2007 was ALNAP’s 10th birthday and we celebrated in a colourful tent in the remote Drôme provençale, at the 21st Biennial Meeting hosted by Groupe URD. 2007/8 also saw the development and launch of a new five-year Strategy, which was completed and approved by the Membership at the 22nd Biennial, hosted by OCHA’s Regional Office for West Africa in Senegal.

We were keen to ensure that the Strategy reflected the collective thinking and will of the Membership, and went to great lengths to use as inclusive an approach as possible. We were delighted to witness the very high level of collaboration and engagement from the membership and we have no doubt that the content and final Strategy benefited enormously as a result.

The Strategy provides us with a road map to become a more global and utilisation-focused network. We are optimistic that ALNAP will be able to stimulate positive changes. Part of this will be through timely and targeted dissemination of lessons and good practices gleaned from evaluations, and research. No less important is ALNAP’s role in facilitating dialogue and discussion, and enhancing engagement with new, non-traditional actors and platforms to discuss major issues affecting our work.

It has been an exciting and busy year and this report provides the highlights of what the Network and the Secretariat have been undertaking. These include the production of the 7th Review of Humanitarian Action, the production of real time lessons papers on specific humanitarian crises, and the Biennuals. Also this year was the launch of a number of innovative and exciting initiatives, not least the Humanitarian Performance Project. There are exciting times ahead for all those involved in ALNAP.

As always, we would like to thank you for your commitment and contribution to ALNAP and look forward to working with all of you over the coming year.

Eleanor Monbiot, Chair
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Message from ALNAP Director

In the last few years, we have seen accelerated change in a number of social, economic and natural factors, including global warming and the related effects on the environment; growing economic instability and deepening imbalances between rich and poor; rising food prices, the so-called ‘war on terror’ and changes in attitudes to ‘Western’ interventions; new types of armed conflict; demographic changes such population growth and increased ‘South-to-North’ migration; and political changes, including the rise of regional power blocs.

All of these have had an influence on how recent humanitarian crises have unfolded and on the nature of the response. This influence is unlikely to abate – indeed, it will certainly increase into the future.

As a result, the tasks faced by humanitarian practitioners have become increasingly complex. Aid agendas overlap and connect to those of other actors including the military, the human-rights community, those concerned with risk reduction and development, politicians and the media. Informal global systems and diaspora social networks are providing increasing amounts of remittance-based assistance and the formal system is yet to find ways of linking to and harmonising with these processes.

Given these trends, it is anticipated that humanitarian interventions will become more widespread, and more challenging to implement in keeping with both humanitarian principles and the principles of quality management.

Getting this right represents a major challenge for the entire humanitarian system in the years to come. No one actor has the answer – whether established or new, all actors in the 21st century humanitarian environment will need to mobilise to make a contribution to this evolving vision.

Our capacity to meet these challenges needs to be seen realistically – after all, many of the lessons from the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda have still not been turned into better practice and improved performance. This is despite various reform initiatives, new standards and codes of good practice, inter-agency quality initiatives and the application of modern management techniques in aid agencies.

In ALNAP, we have been thinking hard about how to contribute to positive change in a changing world. In the 10 years since ALNAP was founded, it has built a reputation for being a neutral platform for facilitating and strengthening humanitarian learning and accountability. Through the RHA and lessons papers, ALNAP has captured and distilled experiences from evaluations and other sources and, through the network, has made them available to both operational managers and policy makers. Positive feedback suggests that these initiatives have real potential to improve humanitarian performance.

It is fair to say that 2007/8 was a turning point for ALNAP membership and the secretariat. Through our new strategy, and with strengthened secretariat capacity, we have more potential to bring about positive learning and change. We want to do this by building on our existing achievements and knowledge base, and continuing to bring the sector together for reflection and learning.

New changes mean challenges. We are optimistic that ALNAP can also change – and become even better at what we do, and importantly, how we do it. We are exploring the space for improvements in a more creative and innovative way than ever before. We believe that we are already better placed to make a stronger contribution to performance in the humanitarian sector. And we firmly believe that the best in ALNAP is yet to come.

Watch this space.

John Mitchell, Director
I. Strategy and Governance

ALNAP Strategy 2008-2013

The new five-year ALNAP Strategy is the first such document since the Vision of 2002. Drafted by the Secretariat, the strategy development process saw very substantial and constructive engagement and input from across the Membership – both at the 22nd Biannual in Plaisians, France and in the months that followed it. Following detailed inputs from the Steering Committee, the Strategy was unveiled and approved by the Members at the 23rd Biannual in Saly, Senegal.

The Strategy focuses on five priority objectives, and highlights what will be done to achieve each of them, and what will be seen in terms of outcomes.

The five objectives are:

1. ALNAP will establish stronger links between learning processes and improvements in humanitarian policy and field practice.

2. ALNAP will advocate for and actively promote improvements in performance in the humanitarian sector.

3. ALNAP will improve system-wide fora for active learning and the exchange of experiences and ideas.

4. ALNAP will work to improve the quality and utilisation of evaluations within the Network and throughout the humanitarian system.

5. ALNAP will expand its global reach and engagement in order to better promote humanitarian learning.

The Strategy is to be supported by a Communications Plan, which is currently under development and will be completed by December 2008.

The strategy can be seen here: http://www.odi.org.uk/ALNAP/pdfs/alnap_strategy_2008-2013.pdf

Membership, governance and staffing

- Tearfund joins full members

During 2007/8, Tearfund joined the Full Membership, bringing the number of Members to 57. As a HAP-certified organisation, with a wealth of experience

Reflections on Strategy Development for a Global Humanitarian network

Cross-organisational networks have played pivotal roles over the past decade in the humanitarian sector. There are now a plethora of network structures and platforms to support and shape the efforts of humanitarian agencies to coordinate and collaborate. At the global level, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the recently created Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP), ALNAP itself, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and the Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN), are but a few examples where collective processes at the policy level are being used to meet new and ongoing humanitarian challenges. At the operational level, the Cluster approach – sector-specific aid coordination mechanisms established in 2005 as part of the UN-led humanitarian reform process – can be regarded as working towards thematic communities of practice, focused on the improved delivery of different types of humanitarian aid.

Networks clearly have wide-ranging applications in the humanitarian sector, yet surprisingly little has been written on the strategic development and management of networks with the humanitarian sector in mind.

As part of the five-year strategy, the ALNAP Secretariat applied an emerging approach called the Network Functions Approach, which can be applied to analyse and strengthen humanitarian network initiatives. As a result of ALNAP’s work, a collaboration between ALNAP, ICVA and ODI saw the methodology being documented and disseminated across the sector. This has led to much interest and engagement, with the ALNAP Secretariat lending support to networks working on issues as diverse as DRR, education, and children.

in capacity building and partnerships, Tearfund have already made a great contribution to discussions and debates at ALNAP Biennials. Their work on capacity building has also seen a very useful process of engagement with the ALNAP Secretariat, most recently on Monitoring and Evaluation of capacity building efforts.

- **Other membership news**

Applications for full membership were at record levels, with a number of approvals pending SC decision. The number of Observer Members continued to grow, reaching almost 1,000 by the end of the financial year.

- **Steering Committee**

2007/8 saw four Steering Committee meetings, the minutes of which are made available to Full Members.

At the end of the financial year, the Steering Committee representation was as follows:

- **Donors**: Stefan Dahlgren (Sida) and Nicoletta Pergolizzi (DG ECHO)
- **UN Agencies**: Claude Hilfiker (OCHA) and Mathew Varghese (UNICEF)
- **NGOs and NGO network/umbrella groups**: Eleanor Monbiot (Chair, World Vision) and Eva von Oelreich (SCHR)
- **Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement**: Charles-Antoine Hofmann (BRCS),
- **Academics and consultants**: Peter Walker (Tufts University)

The Secretariat is grateful to the above for their work on the Committee, and also to Philip Tamminga (IFRC) and Miriam Lutz (USAID/OFDA), who stepped down during the year.

- **Secretariat Staff**

At the end of the financial year, the Secretariat staff consisted of:

- John Mitchell, Director of ALNAP
- Ben Ramalingam, Head of Research and Development
- Colin Hadkiss, Administrator (part time)
- Franziska Orphal, Communications and Information Assistant (part time)

Maurice Herson, Projects Manager, left the Secretariat in January 2008. Also, Sarah Skeels worked as temporary Communications and Information Assistant from April to October 2007.

In March 2008, Saku Mapu (Communications Officer) and Karen Proudlock (Research and Evaluation Officer) were appointed to the staff, to take up their posts at the beginning of the 2008/9 financial year.
II. Publications

7th Review of Humanitarian Action

The Review was completed at the end of the year.

John Mitchell shares a personal view on collective action and performance.

Paul Clarke and Ben Ramalingam provide the first systematic, evidence-based review of organisational change in the humanitarian sector.

Tony Beck and Margie Buchanan-Smith’s meta-evaluation focuses on humanitarian joint evaluations.

Finally, John Cosgrave and Maurice Herson synthesise key lessons from evaluations of the humanitarian response to the Pakistan earthquake of 2005.

Lessons papers

Two papers were produced in collaboration with the ProVention Consortium:

Slow-onset disasters: drought and food and livelihoods insecurity. Learning from previous relief and recovery responses.

Flood Disasters: learning from previous relief and recovery operations.

Both have received large amounts of very positive, unsolicited feedback, and are among the most popular ALNAP publications.

Training materials

Evaluation of Humanitarian Action training materials, developed by ALNAP in conjunction with Channel Research, are available on the ALNAP website and continue to be used. Channel Research continue to run courses using the materials.

Others

ALNAP staff have also written articles and papers, including contributions to HPN Exchange, Capacity Journal and the ODI Working Paper series.

Reflections on Monitoring and Learning – ALNAP and ‘soft power’

As a learning network focused on the improvement of performance, ALNAP must practice what it preaches, and work to systematically learn from its progress against its objectives.

However, it is important to be clear about the assumptions we are making in thinking about how ALNAP, and other similar initiatives, can bring about changes in humanitarian policy and practice.

Seven key assumptions underlie the effective utilisation of ideas in policy and practice, and these are highly relevant to ALNAP’s work as a learning network:

1. The existence of comprehensive, credible evidence based on systematic learning exercises, including evaluations.

2. The ability of such evidence to provide a direct guide to decision-making in specific circumstances.

3. Knowledge of such evidence by all relevant actors.

4. Adequate resources (e.g. time, money, capacities) to act upon the evidence from learning exercises.

5. Sufficient incentive to apply the evidence.

6. Absence of substantial disincentives (material or non-material) to applying the evidence.

7. An implementation chain sufficiently short to ensure a good likelihood of compliance with the implications of the evidence.

These assumptions provide a starting point for a systematic framework for monitoring and learning from ALNAP’s work, and assessing the contribution it makes to positive change. The great majority of ALNAP’s mandate, mission and strategic objectives focus on the first three of these assumptions.

ALNAP aims to track progress and identify lessons (positive and negative) which relate to each of these core assumptions, tracking ALNAP’s direct contribution to system-wide improvements in each of these areas. ALNAP also proposes to track how improvements in each of these areas, and increased advocacy efforts, contribute to improvements in the others.
III. Bringing the humanitarian community together

Biannual Meetings

ALNAP Biannual Meetings continue to provide the humanitarian system with its only system-wide forum for the exchange of ideas and learning on issues related to accountability and performance. They also provide an excellent opportunity for networking by bringing together diverse practitioners from across the sector. Each Biannual Meeting is hosted by one of the ALNAP Full Members, which gives each meeting a distinct character and feel.

The 21st Meeting in Plaisians, the home of Groupe URD in rural France, was also the 10th anniversary of ALNAP. The meeting offered an opportunity to look back over the past decade, reviewing progress and improvements in performance and challenges for the future. The discussion took stock of how quality and accountability initiatives have contributed to changes in quality programming, and considered how to work towards future improvements. The origins and aspirations of ALNAP, but also of other quality and accountability initiatives, were presented and reviewed, and workshop groups debated where to go next at system, organisation and individual levels.

The 22nd Biannual was hosted by OCHA’s Regional Office for West Africa in Saly, Senegal. The meeting theme was “Compounding crises: combinations of vulnerabilities, risks and hazards in West Africa”. The meeting was conducted in English and French with simultaneous translation – a first for ALNAP.

A “humanitarian market place” enabled regional NGOs to make their work and products known to the wider humanitarian sector. On the first afternoon, participants heard and responded to presentations on compound crises from the national, regional and global levels; the following day began with three case study presentations on west African crises, after which five workshop groups discussed early warning, needs assessment, institutional flexibility, monitoring vulnerabilities and evaluating compound crises.

Follow up to the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC)

A side meeting during the Plaisians Biannual and a number of teleconferences brought together those interested in following up the work of the TEC, led by Groupe URD. Dissemination of lessons at a regional level has been led by AIDMI, who have undertaken a series of meetings and workshops to present best practices and lessons to local agencies in tsunami affected countries.

The new Humanitarian Performance Project is the key secretariat-led initiative arising from the TEC, and is described in more detail in section IV.

RTE working group

ALNAP has continued to mobilise and provide support to the cross-agency Real-Time Evaluation Working Group, and has been working to develop guidance on RTEs.

Presentations and attendance at other fora

The Quality and Accountability Initiatives group meets twice yearly and now consists of ALNAP, Collaborative Development Association, Coordination Sud, Groupe URD, HAP-International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project. Two meetings were held during the year, at which the directors from all the initiatives were present.

ALNAP staff and others representing ALNAP continued to participate in various meetings, seminars etc., including OCHA’s Global Symposium ‘Information for Humanitarian Action’, the International Aid and Trade event; the People in Aid International HR Conference; the Seventh Meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation; the LINGOS Annual Conference and the People in Aid and LINGOS workshop on field level learning.
IV. Three New Initiatives

*Humanitarian Performance Project*

Following the publication of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition reports the ALNAP Secretariat undertook a preliminary analysis of findings and recommendations. This led to a scoping exercise ‘Raising our game’, which emphasised that the humanitarian system has not yet developed a regular means of assessing and reporting on its overall performance. John Borton was commissioned to undertake an initial investigation, looking at similar mechanisms in other sectors, and to present his findings to the Members at the 22nd Biannual meeting (see above).

This discussion led to the birth of the *Humanitarian Performance Project*, which started with a stakeholder survey and a mapping of data collection activities within the humanitarian system. The project aims to test the feasibility of developing a mechanism capable of assessing and reporting on humanitarian performance.

*Evaluation Systems*

In a desk review undertaken in January-March 2008, ALNAP identified that the evaluation of humanitarian action (EHA) has slowly but steadily grown in both quantity and quality since the groundbreaking Rwanda evaluation in the 1990s.

Since its formation, ALNAP has facilitated case study-based reviews of humanitarian evaluations (Apthorpe et al, 1999), two reviews of how humanitarian evaluations have been utilised (van de Putte, 2002, Sandison, 2007), six meta-evaluations which have focused on the quality of humanitarian evaluation reports (ALNAP, 2001 onwards); two works on specific evaluation learning methods such as after action reviews, joint evaluations and RTEs (ALNAP, 2003; ALNAP, 2008; and ALNAP, 2008 forthcoming), and two sets of good practice guidance material (Hallam, 1998; Beck, 2005).

Much of this work has focussed on evaluation practice – for example, how to undertake evaluations, or how to improve the use of evaluation criteria; on related fields, especially those that support utilisation, such as communications and knowledge management; and on broader questions such as that of whether or not EHA should address the wider political contexts within which humanitarian aid takes place.

However, within this body of literature, there has been limited analysis of the organisational contexts and processes of evaluations. How do international agencies conduct evaluations, and why do they conduct them? What are the factors that alternate support and hinder the undertaking of evaluations and use of their findings? What kinds of policies, practices and utilisation mechanisms are in place, and what benefits do organisations see as a result?

The evaluation systems project aims to use a cross-network capacity building approach to address these questions and make tangible contributions to ALNAP members’ efforts to strengthen humanitarian evaluations.

*Regional Networks Initiative*

As was highlighted in *Reflections on Strategy Development* in Section I, networks are seen as an increasingly important way of enhancing the management, delivery and evaluation of both humanitarian assistance and recovery programmes.

In emergency relief scenarios, non-government organisations (NGOs) play a fundamental role in different phases of the project cycle - from response to recovery and rehabilitation. Analysts and field workers alike have noted that, in increasingly complex operating environments, there is a need to shift from single agency approaches to better networking and improved inter-agency coordination.

However, in spite of their potential to respond to new complex challenges, regional relief networks have been under-utilised, primarily because they have lacked the resources and funds that could help build sustainable structures, linkages and ways of working. Working with People In Aid and the other quality & accountability initiatives, ALNAP will be seeking ways to collaborate with and strengthen the capacity of a number of regional networks, in order to provide new opportunities to enable such networks to realise their true potential and enhance their role in improving humanitarian assistance.
V. Communications and Information

Central role of communications in new five-year strategy

Our new communications plan aims to provide a measured and carefully targeted flow of information between the different constituent parts of the ALNAP network, so that members can be kept up to date with what they need to know and when they need to know it. An effective network needs free-flowing communication channels between its constituent parts and our experience over the past 10 years will help us regulate an optimum flow - not too much so that members are swamped, but not so little that members are not informed.

We want to ensure that the experiences and lessons from past emergency operations are compiled, distilled, well presented and made available in ‘real time’ to operational staff. In this way our approach to communications reflects the central strategic objective of taking a more utilisation focussed approach and one which has more potential to make a real difference and bring about improvements and positive change when it matters.

We are also aware that we require better feedback and information as to how ALNAP products are used so that we can have a clearer understanding of our potential impacts. This will assist us with modifying and improving our future products. We will be developing monitoring tools to help us take a more systematic approach in collating end user data and will report on this on a regular basis.

ALNAP website

The website has been regularly updated to reflect new publications, information about meetings and other relevant news.

The average daily number of visits to the website in 2007/8 was 520. Once again, the lessons papers attracted high numbers of visits: the flood disasters paper, which was not posted until mid-January, was downloaded 461 times in the 10 weeks to the end of the period covered by this Report.

ALNAP also maintains the TEC Website and will do so until after completion of the second LRRD study being led by Sida.

Evaluation Reports Database (ERD)

The number of reports in the database has now reached 903; a larger number of new reports were added this year, and an analysis of the sources of these reports is shown below. This year, the analysis identifies joint evaluations as a separate category, most of these reports having formed the dataset for the meta-evaluation in the Review of Humanitarian Action.

There were 4,730 visits to the database during 2007/8.

![Figure 1: Sources of reports contributed to the ERD in the financial year 2007/8](image)

Planned improvements

The Secretariat will in 2008/9 undertake a review of the site with the aim of making it more dynamic, in order to facilitate better communication both to and within Network and to others.

The training materials will also be updated, and developed as a distance learning module.
VI. Financial report

The number of funding members continues to expand, reaching 35 in 2007/8; this has enabled us to avoid the need for increased contributions from existing funders.

In addition to the subscription contributions listed below, we are grateful to Members who have made ‘in kind’ contributions, notably:

Groupe URD for hosting the 21st Biannual Meeting;

OCHA for hosting the 22nd Biannual Meeting.

Groupe URD, OCHA (twice), and the British Red Cross for hosting meetings of the Steering Committee.

Groupe URD for seconding Modou Diaw for one month to assist with the arrangements for the 22nd Biannual in Saly.
1. **Income/Expenditure**

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<td>(£)</td>
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3. **Income**

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<td>2006/7 contributions received in 2007/8</td>
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<td>Book sales</td>
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<td>Costs reimbursed by collaborating organisations</td>
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<td>Other income</td>
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<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
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¹The ALNAP budget includes a sum of £5,000 to serve as a reserve fund to cover initial expenses incurred in the time between inception of a future evaluation coalition and its receipt of funds from its members; this provision will be carried forward from year to year until it is needed.
### 4. Member contributions

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</tbody>
</table>
ALNAP Full Members

ALNAP is a sectorwide network dedicated to improving accountability and performance in humanitarian action through learning, consisting of the following full members:

[Image of logos representing various organizations]
For further information please contact the ALNAP Secretariat

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ALNAP is hosted by the Overseas Development Institute.