



Ben Parker - Director, Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) and Interim Head of Office, OCHA Eastern Africa

Ben Parker is the **director of IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks)**, an award-winning, editorially independent humanitarian news and analysis service reporting on more than 70 countries directly to two million online readers a year and almost 50,000 email subscribers, and reaching millions more through syndication (see www.irinnews.org). He is also currently serving as the **interim Head of the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Eastern Africa.**

After helping to set up some of the first e-mail systems in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Kenya in the early 1990s, Ben co-founded IRIN in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide which exposed to the world a critical gap in humanitarian reporting. Hailed as a ground-breaking online multilingual information service for UN, NGOs, governments, businesses and media, Ben helped to lay the foundations of IRIN's editorial strategy of focusing on the parts of the world that are often under-reported, misunderstood or ignored, and also set up regional offices in Nairobi, Johannesburg and Abidjan. He subsequently helped AfricaOnline.com, a private company providing internet services to the African continent, in designing its content strategy and also assisted several UN organizations with their information management. Notably, while serving as a UN communications officer in Sudan from 2003-2006, he was closely involved in raising the alarm about Darfur internationally and released some of the first widely-available photos and TV footage of the crisis. He then returned to IRIN in 2006 as its global Editor-in-Chief and Director.

In June 2011, Ben was also appointed as the Head of OCHA in Eastern Africa, just as parts of the region were approaching levels of drought and famine that it had not experienced for almost two decades. He is currently playing a central role in UN efforts to contain the famine and deliver aid to those most affected in the region.