

**Second**, development policies that take into account the potential for disasters can significantly reduce the impact of disasters, and save millions of development dollars in the process.

And **third**, relief programmes that strengthen local capacities can do much to lay the groundwork for successful rehabilitation, and, ultimately, development.

NGOs can have a strong positive impact on all three of these areas. But they cannot operate in isolation of the important role governments must play. Each national government has a responsibility to ensure the well-being of its citizenry. The extent to which governments look to NGOs as partners before, during and after disasters will, in large measure, shape the quality of life for all. NGOs, for their part, must work continually on their own skills and professionalism.

We must integrate relief and development. We must reach out to the most vulnerable whose lives and resources are at stake. I am confident that the NGOs on the ground are prepared to meet you more than halfway. It is important for all of us to take this challenge seriously. ■

*Vulnerable groups - such as women and children - display remarkable resilience in coping with disasters. This resilience can be reinforced by increasing local training, improving information flows, and building stronger linkages between relief and development programmes.*

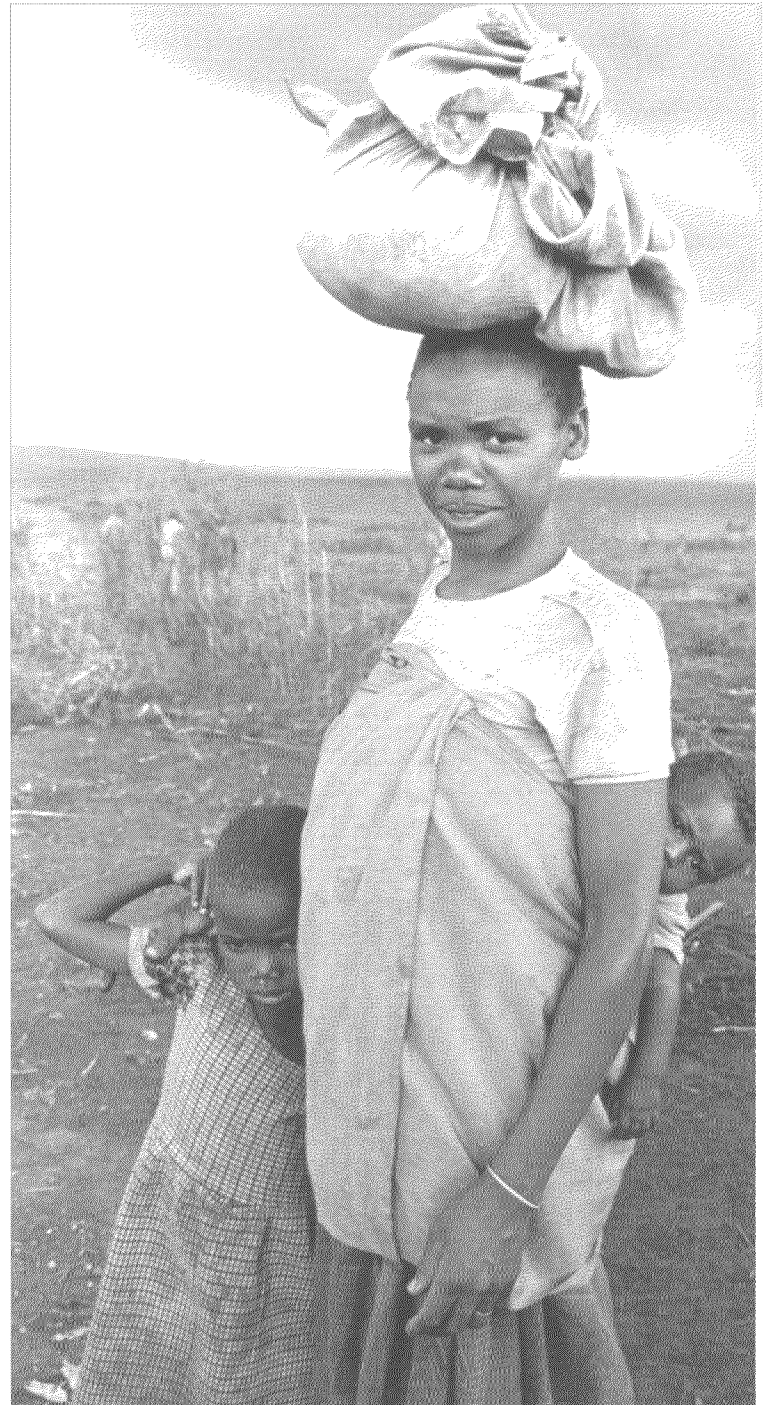


Photo: UNHCR

## **Recommendations/NGOs**

### **Priorities for NGO Effectiveness**

#### **1- Training**

**NGOs working in disaster relief need to develop and coordinate training for their staff.** We should continually strive to improve the management and technical skills of our representatives in the field. Governments should provide more support for the participation of indigenous NGOs in disaster training sessions sponsored by national and international organizations.

#### **2- Institutional Memory**

**NGOs need to give more emphasis to developing institutional memory within NGOs and as a relief community as a whole.** We need to stop reinventing the wheel for each new situation.

#### **3- Coordination**

**We need to give more support and attention to national NGO coordination bodies.** The local or national NGOs of every disaster-prone country need resources to develop coordinating bodies that disseminate information and provide a single point of contact for government agencies, the UN and international NGOs that arrive to provide assistance in times of disaster. This would greatly facilitate the flow of information and coordination of operations. We are all here to think globally about disaster reduction. We can think globally, but we must act locally.