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CIVILIANS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPARTIALITY OF MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES IN CONTEXTS OF ITS INTERVENTIONS

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Abstract

This study explores civilians' perceptions on the impartiality of the international humanitarian organization (IHO) Médecins sans Frontières (MSF). This is done through engaging participants from countries where MSF operates and has experienced different challenges in delivering humanitarian aid to civilians. The countries include the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Somalia. A basic interpretive approach was used to explore and interpret participants' perceptions. Interviews were conducted with groups of participants based on their respective countries of origin. The interview questions and guide were developed using indicators of impartiality which the researcher formulated based on varying literature and definition of impartiality, independence and neutrality as the core humanitarian principles that guide the work of MSF together with many other IHOs. Participants expressed their perceptions on the impartiality of MSF through reflecting on associations they made between the IHO and parties they considered to have vested interests in humanitarian crises. These parties included Western countries, the military and persons perceived to have discriminatory and colonial intentions. Upon analysis of these perceptions, it becomes clear that MSF, as an IHO that holds itself to operate according to the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality, needs to reflect on how it builds its identity in order to mitigate perceptions that may have potential to hinder its ability to access and assist civilians affected by humanitarian crises.

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Signature F. KANJU *Date: 20/06/2016*

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Chapter 1 Introduction

"In life-and-death situations, assistance will generally be accepted whether it comes in a Wilsonian, Dunantists or even the back of a military truck. But over time, the nature of the giver begins to matter" Abu-Sada (2012, p. 185).

Theoretical background to study

This study is premised on debates of civil-military relations in humanitarian interventions (CIMIC). These are interactions and collaboration between the military and humanitarian actors who are identified as civilians in humanitarian crises. Pugh (2000) pointed out that civil-military relations often play out in three different dimensions: relationship between external military and internal civilian authorities and society at large, between internal official or non-official forces and external civilian agencies, or between external military and external civilian agencies. Humanitarian organizations made up of civilians draw their tradition of practice from the principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality as a way of distinguishing themselves from warring parties or any party with vested interest in a humanitarian crisis. Although studies in security sector reform acknowledge that both the military and the civil society have relevant roles to play in contexts of insecurities, many humanitarian organizations have come out to critique the CIMIC. One of the ways through which the military is seen playing a role in humanitarian crises has been legitimized through the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) approach. The idea that external parties can intervene in another state if that state is not protecting its own civilians comes under criticism from most aid agencies. Winslow (2002) labels coordinated civil and military interventions as strange bed fellows. The challenges of misperceptions and confusion are not only in relation to populations affected and gatekeepers on the ground but also amongst international aid agencies and the military themselves. Winslow (2002) expresses the interaction between these two parties to have traditionally been characterized by avoidance or antagonism. Some of the differences between aid agencies and the military as listed by Winslow include: organizational structure and culture, tasks and ways of accomplishing humanitarian objectives, definitions of success and time frames, abilities to exert influence and control information, and the last one as control of resources (2002).

The use of military resources and personnel to deliver humanitarian aid is however not new. During the US and Vietnam War, the US introduced a medical program in the combat areas in Vietnam called the Medical Civic Action program (MEDCAP) (Abu-Sada, 2012). From

1963 to 1971, this program saw an estimated 40 million encounters between US military and Vietnamese civilians and cost between $500 and $700 million (Wilensky in Abu-Sada, 2012). The political goal of this program was to “win the hearts and minds” of the Vietnamese population in areas where the US military had their bases (Eisner in Abu-Sada, 2012). Some of the arguments against civil military interventions include claims that it impedes on humanitarian principles. The principle of independence speaks to the ability for humanitarian actors to deliver aid without the influence of any party with vested interest in a humanitarian crisis. Neutrality on the other hand is concerned with the need for humanitarian actors to not be aligned with any interest party of a humanitarian crisis. A historic example of this principle can be drawn from the formation of the international humanitarian organization, Médecins sans Frontières / Doctors without Borders (MSF). This organization was formed when a few humanitarian workers employed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) decided to speak out publicly about the political manipulation of humanitarian aid delivered to civilians of the then Biafra war. The ICRC was upholding the principle of neutrality by choosing not to comment or point out who may be at “fault” or a cause of the suffering experienced by civilians. Lastly, impartiality is the principle concerned with the need for humanitarian actors to deliver aid to those most affected by crisis regardless of affiliation or creed. Therefore the critique levelled against civil military interventions by IHOs is that the military fails to adhere to any of these key principles by virtue of who it is. It is against this background that this study seeks to explore in detail, impartiality as one of these basic humanitarian principles.

With civil-military relations assumed to be one of the factors changing the nature of humanitarian interventions and increasing violence experienced by humanitarian actors, humanitarian actors have started to reflect on perceptions by persons affected by crises. The work and aim of humanitarian actors is to save lives and minimize suffering of persons affected by any humanitarian crisis (Watson, 2011). In order to do so, most of their operations need to be guided by the principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality. These are principles associated with humanitarian organizations whose foundations are said to be Dunantist. The Dunantist humanitarian foundations were coined after Henry Dunant, founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (ICRC) (Feinstein International Center, 2015). The Feinstein International Centre (2015) has described followers of Henry Dunant’s humanitarian traditions as ‘principled’ and those who follow examples of former USA President Woodrow Wilson as ‘pragmatist’. Humanitarian organizations such as the ICRC and MSF are prodigies of the Dunantist humanitarian ethos.

They believe in humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence as core to the humanitarian practice. To operate guided by these humanitarian principles has been interpreted to mean for most of these humanitarian organizations efforts to be distinct from military, political or any interest groups. For an example, organizations like MSF go to the extent of not using armed security in their projects.

The principle of independence guides followers of the Dunantist ethos to distinguish themselves and have little or no relations with any interest groups such as political, religious or business groups. In addition to this, the principle of neutrality guides these IHOs not be partisan of any interest group. IHOs make efforts to work according to these principles in order to deliver aid to persons most in need in any context, regardless of their race, religion, political affiliation or creed. The ability to do so, is to practice the principle of impartiality. It is not always the case that humanitarian organizations are able to provide aid to vulnerable populations affected by humanitarian crisis. In addition to challenges they face to uphold their humanitarian principles, insecurities faced by humanitarian organizations in contexts within which they operate poses a challenge for their impartiality.

The international medical humanitarian organization, Médecins sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has been working in contexts affected by various humanitarian crises since 1971 (MSF, 2015). Like many other IHOs, insecurities experienced by employees of MSF has proven to be a limitation for its effective delivery of aid. As a consequence, IHOs including MSF are seen halting, scaling down operations and suffering the loss of aid workers in their line of duty. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) together with MSF continuously place emphasis on the humanitarian principles of Independence, Neutrality and Impartiality. However, it seems more is needed than emphasis on humanitarian principles for humanitarian organizations to be spared from violence.

There are numerous challenges faced by humanitarian organizations with regards to the above principles. As elaborated in most of the case studies put together by Magone, Neuman, & Weissman (2011), humanitarian principles are at times negotiated in different contexts of crises. When humanitarian principles are negotiated or bend, IHOs often assert that it is with an end to serve the humanitarian needs of the vulnerable populations. In other words, negotiating humanitarian principles is a way for IHOs to remain impartial, to be able to deliver aid to those who need it.

The focus of this study is on MSF as an IHO operating in contexts affected by humanitarian crises, from natural disasters to war and epidemics.
It is against this background that the study wishes to explore the perceptions of the impartiality of the MSF by civilians with first-hand experience of humanitarian crises.

Research model and design

In order to explore the above topic of this study, the researcher opted for a qualitative approach to conduct the study. The following paragraphs will expand on the research topic by describing in detail the problem statement, knowledge gap, purpose statement and key research questions that have formed the foundation for this study. The chapters to follow will present the literature background on what other theorists and researchers have concluded on the issues related to humanitarian action guided by the humanitarian principles and challenges faced by humanitarian actors who are not in support of CIMIC. Different studies will be looked at to elaborate on how such challenges impact on the impartial delivery of humanitarian aid. The concept of impartiality as a humanitarian principle that enables delivery of aid is also explored in detail. An operational definition of impartiality will also be given to guide the discussion in this report.

The unit of analysis, Médecins sans Frontières/Doctors without Borders (MSF) will also be presented in detail to outline its key principles and approaches it takes in its humanitarian interventions. In light of MSF's operations being widespread in over 71 countries, only three of the countries within which it has a history or currently operates will be looked at. These include the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Somalia. The rationale for opting for these three countries will be outlined in the research methodology chapter.

The study was put together using approaches and research design of a qualitative paradigm. Aspects of this approach will also be outlined to support the choices made on methodology for data collection. In order to build on the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher also reflects on her positioning throughout the research process and acknowledges the limitations and validity of the study. The results of the study will be presented in a descriptive nature, using questions from the data collection processes. To analyse the data, themes developed for the purpose of this study, which are informed by the literature reviewed will be used. The conclusion of the study does not present recommendations, however, reflections on possible areas of further investigations and analysis will be presented.

The focus group guide is attached at the end of this report as Appendix 1. Transcripts and audio recording can be made available to the supervisor and external examiners upon request.

Research purpose and aims of the study

Problem statement

Acceptance of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) approach and mandates adopted by agencies of the United Nations such as the UNHCR legitimize the civil-military interventions in humanitarian crises. This poses a problem for humanitarian organizations who believe their principles remain key in ensuring their identity as distinct from warring or interest parties in humanitarian crises, thus ensuring their ability to provide aid to civilians affected. These reflections are often made by humanitarian organizations who on their roles as independent, neutral and impartial actors, versus the role of the military who have political mandates. Do civilians, who are ordinary persons, affected by a humanitarian crisis make the same reflections? Do they perceive such humanitarian organizations, the likes of MSF to be impartial? In other words, do they perceive MSF to be a humanitarian organization that provides aid to persons in need regardless of their affiliations, social status and only based on need for aid?

Knowledge gap

The reflections made in this study are not new in the field of humanitarian work. What is unique is the specific focus on one of the three core humanitarian principles. This focus on impartiality expands on the definition of this principle as the humanitarian principle that determines whether an IHO is able to deliver aid or not. In addition to this, the angle taken by this study to analyse perceptions of civilians who have had both direct and indirect experience with MSF contributes the field of security studies and practice of humanitarianism. The use MSF as a unit of analysis presents an interesting angle for reflections as it is one of the IHOs known to openly challenge civil military relations in humanitarian response. It is also known for efforts it makes to distinguish itself from other IHOs in efforts to build its identity as an IHO aligned with humanitarian principles. An example of this is MSF's common stance of refusing to participate in various integrated platforms where fellow IHOs sit and reflect on their roles and direction of humanitarianism. Hence this study reflects on whether civilians perceive MSF to be impartial, especially from countries where it has been expelled, decided to halt all its operations and is currently operating in. The work available, as it will be seen in the literature review focuses on whether different international humanitarian organizations are perceived to operate according to the

three core humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality. Often this has been done by delving extensively into either one of the three principles.

In addition to the above, this study also presents a new angle in humanitarian and security studies to date. This entails exploring whether humanitarian organizations that publicly criticise the civil-military relations are succeeding in providing aid impartially, without collaborating with the military.

Purpose statement

The purpose of this research is to explore civilians' perceptions on the impartiality of MSF in three different contexts. These are: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Somalia. These are three contexts wherein MSF has provided humanitarian assistance to civilians in different periods. An exploration of these perceptions will be used to analyse the extent to which this single principle has any bearing on perceptions of other humanitarian principles and insecurities experienced by MSF in its humanitarian interventions.

Research question

The key research questions in this study include the following: What are civilians' perceptions on the impartiality of MSF? Do civilians make a clear distinction between MSF's interventions and those led by civil-military relations? Do these distinctions or perceptions have any impact on how civilians perceive the impartiality of MSF? Do civilians make distinction between impartiality and other humanitarian principles?

Conceptual and theoretical definitions of terms

A number of the concepts and terms referred to in this report are common in the security and humanitarian sector. However, some of them carry broad definitions and for the purpose of this study, conceptual definitions will be given to set parameters within which these concepts will be discussed in this report. The concept of civil-military relations or CIMIC as mentioned earlier in this report can be described as relationships between civilians and the military. As pointed out by Pugh (2000) these relationships can be categorised to play out in three dimensions. This study does not look into detail these three dimensions but engages on them broadly to reflect on how they may be described by civilians. For purposes of consistency, the term civil-military relations will be used instead of CIMIC.

The concept of humanitarian organization is broad. As already alluded to in this study, organizations including the military who are involved in the delivery of aid in crises contexts

can also be called humanitarian organizations. The focus of this study is not on all kinds of such humanitarian organizations but is specifically focused on humanitarian organizations that wish to be separate from any civil-military relations in their interventions. It is again not all of such organizations but literature reviewed is particularly focused on a few of those that are known to operate internationally. In efforts to remain consistent throughout this report, reference to such international humanitarian organizations will from henceforth be abbreviated as IHOs. Again, not all of these are discussed in detail, but MSF has been chosen to be the unit of analysis and only its presence in three African countries is looked at as part of the research question.

More about MSF and aspects of its practice and history that are of relevance to this study will be looked into in the literature review chapter.

Contribution of the study

The explorations and findings presented by this study contribute to critical thinking for both humanitarian and security studies. The focus on one IHO, which is MSF does not limit the reflections made. However, it creates better opportunity to explore the extent to which IHOs that choose to distinguish themselves from civil-military practices in humanitarian interventions are perceived as impartial. These explorations will not only contribute to MSF's reflections but to other IHOs who have come out criticising civil-military relations in humanitarian interventions. The focus on impartiality may also engender more critical reflections on the extent to which civilians' perceptions of the other humanitarian principles of independence and neutrality, have any bearing on their perceptions of IHOs' impartiality.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

In recent years, the delivery of humanitarian aid seems to come at a cost. IHOs such as the ICRC, MSF and different agencies of the United Nations (UN) have been experiencing increasing levels of violence in their line of duty (Humanitarian Outcomes, 2012, p. 1). Through different reflections, some attribute such levels of violence to perceptions that these IHOs are not as independent or neutral as they claim to be. Others attribute such perceptions to the legitimacy given to interventions that are of civil-military relations in practice. All such attributions have in most cases been reflected upon based on what is often considered a defining era of humanitarian interventions, which is the war on terror era (Abiew, 2012).

A number of the studies reviewed in this report are from Iraq. A number of studies have surfaced from Iraq with researchers reflecting on the impact of the so called 'War on Terror' discourse on humanitarianism. Researchers claim this 'War on Terror' discourse might have been one of the game changers for security in humanitarian interventions (Abiew, 2012; Humanitarian Outcomes, 2012 & Montclosb, 2013). It is well accepted that the context of humanitarian crises, whether epidemics, wars or natural disasters are often challenging and humanitarian workers put themselves at the frontline of these crises. The concern raised by most researchers and IHOs is that the insecurities they experience seem to be deliberate targeting of IHOs Montclobs (2013). Insecurities are a concern for IHOs as it limits their ability to provide aid on any side of a crisis, their ability to be impartial.

The next paragraphs in this chapter will review different literature that will contribute to the understanding of the humanitarian principle of impartiality. There will also be reference made to other humanitarian principles including independence and neutrality. This is done with the objective to shed more clarity and understand of impartiality.

The humanitarian principle of impartiality

The practice of delivering humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable population is driven by the humanitarian principle of Impartiality. This principle "…carries the fundamental objective for humanitarian action that resources and responses are prioritised and allocated according to actual humanitarian needs…" (SCHR, 2014, p. 2). In most crisis contexts, access to the most affected population can be limited by the nature of the crisis, be it conflict or natural disaster. Lack of adequate resources may also limit the delivery of aid to all those affected. However,

IHOs often rely on the principle of impartiality in order to distribute their resources, thus ensuring that those most in need receive aid. The extent to which humanitarian agencies can be impartial has in most cases been attributed to their capacity to uphold other humanitarian principles, such as neutrality, independence and humanity. It is therefore critical for humanitarian agencies not to be aligned with any party involved in conflict. This facilitates better chances for IHOs to serve the needs of civilians trapped on different sides of a conflict (Anderson, 2004).

To expand on the notion of impartiality in this study, the table below lays out aspects that were looked at as indicators of impartiality and how it is reflected by the perceptions of civilians on particular IHO.

Humanitarian indicators of impartiality

Indicator of impartiality	**Implications on civilians' perception**
Strong level of independence	Extent to which civilians perceived the IHO to not be influenced or driven by vested interests of external groups
Clear position of neutrality	Extent to which civilians perceived IHO to not represent or protect the interest of any group but serve interest of most affected
Fair and equitable employment standards	Extent to which civilians experienced and perceived non-discriminatory employment practices by IHO
Commitment to organization's mandate	Extent to which civilians understood and believed the mandate and organizational principles of the IHO

Table 1. Fezile Kanju, 2015 (Formulated from literature reviewed)

From the above indicators, a number of questions were then formulated and probing ones introduced to guide the questions asked to participants in this study. These include participants' understanding and clarity of an IHOs' practices and principles, their perceptions on the nature of relationship between humanitarian agencies and interest groups, and participants' association of IHOs with particular state or interest group (Chatham House, 2014). Participants were asked specific questions related to these three points and MSF. The three aspects mentioned above form the basis upon which the operational definition of impartiality, in particular for MSF is presented in the study. Impartiality can therefore be understood as the approach or practice of delivering humanitarian aid to those most affected,

regardless of any interests that may dictate to the humanitarian provider how, when and what kind of aid should be delivered to people affected by humanitarian crisis.

In summation, they highlight aspects of upholding humanitarian principles or neutrality and independence. According to MSF's modus operandi, the first aspect mentioned above of understanding its humanitarian role in different contexts is critical to distinguishing itself from other IHOs. The second and last aspects listed above point to its ability to act in a neutral and independent manner. Although closely related, the second and third aspect on impartiality differ as the former looks at experiences and actions of the organization in its interventions, while the last aspect looks at how civilians perceive or associate it with other parties.

The focus on impartiality in this report is not to suggest that this humanitarian principle overrides all principles nor that it is exclusive of all the other principles. The focus on impartiality is to highlight the extent to which humanitarian organizations can reflect on the effectiveness or impact of their interventions by reaching those in need.

Why perceptions matter

As mentioned above, violence in contexts of humanitarian crises can be a limiting factor for the successful delivery of aid by IHOs. The targeting of humanitarian facilities, looting, kidnapping and killing of humanitarian actors are mentioned as some of the factors contributing to the insecurities faced by IHOs. The approach of reflecting on insecurities seems not to take as priority perceptions by civilians, who are recipients of humanitarian aid in times of crises. In this study, the perceptions of civilians affected by humanitarian crises are prioritized to contribute to ways of understanding insecurities faced by IHOs. Dijkzeul and Wakenge (2010) noted that perceptions, as it will be in the case of this report are synonymously used with beliefs, views, critical opinion and terms of interpretation. The views, beliefs or perceptions of individuals can be influenced by experience, knowledge from different teachings, media or hegemonic discourses in one's society. Abu-Sada (2012) mentioned that perceptions are subjective and dependent on one's position in society. For an example, a middle class person less affected by the flooding crisis in Mozambique may be less appreciative of the humanitarian assistance provided to poor populations directly affected by the same crisis. Although perceptions are subjective, depending on one's capacity to influence; they can have far reaching influence amongst different groups.

It is unfortunate when the views of persons affected by humanitarian crises do not seem to be prioritised when reflections on the effectiveness of aid are made. Ginty (2014) is one author who has criticized the approach of many IHOs who ignore the agency of the civilians whose lives they try to save. He (2014) asserted that "… [IHOs] reinforce the notions that 'expertise' is exogenous and that local actors (who often have direct experience of the conflict or war-to-peace transitions) are passive victims and recipients who lack the agency to chart their own path…" (Ginty, 2014, p. 551). While positioned on the receiving end of humanitarian aid, civilians formulate their own views about the nature of aid given and the nature of the giver. The need to recognize the agency of civilians is also supported by analysis made by Baines and Paddon (2012). They (2012) reflected on this through their exploration of how civilians improve their protection in context of humanitarian crises, war in particular. It was from understanding the efforts such as avoidance, accommodation and knowledge of local context that Baines and Paddon (2012) believe civilians exercised their agency in contexts such as the Pabo refugee camp in northern Uganda.

As encapsulated by Ginty (2014), perceptions may direct analysts to issues of power and influence that have potential to impact of the security of IHOs. International humanitarian organizations do not only rely on secured environments and adequate resources for them do delivery aid effectively. The deliberate action and choice of affected civilians to seek aid where it is available is another factor that plays a determining role in the effectiveness and reach of humanitarian aid. Therefore misperceptions, whether in the form of fear or confusion amongst civilians may determine the extent of impartiality of IHOs. In order to avoid misperceptions, Vaughn (2009) recommends for humanitarian organizations to operate according to humanitarian principles. He (2009) suggests that this could potentially control for some of the common driving factors for security incidents; including mistaken identity and confusion on the roles and motivations of IHOs.

MSF as the unit of analysis

The international humanitarian organization, MSF was founded in 1971 by 13 doctors and journalists in France during the humanitarian crisis of war and famine in the former Biafra (Brauman & Tanguy, 1998). It was formed after its founders, who at the time were working with the ICRC reached disagreements over the organizations' approach of not speaking out to denounce what they believed were violations of human rights. In addition to this, the founders of MSF opposed the stance by the ICRC to respect the sovereignty of a country in

its interventions, which was deemed as a limitation to accessing civilians in need (Brauman & Tanguy, 1998). MSF currently provides medical humanitarian relief to civilians in about 71 countries worldwide (MSF, 2015). This IHO claims its operations are guided by humanitarian principles including independence, neutrality and impartiality. Alongside the principle of independence, the IHO asserts it seeks to be neutral and impartial whilst upholding universal medical ethics, and observes the right to humanitarian assistance and strives to do so with total freedom in its delivery of aid (MSF, 2015). In line with its approach to being independent, the IHO claims almost 90% of its funds are from private donors and not governments (MSF, 2015).

Regardless of the IHO's modus operandi as mentioned above, MSF has suffered hindrances in exercising its functions. These include violence such as looting of its medical centres, kidnappings and killing of its staff in different contexts (MSF, 2015; Malo, 2016). Some of the incidences suffered by MSF in its contexts of operations will be detailed later in this report. The next paragraphs outline the approach of MSF's work as an IHO in relation to other humanitarian players. These will later guide the discussion on how civilians' perceptions on the impartiality of the MSF are worth exploring.

MSF's relationship with other IHOs and tradition

MSF's approach to the principle of independence guides how it engages and how it chooses to not engage, not only with interest parties of humanitarian crises but also with different IHOs. As in the case of the ICRC in the Biafra humanitarian crisis, the founders of MSF saw it as a limitation to wait for governments' authorization to intervene. Examples of this can be seen by its level of participation in platforms that bring IHOs together. Tong (2004) pointed out that MSF participated in the first phase of developing the Sphere standards and also signed on the Red Cross Code of Conduct for humanitarian organizations. Its participation in the first phase of this process was seen as a professional responsibility to improve and maintain a standard of quality humanitarian response. However, internal debate over participation in the process led to MSF halting its participation in the second and third phase of the process, which included trainings and dissemination of the produced Sphere Handbook (Tong, 2004). A somewhat ombudsman for humanitarian organizations to hold one another accountable was preliminarily established after the Rwandan Genocide, the Humanitarian Accountability Project International (HAPi) (Tong, 2004). With its experience in Rwanda at a time of the genocide, MSF still chose not to be a part of this platform for engagements with other IHOs (Tong, 2004).

Some of the justifications for MSF's dissociation with some IHOs are elaborated by Tong (2004). Arguing from an MSF position, Tong (2004) claim homogeneity of humanitarian organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations is misleading. He (2004) asserts that humanitarian organizations are unique in mandate, political and cultural heritage, although they may all be characterized by intervening in a similar context. The heritage or tradition of IHOs is said to be influenced by three dominant traditions. Tong (2004) drew from Abby Stoddards (2003) and listed them as the Religious tradition, the Wilsonian tradition and the Dunantist tradition. Organizations aligned with religious traditions may not identify with one particular religion but consider the influence of their actions as free giving. On the other hand, the Wilsonian tradition is named after US President Wilson. This however does not imply that organizations influenced by this position necessarily align their mandates with the Policies of the US government.

The MSF's political and cultural heritage is said to be influenced by Dunantists tradition, French and Latin traditions of adverse relationship with governments through denunciations and exerting pressure from the outside. As opposed to the Wilsonian 'state humanitarianism', the MSF approach can be described as 'disobedient humanitarianism' Tong (2004).

For the purpose of this study, the period in which the MSF profile was documented and reflected upon is worth noting. Since 2007, there has been new and emerging MSF offices established in different contexts outside of the European historical and political traditions that are adding to the MSF identity. These include the MSF Southern Africa, MSF Latin America and MSF Asia. Although approach to practice and analysis may vary according to the location of an MSF office, the Dunantist influences and MSF's value for *témoignage* (witnessing and speaking out) remain the same Tong (2004). Within MSF, the principles of independence and impartiality are highly valued and closely convergent. Tong (2004) asserted that this is one of the reasons why MSF finds it difficult to participate in humanitarian platforms that view the effectiveness of interventions to be determined by technical outputs, even though they may be of good quality and accountable.

MSF's operational mandate

As mentioned earlier, humanitarian organizations vary in their mandates. MSF is seen as having a medical humanitarian mandate. In some contexts, its medical work may be seen as similar to that of development organizations. Most of its interventions on HIV, TB and malnutrition are examples of this. In the planning processes, MSF bears in mind the long term impact of its interventions and the participation of patients receiving its care. However, this participation is determined and guided by the principle of independence.

In light of the different countries and contexts within which MSF operates, this report will only focus on three of these countries. The following paragraphs will look closely into the experiences of MSF in the three countries chosen to be the focus of this study.

MSF in the Democratic Republic of Congo

MSF has been working in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since 1981 (MSF, 2005). By 2001, the country had already seen about 30 years of collapsing systems and infrastructure under the governance of President Mobutu Sese Seko (Herp, Parque, Rackley, & Ford, 2003). MSF conducted a survey in five regions in the Western and central parts of the DRC in the same year. The findings revealed high mortality rates due to malnutrition and infectious diseases. About 2.7 million of the country's population had been displaced and over 300 000 had fled to neighbouring countries (Herp, Parque, Rackley, & Ford, 2003). In the different regions of the DRC including Kivu, MSF has been providing care for victims of sexual violence, treating gunshot wounds, malaria, measles and antenatal care (Herp, Parque, Rackley, & Ford, 2003).

Insecurity in the country has forced humanitarian organizations including MSF to suspend their operations. In 2005, an MSF facility in North Kivu was looted by armed men in uniforms who took money and marked MSF vehicles amongst other resources (MSF, 2005). Most recently in 2013, a number of health facilities were attacked in Geti, which is in the Oriental Province of the DRC was attacked which left. This incident left a health care worker dead and some patients wounded (MSF, 2013). This again shows the extent of insecurities faced by MSF in delivering humanitarian aid.

In addition to the above, MSF has also intervened in the DRC region of Bunia, since 2003 (MSF Vienna Evaluation Unit, 2011). In this region, MSF's operations included supporting victims of sexual violence in the area until it handed over this project to a local organization that would continue the work. It was important for MSF to define a partnership that would be able to continue the work in a neutral, independent and impartial way as it had strived to do (MSF Vienna Evaluation Unit, 2011). It is common MSF practice to evaluate and review partnerships in contexts where it operates. This practice is said to strengthen and ensure MSF's independence. This evaluation activity also looked at the perceptions and impact of handing over MSF projects to a local partner. The evaluation showed that for some medical authorities in the area, the handed over project was still perceived as providing quality medical care since the infrastructure still carried the MSF logo (MSF Vienna Evaluation Unit,

2011). Old staff who worked at the project mentioned they experienced no difference since the facility provided free care and had a constant supply of drugs. The evaluators of this project felt the lack of MSF proximity to the patients could lead to MSF being perceived as no different from UN agencies (MSF Vienna Evaluation Unit, 2011).

The perceived impact of this handover was highlighted with regards to how the local organization handed the project operated and how it was perceived. The local organization, *Solidarité Féminine pour la Paix et le Développement Intégral* (SOFEPADI) was said to be popular in the area for being vocal and denunciation (MSF Vienna Evaluation Unit, 2011). In addition to this, SOFEPADI was also perceived as a collaborator with the International Criminal Court (ICC) by local civilians (MSF Vienna Evaluation Unit, 2011). It was reported to have had three serious security incidents in Bunia. One of these included an incident where robbers broke into a staff's house (MSF Vienna Evaluation Unit, 2011).

This brief background on MSF in the DRC highlights that perceptions of MSF in contexts where it works closely with other humanitarian organizations can either be positive or negative. In the Bunia case, it seems it was both positive and negative to some extent, where its reputation contributed positively to how the local organization was perceived after MSF handed over the project. On the other hand, association of the local organization with the ICC may also pose a challenge for MSF as it was already associated with the local organization. More on these points will be elaborated on later in the report.

MSF in Ethiopia

Located in the Horn of Africa region, Ethiopia has seen different humanitarian crises from conflict to famine. In 1985, MSF responded to a malnutrition crisis, in the famine-stricken regions of Ethiopia (Binet,2011). It was during this period that MSF was expelled from the country after speaking out against the Ethiopian government for using humanitarian aid to influence and gain more control on its political interest (Binet,2011). More than 2 decades from this period, MSF found itself struggling to deliver aid to the most populations affected from all parts of the conflict between the Ethiopian Federal Government and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) (Binet,2011). The ICRC is another IHO that has struggled to work in Ethiopia. It was also expelled from the country for being accused of siding with the ONLF (Binet, 2011).

The MSF experience in Ethiopia shows that it is not just through direct violence or instability that IHOs are unable to access civilians in need. The ability to be impartial is not only dependent on an IHOs' interest but the political authority or sovereignty that role players such as government have over their respective states.

MSF in Somalia

Similar the DRC and Ethiopia, the state of health and other infrastructure in Somalia have been unstable and poor for decades. Although many humanitarian agencies have become familiar with the Somali context, none can claim to be succeeding in managing the insecurities in the country. MSF operated in Somalia under different contexts, including epidemics and displaced populations. Somalia remains the one context within which MSF chose to use armed security guards in its operations to improve their security.

The most recent attacks that saw MSF taking drastic measures were the kidnappings and killing of its staff in Somalia. This led the IHO to pull out all its operations from the country in 2013, after being present for more than two decades (Werkhäuser, 2014). Dr Unni Karunakara, then President MSF was quoted in a Reuters report saying: "The closure of our activities is a direct result of extreme attacks on our staff, in an environment where armed groups and civilian leaders increasingly support, tolerate or condone the killing, assaulting and abducting of humanitarian aid workers" (http://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-msf, 2013).

Contextualizing the DRC, Ethiopia and Somalia in relation to MSF

The rationale and criteria for the chosen country contexts looked at in this study was based on the different experiences MSF has had in each one of them. MSF continues to operate in the DRC as was highlighted in the literature review chapter. Its health interventions in the DRC range from treating war wounded to HIV and survivors of sexual harassment. Similar to the DRC, MSF continues to work in Ethiopia to date. However, the MSF history speaks to the expulsion of MSF operations from Ethiopia in 1985. The expulsion was as a result of the IHO practicing one of its values or principles of témoignage, speaking out publicly against the government of Ethiopia asserting it was using humanitarian aid for political reasons. Contrary to the Ethiopian experience where it was told to leave, MSF took a decision to stop all of its operation in Somalia in 2013. The experience of MSF in all these three countries has been longer than five years, which is reasonable period for civilians in these respective countries to be familiar with its projects and practices.

Insecurities experienced by International Humanitarian Organizations

Since the United States of America's invasion on Iraq in 2011, researchers together with aid workers have paid close attention to the nature and level of violence experienced by aid actors, IHOs in particular (Abiew, 2012; de Torrente, 2013; Humanitarian Outcomes, 2013). Reflections have been made on the nature and extent of these attacks and violence. Linkages have been made between these attacks and Western governments' focus on the War on Terror, particularly the call by the United States of America's Colin Powel to either be 'with us or against us' (Abiew, 2012).

In addition to this, the extent of violence and alleged deliberateness of it against IHOs is also reflected upon by many including Roberts (2005). Claims that the traditional humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality no longer protect IHOs have grown amongst humanitarian actors (Fontaine, 2004: 168; UNHCR, 2004a: 4–5; Bickley, 2003: 2; Sheik et al., 2000). Efforts and in some ways, special focus has been given to review the security of IHOs. This focus has been as a result of fearing threats to their existence and ability to provide aid.

Although most reflections seem to highlight experiences of violence since 2011, these attacks did not however date back before 2011. On October 27 2003, suicide bombers crashed an ambulance with explosive into an ICRC compound in Baghdad (Abiew, 2012). Eighteen civilians were reported dead in this incident and many more wounded. Abiew (2012) further adds that this incident followed an attack of a United Nations (UN) head office in Baghdad where 23 people were killed including the UN's Special Representative of the Secretary General, Sergio Vieira de Mello.

In Syria the UN reported 12 of its staff and 32 staff of the Syrian Arab Red crescent had been killed since March 2011, with 21 UN staff kept in detention (Nikolaeva, 2014). A number of reflections from MSF also raise concerns for their presence in high risk contexts. In South Sudan in May 2014, MSF surgeon Hannes Pietschmann explained to an online reporter how as aid workers, they had to stay in protected shelters with survival packs (Werkhäuser, 2014). In addition to the killings, kidnappings as highlighted in the table below also characterise the nature of violence towards aid workers. Five MSF staff members were held hostage for a

number of months in Afghanistan (Weissman, 2006). A 2012 report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) indicates quantitative findings on the rate of violent incidents experienced by aid actors in different contexts.

Major attacks on aid workers: Summary statistics 2000-2011

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of incidents	42	29	46	63	63	75	107	123	165	154	129	151
Total aid worker victims	91	90	85	143	125	173	240	220	278	295	245	308
Total killed	57	27	38	87	56	54	87	87	127	107	72	86
Total injured	23	20	23	49	46	96	87	87	91	94	86	127
Total kidnapped*	11	43	24	7	23	23	66	46	60	94	87	95
International victims	21	28	17	27	24	15	26	35	51	74	37	28
National victims	70	62	68	116	101	158	214	185	227	221	208	280
UN staff	31	28	18	31	11	28	61	39	65	101	44	91
International NGO staff	45	48	54	69	69	112	110	132	157	129	139	140
LNGO staff & RCS staff**	5	2	5	35	43	28	55	35	46	55	47	77
ICRC staff	9	11	7	8	1	3	10	4	5	9	10	5

Table 2 (Humanitarian Outcomes, 2012, p. 1)

**Victims survived or not yet determined (those killed while kidnapped are counted under "killed" total)*
***Local (host country) Non-Governmental Organizations and National Red Cross/ Red Crescent Society*

According to Chkam (2006), about 200 aid agencies were operational in Iraq in 2003 but many had to pull out due to the violence, leaving about 60 of them.

An opposing view to the dominant view that violence targeted at aid workers has been increasing is raised by Montclobs (2013). According to Montclobs, there was a decrease in the death toll of ICRC staff between 1997 and 2008 (2013). This assertion can also be supported by the findings in Table 1 above. The table above shows no clear increase in number of recorded incidences on ICRC staff between 2000 and 2008 (Humanitarian Outcomes, 2012). He (2013) further argues that the figures are not reflected in relation to previous figures like in the Second World War. Thus they do not give a comprehensive

picture of whether insecurities and threats for humanitarian works is increasing or decreasing in recent times.

In light of Montclobs (2013)'s analysis, statistical figures of violent incidents experienced by IHOs will not be used as a basis on which humanitarian operations are affected. The basis for concern that can be drawn from the findings so far is on the nature of pressure or insecurity experienced by IHOs.

Another point of concern raised by IHOs is that unlike before, humanitarian workers are now intentionally and deliberately targeted. Montclobs (2013) cites a claim made by World Vision International that in the history of humanitarianism, recent times have shown to be characterised by deliberate targets of aid workers. Jean de Courten also cited in Montclobs (2013) asserts that working in high risk context is common for aid workers, however it is new that aid workers have become targets in these contexts.

Analysis on the nature and extent of violence and insecurities for aid workers has introduced a discourse of "humanitarian space" with views suggesting that this "humanitarian space" is shrinking (Montclosb, 2013). More on the concept of humanitarian space will be explored later in this report. Some of the assessments made on the violence experienced by IHOs point to challenges for IHOs to adhere to the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality. The following paragraphs will look at the extent to which IHOs were perceived by civilians affected by humanitarian crises.

Lack of accountability

A study that explored the perceptions of civilians in Iraq on the practice of IHOs, showed a strong perception amongst Iraqis that international and government actions were corrupt (Hansen, 2008). These perceptions were based on reflections from media reports on reconstruction funding projects expected to be implemented by government. Hansen (2008) indicated that these perceptions of corruption were based on Iraqis' reflections on the hardships of their day to day experiences, and what they saw in the media as the government's reconstruction project. As non-state actors, most IHOs are left source and spend funds using their own self-determined approaches. This leaves little room for external and independent review on how these funds are sourced and spent. The dependency on donations and external sources for funding exposes most IHOs to dependency relationships with their funders.

For some IHOs, funding is dependent and determined by their state's interests or influential non-state actors with vested interests in the areas of interventions. Hansen (2008) highlights that in the case of Iraq, aid agencies were able to function and had secured funding prior to the US invasion in 2003. However, since 2003, the funding nature has experienced unfavourable changes for aid agencies, citing a failed preparedness appeal for US$193 million which was launched by the UN (Hansen, 2008). These financial challenges form part of the constraints experienced by IHOs in achieving impartiality. In early 2005, a UN Flash Appeal and other funding encouraged some aid agencies to expand their programmes (Hansen, 2008).

The ability to adhere to humanitarian principles and to work according to strategies implemented by fellow IHOs does not immune humanitarian workers from targeted attacks. However, it can contribute to the length of the period IHOs get to remain in the areas and make efforts to continue with their operations. Egeland (2011) recommended that IHOs should identify and prioritize their objectives, and consider collective advocacy and negotiation with governments and militia groups**.** In Hansen (2008)'s study, participants perceived IHOs that had pulled out when violence increased and when they were faced with insecurity to be lacking courage.

Shrinking humanitarian space

The familiarity of this discourse amongst humanitarian actors brought with it variations in its definition. For some, the concept of humanitarian space is understood to be an environment that facilitates for the responsibility to protect, assist civilians, and prosecute perpetrators (Mills, 2013). Former MSF President Dr Rony Brauman defined humanitarian space as "…a space of freedom in which we are free to evaluate needs, free to monitor the distribution and use of relief goods, and free to have a dialogue with the people" (Mills, 2013,p. 608).

The IHO Oxfam, presents a definition that places focus on the persons affected by humanitarian crises. Oxfam's definition captures the notion of humanitarian space to be an environment where the rights for persons in crises, to receive protection and assistance are respected. It again noted that humanitarian space is an environment within which aid agencies are able to respond effectively, with impartiality and independence to the needs of the affected populations (Mills, 2013). A similar definition is held by the UNHCR, which defines humanitarian space as an environment which facilitates for the access to protection

and assistance for its target populations in crises (Mills, 2013). The UNHCR further identifies humanitarian space to be both a social and political environment (Mills, 2013).

In light of the varying definitions presented above, Mills (2013) conceptualizes humanitarian space "…as the wider ideational and political environment in which humanitarian actors operate, and in which the displaced and others affected by war exist, sometimes as pawns on a geopolitical chessboard" Mills(2013, p.609). In other words, the experience beyond the direct violence experienced by IHOs, but the underlying political, social issues and perceptions that ultimately impact on how IHOs deliver aid.

In addition to perceptions of poor accountability, Reimann, Debiel and Sticht cited in Fischer, (2006) emphasized the following as some of the criticism levelled against IHOs: Lack of independence, influence by donors and media, being dominated by western origins, and lacking legitimacy by not being subjected to any democratic controls. Again, Bridges (2011) argues that the reactive speaking out or advocacy of IHOs today is another contributing factor to the growing threats or insecurities. Bridges (2011) further recommended that IHOs must be innovative with their advocacy and focus less on western platforms to assess the impact of their advocacy. There also needs to be an involvement of the population affected by crises in deciding how and what to speak out on (Bridges, 2011).

Following on the criticisms laid out above, this report will reflect on civilians' perceptions by categorizing the criticism as follows: Perceptions on approach, perceptions on practice, and perceptions on the relationship between IHOs and interest groups.

Perceptions on approach: Confusion with the role of IHOs

A briefing report prepared by Focus on Operationality in 2008 looked at findings from a study by the Humanitarian Agenda: 2015 project in Iraq (Hansen, 2008). The study found there were strong and positive perceptions about the effectiveness of humanitarian actors in Iraq, however notable gaps between ethos and practice were reported (Hansen, 2008). The findings indicated that most Iraqis seem to have great understanding of humanitarian principles, and related some of the principles to Islamic teachings and traditions in Iraq (Hansen, 2008). There were also some perceptions of tensions reported between Islamic teachings and fundamental principles of the ICRC together with other IHOs' code of conduct (Hansen, 2008). He (2008) summarized these tensions under the theme "humanitarian ethos unites, practice divides". According to Hansen (2008)'s study, Iraqis were able to identify

instances where they felt humanitarian ethos were breached by humanitarian actors on the ground. There were perceptions of aid being politicized, militarized and used for particular interests other than those of affected civilians by international and Iraqi actors (Hansen, 2008). In a case study presented by Mills on Darfur, the multiple identities or chapters of most IHOs are used to ensure that they continue with operations even after one of their entities has been expelled from the context. For Oxfam, its UK chapter was kicked out of Darfur and but Oxfam US continued with operations, Mercy Corps US was replaced by Mercy Corps Scotland and the Switzerland CARE International Foundation stepped in after CARE USA (Mills, 2013). These approaches in dealing with access challenges emphasize the state affiliated roots of these IHOs.

Perceptions on practice: Disregard for affected persons' religion, culture and capacities

The behaviour and insensitivities towards Iraqi traditions and Islamic teachings impacted on how local Iraq community viewed international aid actors. Participants in Hansen's study made reference to the way in which foreign aid actors dressed and disregarded the distinctions in how men and women are expected to interact according to the Islamic religion. There was however positive perceptions of foreign aid actors from Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, who were spoken of as polite, including workers from a small American NGO (Hansen, 2008).

In a report put together by Vaughn (2009), the security challenges faced by IHOs were looked at according to different levels of impact. The table below illustrates the findings from his report.

Impact of insecurities experienced by IHOs

Impact level	Initial impact of security incident	Longer-tern result of incident
Local	Physically damages organization or harms staff ; Impairs programme or entire operation	Damages norm of inviolability and legitimizes future security incidents; Poses existential threat to the survival of the programme or operation and imperils local beneficiaries
Organization	Short and longer-term financial loss; Negative publicity, liability, or inquiry, loss of market share	Damages norm of inviolability and legitimizes future security incidents; Poses existential threat to organizations' economic survival
International	Weakens norm of humanitarian inviolability; Challenges core belief that humanitarian identity brings security	Damages norm of inviolability and legitimizes future security incidents; Poses threat to the survival of humanitarian identity, principles, norms and action

Table 3 Impact assessment of security incidents (Vaughn, 2009, p. 273)

According to Vaughn (2009)'s table above, security incidents experienced by IHOs can have far reaching effects. These effects may not only affect one particular IHO in a specific context where it may be operating, but internationally and to the general IHO community. As it will be illustrated later on in this report, the inviolability of IHOs is one factor that seemed to be questioned by some participants as they expressed their perceptions.

Lack of Neutrality

The collaboration of some international humanitarian organizations on international campaigns and with politically driven international agendas also affect perceptions on the ground. In 2009, two sections of MSF together with 11 other international organizations were expelled from Darfur by the Sudanese government (de Torrenté, 2013). This was at a time when international campaigns such as "Save Darfur" and the investigations by the International Criminal Court (ICC) were underway (de Torrenté, 2013).

Perceptions on the relationship between IHOs and interest groups

de Torrenté (2013) mentioned the relevance and effectiveness of humanitarian aid to the crisis together with the relationship between aid providers and recipients as contributors to perceptions on IHOs. Humanitarian organizations are perceived as addressing the effects and not the causes of crisis. In the Dijkzeul and Wakenge (2010) study, the IRC for an example was perceived to be associated with the US government which was also seen to be supporting Rwanda. The common sentiments around this perception were that the IRC arrived at the time when the war started. Again, this approach of addressing effects and not causes had some respondents in the study asserting that "…humanitarian organizations need war to become - and - stay active" (Dijkzeul and Wakenge, 2010, p. 1161).

Analysis of literature and conclusion

The three themes used above to categorize perceptions of IHOs are mainly used for clarity, however as the examples given above indicate, perceptions are not necessarily divided and categorised by civilians. The literature exposes the assertion that humanitarianism started off as a powerful discourse and has now become a discourse about power (Wellerstein cited in Abu-sada, 2012). This statement inspires some questions for potential reflection. The first of such questions is the extent to which the "providers and recipients" relationship may be contributing to an "us and them" discourse. This discourse may have potential to create unfavourable power dynamics in humanitarian crisis contexts. Linked to this, is the power and legitimacy of local humanitarian staff or national staff. As actors providing humanitarian aid but also directly affected by crisis, are they engaged with as "recipients" by the IHOs, or are they equally positioned as "humanitarian workers"?

The nature of research and reflection on perceptions of IHOs

Most of the studies conducted to reflect on the changing nature of the humanitarian environment, such as the ones looked at in this review have been written by researchers and humanitarian actors with origins in the west. Okumu (2010) brings in a different perspective in his claim that the presence of humanitarian international non-governmental organizations (HINGOs) as he refers to them. Okumu argues that HINGOs though unintentional may contribute to the prolongment of wars in contexts such as conflicts in Africa. For war belligerents, the resources brought into their weak and collapsed states by HINGOs provide opportunities to make money and trade for more weapons. He goes on to list a number of ways through which HINGOs may be contributing to war. The manipulation of aid and use of people as shields are some of these ways (Okumu, 2010). Another way through which

HINGOs may be contributing to war is through creating theatres of operation (Okumu, 2010). This is when HINGOs contribute to governments' "…depopulating the theatre of operations" (Okumu, 2010, p. 126). More ways include the dual use of infrastructure-reconstruction of roads, activeness and productivity of airport.

Recommendations to improve security for humanitarian actors

A number of researchers have looked at factors that can be recommended for IHOs to improve levels of security and change negative perceptions where they operate. A report produced by Humanitarian Outcomes suggests for aid agencies to critically analyse the context within which they wish to intervene. In this report, most of the insecure contexts for aid agencies were characterized as failed or weak states, thus presenting little hope for aid agencies to be legitimately protected under legitimate laws (Humanitarian Outcomes, 2012)**.**

MSF asserted that neutrality is the only form of protection aid agencies can rely on (Werkhäuser, 2014). President of MSF in Germany Dörner said aid actors must always be seen as separate from military actors (Werkhäuser). The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) suggests that the application of standardized methods of engagements with insurgencies can serve as a form of protection for IHOs (Egeland, 2011). Okumu (2010) also recommends for HINGOs to set clear goals and operate with realistic objectives, train humanitarian workers, and engage in greater coordination. Terry (2003) recommended a need for aid agencies to do more than just respond to the humanitarian challenges they witness on the ground. Although many humanitarian aid actors choose to disassociate themselves with development and human rights workers, there is a growing need for aid actors to also speak out against the violence and foundational issues that influence the nature of crises (Terry, 2003).

Most of these recommendations can however only apply to UN agencies and their affiliated organizations as they refer to greater coordination of security and humanitarian programs, for which actors such as MSF would not align with. As noted earlier in the report, IHOs such as MSF chose to also work in most cases, independent of fellow IHOs as it believes this to be one of the ways through which it can assert its independence.

A number of questions are raised throughout this report to inspire further investigation on the nature and practice of international humanitarian organizations in contexts of humanitarian crises. As mentioned earlier, civilians' perceptions of IHOs are local and subjective, therefore the similarities drawn out from different researchers in this review point to some of

the key areas of concern for IHOs. These include failure by some IHOs to operate guided by the humanitarian principles.

The subjective nature of perceptions raises challenges for generalization. The views of the few participants engaged with in the studies reviewed above provide this study a strong guide for understanding aspects that have potential to affect the delivery of aid in a way that is impartial. Although the findings on Table 2 on the incidents and deaths experienced by IHOs may not hold strong evidence that indicate concerning increases, what Jean de Courten cited in Montclobs (2013) mentions as deliberate targeted acts of violence against IHOs and their workers is ground for concern in this study. Targeted acts of violence against IHOs are influenced and driven by motives based on how certain groups perceive IHOs. Therefore, to understand the extent to which persons that have direct and indirect experience with different IHOs will contribute to understanding of how they are perceived.

As mentioned earlier in the review, most IHOs are aware of the need to improve their identity and ways in which they are perceived. In most cases, internal review processes are done in efforts to do just that. What Ginty (2014) highlights is the need to engage with civilians external of IHOs' ways of thinking and visions of practice. Ginty (2014) emphasizes the need to recognize that the agency of the very people affected by humanitarian crises. It is their perception of the nature of the crisis affecting them, their perception of the aid they receive and the provider of such aid that has influence on how IHOs ought to be operating. It from acknowledging this agency that IHOs can also understand that humanitarian crises, insecurities they face and challenges to humanitarian principles do not happen in a vacuum.

International humanitarian organizations whose practice is guided by the principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality acknowledge that these three are not exclusive of one another. As seen in most of the cases reviewed in this literature, it is difficult to discuss the principle of independence without reflecting on the need to be neutral and ability to provide aid with impartiality and vice versa. With such a reality in mind, indicators of impartiality were developed and explained in this literature review to guide how it will be engaged with in this study. As elaborated in Table 1 earlier, the other humanitarian principles of independence and neutrality together with clarity of a IHOs' mandate are used as indicators of impartiality reviewed against how civilians perceive a particular IHO against each one of these. It is from these indicators that questions for engagement with participants for this study were drawn up. The same indicators are also used extensively to interpret the perceptions of participants in the results chapter which will follow later.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the steps taken by the researcher to produce the final work evidenced by this study. These steps are spelled out in the research design, the study population and sample, methods used in collecting data and interpreting it.

Research design

In order to explore perceptions on the impartiality of MSF in contexts of its interventions, this study took on a basic interpretive approach. Bevir and Kedar (2008) discuss the interpretive approach to be one that acknowledges the participants, the researcher and in this case the unit of analysis to be located within a particular historical contexts and values. The decision to consider the basic interpretive approach was motivated by the aim of the study, which was to explore and gain an in-depth understanding on the issues highlighted through the literature in relation to those raised by participants. The participants in this study are all from countries within which MSF has had or currently operates in. These are particular contexts affected by humanitarian crises, so the experiences and perceptions of participants are reflected upon having this in mind. Again, the researcher has particular experience as an employee of MSF, thus her level of engagement with the participants and on the issues discussed also need to be reflected upon. As defined by Ary et al. (2009), the purpose of a basic interpretive study is to gain understanding of the work and experiences of others. This study sought to do just that with regards to the perceptions of civilians affected by humanitarian crises on the impartiality of MSF.

Population and Sample

It was anticipated by the researcher that nature of the topic of this study would raise some issues that may be sensitive in nature for participants. In light of recent xenophobic violence in South Africa, the researcher identified people in her network and that of the MSF Southern Africa office in Johannesburg to be key contacts to approach other potential participants. The persons identified were from the same countries as each group of participants and had an

existing relationship with the key contacts. This method in identifying participants was based on the snow ball approach (Neuman, 2013). Participants in the study were grouped according to their countries of origin, which are the countries focused on in this study, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Somalia. Participants from each one of these 3 countries will from hence forth be referred to as Diaspora group of that particular country.

The proposed aim was to engage 12 participants, 4 from each 3 respective countries. However, interest amongst other participants grew when they were approached and the sample size grew from the initial proposed 12, to a total of 20. With a sample size of 20, participants were not evenly divided amongst the 3 Diaspora groups. Again, not every one of the 20 participants knew about MSF but joined a focus group because someone they knew was participating and they preferred them being present. There were 7 participants, with 1 participant as a supporting friend from the DRC Diaspora group, 8 participants from the Ethiopian Diaspora group and4 participants from the Somali Diaspora group.

Although there were no fixed requirements or expectations on gender representation in the sample, the researcher was conscious of gender dynamics during participation and anticipated imbalance in representation. The aspect of gender will also be highlighted upon later in the analysis of the findings.

Procedure for data collection

All method for data collection was administered in Johannesburg, South Africa. The researcher relied on primary data for this study, using the three different country contexts. The focus groups were divided according to each one of these countries. However, instead of three focus groups for each respective country, four focus group discussions were held. This was as a result of splitting the DRC Diaspora group into two different focus group sessions. Participants of one of these two groups could not be available on the day of the first focus group, but were very keen to participate in the study.

The focus groups discussions were held at venues including restaurant, homes and during times deemed best convenient for participants. For each group, the researcher was accompanied by assistants from the respective Diaspora community. The role of the assistant was to introduce the researcher whom he knew to the participants, and in the case of the Somali and the second DRC Diaspora groups, the assistant also assisted in a few instances

with language translation. To have an assistant known by participants contributed towards the group building rapport with the researcher.

The duration of the focus group discussions differed per group. All participants were briefed about the purpose of the research and the estimated duration of between 45 and 60 minutes. Only one of the discussions with the second DRC Diaspora group went slightly over 60 minutes. This was at the interest of participants and the time was spent on questions from the participants to the researcher on issues related to the work of MSF and challenges facing foreign nationals living in South Africa.

There were unstructured interviews conducted with two of the 19 participants who could not participate in the focus groups due to time constraints. However, focus group discussions proved to be most effective in drawing out engagement from participants, by following the guide of issues raised by other participants in the groups. As the researcher grew aware of this approach, issues raised by participants in the focus group discussions were incorporated into questions for the two participants during their respective interview sessions.

At the start of each focus group discussion, all participants were briefed about the research and assured confidentiality and anonymity. Information cards were handed out for participants to fill in their age, gender, number of years they had been living in South Africa and a pseudo name of their choice. The age and gender were useful for the researcher to understand some of the group dynamics, as will be detailed later. Participants' responses to the number of years they had been living in South Africa were contributed to the researcher's reflections on how participants expressed and represented their memory of their country of origin. Although the information card allowed for participants to choose their own pseudo name, a few participants insisted on using their real names. Some of the participants also offered the researcher their contact details in the form of email addresses for the final report to be shared with them, to which the researcher agreed.

Data Analysis

Presentation of the data in the results chapter will focus on the questions asked during the group discussions. The data will first be presented in a descriptive format to provide detailed background to the analysis which will follow thereafter. Analysis of this data will be done by using themes and the dominant discourses highlighted earlier in the literature review. The

themes follow the three aspects mentioned earlier, which provide operational indicators of impartiality in relation to the MSF as an IHO. These include exploring perceptions of impartiality according to humanitarian approach, humanitarian practice, and perceptions on MSF's relationship with interest groups. In relation to these three aspects, the dominant discourses drawn from the literature review include: the western and European identity of IHOs, the use of humanitarian aid for political reasons by IHOs, relevance of IHOs' interventions to the affected context.

Validity and Reliability

In order to enhance the validity of this study, aspects for internal validity were considered. As a qualitative study with a non-representative sample, findings of this research cannot be generalised to other groups or contexts. However, the research design and methodology applied contribute to the credibility of this study. The conclusion will indicate ways through which aspects in the study can be used for further research and analysis.

Reflexivity and Ethics

As an employee of MSF, which is the IHO under scrutiny in this study, the researcher acknowledges that the analysis in this study may be subjective. To control for researcher bias and potential influence on interviewees, the researcher introduced herself as a student at the University of Witwatersrand in addition to her known role by some of the participants as an employee of MSF. The researcher assured participants that the information and their contribution to the study will not be used for purposes of employment opportunities nor in decision making processes about the opening or closure of any MSF project. This was also in an aim to control for social desirability bias (Neuman, 2013).

All notes and transcripts of the study are kept safe as the sole responsibility of the researcher and can only be made available to the research supervisor and external examiners upon request. To ensure anonymity for participants, pseudonyms will be used in the write up of the findings and participants will be asked to choose their own pseudonyms.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the perceptions of persons on the nature of aid they receive and the perceptions of IHOs is subjective. Different contextual issues may influence how civilians perceive IHOs such as MSF. The results from this study provide support to this

assertion. The views shared by the 19 participants reflect differences that can be associated to their experience of MSF in these three different countries.

Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study from the interviews conducted by the researcher. As mentioned earlier, the basic interpretive approach to social research allows for participants to be acknowledged and their role, position and experience as essential aspects to reflect upon in a study. The following paragraphs present the researcher's documentation and categorization of the findings based on the interview questions and what the researcher sought to explore.

Participants' profile

There was a total 19 participants who engaged in the focus group discussion from the three respective Diaspora groups. Only two of the 19 participants were female. As mentioned in the research methodology, the sampling of the participants did not use gender as criteria for participation. The three individuals who served as support facilitators were all male. Therefore, they approached some of their friends whom as influenced by culture and religion amongst the Somali and Ethiopian Diaspora groups, would then be male friends. The gender imbalance in the sample is a factor the researcher had considered as a potential limitation to the study. However, to facilitate for a conducive platform to have the female voice heard, the researcher granted a request by one of the female participants to be interviewed on her own due to other commitments, she could not make the time of the focus group on the day.

Age can often create unfavourable group dynamics in focus group discussions (Neuman, 2013). Although not all the participants filled out the information cards handed out to them with their ages, most of the participants who did were in the early 30s and 40s. The focus groups comprised of participants who already knew one another as friends, relatives or business partners. It therefore seemed comfortable for participants to express themselves regardless of age difference.

Across the different group discussions, the researcher learnt through informal engagements with the participants about their professional background and means of earning a living while they were still living in their respective countries of origin and now in South Africa. Participants from the Somali Diaspora group had been students in Somalia and went on to study further in Kenya before coming to South Africa. Regardless of English not being a

national language in any of the three countries of focus, most of the participants were fluent in English. The assistants to the researcher only assisted with little translation and clarification on some concepts, since they were familiar with the humanitarian work and principles. The period that most of the participants had been living in South Africa might have also contributed to language not being a barrier in the discussion. Seven out of the 15 participants had been living in South Africa for more than 10 years.

The Somali Diaspora group comprised of the youngest participants in the sample. Only one of the participants in this group was above the age of 35. All the participants in this group knew about the work of MSF, mainly through word of mouth and for two of the participants, it was from having engaged or visited an MSF facility in Somalia. Participants shared they came from the southern parts of Somalia, including the cities of Kismayo and Mogadishu. At the start of the discussion, participants engaged little amongst themselves but mainly responded directly to questions and probes from the researcher. Towards the end of the discussion, participants had questions for the researcher and amongst themselves. The questions mainly focused on the work of MSF in Somalia and in South Africa for training and employment opportunities. The group discussion lasted for 60 minutes and the researcher had to be conscious of time as the discussion took place on a Friday and ended an hour before the Muslim prayer time. Participants expressed satisfaction with the process and the questions at the end of the discussion.

Participants in the Ethiopia Diaspora group met with the researcher at a restaurant owned by one of the participants. With the exception of one, all of the participants had been living in South Africa for more than 10 years. They were all fluent in English and the assistant to the researcher did not have the responsibility to translate any of the questions raised other than to introduce the researcher to the group. As a result of calendar differences between Ethiopia and most countries, participants at times referred to year period according to the Ethiopian calendar but group assisted in converting the periods to the calendar most common world calendar.

It was through different engagements after the recorded group discussions that the researcher learnt that most of the participants ran different small businesses such as private taxis and restaurants. One of the participants was reported to be a veterinary by profession. Although participants were aware of the option to choose pseudo names, almost all the participants chose to write their actual names. Participants assured the researcher that being associated with the views they were willing to share for the study would not pose any threats to them.

They expressed that the information and views they would share would be their own and would be to the best of their knowledge. It was from this group that participants started giving their email contacts to the researcher to have the final report shared with them. A total of eight participants formed part of this focus group discussion; however some came at a later stage of the discussion while others left before the end. Throughout, there was a minimum of four participants who participated from the beginning until the discussions were concluded. The duration of this focus group was also 60 minutes, however conversations with two of the participants continued for a few minutes after the hour. Some aspects of the conversation which include what participants do to earn a living in South Africa and questions for the researcher about MSF are included in this report.

As mentioned in the research methodology chapter, the DRC Diaspora group was split into two focus group discussions that were conducted on two different dates and venues. The first group met at the house of one of the research assistant known to this particular group. In this group, there were four interested participants but only three knew about MSF and engaged in the discussion. This research will henceforth reflect on three instead of four participants from this group regardless that the fourth participant was asked by her friend to be present during his interview. Although this group lived together, participants asked to be interviewed separately instead of participating in a focus group. The researcher made provisions for this request and interviewed each participant separately. In order to draw out aspects that would have enhanced the group discussion, the researcher incorporated aspects of the participants' responses in her questions during the interviews.

Similar to the Somali Diaspora group, participants in this group were below the age of 30. Only two of the three participants had indicated they had been living in South Africa for more than five years but not more than 10 years. None of the participants needed any translation as they were all fluent in English. The research assistant did not participate in the interviews but introduced the researcher to each one of the participants prior to the interviews. All of the participants in this group chose to use pseudo names for the study, they also agreed to the use of a voice recorder. This was the group that comprised of one of the two female participants.

The fourth and final group is still considered for the purpose of this study as part of the third group of participants. This was the second DRC Diaspora group. With the exception of the one female participant, all three participants indicated they were 36 years of age, and all four participants were above the age of 30. Some of the participants in this group chose to use their actual names while others chose their own pseudo names. The ones who chose to use their actual names shared similar sentiments about their decision with participants who chose

the same from the Ethiopia Diaspora group. All participants in this group had a relatively good understanding of the English language. Only two of the participants needed translation from the research assistant on a few of their responses as they found they best expressed themselves in French. Participants in both DRC Diaspora groups indicated they were from Kinshasa, Goma and Butembo in the DRC. It was for this group that the researcher failed to use the voice recorder as the environment was not conducive enough. The discussion for this group was for 60 minutes including questions to the researcher.

Participants' perceptions of the mandate of MSF

An opening question for all focus group and interview sessions was for participants to share what they know and understand about MSF. This question formed the basis on which the researcher could explore the extent to which participants perceived MSF as an IHO that has a clearly defined mandate and whether participants felt the IHO stuck to its mandate. This was critical in assessing the perceptions of impartiality MSF as its charter stipulates that this IHO provides relief to populations affected by humanitarian crises regardless of race, creed, political nor religious affiliation (MSF, 2015). This question also served to explore the extent to which participants were able to distinguish between the work of MSF and that of other IHOs.

To this question, participants responded with the following:

Participants from the Somali Diaspora shared positive sentiments about the work of MSF. The group acknowledged that the work of MSF is great and expressed the organizations' approach to be best described by its name. A number of activities including the provision of maternal healthcare and vaccination programmes were mentioned by participants. In addition to this, participants also gave general responses that the IHO MSF was known to them as an organization helping people in need. One of the participants expressed his knowledge and understanding of MSF by saying "…as the name suggests, Doctors without Borders, they are basically doctors without racism" (Participant 6, 2015).

Participants from the three Diaspora groups expressed understanding of the humanitarian activities of MSF with examples such as vaccination, maternal healthcare, HIV treatment and others also mentioned food and assisting victims in refugee camps. Bahati, a participant from the DRC Diaspora group shared about her experience of being in the DRC between1996 and 1997 during the time of war in the Eastern parts of the country. She explained her

understanding of MSF to be of an organization that works together with the United Nations and in the time of war in Goma, MSF provided for her and others who were left without homes and food with shelter and food parcels.

Kevin, another participant who chose to not use a pseudo name for his participation held similar views of what MSF is about with Olivier, another participant who used his exact name from the DRC. Although they both expressed their understanding of the IHO to be that of an international organization helping people in need. Olivier started off his response by asserting that "[MSF] are politicians. They don't know what they do" (Participant 5, 2015) To expand on his view, Olivier (Participant 5, 2015) with nods of agreement form the other three participants mentioned that MSF's ability to cross borders without any trouble is as a result of the pressure African governments face from European countries who have vested interests in the countries where they send international humanitarian organizations.

Kinfe (Participant 15, 2015), a participant in the Ethiopian Diaspora group shared different sentiments to those one expressed by the two participants above. He shared of how he had always admired the work of people involved with MSF "…for someone to put themselves at the frontline of humanitarian crisis, and risk their life is something I admire" (Kinfe, Participant 15, 2015). He (Participant 15, 2015) further explained that he had never met anyone from the organization and did not know much about MSF's work in Ethiopia but had mainly seen and heard about its activity through television and different media. Another participant from the Ethiopia Diaspora group shared with the group that he found the work of MSF to be relevant and valuable as it saves lives. He further exclaimed that his knowledge of the IHO is that "…they are the first ones in to respond to crisis" (Participant 15, 2015).

Throughout the different focus group discussions, participants highlighted that MSF's aid was provided to civilians for free. This contradicted to the experience of one participant from the Ethiopia Diaspora group who mentioned that in Addis Ababa where he knows MSF was present, the IHO was selling malaria tent and not giving them for free to civilians. There was also emphasis made by participants that MSF was a medical organization. Although others indicated their knowledge of the organization to be one that also distributed food, this was in addition to mention that the organization provided medical care such as vaccination, treatment for HIV, maternal healthcare, and assisting in natural disasters.

With the exception of two participants in the Ethiopia Diaspora group, all participants mentioned they had no knowledge of MSF's work in their country of origin. One of the two mentioned he knew of MSF's work in Addis Ababa where the organization was selling malaria tents. The second participants mentioned his knowledge of MSF providing maternal healthcare in the Ogaden and Afar regions; most recently responding to a natural disaster in the Far East and assisting people in camps who were returning back from Saudi Arabia.

Although most of the participants in the Somali Diaspora focus group were young when they left Somalia, thus have little experience of MSF in the country, one of the participants shared on his experience of having visited Banaadir maternity hospital and Hamar Jajab clinic which he mentioned were both health centres sponsored by MSF. Gulled mentioned that MSF used to train the staff and others at these health centres so they could continue and help others in their community. The group expressed consensus in this being a positive thing done by the organization.

In relation to the other groups of participants from the Ethiopia and Somalia, more time was spent by this DRC Diaspora group on this question. Further reflections included perceptions of MSF as an organization that creates wars and humanitarian crises for the organization to remain active. "If there's no blood, there's no work for them" Patrick. The group were in unison that although the organization may have people from different countries working for them to help civilians affected by humanitarian crises, behind MSF there are other political forces influencing them. In addition to their personal perceptions, Patrick (Participant 1, 2015) also contributed what he believed to be a dominant perception amongst civilians from in the DRC.

> Many organizations, for them to work, there has to be a need. The crises create work for western organizations and white people… Of course people need them but they created the wars. They also intervene in places where there is no war but maybe natural disasters and diseases but their presence is most felt in places where there is war. (Patrick, Participant 1, 2015)

Although little was shared by the DRC Diaspora group on the areas in their country of origin where they know MSF to be present, there was a general consensus and knowledge shared by participants of knowing about the organization as a result of their presence in the DRC.

Participants' perceptions of MSF in their country contexts

A probing question was put across for participants to elaborate further on their understanding of the work of MSF looking at how they perceive the IHO based on their knowledge of its work in their respective countries of origin. This question allowed the researcher to probe further to explore some of the sentiments expressed by participants that have already described above. In order to contextualize this question, especially for participants who asserted they had no knowledge of MSF's presence in their countries of origin, a brief background on some of the noted historical experiences for the IHO were shared with participants. In the context of Ethiopia, the researcher shared on the expulsion of MSF from the country after it publicly spoke out to denounce what it claimed was the use of humanitarian aid for political gains by the Ethiopian government in 1985. This question sought to give participants an opportunity to share their perception on whether they think the experience of MSF was a limitation or threat for the IHOs' impartiality.

Kinfe, a participant in the Ethiopian Diaspora group spent some time reflecting on this, illustrating the geo-political nature of the East African region. He highlighted the influence of former colonizers including France on Djibouti, Italy on Eretria and Somalia, Britain on Kenya, Egypt and Sudan as critical for his reflections. According to Kinfe, the challenge at the time was not that of famine but of sanctions imposed on Ethiopia as a result of its military government at the time been allies with the former USSR. "Any NGO supported by countries that are enemies of the Ethiopian government would have been expelled. So the government at the time was politically correct" (Kinfe, Participant 15, 2015).

None of the participants in the Ethiopia Diaspora group acknowledged any knowledge of this incident as an experience of MSF and further, any IHO at the time, they acknowledged knowing of the period of what they asserted was not merely famine but a period of war in the country. In addition to Kinfe (Participant 15, 2015)'s reflections above, there were two commonly held views in the group. One of the views was an acknowledgement by participants that government at the time, as it might as well be with the current government used aid for political gains. The second view was a reflection on the role of IHOs in fuelling conflict by providing aid and money to belligerent groups in conflict.

The context of MSF experience shared with the Somali Diaspora group reflected on the decision by MSF to pull out completely from the country in 2013 citing subsequent security

incidents suffered by the IHO in the country. This knowledge shared with participants was to probe their perception on how this decision by MSF may have impacted on the IHO's impartiality in Somalia. All participants attested to the knowledge of this experience by the IHO. Ustad, a participant in this group agreed with the view that MSF left Somalia due to insecurity in the country. With consensus from the rest of his fellow group members, he asserted that "…the absence of the organization is truly felt…" (Ustad, Participant 19, 2015). With regards to MSF's ability to provide impartial humanitarian aid to civilians in Somalia, participants expressed that the organization was able to do so while it was still operational in the country. In addition to this, one participant mentioned that "…at the current moment, [MSF] cannot provide good services because the challenges that made them leave Somalia still exist" (Participant 6, 2015). This statement contradicted a question asked to the researcher by one of the participant who wanted to know when MSF would return back to work in Somalia as he asserted that there security situation that affected the organization in 2013 had changes under the new regime.

On the other hand, there was consistency amongst participants 'responses on their understanding and knowledge of the work of MSF and their perceptions on the organization's impartiality. "There is nothing personal against MSF. People who are targeting MSF are also targeting other NGOs, they simply do not want vulnerable people to be helped" these were the sentiments of Ayaanle to which the group agreed (Ayaanle, Participant 18, 2015).

Another way through which participants linked the activities of MSF to the principle of impartiality is evident in the view shared by Paluku (Participant 9, 2015), a participant in the DRC Diaspora group. He shared his knowledge of the IHO as an organization that assists victims of wars and asserted that MSF can work on any side of a conflict, including the opposition. Paluku expanded on the notion of the IHO being able to work on any side of a conflict as related to the organization's ability to cross any country border (Participant 9, 2015). Gifu, a participant in the Ethiopia Diaspora group held a similar view to Paluku and expressed that his knowledge of the organization is that of "…the people who cross borders…" (Paluku, Participant 9, 2015). According to Paluku's reflections, MSF is able to work across borders with no challenges as a result of a worldwide agreement that makes provision for the organization to do so.

Participants' perceptions on the neutrality of MSF

A question was asked for participants to reflect on whether they associated the IHO MSF with any country or group with any political or financial interest in contexts of humanitarian crises. This question was guided by the implications an IHO's level of independence and neutrality could have on its ability to be impartial as highlighted in the literature reviewed in this study. The first and immediate response to this question by participants in the Somalia Diaspora group was a negative response. Participants asserted they did not associate MSF with any country or interest group and viewed the IHO as "…neutral…" and one participant responded with plurality that "...so far we have not seen MSF collaborating with any country or politics…MSF deals with medical services not political services" (Participant 18, Participant 6, 2015) . The Somali Diaspora group was the only group in the study whose participants claimed they did not associate MSF with any country or interest group.

Participants from the Ethiopia and DRC Diaspora groups mentioned associating MSF with countries from "overseas" and the United States of America. When asked to expand on this association, Bahati, a participant from the DRC Diaspora group shared on her experience of MSF while she was in the DRC. She responded "…before they gave us food they had to explain where the food was coming from and they …they mentioned some countries that had put together to make those people to have food" (Participant 7, 2015). She further explained that the explanation from the organization came after there we rumours in the community that the food given to civilians was satanic.

Another participant in the DRC Diaspora group was first to respond to the same question by stating that he associated MSF with the USA as "…they are behind everything" (Participant 3, 2015). The same participant went on to pose a question for confirmation on his view that MSF is a French organization, to which the group confirmed and continued his response by concluding that France and the USA "…are all together" (Participant 3, 2015). In addition to perceptions of MSF being associated with western countries, some of the participants in the DRC Diaspora group went further to mention that the organization was associated with "white people". This perception was also qualified by one of the participants to not only be the perception of the group but most civilians in the DRC. He mentioned that "white" people are not liked in the DRC and local civilians mainly refer to the international employees of IHOs as "bazungus" which translates to "white people". To this point, another participant mentioned with a sense of frustration that it is the "white people" who hold senior positions in these IHOs. He expanded on his point by saying:

> It's like taking a soldier from the SANDF [South African Defence Force] and sending him to Congo. First thing he will get arrested by a small boy because he has no idea. MSF takes a person from the DRC and pays him less than a muzungu who doesn't even know the language. (Kevin, Participant 3, 2015)

The engagements in this group were often interjected with reflections of perceptions that the work of most IHOs in the DRC serves the interest of European countries and "white people". A narrative of a Congolese Dr Mukwege who won the Nobel Peace Prize was shared by the group. They mentioned that as a result of being concerned by issues affecting "…his people…" in the DRC, we committed himself to do work that IHOs including MSF did not do much about. According to the group, Dr Mukwege was assisting victims of rape in the Eastern DRC where, mainly women. One of the participants made emphasis to this point by saying MSF was not intervening in that particular crisis but was focusing on war, and concluded with slight laughter.

Participants in the Ethiopia Diaspora group acknowledged having little knowledge about MSF's origins and association. However, Yirtaan (Participant 13, 2015) shared that from his own investigations on the internet about the IHO, he learnt that its origins were Belgian. In addition to Yirtaan's response, participants expressed their views of the organization being supported and funded by most European countries. On participant expressed "I do not know but I suspect as always is the case [MSF] is from western countries" (Participant 13, 2015). The responses to this question by participants in the Ethiopia Diaspora group also included reflecting on the IHO's employees. Berihun (Participant 14, 2015) shared with the group that his knowledge of the organization is that it employs people from different countries. He further expressed that MSF is "… from western countries but also employed some people from Africa" (Participant 14, 2015).

In addition to participants' association of MSF with the USA, Western and European countries, participants also mentioned that the work of the organization was also associated with other IHOs. The participants also mentioned that for local civilians, IHOs are seen to be doing the same work. It was asserted by the group that local civilians could only distinguish between IHOs by their names and logos only and not by the work they do or principles. An example to this point reflected on a perception that there is often confusion of MSF, Red

Cross and Croissant Rouge, “Croissant Rouge” was explained by participants to refer to the ICRC.

The actions of employees of IHOs were also highlighted by participants as a reflection on how IHOs are perceived. One participant narrated of recent allegations of employees of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC, MONUSCO who were said to have been involved in smuggling of drugs and diamonds and raping women in the DRC. He concluded by stating that “…it’s like a case of a bad tomato” (Participant 1, 2015). Olivier (Participant 5, 2015), added to the assertion by the previous participant by voicing that all the IHOs were the same even though they may be different in names. He asserted that they change names to appear different amongst civilians but in essence they all do the same work. Olivier also expressed frustration with the work of MUNESCO which he claimed also intervened in issues of domestic violence. He posed a rhetorical question to the group on the link between humanitarian work and domestic violence, asserting that MUNESCO was abandoning their mandate. Another participant supported the point of IHOs being the same by mentioning as an example that MSF preferred employing persons trained by or with experience from the Red Cross.

One of the two female participants in the DRC Diaspora group, Annie had worked for MSF in the DRC as a medical personnel. Although she mostly agreed with the group on the perception that MSF is a western organization and that the IHOs were creating wars to remain working in the country; Annie (Participant 4, 2015) also mentioned that the work of MSF was helping women who did not know about vaccinations.

Participants’ Experience of the work of MSF

Some of the questions asked to probe participants’ responses included encouraging participants to share their experiences of MSF‘s work in their countries of origin or times when they received treatment or assistance from an MSF facility. Although very much related to the question discussed earlier on perceptions of the mandate or work of MSF in the different countries of focus, this question differentiates between assumptions or perceptions and experiences of participants.

Bahati (Participant 7, 2015), one of the participants mentioned she lived in Goma, the Northern Province of the DRC. She shared on her experience of being provided with aid by MSF:

> I remember in the time of war, it was in 1997, 96… After war, when we come back, there was no job, there was no water, there was no food, there was nothing. So MSF was providing, they gave us food. They gave us card and had food like monthly, yeah. (Participant 7, 2015)

Kinfe (Participant 15, 2015) a participant from the Ethiopia Diaspora group shared on his understanding and knowledge of the work of MSF from a time when he was a student in Addis Ababa around 1990 and 1991. He mentioned it was during this period that he was active in the Red Cross and was trained in first aid. His knowledge of MSF was of another IHO that would also come to train them on different diseases. Kinfe mentioned that MSF never came to provide the training while he was in Ethiopia. He then qualified his statement by saying "…Ethiopia was in transition then and I never continued" (Participant 15, 2015). Another participant from the DRC Diaspora group shared a similar experience of a time in the year 2000 when MSF was not able to continue with a demobilization project he understood would be led by MSF, World Vision and UNHCR. To expand on this, he reflected on his personal experience of not being integrated. Kevin mentioned with sarcasms that he was told to go to school after he had spent 5 years "…making money in the bush…" (Participant 3, 2015).

To expand on this question, a participant in the Somalia Diaspora group posed a question to his fellow group members as to whether they thought there were other IHOs operating in Somalia whose activities were better than those of MSF. The word 'better' in this context was explained to refer to quality of services and extent of reach. Although most of the participants responded in the negative, one participant asserted that the work of the World Health Organization (WHO) was better. To elaborate on his response, he mentioned that the WHO provided training to civilians and its employees which contributed to improved service delivery. Bahati from the DRC Diaspora group shared similar sentiments on the work of Oxfam in the DRC as more comprehensive than that of MSF. She mentioned the IHO, Oxfam provided shelter in the form of houses and training for civilians beyond the immediate food and healthcare.

The location of MSF projects in participants' countries of origin was highlighted when participants shared on their experience of the IHO's presence in their respective countries of

origin. A participant in the Somalia Diaspora group mentioned as an area of improvement by MSF that the IHO needed to consider rural contexts in order to reach most vulnerable populations. Some of the rural areas suggested by participants where MSF could expand its activities to included Burhakab, Qioryale, Gof Gagud. Similar to the perception of a participant from the Somali Diaspora group, participants in the DRC Diaspora group expressed that MSF in the DRC mainly works in big cities and not in rural areas such as Walungu, Ijwi and Birava.

Participants' perceptions informed by the media

Two of the participants, on from the Ethiopia Diaspora group and the other from the DRC Diaspora group shared on what they claimed was information from their personal study or research on the work of IHOs. Yirtaan (Participant 13, 2015) from the Ethiopia Diaspora group mentioned that from reading different media reports including websites and blogs written by former rebel members from Ethiopia living outside of the country, he learnt that most of the IHOs gave aid to rebel groups to distribute to civilians they could not reach. He further mentioned that the media reports pointed out that it was through such actions and being given money by IHOs that rebel groups were able to buy guns or sell the aid for their personal gain. Yirtaan's reflections on this point were not directly linking the work or actions of MSF to these reports, however, he made general remarks of this to be actions of IHOs with no distinctions or direct mention of any particular IHO (Participant 13, 2015).

On the other hand, Kevin who participated in the DRC Diaspora group discussion made his assertion by posing a question to fellow participants: "Do you know that Osama Bin Laden was arrested with the help of MSF?" (Participant 3, 2015). The group did not respond to the question, which then allowed time for him to expand on his point by narrating of how he heard read that through the ideas of a female university of California student, who suggested that a vaccination programme be used as a disguise for collecting DNA samples of civilians in a community believed to be Osama Bin Laden's hiding place. He then mentioned that it was through a vaccination programme carried out by MSF that the DNA samples were collected, which then led to the arrest of Osama Bin Laden. Although the other three participants did not comment to support or challenge this point, Patrick (Participant 1, 2015)'s comments which followed made mention of how vaccination programmes were often followed by what he perceived as continuous humanitarian crises.

The positioning of the participants and the researcher in relation MSF

In focus group discussions with the Ethiopian and DRC Diaspora groups, there also seemed to be a sense of distancing by participants from MSF. Amongst the Ethiopian Diaspora group, there was regular reference of the researcher's position as an employee of MSF as "…this organization of yours…", while participants from the DRC Diaspora groups made reference to MSF and the researcher's position as "your organization", often requesting for the researcher to make known to MSF the concerns and views of the groups. This was mainly through discussions that participants raised as relevant in pointing to MSF failing in its role to assist persons affected by crisis in South Africa. To this participants proposed for the researcher to raise the issue of MSF conducting research to assess the challenges faced by migrants from different countries living in South Africa. Although this was not a direct response to questions raised by the researcher, the researcher chose to give space and time for participants to share their views in order to strengthen rapport and recognize the agency of participants.

In all three focus groups discussions, participants reflected on the work of MSF in South Africa and the role of the researcher as an employee of the organization. A participant from the DRC Diaspora group asked the researcher to share on how MSF works in South Africa. To this, the other participants pointed to MSF not having activities that address the challenges of foreign nationals in South Africa as a failure of the organization to provide humanitarian aid to civilians who need it most but choose to focus on wars. One participant mentioned with a sense of confusion that it would be easier for MSF to assist civilians who are foreign nationals in South Africa than it is in the DRC but it was not doing so.
The above reflections from participants from the DRC Diaspora group were interjected by a participant who expressed:

> If you ask me for a solution, if I can go back to my country I can start propaganda about them. They are all the same, like the UNHCR many organizations they don't do anything that helps. I will not start propaganda with the government but with the people who suffer the same and start a revolution (Kevin, Participant 3, 2015).

To the above comment, fellow group members agreed that challenges faced by foreign nationals living in South Africa were as a result of a failure by IHOs to address the humanitarian crises in their country of origin. To emphasise on this perception, one participant mentioned by also reflecting on his personal experience that most of the persons

living in South Africa from the DRC are trained soldiers. The failure to address what the groups expressed as humanitarian challenges in contexts including South Africa and the DRC would result in more challenges. A participant supported this view by asserting that "if they don't fix things, if we go back home it will be like Somalia" (Participant 8, 2015).

Perceptions on challenges on MSF's ability to be Impartial

Participants in the Somalia and Ethiopian Diaspora groups acknowledged that humanitarian interventions could be challenging for MSF. Some of the reflections shared to elaborate on this assumption included the challenges of local employees with low skills levels. This was expressed by participants in the Somalia Diaspora group that the perceptions on MSF's level of impartiality was also affected by how local employees of the IHO treated civilians who sought the assistant of the organization. One participant concluded that civilians might be dissatisfied with the level of care if local employees of MSF provide care along racial, cultural and religious lines. With similar views, a participant from the DRC Diaspora group shared of her experiences of local NGOs supported and working together with IHOs in the DRC who organized corrupt means of accessing resources from IHOs such as medicine and food for distribution to affected civilians but selling them at a profit to provide businesses. In light of these challenges, Ayaanle from the Somalia Diaspora group reflected on the impact of such challenges by stating that "…people may feel bad, like MSF is not fulfilling their duties. [They] may feel like MSF is not working on justice and is not providing balanced services" (Ayaanle, Participant 18, 2015).

Gifu, a participant from the Ethiopian Diaspora group mentioned challenges for MSF to be impartial could be linked to restrictions imposed by the government. He mentioned that "…the government [could] always find fault in what organizations are doing to assist vulnerable populations" (Gifu, Participant 17, 2015). Another participant in this group associated challenges for IHOs to be impartial with violence perpetuated by rebel groups. With regards to challenges with government, another stated:

> You can't be an NGO operating in Ethiopia without being under government and political. I wanted to start an NGO there and I was told we are the ones who call them NGOs but they have to work under government. Maybe government takes 30 percent of the money and [NGOs] keep 70 percent. (Berihun, Participant 14, 2015).

Challenges and Limitations of the study

The researcher acknowledges that the research cannot be generalized, considering that it is a qualitative study. Although the topic studied is broad, and does concern other actors outside the IHO MSF, the focus is limited to one unit of analysis. Therefore the findings are not used to make assumptions on how IHOs in general can reflect on their approach to the principle of impartiality. Participants' reflections and contributions are also be limited, as they all are currently based in South Africa and no longer in the countries reflected upon. Thus, their perceptions are not of their current living conditions but of their past, and memory and other factors might have contributed to the responses they gave.

This study engaged persons most of whom had been directly affected by humanitarian crises in their countries of origin. However, some participants also reported having experienced forms of violence and crises of a humanitarian nature while living in South Africa. The nature of such humanitarian crisis includes xenophobic violence perpetuated towards black African foreign nationals. It was therefore critical for the researcher to acknowledge these experiences and allow space for participants to at times guide the discussion when the discussions seemed to be sensitive. As a South African and as an employee of MSF, the researcher also faced direct questions from participants. These questions suggested that the researcher's position was perceived as one that could potential influence or create opportunities for some of their concerns to be heard. To such perceptions and engagements, the researcher allowed time for these issues to be raised, and responded by emphasising on her role as a researcher for the purpose of this study. The researcher also communicated with participants that the final report would also be shared with MSF Southern Africa office, for its own reflections. Participants raised concerns and suggestions for MSF Southern Africa office to conduct research that would look at the experiences of foreign nationals in South Africa. Participants elaborated on this with examples of projects that MSF could initiate in South Africa to address challenges faced by foreign nationals. These include the opening of health facilities that could be easily accessed and would potentially not discriminate between patients. To some of these concerns, the researcher shared to the best of her knowledge and experience on processes and activities that had been carried out by MSF and some of its partner organizations. The researcher did emphasise that this was not in response of their suggestion but to validate their concern as one that most organizations have been aware of.

These reflections were challenging for the researcher to engage with much detail on, to avoid raising false hope amongst participants. It was also challenging for the researcher as participants spent a notable amount of time sharing their sentiments and experiences with

regards to xenophobia in South Africa. However, they are worth noting here as they also provided a different and indirect perceptions participants had of MSF. These reflections seemed to suggest that participants acknowledged the value of the work of MSF. However, their frustrations with the systems and xenophobic violence they experience in South Africa, the lack of assistant from IHOs including MSF was used to reflect their perceived failures and corruption of IHOs.

In addition to the above reflections on the researcher's position, a number of questions raised by participants in the Somalia Diaspora group suggest influences on some responses. It was expanded upon in the results and discussion chapters of this report that there may have been effects of the social desirability bias amongst participants in this group. This can be supported by analysing some of the questions asked by participants to the researcher towards the end of discussion. Some examples of these questions include the need to know when MSF would return back to Somalia. Inferences can be about such a question to suggest that participants may have provided responses they felt who be acceptable to the researcher as an employee of MSF, in order to comfortably recommend the need for MSF to return back to Somalia. In order to control for this bias, the researcher made attempts to ask questions to participants in ways that could make it possible to explore different views. One of the questions introduced to this group was for participants to share on what they thought were the weaknesses of MSF in Somalia. It was to this question that participants started reflecting on the poorly skilled local employees of MSF and corruption in recruitment processes as having a negative impact on the impartial delivery of aid.

The research sampling method for this study brought in limitation with regards to engaging the female voice in a more detailed way. There were only three female participants in this study. Both of whom were from the DRC Diaspora group, of which only two knew about MSF, Annie and Bahati. The domination of the male voice throughout the group engagements seemed to overwhelm the female voice. However, both participants in their respective participation in the study expressed perceptions that closely reflected on the medical intervention of MSF, to which they both agreed was relevant for civilians affected by humanitarian crises. The limitations and challenges reflected above, characterize the tone of this report. Issues of humanitarian crises and exploring perceptions cannot be done without acknowledging the influence of persona experience, the environment within which civilians and the researcher find themselves, and other social and political factors that shape how we engage.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Analysis

Introduction

The literature reviewed in this study points to the extent to which researchers have prioritized security concerns facing IHOs to date. As illustrated earlier, a conference held to explore ways of improving the applicability of humanitarian principles was held by various IHOs in 2014 (Chatham House, 2014). The analysis of data in this chapter follows the three aspects highlighted for the purpose of unpacking the principle of impartiality in this study. In no particular order, they are: perceptions of MSF's humanitarian approach, perceptions of MSF's humanitarian practice, and perceptions on the relationship between MSF and interest groups. Through discussing the results, analysis on how each one of these aspects contribute to an IHO's ability or limitation to be impartial will be made. Prior to analysing the content of particpants'perceptions, a look at how participants engaged through the interviews and discussions is done to give contexts for some of their responses.

Participants' approach and level of engagement in the study

Participants from the Somalia Diaspora group expressed a strong sense of support on the work of MSF. The reflections may have been influenced by participant's subtle desire to see MSF return to Somalia, since the IHO decided to halt all its operations in this country in 2013. This claim is deduced from the nature of the questions asked by participants to the researcher. A question asked by one participant at the end of the discussion was: "Do you know when MSF will return back to Somalia, especially since Somalia is now under a new regime?" This question however, contradicted the response given by another participant earlier in the group discussion. This participant expressed his understanding that MSF left Somalia due to insecurity and asserted that the same insecurity that made the organization to leave Somalia in 2013 still exists today.

There was a sense of formality throughout the group discussions; this may have contributed to the brief responses from the participants. Most of the participants gave brief responses to the question: What do you understand and know about the work of MSF? It was only after a number of probes that participants started to share their own narratives about the IHO. These narratives shed light on how they analysed the work of MSF, in relation to their analysis of political contexts within which they know of MSF's work.

Participants in this group also seemed more comfortable with having a shared view and understanding of the work of MSF. This was evident in the way participants asked each other questions such as “do you think other IHOs do a better job than MSF in Somalia?” Although one of the participants shared his view on the work of WHO, which he believed went a step further than what MSF was providing in Somalia, the general consensus amongst participants was that the work of MSF was well appreciated by civilians. There are a number of factors from this focus group that suggest a sense of social desirability bias from participants (Neuman, 2013). In other words, there seemed to be a preference to give responses that were supported by fellow group members, even though these later contradicted individual responses. A case in point is while participants claimed to be of the view that MSF left Somalia in 2013 due to understandable levels of insecurity that continued to exist, questions posed to the researcher suggested different views. Such questions included: “When do you think MSF will return back to Somalia now that the situation has changed under the new regime?” Another question was for the researcher to share on how MSF was affected by the decision to leave Somalia. One participant who had not engaged much during questions posed by the researcher, asked the researcher towards the end of the group discussion to share on whether MSF had made any provision for patients who were on chronic treatment at the time of its departure to ensure continuity for their care for a few months. A participant who had highlighted the positive efforts of the WHO in providing training to it employees and civilians asked a question about the work of MSF in South Africa and if there were any opportunities for training and field work for non-medical persons. Amongst the three focus groups, the Somalia Diaspora group had more questions from different participants which engaged the researcher.

In a slightly different approach to that of the above group, the DRC Diaspora group spent more time on what they believed were their suggestions for the work of MSF in South Africa which would potentially impact positively on their lives as foreign nationals living in South Africa. These suggestions were raised at different times of the discussion. This group seemed less formal and structured in their engagement on the questions posed to them. There was also more engagement amongst participants that with the Somalia Diaspora group. All participants engaged fully with the questions in the discussion and seemed free to express their views, with the exception of one of the female participant who was part of the second DRC Diaspora group. Participants in the DRC Diaspora group also seemed to have been more comfortable and expressive in terms of the work of IHOs in their country of origin. There was more mention amongst this group of other IHOs by name and the group seemed much familiar with the work and approach of the IHO they mentioned in their engagements.

These include the ICRC and Red Cross, UNHCR and MSF. Participants in this group also made clear distinctions between their personal views to those they shared as dominant and common views amongst civilians in the DRC. This distinction was evident in the use of the first person noun such as "…I believe…", "…I have seen it…" as opposed to "…most people in the DRC…" This pointed to a sense of intention by participants to have their personal views heard and recognized. Again, the decision by some of the participants to use their actual names instead of pseudo names strengthens this reflection.

In a similar fashion to some of the participants in the DRC Diaspora group, participants from the Ethiopia Diaspora group chose to use their actual names in the study. However, they acknowledged a level of uncertainty when it came to sharing on what they know about the work of MSF. Unlike participants in the DRC Diaspora group, participants mostly shared in general terms what they knew and understood about the work of MSF. There was a sense of confidence and certainty when participants expressed their views about IHOs in general, and the political context in Ethiopia than when they spoke specifically about MSF. With the exception of Gifu (Participant 17, 2015) who is a veterinary by profession, participants acknowledged they had little knowledge on the work of MSF in Ethiopia. Throughout most of the engagements, this acknowledgement was often accompanied by a sense of frustration as one participant expressed "…I have no idea what they do in Ethiopia" (Participant 11, 2015). At the end of the focus group discussion, one participant engaged with the researcher posing questions about how MSF measures its impact and success in the work they do in Ethiopia. He emphasized that it was easier for him and others to be aware of the work of CARE International as an example because people in Ethiopia saw what they do and they were visible to the public. This emphasises the sense of frustration expressed by most participants from the Ethiopia Diaspora group on the little knowledge they had about the work of MSF in Ethiopia.

In light of the above reflections on the use of certain terms of speech, the researcher acknowledges that language difference may have also contributed to the way participants expressed themselves. As noted earlier in the study, none of the participants had English as their first language. Therefore, the reflections above are not conclusive but highlight the differences in the group discussions per Diaspora group.

Perceptions on MSF's approach: Understanding and clarity on MSF's mandate

The first two questions described in the results chapter and their responses speak to the extent to which participants understood the organizational mandate of MSF. It is evident from the responses that participants who shared personal experiences of receiving assistance from an MSF facility, also reported positively about the IHO's ability to adhere to its own mandate. Although some of these participants, Bahati (Participant 7, 2015) for an example did not seem to have knowledge of the humanitarian terms or principles as often referred to in this report, she was able to articulate her experience of MSF as that of an impartial IHO. While some participants from the Somali diaspora group for an example did not mention having had personal experience of being assisted at an MSF facility, they explained perceiving the IHO as impartial based on what they have heard or know about the IHO. Participant 6, from the Somali diaspora group expressed that the name Doctors without borders inferred and obviously so, an IHO without racism. As persons from countries that have suffered different humanitarian crises, the participants in this study showed a fair understanding and knowledge of the humanitarian work. Participants were able to share what they deemed to be acceptable and unacceptable practice by IHOs. This was so regardless of the assertion made by some of the participants that they had little knowledge about the activities of MSF, particularly the Ethiopia Diaspora group.

In the literature reviewed in this study, a number of criticisms levelled against IHOs were explored. Reimann, Debiel and Sticht cited in Fischer (2006) pointed out the lack of independence, being influenced by donors and media, dominance by Western origins, and lacking legitimacy by not being subjected to any democratic controls as some of these criticisms. In his study, Hansen (2008) also pointed out that civilians perceived IHOs to be contradictory, especially with regards to the principles and practices by some IHOs in Iraq. The same criticisms can also be drawn from the findings in this study. Although most participants in this study did not directly make mention of humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality or impartiality, their reflections point to an understanding of the ethos of humanitarianism.

As described in the results earlier, one participant from the Ethiopia Diaspora group shared on his experience of MSF selling malaria tents in Addis Ababa. This experience suggests a level of contradiction on the practice of MSF, as other participants shared that MSF provides aid for free. In light of the perception that MSF sold resources to civilians in Ethiopia, its extent of impartiality may be questionable to this participant. The selling of tents to civilians

who are already in need and facing a humanitarian crisis, point to a division between those who can afford and those who cannot. Again, through listening to fellow group participants on their knowledge and understanding of MSF as an IHO, the participant's experience of the opposite of this could also lead to suspicions on the credibility of members of the IHO or the IHO in general in his context.

Perceptions on MSF's practice: Perceptions of MSF in relation to other IHOs

Vaughn (2009) mentions that at the field level, IHOs operate as one unit. The failures or negative actions of one IHO can impact on the perceptions of other IHOs. There is often generalization of the actions of one IHO to other IHOs. Throughout the focus group discussions, some participants did not comment directly about MSF, but responded to questions that referred directly to MSF in general terms. These generalizations came in different forms including referring to MSF as an IHO in plurality. Some of the IHOs mentioned by participants included CARE international by the Ethiopian Diaspora groups, WHO and Red Cross by the Somali Diaspora group, and MUNESCO and Oxfam by the DRC Diaspora group. This reflects a low level of perception on what might distinguish MSF from other IHOs. Such a trend was common amongst participants both the DRC and Ethiopia Diaspora groups.

To gain clarity on these generalizations, the researcher engaged participants on whether they considered any form of distinctions in the practice and approach of IHOs. Patrick from the DRC Diaspora group reflected on this by emphasizing that the generalization of the actions of one IHO to the lot is "…a case of one bad tomato" (Participant 1, 2015). He was reflecting on the sentiments of his fellow group members on the actions of MONUSCO. In their responses participants from the DRC diaspora group referred to its employees as "bazungu" or white people whom according to the participants were not so different from the "bazungu" or white people working for IHOs. Participants from the Ethiopia Diaspora group also showed generalization of IHOs to their reflections on MSF with sentiments of Yirtaan (Participant 13, 2015) for an example, on his reflections of IHOs being reported to support rebel groups by paying them money so they can operate in regions controlled by rebel groups or by giving the aid directly to them for distribution.

These generalizations may pose a threat to the work of IHOs, especially in contexts where the actions of one may be challenged by host governments or military belligerents. Different IHOs make efforts to resist this challenge by using different identities or operating under their

different entities. As evident in Mills (2013)'s report, IHOs such as CARE international, Mercy Corps and Oxfam were able to continue operations using different entities, after one of their entities were expelled from Darfur. Although such approaches may improve access for IHOs, they may not necessarily improve civilians' perceptions on the impartiality of these IHOs as generalization is reflected as playing a dominant role in perceptions.

Although it might be acceptable to expect the level of knowledge and understanding of the different IHOs to be different amongst civilians and recipients of aid to that of persons employed by the IHOs, it can be telling how in terms of perceptions and the security challenges faced by IHOs, that how one IHO is perceived may often be generalized to IHOs known to civilians or operating in a similar context.

At times when participants reflected on negative actions of other international humanitarian organizations, participants did not indicate an inclusion or exclusion of MSF in their views. This together with the association of MSF with a political agenda may pose as a challenge for MSF as it often strives to distinguish itself from the work and approaches of other IHOs as suggested by the sentiments expressed by the Germany President of MSF that neutrality is the only form of protection aid agencies can rely on (Werkhäuser, 2014).

Extent to which neutrality and independence influences perceptions on impartiality

The principles of neutrality and independence are grouped together in this analysis guided by the way in which participants engaged on issues related to them. These two principles although different, they both reflect on an IHO's ability or inability to deliver aid impartially. Evident in participants' responses above, perceptions on MSF's independence, which was often described by the views of political influences on the work of MSF; and views of MSF being a "western" or "European" organization were often expressed one after the other or in a way to elaborate on the other. Therefore if an IHO is perceived to be "western" or "European" and to be driven by the agenda or interest groups, it cannot be perceived as impartial. These perceptions of "western" or "European" IHOs seem to suggest a silent perception of "non-Western" or "non-European", which also suggest an "us and them" distinction. Wellerstein cited in Abu-sada (2012) speaks of this "us and them" perception as often evident amongst international and local employees of IHOs. Participants in this study alluded to this "us and them" through the sentiments they shared on the different levels of quality and corruption associated with local employees and international employees. In the

case of the DRC, participants expressed frustration on how they perceived inequality in the treatment of local and international employees of IHOs. One of the examples given was with regards to salaries or remunerations. One participant from the DRC diaspora group had this to say "MSF takes a person from the DRC and pays him less than a muzungu who doesn't even know the language." (Kevin, Participant 3, 2015)

The organizations' extent of independence and clarity on the purpose of its medical activities was also raised as a point of contention by some of the participants. The narration by Kevin from the DRC Diaspora group on what he read through the media on MSF being implicated in the arrest of Osama Bin Laden is one case in point. Although this is a perception the participant holds from secondary sources that this study will not seek to verify, it is worth noting as a perception held by the participant. If the activities of MSF are believed to be directed by political interests, the question of impartiality takes the centre. The impartial delivery of humanitarian services dictates that IHOs identify and prioritize activities according to the needs of population most vulnerable. Therefore, the perception of politically motivated vaccination program raises concerns on the extent to which the needs of a population most in need of such a service were considered.

The extent to which participants viewed the work of MSF as relevant does not necessarily indicate a level of perceiving those activities as impartially delivered to civilians. The views of participants in the Somalia Diaspora group are one case in point. Participants from this group felt somewhat positive and welcoming of the interventions of MSF, however they raised the locations of MSF operations in Somalia as an area that needs improvement by the IHO. In most contexts, rural areas are characterised by low levels of socio-economic standing, poor resources and population already exposed to a number of vulnerabilities. The assertion that MSF could improve its activities by locating itself more in the rural areas than in "…upper areas…" as mentioned by one participant suggests a need to prioritize activities according to areas and populations in need, thus a need for impartiality.

The visibility of MSF in a particular location or context also seems to play an influential role in how participants view the location of MSF activities. It is acceptable that in some contexts, offices that coordinate the operations of the IHO may be located in cities for logistical purposes, while activities are carried out in rural areas. It is also worth considering in this reflection that most participants from the Ethiopia and Somalia Diaspora groups mentioned some of the big cities including Kismayo, Mogadishu and Addis Ababa as the areas they

lived in while they were in these respective countries. Therefore, perceptions on the location and visibility of MSF might be influenced by the location of participants.

Other reflections on the choice of location by MSF, was elaborated upon by participants from the DRC Diaspora group. The narrative shared by participants of Dr Mukwege, a Congolese doctor whom according to the participants was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize insinuates the questioning of MSF's impartiality. As described in the results chapter, participants held the view that this doctor chose to assist survivors of sexual violence in remote areas and the efforts of MSF were nowhere to be seen in this context. If one follows the context of this narrative, the reflections made by participants suggest that at a time of desperate need by a population in need of humanitarian assistance, especially women, the work of MSF was not visible. In light of participants asserting that MSF had other operations in the DRC at the time, the process of prioritizing its activities did not seem to take into account what the participants considered to be the most vulnerable group.

The position of participants in terms of class and gender contributes to the analysis of perceptions on impartiality. As highlighted earlier in the literature review, where participants come from and their social status can influence perceptions on IHOs. The composition of the group of participants in this study presents a skewed representation of the experiences and perceptions of women. Only 2 of the participants were women. The activities of MSF in the 3 respective countries in this study focus on issues mainly related to the health and wellbeing of the female population, therefore the vulnerability of women in these contexts. In the DRC, MSF reports its activities to include health centres that support survivors of sexual violence, such as the one handed over to the SOFEPADI in the DRC (MSF Vienna Evaluation Unit, 2011). However, a reflection on women as a vulnerable group that is in most need of the humanitarian aid of MSF was only highlighted by one participant from the Ethiopia Diaspora group. This participant emphasized in positive light the work of MSF as serving the needs of people in need. "I am sure even for you it is unimaginable that a woman would give birth to seven children without any medical support…" (Gifu, Participant 17, 2015).

Perceptions on MSF's relationship with interest groups

It is limiting and goes against humanitarian principles for IHOs to align themselves with a particular party involved in conflict. International Humanitarian Organizations that align themselves with the Dunantists approach reflect on this as a threat to their neutrality. Therefore, it is critical for humanitarian agencies not to be aligned with any party involved in

conflict in order to serve the needs of civilians trapped on different sides of a conflict (Anderson, 2004). For IHOs to be perceived as aligned to parties involved in conflict may affect perceptions on the neutrality and independence of such IHOs. In the literature above, insecurities faced by IHOs in different contexts is associated to perceptions on the lack of neutrality and independence. Vaughn (2009) adds to these implications by pointing to the insecurities also experienced by employees of IHOs that experience violence targeted against them. A few of the participants in the study, from the Somalia and Ethiopia Diaspora groups expressed sympathy for humanitarian workers who find themselves caught in the crossfire of conflict in their line of duty. These expressions of sympathy are inferred in sentiments of participants' admiration of the work of humanitarian workers. One participant shared how he had "…always [respected] the work of these people, it is not safe but they continue to risk their lives. I always wanted to be like them".

Although this is not to suggest that the other participants expressed animosity towards employees of IHOs, they seemed to express low levels of confidence in the capacity and intentions of IHOs workers. The examples given by participants from the DRC Diaspora group such as employees of MONUSCO who were allegedly linked to drugs and diamond smuggling in the DRC, and international or expatriate "white" employees being considered for senior positions than local Congolese who are said to have a better understanding of the context and language.

The perceptions shared by participants from the Somalia Diaspora group on the quality of staff from Somalia compared to international employees also point to a difference in the quality of aid delivered by one particular IHO. Participants mentioned that this lack of skilled local aid workers employed by MSF and corruption in different communities in recruitment processes led to an unequal delivery of services. Thus impartiality in this case is not only perceived to be as a result of the IHO's failure to consider civilian needs but other factors involved in the process of aid delivery and expressed in the different quality of services. To further elaborate on the skills and capacity on the ground in the delivery of aid, one participant from the DRC Diaspora group mentioned corruption of local non-governmental organizations that sold for their own profit, aid meant to be distributed amongst civilians free of charge. This had implications on the impartial delivery of aid as civilians who were most vulnerable and without means to buy aid, were left without the aid they needed.

In order to be impartial, IHOs need different kinds of resources, including human resources. The insecurities experienced by most IHOs to date do not only pose a threat to these IHOs but threaten their potential to attract staff that help delivery aid (Vaughn, 2009). Human resources in this study is not only from the side of international employees but also skills and corruption at the local level as expressed by participants pose a threat to the impartial delivery of aid.

What Okumu (2010) argued may be an unintentional action on the part of IHOs to contribute to the prolongment of conflict in crises contexts, some of the participants expressed as a belief they have on the work of MSF together with other IHOs in the DRC. Through views that IHOs create conflict and wars so that white people from European countries may have employment was shared by participants in the DRC Diaspora group. Another view expressed by participants in the study related to the prolongment of conflict was shared by Yirtaan from the Ethiopia Diaspora group that from the media reports he had researched, including blogs of former rebel group members, IHOs contributed resources that sustained such insurgencies. In his study, Okumu (2010) came to similar findings that the resources brought into a weak or collapsed state may provide opportunities for income or trade for weapons for rebel groups.

The narration on the arrest of Osama Bin Laden being linked to MSF also speaks to what Okumu (2010) and Hansen (2008) respectively reffered to as the manipulation of humanitarian aid. As elaborated in both their studies, this impacts negatively on the perceptions of civilians thus threatens IHOs ability to deliver aid impartially.

In the case of participants from the Somalia and some from the Ethiopia Diaspora groups, participants didn't know link political activities to MSF and even to any other IHO. In cases where political activities or involvement was mentioned, it was to also highlight the political nature of groups spreading such messages about IHOs. However, most participants did generalize the work of MSF to that of other IHOs. It can be said that in the field context, when IHOs respond to humanitarian crises, all efforts of IHOs are seen as important and relevant. The community of organizations and institutions involved in humanitarian interventions acknowledge the efforts and activities of one another. This is where in some cases, there has been efforts to consolidate humanitarian interventions. Although organizations such as MSF choose to operate outside of these coherent approaches, it still acknowledges that the actions of fellow IHOs may impact on how IHOs are generally perceived and more on the extent of delivering needed aid to vulnerable populations. This is

documented in the recent report produced by MSF titled "Where is everyone?" (Healy & Tiller, 2014) and the work of Tong (2004) which elaborates on how MSF strives to distinguish itself form other IHOs.

Some of the participants in the study shared the view that IHOs were all the same in approach and intentions. As alluded to by Olivier from the DRC Diaspora group "…they just use different names but you all belong to one group that is called the UN". These sentiments speak to the approaches that for most IHOs have proven positive and effective as they have allowed some IHOs to continue delivering aid even in contexts where one of their entities had been expelled. Mills (2013) made reference to this approach in the case of Darfur where most IHOs had been expelled and experienced challenges accessing populations in need. He elaborated on this point with an example of Oxfam, Mercy Cops and CARE International.

Association of MSF with particular state or interest group

In this study, a distinction between a perceived relationship and the association of IHOs and interest groups or states is made. The above analysis focused on perceived relationship while now the focus will be on the association. Participants in the study reflected on the perceived relationship between IHOs or MSF and interest groups with overt examples, whether from their direct experiences or from other sources they claimed to be aware of. On the other hand, there were more generalizations and deductive reflections made by participants with regards to their associations of IHOs or MSF and particular states or interest groups. Throughout the 3 focus groups, participants showed a sense of understanding and reflection on the political context of their country of origin, regional and international political landscape. This can be supported by the approach most participants took to respond to some of the questions directly focusing on MSF as an IHO or through introducing themselves at the beginning of the focus group discussions. One participant form the Somali Diaspora group started off his introductions by giving detailed reflections on his perception of the political history of the Somalia and the different regimes it has transitioned through, from the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2004 and the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in 2006. In addition to this, Kinfe, from the Ethiopia Diaspora group made illustrations on a separate sheet to explain to the researcher the regional and international political context he believed played a role in the decision by the Ethiopian government to expel MSF from the country in 1985.

Although there seemed to be a sense of understanding and analysis from participants on the political nature of the context within which IHOs operate in, other sources for their reflections also played an influential role in their perceptions. The media was one such source. Once again, reflections from participants with regards to their association of MSF to a

particular state of interest group can be looked at in 2 different ways. Those who were more direct in their response and those who were generalizing. The association of MSF or IHOs with a particular state or interest group was expressed only amongst the Ethiopia and DRC Diaspora groups. Most participants from the DRC Diaspora group were more direct in their responses and shared they associated MSF with the USA government or country. Bahati, one of the 2 female participants in this study supported her assertion by sharing that as a result of growing suspicions amongst community members that the food and non-food items distributed to civilians by MSF were satanic. MSF explained to the community that the aid was from different countries including the USA. Other participants from the DRC Diaspora group mentioned they associated MSF with France and went further to associated France with the USA.

There was an acknowledgement amongst participants from the Ethiopia Diaspora group of not knowing with certainty which country to associate MSF with. However, generalizations were made that asserted their association of the IHO with western and European countries. One participant expressed his response by asserting that most IHOs were from western countries, to which the rest of the group acknowledged by nodding. It is worth noting that there is a difference in how participants who claimed associating MSF or IHOs with the USA or western countries did so in different ways. Some participants expressed their association with regards to what they perceived to be the origins of MSF, while others did so with regards to their perceptions on the work of MSF. The former may at face value seem less problematic for MSF or other IHOs, particularly those who align themselves with the Dunantists humanitarian roots. However, the current political landscape of the humanitarian world such as the "War on Terror" discourse as expressed by theorists reviewed earlier suggest these associations may be problematic to the security of IHOs (Abiew, 2012; Humanitarian Outcomes, 2012; Montclosb, 2013).

In addition to the problem of the "War on Terror" discourse for MSF and other IHOs aligned with the Dunantists approach, participants' associations of MSF or the general IHO community with western or European states point to a discourse of the former "colonizer and colony". This raises potential challenges for most IHOs especially as the contexts who suffer humanitarian crises still bear the legacy of colonialism. Amongst the 3 countries looked at in this study, it is only Ethiopia that was never colonize. However, the regional politics and experiences of colonialism by its neighbouring countries are perceived as having an impact on the country. The illustration below was made by Kinfe, one of the participants from the Ethiopia Diaspora group to express his view on the decision made by the Ethiopian government to expel MSF from the country in 1985.

Illustrations of Ethiopia's regional politics

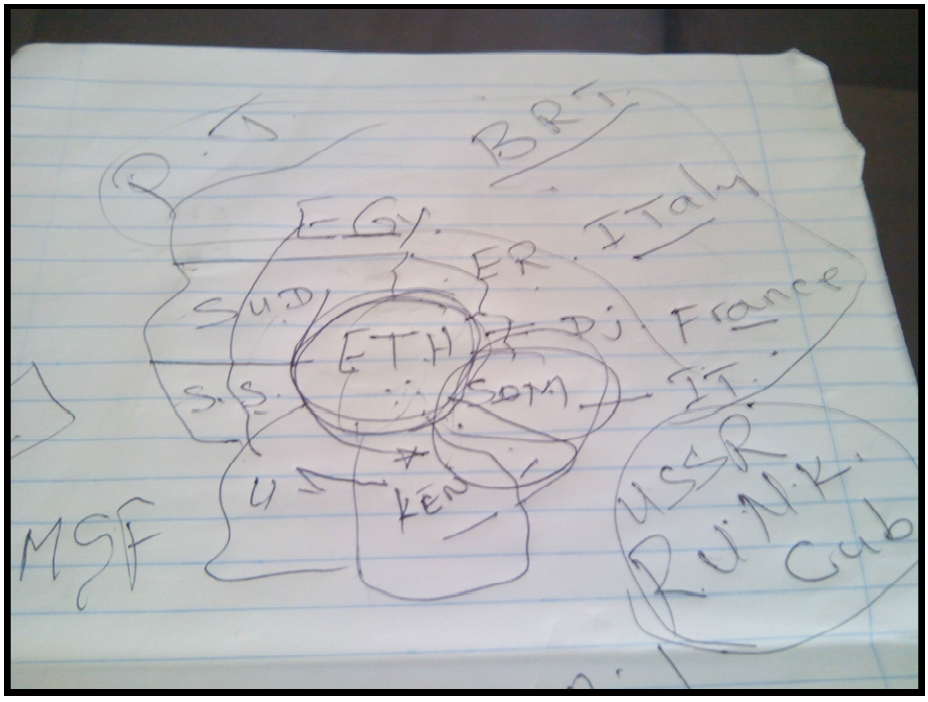


Image 1 Kinfe- Participant 15, 2015

In this illustration, Kinfe does not make any direct association of MSF or IHOs with the countries he speaks about, either that he neither asserts are neither colonial states nor colonized states. He however took time to point out the political relationships between these countries. For an example, he explained how France has political power and control over Djibouti, Italy on Eretria and Somalia, Britain on Kenya, Egypt and Sudan as critical for his reflections. Kinfe then highlights how decisions made by each respective country take into consideration the contextual influence of any political players. Thus history and perceived or real political position of ant state may have direct impact on how IHOs are perceived and the space they operate within. As Kinfe pointed out, "Any NGO supported by countries that are enemies of the Ethiopian government would have been expelled" (Kinfe, Participant 15, 2015). In addition to these reflections on the former "colonizer and colonized" discourse, sentiments expressed by participants from the DRC Diaspora group contribute to these reflections. The perceptions of participants associating MSF with the USA, western and European countries and in particular, "white people" point to the political history and experiences of countries in the continent as former colonies of the western and European countries. This poses challenges for an organization like MSF as one of its traditional

approaches is rooted in challenging governments as mentioned by Tong (2004). This approach may not be so effective in the African continent as challenging African governments by entities associated with former colonies of these countries may be perceived as a repeat of a history most countries together with civilians seek to transform.

In some of the studies reviewed in this study, the agency of civilians is highlighted as a key factor to consider that shaped perceptions. Therefore, resistance of former colonial rule should not only be viewed from the position of governments of former colonies but also civilians in those particular countries.

These associations point to participants' perceptions on the independence of MSF or IHOs. Although as mentioned in discussions at the Chatham House (2014), the lack of independence by IHOs does not necessarlly lead to a lack of impartiality. This can be possible if the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) approach is taken into consideration. The R2P approach, humanitarian organizations or other actors intevening in humanitarian crises may be assured of a way to deliver aid to civilians caught on any side of a conflict through arm protection for an example. In cases where the military has been used to deliver humanitarian aid to civilians, confusion amongst civilians have been rife. This is especially as a recult as the political interests that often accompany such approaches as pointed out in examples by Abu-Sada (2012) and Winslow (2002). However, lack of independence is problematic for IHOs such as MSF and the ICRC who align themselves with the Dunantists approach. For these IHOs, independence is considered as an enabling tool for their impartiality. A lack of independence is again considered problematic as influence from external players may also determine levels of neutrality, which again threatens impartiality for these IHOs.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of civilians affected by humanitarian crises on the impartiality of MSF. Neither of the participants was given the definition nor indicators of impartiality during the interviews. The onus to clearly introduce the study and its objectives to participants without leading providing questions was on the researcher. The researcher elaborated to participants that the purpose of this study is to gain understanding of their respective understanding and experiences of the IHO MSF, based on their direct or indirect engagement with the IHO in their respective countries of origin. The participants were then asked questions which the researcher drew from the indicators of impartiality explained earlier in the literature review. These questions ranged from open ended questions that sought to gain participants' knowledge and understanding of the work and mandate of MSF, to their perceptions on its relationship with parties involved in conflict. True to form, the principle of impartiality could not be discussed without reflecting on the principles of independence and neutrality. In some cases, as presented in the results chapter, participants shared on how they perceived MSF to have political influences such as influence from western countries. Again, associations of MSF or the lack of distinction between MSF and other IHOs in some responses proved how a question aimed at exploring perception of neutrality would draw in other reflections on perceptions on the mandate of MSF.

This plurality in response to specific questions during the interview may seem to threaten the consistency and validity of this study. This study overcomes this threat by acknowledging as it has been done in the literature review that the principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality are not independent of one another. The researcher used this reality to develop the indicators of impartiality by acknowledging how both the principle of independence and neutrality can determine the extent to which civilians perceive an IHO to be impartial.

Impartiality was discussed as a IHOs' ability to deliver aid to those who need it the most. It is about IHOs' ability to reach those in need. However, as highlighted in the early Chapter 2 of this report, this ability can be hindered by the levels of insecurities faced by humanitarian actors in our time. International Humanitarian Organizations may have the resources and will to assist those affected by humanitarian crises, but resources and will power may fail is their security in not assured. This said, many IHOs, including MSF do not ascribe to the need to civil-military relations in their interventions as a way to gain access to insecure contexts and reach populations in need. They believe in drawing distinctions between their approaches to that of the military. In some cases, IHOs have gone to the extent of criticising civil-military

relations as a cause of some of the insecurities they face. IHOs have levelled claims against the civil-military interventions that it creates confusion amongst civilians and parties in conflict. This study sought to explore civilians' perceptions on the impartiality of MSF. These explorations my potentially contribute to the reflections on these criticism of civil-military relations by weighing whether there may be confusion amongst civilians on the interests of IHOs such as MSF and military interventions that are often seen as political.

In order to explore these perceptions without diverting to this great debate of civil-military relations, the study engaged participants from three countries with a history of MSF interventions. More focus was made on the perceptions of these civilians with regards to their understanding and experience of MSF in these respective countries. The perceptions of participants from the DRC, Somalia and Ethiopia in this study speak to the reality of the approach and practice of MSF, whether real or perceived by the participants. The perceptions on the relationship between MSF and interest groups were also explored. The decision for such explorations was guided by literature that evidenced the experiences of different IHOs in countries such as Afghanistan. It was through such literature that civilians' perceptions of IHOs exposed different aspects that support but in most cases challenged the practice of IHOs in relation to the humanitarian principles. The principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality were brought to question by some of the experiences and perceptions of civilians in the literature reviewed in this study. In attempts to explore the extent of such questions in different context, this study focused on MSF as a unit of analysis and three countries within which it had different experiences that showed different aspects of insecurities faced by IHOs. In Somalia, MSF made a decision to leave the country and stop all its operations in 2013. This was after a series of abductions and violence experience by the IHO in that country. In Ethiopia, MSF was forced out of the country by the Ethiopian government in 1985. While MSF still operates in Ethiopia and in the DRC, which is the third country focused on in this study, the DRC is still a country faced with ongoing violence.

All perceptions reflected in this study are linked to one or more humanitarian principles, and worth noting is the implications they may have on perceived impartiality. The results in this study produced an additional category to the way perceptions on the impartiality of MSF were initially sought to be explored. In addition to perceptions on the approach, perceptions on the practice and perceptions on the relationship between MSF and interest groups, participants' responses added an association of MSF with a state or/and interest group. Similar to responses on the first three categories of perceptions, the fourth category of associating MSF with a state or interest group was also in part referring to MSF and generalized to other IHOs. Here again, emphasis is made to focus on IHOs whose approaches

are aligned to the Dunantist humanitarian foundations. To bring to a conclusion the responses of participants in this study, the potential impact of these perceptions and association will be explored.

Potential impact of perceptions and association on impartiality

It has been noted early in this report that the perception categories developed for the purpose of exploring civilians' perceptions on the impartiality of MSF are not necessarily mutually exclusive. These perception categories serve to bring clarity on the responses by participants in this study. To explore participants' responses on the potential impact on impartiality, thee overlapping nature of these perception categories is engaged with in this discussion.

Participants' responses that noted the free provision of humanitarian aid, the corruption of employees, the ability to be the first one to intervene and frustrations on the low visibility of MSF in countries such as Ethiopia, reflect participants' perceptions on the approach and practice of MSF as an IHO. As noted earlier in this chapter, participants often generalized their responses on MSF to other IHOs. This form of generalization may have a potential negative impact on the perception of MSF as an IHO that operates with impartiality. An additional aspect of such generalizations is the reference made to employees of IHOs. Although this study did not deliberately explore perceptions on the employees of MSF or any IHO, participants' responses generalized with ease their perceptions on the actions of employees to MSF or IHOs. The tendency to note with specificity actions of employees of an IHO by participants may also reflect a potential ability to distinguish between an IHO's approach and the actions of individuals when it comes to practice.

Some of the themes that emerged from responses to the question on perceptions on the relationship between MSF and interest groups included: the political intentions of aid delivered, and strategic use of organizational identity to gain access. These responses pointed to potentially negative impact on MSF's ability to be perceived as impartial. These perceptions seem to threaten the trust participants may have of MSF or IHOs they might have generalized to. They also suggest potential to create confusion amongst civilians on the identity of IHOs that are perceived to use different entities of their identity to gain access. The association of MSF with particular states was seen from participants' responses, in most cases as participants described their understanding of what the IHO does and its sources for resources. These associations with particular states present potentially negative perceptions on the impartiality of MSF. This is mainly as most of the states associated with MSF by

participants were not perceived in positive light. There was also a generalization of these states as “western”, which amongst participants was perceived to have political influence and vested interest in humanitarian crises experienced in the participants’ countries. These associations also pointed to historical reflection of participants on the impact of colonization on their countries of origin. Participants’ associations also showed levels of resistance to colonial powers, for an example, through narratives that seemed to point to issues of racism with regards to employment opportunities between local and international civilians.

According to International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, civilians have a right to humanitarian assistance in times of crises (Vaughn, 2009). In the same documents, humanitarian organizations and their workers have a right to be spared from all forms of violence in order to effectively deliver aid. The effective delivery of aid is often evaluated according to the extent to which IHOs can reach populations most affected by humanitarian crises and in most need. This standard of evaluating the impact of humanitarian interventions has been expressed in this study as the principle of impartiality. The impartial delivery of humanitarian assistance is what guides most if not all humanitarian organizations. This principle as described in this study “…carries the fundamental objective for humanitarian action that resources and responses are prioritised and allocated according to actual humanitarian needs…” SCHR (2014: 2). International humanitarian organizations choose different approaches to facilitate for their impartial delivery of aid. Unlike other humanitarian organizations, including peace keeping missions such as MONUSCO; IHOs who align themselves with the Dunantist approach strive to make other humanitarian principles enable them to be impartial. The principles of independence and neutrality have been praised by IHOs such as MSF as the principles that enable broaden what was mentioned earlier as their humanitarian space. As emphasized in the definition provided by Oxfam, the claim to having humanitarian space ought to reflect the ability of an IHO to operate effectively in delivering aid to civilians in need of aid and to civilians most vulnerable (Mills, 2013). Violence as mentioned in this study continues to prove how IHOs face limitations in their impartial delivery of aid. Exploring insecurities faced by IHOs is not the only way of exploring limitations or potential limitations to the impartial delivery of aid. As elaborated in the review in this study, IHOs have been facing insecurities that threaten their efforts. In most instances as seen in this study, these insecurities can be quantified. As seen on Table 2 of this report, IHOs are able to report on the number of attacks and violence perpetuated against them and their employees. This study has expanded on the notion of insecurity as not only limited to the experienced levels of violence but as implicated in the perceptions of civilians affected by humanitarian crises.

The purpose of this study was to explore civilians' perceptions on the impartiality of MSF. If the agency of civilians is taken into consideration as suggested by Ginty (2014), then a broader reflection of power relations and potential indicators of insecurities for IHOs could be understood. Civilians draw up perceptions based on a number of different factors. This study highlighted that direct experience, understanding of local, regional and international political context, the media play a role in shaping civilians' perceptions. In order to explore the perceptions on the impartiality of MSF, this study opted to focus on the views of participants from 3 different countries that have seen a number of humanitarian crises. The common factor amongst these 3 countries was that MSF had operations in these countries, so participants had a fair understanding or experience of MSF in their respective countries of origin. Although not all participants in this study claimed having had direct experience of MSF, they were all able to reflect on the nature of IHOs operations in their respective countries of origin or as based on other sources including the media as mentioned above.

The researcher acknowledges that participants in this study had different knowledge levels and experiences of MSF, which was the unit of analysis. Although this can be viewed as a threat to the credibility of the findings in this study, it has been reflected upon in this study to suggested 2 important issues. On the one hand, it suggests that participants may not have had much knowledge about MSF specifically. On the other hand, it could also mean that participants did not distinguish the actions of MSF to those of other IHOs. Both speculative reflections have been analysed in this study to have potential implications on the impartiality of MSF. The low levels of knowledge about MSF could be as a result of poor visibility of the IHO in countries where it operates. As discussed in this study, this may affect perception on impartiality where some participants believed MSF mainly locates itself in urban areas as opposed to rural areas. In addition to such a challenge, the lack of distinction between the works of MSF and that of other IHOs also poses challenges as mentioned earlier, where the failures of one IHO may comprise the ability to be impartial by many other IHOs. The findings that civilians in most contexts do not distinguish MSF from other IHOs leaves, much work for the IHO to engage with other IHOs to ensure accountability on the humanitarian principles of independence and neutrality. These are the 2 humanitarian principles that have been described as having potential to facilitate space for the impartial delivery of humanitarian aid. In addition to low levels of knowledge about MSF, almost all of the participants, with the exception of participants from the Somalia Diaspora group made mention of humanitarian in their reflections. The humanitarian principles of independence,

neutrality and impartiality were not mentioned by the researcher in her questions and probes. Only a few participants from the Somalia Diaspora group mentioned the principle of neutrality in one of their discussions. The rest of the participants shared their perceptions by reflecting on issues that have now been categorized according to the themes developed for the purpose of this study. This is not to suggest that participants had no knowledge or understanding of humanitarian work. It could however suggest a personal and internalized understanding of the humanitarian practice. This is supported by expressions made by participants when asserting that MSF and other IHOs ought to "…stick to their mandate…"

The relevance of the findings in this study can be best summarized by listing a number of questions that can be drawn out from the analysis made in the discussion. These questions are not necessarily recommendations but can present possible opportunities for further research. A key question drawn out of the findings and analysis in this study is not whether MSF is perceived as impartial or not but on how the organization can legitimately influence perceptions of the people it seeks to serve. This can then facilitate for the impartial delivery of humanitarian aid by this IHO.

With MSF's tradition or culture of often separating itself from general IHOs platforms or organizing structures, what can the IHO do to distinguish itself from other IHOs? As it has been elaborated in the study, the nature of IHOs practice and profile plays a critical role in influencing perceptions of civilians. The explorations made by this study also broaden the scope of investigating the extent of insecurities faced by IHOs in today's context of humanitarian crises. Another question to highlight is whether IHOs prioritize being perceived in a positive light by civilians as a measure for security? Vaughn (2009) pointed out that IHOs gain legitimacy by acting according to humanitarian principles. With impartiality highlighted in this study as the end goal for humanitarian interventions, can IHOs including MSF overcome the question of legitimacy if insecurities and perceptions pose as a limitation to their ability to be impartial?

Different platforms have been created by some IHOs which are said to be in efforts to hold one another accountable. International humanitarian organizations seem to have also become aware of the reality that the negative actions of one IHO may affect the general IHO community. Therefore, for MSF whose position has often been to opt out of most of these consolidated platforms, a question to consider is who holds MSF accountable? Although the dissociation of MSF from other IHO may be seen as a positive effort in that it spares the IHO from the generalized views. It also raises points of concern especially with regards to how civilians may not necessarily know or be able to distinguish MSF from other IHOs. In most

cases and as reflected in this study, the efforts by IHOs to reflect on the effectiveness of their work have mainly been introspective. This study presented an opportunity to look at the work of one particular IHO, MSF from the lens of civilians affected by humanitarian crises.

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Appendix 1: Focus Group Guide

CIVILIANS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPARTIALITY OF MSF IN CONTEXTS OF ITS INTERVENTIONS

Focus Group guide

Introductions

- Researcher introduces herself and her assistant, purpose of the focus group
- Researcher explains confidentiality and anonymity, asks consent to record focus group discussion
- Researcher hands out information cards to participants
- Participants introduce themselves

Information Card:

Participant's age

Participant's gender

Number of years living in S.A

Pseudo Name

Engagement questions

1. What do you understand the work of MSF to be about?

Exploration questions

2. What was your experience of MSF in your country of origin?
3. Would you associate MSF with a particular country or interest group?

3.1 How do you think this impact or mean for MSF and impartiality?

4. Would you say the services of MSF reached those who were in most need in your country of origin?

Exit questions

5. Do you have any other thoughts about the work of MSF in your country of origin?
6. Is there anything you feel I should have asked?

Thank you for your time and participation