Contents

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Papers

Editorial: food security, complex emergencies and longer-term programming

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

This special issue of *Disasters* contains a selection of the contributions to an international workshop entitled 'Food security in complex emergencies—building policy frameworks to address longer-term programming challenges'. The meeting, which took place in September 2003, was hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and was funded by the European Commission.[1]

The rationale for the workshop was the need to respond to two main contemporary trends affecting food security. First, the number and scale of conflict-related food security emergencies are greater than ever, and, over the past decade, violent conflict has come to play a more predominant role in exacerbating the impacts of natural hazards, such as droughts, on food crises. While there is not necessarily a linear, causal relationship between hunger and conflict, the two are often related, especially when the conflict is long-standing and its ramifications are compounded by HIV/AIDS. Second, while donors are increasingly obliged to fund short-term emergency interventions, insufficient attention tends to be given to preventing and preparing for crises, while needs for extended forms of assistance in *protracted* crises often remain unmet. Resources for long-term development aid have stagnated or decreased in recent years.

Humanitarian and development agencies have started to find themselves in agreement on the need to identify new policy frameworks to guide responses to short-term and protracted emergencies and to address the need for sustainable food security. Yet, while a clear set of principles guides humanitarian assistance, concepts and capacities for designing longer-term policies and interventions require further development.

This workshop brought together 36 people from 20 agencies, including civil society, donor and research institutions, government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the United Nations (UN). The key objective was to pinpoint the elements of policy frameworks to enhance the resilience of food systems in complex emergencies. Thought was also given to the role of information in supporting this goal.

The papers in this special issue have been organised according to policy questions and food security issues, especially those pertaining to conflict or protracted crisis situations.

FAO's central concerns are set out in the keynote paper. In this, Pingali et al. note how farmers and communities show remarkable resilience in the face of crisis and how relief and rehabilitation efforts are far more effective if they build on the foundations of this resilience rather than relying exclusively on injections of external inputs, technology and institutions.

The paper examines the applicability of FAO's twin-track approach to food security policy, which links immediate hunger relief interventions with a long-term strategy for sustainable growth, under the conditions that prevail in protracted crises.

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Pingali et al. show how conflict has affected each of the three main dimensions of food security distinguished by FAO: availability; access; and stability. Availability losses due to conflict substantially outweigh the provision of food aid. People have found themselves unable to access food as a direct result of fighting or of being displaced, cut off from markets and relief supplies, deprived of employment and income or subjected to war taxes. Stability has suffered due to changes in prices and to markets, because of the loss of institutional support, including for safety nets, or increased exposure to natural hazards.

From the policy standpoint, these developments present FAO with four main challenges:

- to acquire a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the *resilience of agricultural and food systems* in protracted complex emergencies;
- to develop new approaches to *designing flexible, principled support* for that resilience in situations characterised by political manipulation and rapid change;
- to establish *responsive policy and planning frameworks* capable of putting these approaches into effect; and
- to make sure that these frameworks use *field research and information systems* that can adequately capture the complexity of complex emergencies.

In the second paper, Flores et al. point to the existence of a *policy gap* when addressing the needs of people affected by protracted complex emergencies. Their paper considers the apparent convergence of, on the one hand, a 'new humanitarianism' that is expanding to encompass developmental and sustainability considerations and, on the other, development agendas that are adopting a range of vulnerability concerns. While this appears to signal a new and hopeful consensus between these two domains—one that is strengthened by a shared commitment to 'peace-building'—the paper argues that this 'policy gap' nevertheless persists. The result is a predominance of standardised, supply-driven, short-term, commodity focused interventions, often poorly matched to the primary needs of affected people. This problem stems from the fact that agencies' policy frameworks are inadequate in a number of ways, including field staffing insufficiencies, uncertainties about ethical principles and links between aid priorities and donor governments' wider foreign and domestic policy agendas. Flores et al. conclude by outlining some key attributes of policy frameworks that may help to respond to the policy gap and identifying significant hurdles faced in translating these frameworks into effective action.

The final three papers consider food security in specific protracted crises: Sudan; Somalia; and Ethiopia and Eritrea. Pantuliano looks at an innovative, multi-agency initiative in Sudan known as the Nuba Mountains Programme Advancing Conflict Transformation (NMPACT). The NMPACT has built a long-term perspective into emergency responses through a focus on local ownership, capacity building and market revitalisation, which take place alongside activities aimed at conflict transformation and peace-building. Pantuliano contends that this shift away from externally driven interventions has been effective in enhancing the resilience of local communities, although she also acknowledges that the impact of NMPACT over time has yet to be gauged.

Hemrich takes up the need for a context-specific analysis of programme building in complex political emergencies in the next paper, which concentrates on the FAO–EC

Food Security Assessment Unit in Somalia (FSAU).[2] Hemrich shows how the characteristics of an emergency context influence the way in which food security analysis is carried out. He illustrates how the FSAU has responded to a shift in approach by stakeholders, from relief and humanitarian responses towards rehabilitation and development-oriented interventions, by expanding its analysis beyond the Household Economy Approach. Hemrich asserts that food security information in complex emergencies must not only cover outcomes (in order to identify relief needs and targets), but also, increasingly, the determinants of food security and livelihood assets (financial, human, natural, physical and social). The experience of the FSAU suggests that tailored methodological or process approaches can help to rationalise the choice of intervention and can contribute to constructive interaction between local institutions, governments, relief organisations and development specialists.

In the final paper, White explores food security developments in Ethiopia and Eritrea during the 1998–2000 border war between the two countries. The paper assesses the food crisis that emerged throughout the region in late 1999 and early 2000, reaching famine proportions in southeast Ethiopia. Although triggered by drought and widely acknowledged to be rooted in an underlying decline in the viability of rural livelihoods (especially pastoral ones), the crisis was portrayed by both the Ethiopian government and international NGOs as unrelated to the war raging in the border region. White challenges this view by examining the many ways in which the two were connected, not least with regard to donor behaviour, and how these linkages reflected longer-term ties between conflict and food insecurity in the Horn of Africa.

The papers in this special issue address aspects of food security that have a bearing on a difficult and much debated area of aid policy and practice: how to save lives, protect livelihoods and promote peace in protracted situations of conflict and instability. This is an area that has received little attention to date in the food security realm. Food security in complex emergencies has been considered mainly in the context of early warning systems and emergency food aid operations. Thus, it has been analysed almost exclusively in terms of food availability within a short-term, interventionist framework. The papers in this collection focus on the longer-term factors that determine how people defend their own food security in crisis situations, and on the ways in which external assistance can support such resilience across all dimensions of food security, including access and stability, within this extended timeframe. The authors aim thereby to help redress the balance, but they also recognise the challenges—technical, managerial, ethical and political—that are inherent in attempts to create longer-term planning frameworks in such situations.

The overall conclusions of these papers reflect those of the workshop itself and of the much larger number of papers prepared for it,[3] namely that there is a strong case for a broader consideration of food security issues in the context of international responses to protracted crises, and thus with respect to the research and information systems that inform these responses. Such crises are complex, highly differentiated, fluid, politically fraught and indefinite in duration. This means that there is little scope for applying generalised policy blueprints according to a response model comprising relief, rehabilitation

and development phases. It is necessary, though, to strive for policy frameworks with values, standards, approaches, objectives, methodologies and tools that can more effectively support the formulation of principled policies and programmes appropriate to the circumstances at hand. Such frameworks would allow short-term responses to be located within planning horizons that take their longer-term impacts into account, and that consider the full range of policy instruments available to food security planners. They need to include commitment and support for establishing research and information systems that improve our understanding of the prevailing social and political context, as well as how it is shaped by violence. They must also ensure that strong links are forged between knowledge and action so that such understanding is fed into policies and programmes.

Endnotes

1 The workshop was organised by FAO's Agricultural and Development Economics Division (ESA). Details are available on the FAO Food Security and Crisis website, http://www.fao.org/crisisandhunger/root/tivoli_en.htm.

2 Now the Food Security Analysis Unit.

3 The full collection of workshop papers is available on the FAO Food Security and Crisis website, http://www.fao.org/crisisandhunger/root/tivoli_paper_en.htm.

Food security in complex emergencies: enhancing food system resilience

Prabhu Pingali, Luca Alinovi and Jacky Sutton Agricultural and Development Economics Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations[1]

This paper explores linkages between food security and crisis in different contexts, outlining the policy and institutional conditions needed to manage food security during a crisis and to rebuild the resilience of food systems in periods of relative peace. The paper reviews experiences over the past decade of countries in protracted crisis and draws lessons for national and international policy. It assesses the different alternatives on offer in fragile countries to address, for example, the disruption of institutional mechanisms and the decreasing level of support offered by international donors with respect to longer-term expectations. It proposes a Twin Track Approach to enhance food security resilience through specific policies for protracted crises that link immediate hunger relief interventions with a long-term strategy for sustainable growth. Finally, the article analyses policy options and the implications for both short- and longer-term responses vis-à-vis the three dimensions of food security: availability; access; and stability.

Keywords: conflict, food security, food system resilience, humanitarian crisis, humanitarian response.

Introduction

'Hunger is the most extreme manifestation of poverty and human deprivation. Hunger in a world of plenty is not just a moral outrage; it is an infringement of the most basic of human rights: the right to adequate food ... Hunger breeds desperation and the hungry are easy prey to those who seek to gain power and influence through crime, force or terror' (FAO, AHP, 2002).

The interaction of poverty, food insecurity and crisis is a major factor in undernourishment in Africa (FAO, SOFI, 2002). Food systems that are repeatedly put under stress by conflict and institutional variability tend to move from predictable chains of production, processing, distribution and consumption to volatility. The response mechanisms adopted by the international community also seem inconsistent. In addition, although the need to address longer-term objectives is widely recognised, the apparatus for doing so does not seem to exist.

The Anti-Hunger Programme (AHP) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) clearly sets out the moral, legal, economic and political dimensions to hunger. Furthermore, it calls for a sustained and multi-pronged strategy to broaden direct access to food and to increase the availability of food, especially for resource-poor, rural communities (FAO, AHP, 2002). The programme asserts that rural and agricultural development must be an essential element of such a strategy because agriculture and off-farm income generation are a major source of revenue for the rural poor, comprising the majority of the people of the world who are hungry.

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The AHP identifies such a strategy as a Twin Track Approach, presented and endorsed in its entirety by the thirty-second session of the FAO Conference ('Strengthening Coherence in FAO's Initiatives to Fight Hunger') in December 2003. The latter noted that 'one track creates opportunities for the hungry to improve their livelihoods through policy reform and investment in agricultural and rural development. The other track equips the poor and hungry to take advantage of these opportunities by enhancing immediate access to food thereby increasing their productive potential. The two tracks are mutually reinforcing since programmes that enhance access to food offer new outlets for expanded production' (FAO, 2003; Broca, 2002).

This paper contends that the Twin Track Approach can be successfully adapted to a conflictual or post-crisis situation. It argues that such an approach must be based on a multi-disciplinary understanding of communities and their food systems, proposing modalities of intervention able to address key vulnerability issues, strengthening communities and their institutional inherent resilience. The paper identifies some of the issues related to food insecurity and hunger in the context of vulnerability, community- and household-level coping strategies and the limited response choices of the international humanitarian and development communities in crisis situations.

In September 2003, FAO organised an international workshop on the subject of 'Food security in complex emergencies—building policy frameworks to address longer-term programming challenges'.[2] Participants came from humanitarian and developmental institutions (research and inter-governmental agencies) and called for new response mechanisms during protracted crises able to address both short- and longer-term needs, save lives, protect livelihoods and restore the resilience of affected societies. The two major outcomes of the seminar were the identification of existing policy gaps and of possible ways to overcome the current limitations of response mechanisms. These gaps and limitations can mean that aid agencies, concerned governments and local actors end up 'surfing' among emergency, post-emergency and early rehabilitation operational modes, without being able to exit from the emergency phase over extended periods. Meanwhile, development agencies run the risk of being left to deal with the unintended 'blowback' from ill-informed crisis management thinking.

While the short-/long-term dichotomy is useful in directing policy options, long-term information for action must be predicated on an appreciation of changing narratives of resilience and resistance and the response combinations available to individuals, households and communities (Lautze and Raven Roberts, 2003). While these are new questions for FAO, it is vital that we pose them if we are to see a genuine reduction in hunger, food insecurity and related protracted crisis.

Crisis and food security

FAO's latest report on the state of food insecurity in the world (FAO, SOFI, 2004) highlights the fact that international efforts to reduce hunger in the developing world have fallen far short of the pace required to reach the 1996 World Food Summit goal of halving world hunger by 2015. As of July 2004, 35 countries faced food crises requiring

emergency assistance (table 1). According to FAO, over the past two decades, the number of food emergencies has risen—from an average of 15 a year in the 1980s to more than 30 a year from 2000. Much of the increase has occurred in Africa: the average number of annual food emergencies has tripled there. Drought, conflict and HIV/AIDS are cited as major contributory factors (FAO, SOFI, 2004).

Table 1 clearly indicates the growing importance of human agency in inducing crises, either directly (such as wars and civil strife) or through interaction with natural hazards that would otherwise have been of minor importance. Approximately 50 million people worldwide live in an area marked by a protracted crisis that has lasted for five years or more. Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan, for example, have each been in a state of protracted crisis for over 15 years (FAO, SOFI, 2004).

Crisis is a cause and an effect of food insecurity, and inadequate or inequitable access to assets (financial and others) are common to both (FAO, SOFI, 2004; Collier and Hoeffler, 2000; Berdal and Malone, 2000). The majority of the world's poorest people—and those with the least transferable skills—is situated in rural areas, locations where the opportunity costs of armed violence are low (UNU/IAS, 2004) and the incidence of conflict is high. In a study of 38 countries that experienced conflict between 1961 and 2000, Teodosijevic (2003) shows that per capita agricultural and food production levels are ten percent lower during a conflict and in the five years after a conflict than in the five years before the fighting began. The overall loss from conflict-related agricultural production in Africa between 1970 and 2000 was approximately USD 52–55 billion (FAO, SOFA, 2000). And, as Flores (2004, p. 7) notes, 'the average losses of US $4.3 billion per year in agricultural value added for all conflict-affected developing countries exceed the amount of the food aid bill'.

Crisis is often taken to mean violent, overt conflict or a rapid-onset disaster (like a flood or tsunami). However, while there is often a (not necessarily causal) relationship between these and acute food emergencies,[3] irrefutable evidence from the field has fuelled an emerging consensus on a multi-layered notion of crisis. This is implicated in, and interacts with, dynamic narratives of social relations,[4] food production systems,[5] unsustainable natural resource management,[6] resource predation,[7] institutional corruption and shadow economies,[8] epidemic disease, especially HIV/AIDS,[9] and more exogenous hazards, such as drought, flooding[10] or Force Majeure.[11]

Table 1 Food emergencies, 2004

Dominant variable	Africa	Asia	Latin America	Europe	Total
Human	13	3	1	1	18
Natural	5	1	0	0	6
Combined	6	1	4	0	11
Total	24	5	5	1	35

Source: FAO, GIEWS, 2004b

Comprehending the socio-political and economic dynamic of a community in crisis is therefore central to understanding food-related emergencies (Korf and Bauer, 2002; Le Billon et al., 2000). This has become even more critical because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as this touches on some of the most fundamental hierarchies, vulnerabilities and exclusions in any society (Campbell, 2003; UNICEF/UNAIDS, 2003). Crises triggered by HIV/AIDS have led to calls for new paradigms to analyse and respond to 'new variants' (de Waal, 2001) of famine affecting social and community structures and relevant institutions (UNAIDS/Penn State, 1999; Panos Institute, 2003).

HIV/AIDS has decimated already weakened governmental institutions, such as agricultural extension services (Qamar, 2004), and disrupted the transmission of traditional agricultural knowledge between generations (FAO, 2001; UNICEF/UNAIDS, 2003). Moreover, HIV/AIDS is increasingly a factor in protracted and complex emergencies in all regions (Goreux 2001; ICG, 2004), especially where high-value resources, including coltan, diamonds and timber, or banditry results in a concentration of young male workers in environments where their masculinity, a relative asset in their familial context, can become a liability (Campbell, 2004; ICRC, 2004).

The food emergency in southern Africa in 2002–03 clearly illustrates how human activity and a natural hazard (a regional propensity to drought) can interact to precipitate a protracted food security crisis. In 1992–93, a drought linked to El Niño negatively affected agricultural production but there was no major regional crisis. Ten years later, a similar drought was blamed for triggering famine. By this time, formal institutions in several countries in the region had been eroded, sometimes entirely. This was due to a range of human factors, including conflict, HIV/AIDS and inappropriate natural resource management or depredation (FAO, SOFI, 2002, 2003).

The attenuation of state structures and formal institutions does not always undermine the inherent resilience of social relations and can be conducive to short-term food security. For instance, in Somalia, in 1990, when the government only controlled the capital, Mogadishu, and a few other major cities, lack of institutions, non-responsive policies and an inability to enforce policy gave rise to state alienation and de-legitimisation (Harvey, 1998). It has been argued, though, that the absence of a formal, central government was more beneficial in economic terms than the repressive institutions and improper policies of the government (Mubarak, 1997). Certainly, informal and/or private *hawilaad* (meaning 'transfer' in Arabic), remittance and informal or illegal networks in conflict or crisis-prone areas strengthen the short-term access of vulnerable communities to food and other basic services.[12]

Protracted crises and the international response

During the 1990s, while the number of crises in which the human variable predominated was mounting, and their scale was becoming broader, the international community was moving from development-oriented assistance to emergency response. Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) followed a steady upward path between the 1970s and the beginning of the 1990s. After 1990, it either stagnated or started to decrease. In real terms, the reversal in ODA occurred much earlier.

Over the past decade, however, the volume of aid available has not risen to levels required to respond adequately to crises, even in the short term. Emergency assistance often is not even enough to cover strictly humanitarian needs.

The unprecedented global public response to appeals for the victims of the tsunami of 26 December 2004, a rapid-onset disaster, is in sharp contrast to the 'compassion fatigue' (Moeller, 1999) that can be inferred from frequently disappointing reactions to similar appeals for food emergencies arising from political crisis and war. The notion of a media driven policy of humanitarian intervention—the so-called CNN response—is controversial (Robinson, 2002; Cate, 2002). Yet, it is clear that donor governments do respond at some levels to pressure from their domestic (voting) constituencies. It is also apparent that the narrative of aid as endlessly being poured into a 'black hole' of passivity, conflict, terrorism, corruption and ethnic (ahistorical) strife is a powerful one that needs to be addressed (Minear et al., 1996; Clark, 2004; Carruthers, 1999; Macrae et al., 2004).

Moreover, while the financial response to emergencies and ODA for addressing the crisis over the long term have not been adequate, policy formulation and analysis have become increasingly sophisticated. In *Beyond the Continuum,* Macrae et al. (2004) chart the evolution of international aid and development policy in the context of a changing aid environment and shifting perceptions of vulnerability vis-à-vis the political economy of conflict. Their report shows how the discussion moved from the simplistic relief–development continuum, to a growing convergence between the conceptual and operational frameworks of humanitarian and development actors.

The acknowledgement that neither a rapid-onset crisis, like an earthquake, nor chronic violence, such as poverty, is experienced as a single, discrete and uniform event by all those affected (Wisner et al., 2004; Webb and Rogers, 2003) has led to recognition of the importance of understanding risk and corresponding resilience and vulnerability (Christoplos et al., 2004).

The perception of vulnerability differs across disciplines (Alwang et al., 2001; Wisner, 2005) and is often seen as structurally unrelated to risk (Løvendal and Knowles, 2005), with consequent short- and long-term mitigation options. It is becoming clear, though, that vulnerability, or the space of vulnerability (Watts and Bohle, 1993), is the dynamic social production of resilience, or the capacity to manage, adapt to, cope with, or recover from risks to livelihoods. These variables reflect social relations over time and are themselves social relations, linked to group hierarchies and resistances of the society in which they circulate. In other words, they are not only a product, but also producers, with the capacity to alter the forces that brought them into being.

This requires, as Collinson (2003) explains, a new set of questions and a philosophical and cultural shift in practices and outlooks. Organisations involved in crises must move on from the 'what' of short-term needs assessments to the 'why' and 'how' of vulnerability and resilience, taking into account operational experience, a growing body of research on the non-linear complexity of hunger and vulnerability to food insecurity and respect for community resilience. Paradoxically, the 'non-headlining' nature of agricultural development in an emergency context, which is usually represented in the media by large volumes of relief aid or mass displacement of people, can support this role, while also militating against high-profile advocacy activities.

FAO's evolving role in food emergencies

Johnecheck (2005) provides an excellent overview of theories of, and mechanisms for, monitoring and assessing food security as well as other variables, such as development and social progress. Escobar (1985) and Christoplos et al. (2004) have also traced the emergence of a 'development–underdevelopment' narrative, from its emergence in the late 1940s and 1950s, when it was considered equivalent to gross domestic product (GDP) and modernisation. The food crisis of the 1960s forced one of many re-evaluations of such paradigms, and led to a more active role for the international community with respect to interventions with relief stocks of food.

The World Food Programme (WFP), which was established in 1961, initially on an experimental basis, as a joint programme of FAO and the United Nations (UN), was given a mandate to establish adequate procedures for global food needs and emergencies. These included creating food reserves, assisting with pre-school and school feeding and implementing projects that involved the multilateral use of food to facilitate economic and social development. In 1975, the United Nations/FAO Intergovernmental Committee of the World Food Programme was reconstituted as the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes. It was granted an additional mandate to advance and coordinate short- and longer-term food aid policies recommended by the World Food Conference. In 1994, WFP became autonomous. Its Executive Board became operational in 1995.

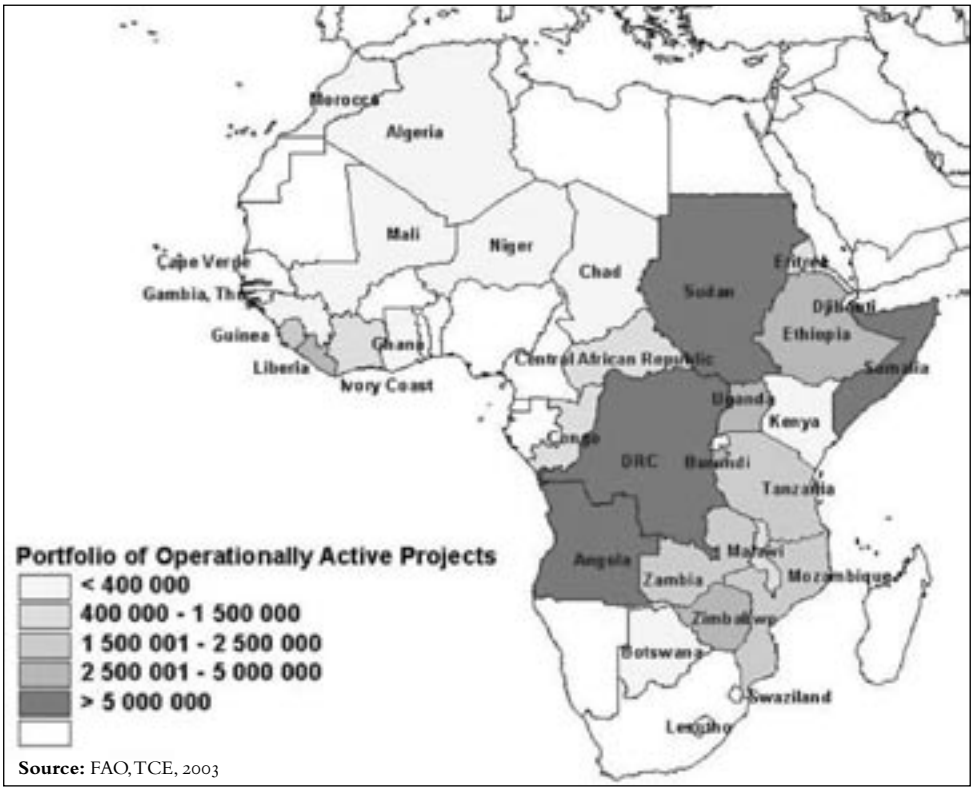
FAO's Office for Sahelian Relief Operations (OSRO) was set up in May 1973 to instigate short-term emergency relief operations in six countries of the Sahel-Soudanian region most seriously affected by drought. OSRO was expanded in 1975 to respond to requests for emergency assistance from any part of the world and was renamed the Office for Special Relief Operations. In 1991, it was transferred to the Field Operation Division as Special Relief Operation Service (TCOR), maintaining its mandate as FAO's focal point for emergency interventions in the agriculture and related sectors and its close relationship with other UN bodies.

In March 2002, it was upgraded to a Division for Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation (TCE) in the Technical Cooperation Department, which became effective in March 2002.

In the early 1970s, FAO established the Global Information and Early Warning System for Food and Agriculture (GIEWS) to observe food supply and demand. The Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES) was created in 1994 to monitor emerging threats from pests and epidemics. The information collected by these systems enables governments and international bodies to take action early in order to prevent emergencies from developing (FAO, TCE, 1997). From the 1990s, FAO's role began to expand from analysis to direct relief operations aimed at restoring the assets and production levels of the affected communities as soon as possible after the onset of a disaster.

FAO established its first emergency coordinating unit in the field in Rwanda in 1994 (FAO, TCE, 2003). FAO has been increasingly involved in crisis situations, mainly in Africa (see map), but also in Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, and, more recently, Indonesia,

Figure 1 FAO emergency interventions in Africa, 1994–2003



Source: FAO, TCE, 2003

following the tsunami. The value of contributions for emergency interventions in Africa has grown from USD 4 million before 1994 to more than USD 100 million in 2004 (the bulk of the most recent funding being earmarked for locust control operations in West Africa). This mirrors global trends in emergency aid compared to ODA (Macrae et al., 2004; Dollar and Levin, 2004; German and Randel, 2002, 2003).

The emphasis on human rather than unconditional state security/sovereignty provides a more neutral framework within which the UN can approach the aid–security linkage and encourage a focus on 'poorly performing' countries, whose economic indicators are consistently low and whose formal institutions are missing or deteriorated (Macrae et al., 2004).

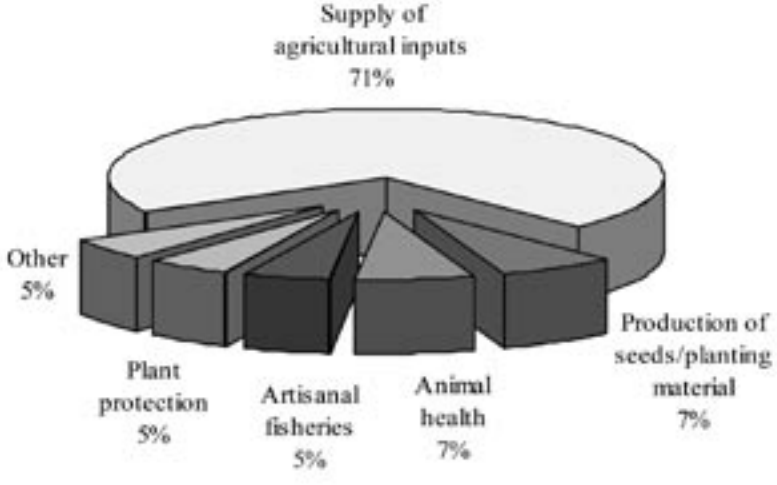
FAO is uniquely well positioned to assume this role in supporting agricultural sector rehabilitation in protracted crisis contexts. Institution-building and support to government remain crucial elements of the FAO agenda, but the organisation also acknowledges the validity of a humanitarian mandate to work with local communities and non-government actors when government structures are absent or in a state of extreme attenuation. It often assumes, therefore, a mediating and coordinating role between state and non-state actors, donors and implementing agencies and communities and advocators. FAO acts as a low-key coordination and technical forum in a

usually highly volatile and politicised environment, while maintaining status through the coordination of disbursements of high volumes of inputs and overseeing from a technical standpoint project proposals.

For example, technical agricultural issues 'made headlines' in Afghanistan in 2002 when the then Transitional Government drew up a code of conduct on imports of seed aid in emergencies, following rumours that agencies were importing Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) seeds and the failure of harvests because of the distribution of inappropriate seed types. The unsubstantiated GMO story was the predominant editorial angle rather than the proven suffering of hundreds of Afghan farmers who had wasted precious time and money. Meanwhile, the success of the National Seed Multiplication Programme was ignored. The programme had expanded and prospered despite looting and intimidation by the Taliban, meaning that Afghanistan emerged from 20 years of war and drought with a surplus of quality wheat seeds—rendering the import of seed aid largely redundant anyway. FAO was able to provide technical advice on the code of conduct, monitor seed importation proposals and provide factual information to the media to try to ensure that unsubstantiated rumours were not presented as facts.[13]

FAO's coordinating and oversight role in agricultural sector rehabilitation in protracted crisis is not only a function of its mandate as a UN specialised agency—a mandate that implies accountability over the long term. Unlike many humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), FAO has a core group of long-term technical experts in all fields of agricultural development, from animal health and pest control to commodity chain analysis and operational logistics. Many employees are former civil servants with a wealth of non-quantifiable knowledge of, and familiarity with, the nuances of local and national politics and bureaucracies. This expertise is

Figure 2 Types of emergency interventions in Africa, 1994–2003



Source: FAO, TCE, 2003

not reliant on project funding and can support sustained and longitudinal studies of the political economy of a crisis. These studies can inform project-based livelihoods assessments in the field as part of a twin-track research agenda that complements the asynchronous delivery of inputs and technical advice.[14]

Traditional approaches to addressing acute crises began with relief inputs (for example, seeds and tools and food aid) and progressed to development assistance, on the assumption that developing countries are on an improvement path, with disasters representing a temporary disruption of a linear development process. As Christoplos et al. (2004) note: 'the problem with all "re" words (reconstruction, recovery, revitalisation, among others) is an implicit assumption of a re-turn to a former, supposedly stable and desirable state of affairs'. FAO has concentrated its relief efforts on the traditional 'seeds and tools' approach (see figure 2). However, there has been significant advancement with regard to concept, strategy and action related to the management of protracted crises. Now the focus is on the long term and on rebuilding resilience, even as immediate needs are met. The next section discusses the emerging framework for managing crises in a twin-track mode.

Rebuilding the resilience of food systems: the Twin Track Approach

Food and food emergencies are by their nature political (Sen, 1981; Watts, 1983; de Waal, 1997). And, as the technologies and taxonomies employed to define and manage famine become more sophisticated, and the link between starvation and crop failure becomes a thing of the past, food insecurity as a social and political construct is becoming clearer (Devereux, 2000; Duffield, 2001; Lautze et al., 2002). Classic examples of the incidence of political famine are Ireland in 1845–48 (Ó'Gráda, 1999), Ethiopia–Eritrea in the 1990s (Duffield and Prendergast, 1994) and Sudan (Elmekki, 1999).

Responses to protracted food emergencies, though, have not yet fully incorporated the above complexity into their operations. The relief mechanisms adopted by the international community are based on the assumption that one can have only two very distinct intervention contexts:

- the development context, where a fully accountable government is in place and where interventions are designed to support governmental policies aimed at sustainability; and
- the acute crisis context, where interventions seek to provide immediate relief, on the understanding that such operations are temporary and that developmental instruments will assume prominence again in the near future.

In such a polarised environment, protracted crises are viewed as a series of acute crises, even when interventions are also long-drawn-out. Lack of government and institutional breakdown does not allow any other kind of intervention than those that are expected to respond to immediate needs, are of temporary duration, and are targeted towards saving life.

In such a context, interventions to tackle food insecurity mean essentially the delivery of food aid in adequate quantities and in a timely manner in order to reduce hunger immediately. The effort that poor households put into meeting short-term food needs often rules out investment behaviour that would have a larger payoff in the longer term. Instead, they are seen to rely on short-run coping strategies, some of which may in themselves erode social capital due to direct competition for common resources or the fraying of socially prescribed behavioural norms (Webb and Rogers, 2003). Coping itself, however, places enormous stress—physiological and social/institutional—on already weakened bodies, and each time it becomes harder for them to regain or approximate the status quo ante, let alone improve on it (Aron, 2002).

Protracted crises reduce a society's resilience to variability. In the context of food systems, resilience can be interpreted as a measure of the ability of a system to remain stable or to adapt to a new situation without undergoing catastrophic changes in its basic functioning. The risk of decreasing functionalities and provision of services in specific food systems becomes high when the society has been heavily affected by a weakened or attenuated public sector and loss of market structures.

The major difference between a resilience analytical framework and early warning systems is that the former does not aim to predict crises, but rather to assess the current state of health of a system, and hence its capacity to withstand a shock, should one occur (Lau et al., 2003). The intervention strategies that will augment the resilience of a food system should be based on the following principles:

- strengthening diversity;
- rebuilding local institutions and traditional support networks;
- reinforcing local knowledge; and
- building on farmers' ability to adapt and reorganise.

The focus ought to be on reconstructing the capacity of communities to find rapid, flexible solutions to problems and to balance power among the various interest groups and stakeholders (Scheffer et al., 2000; Berkes and Folke, 2002).

The process to implement the four mentioned principles to rebuild the functions of food systems and to strengthen their resilience needs to be defined within a clear conceptual and operational framework, adaptable to the specificity of each context. We propose a framework to be used both for the analysis and to develop response mechanisms to fortify the resilience of food systems. The framework takes into consideration immediate and longer-term needs, defining different response mechanisms, strategies and policies depending on the context. The framework employed is the FAO Twin Track Approach adapted and adjusted to address protracted crises.

The first track addresses recovery measures for rural livelihoods. The second track provides immediate support to vulnerable groups. The two tracks are intended to be mutually reinforcing, and the positive interaction between them should generate incentives to follow a path toward recovery. The context of each protracted crisis is unique, although most share general characteristics: institutional dysfunction/collapse; large-scale displacement; and disruption and dysfunction of livelihoods or a substantial part

Table 2 FAO Twin Track approach in protracted crises

Twin Track Approach	Availability	Access and utilisation	Stability
Rural development/ productivity enhancement	Enhancing food supply to the most vulnerable	Re-establishing rural institutions	Diversifying agriculture and employment
	Improving rural food production, especially by small-scale farmers	Enhancing access to assets	Monitoring food security and vulnerability
	Investing in rural infrastructure	Ensuring access to land	Dealing with the structural causes of food insecurity
	Investing in rural markets	Reviving rural financial systems	Reintegrating refugees and displaced people
	Revitalisation of livestock sector	Strengthening the labour market	Developing risk analysis and management
	Resource rehabilitation and conservation	Mechanisms to ensure safe food	Reviving access to credit system and saving mechanisms
	Enhancing income and other entitlements to food	Social rehabilitation programmes	
Direct and immediate access to food	Food Aid	Transfers: Food/cash based	Re-establishing social safety nets
	Seed/input relief	Asset redistribution	Monitoring immediate vulnerability and intervention impact
	Restocking livestock capital	Social relief/rehabilitation programmes	Peace-building efforts
	Enabling market revival	Nutrition intervention programmes	

of them. The Twin Track Approach provides a policy framework for addressing these common problems. Yet, in each crisis, the combination of responses adopted from the two tracks and the timing of implementation are context-specific and dependent on the risk analysis and management component.

Immediate needs

Increasing risk of institutional or state incapacity is often evident well before the crisis emerges (de Soysa and Gleditsch, 1999; Le Billon, 2003; Messer et al., 2001). Nonetheless, in these contexts, the international community refrains from intervening unless humanitarian aid is needed, in contrast to development aid, in a context of acute, transient crisis, where intervention is temporary, exogenous, immediate and aimed at saving lives.

Eventually, other instruments designed to be implemented over the medium or long term will succeed the humanitarian response.

Urgent action to guarantee direct and immediate access to food is essential and should remain central to medium-term planning. Protracted crises are often characterised by malnutrition and under-nourishment. This means that nutrition programmes are essential for short- and long-term interventions. It is crucial, too, however, to ensure that inputs are coordinated, particularly where therapeutic feeding is required. In relation to Afghanistan, Dufour and Borrel (2005) report how a policy gap meant that members of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and NGOs were arbitrarily delivering infant feeding formulas to women based on erroneous assumptions. In a context of inequitable and irregular access to safe drinking water and non-optimal weaning practices, this meant that some infants were at elevated risk of diarrhoea and malnutrition.

Food aid is essential both for availability (when production and import capacity is insufficient) and for access (with respect to those with non-existent or diminished entitlements to food). Even so, timing of distribution, as well as proper targeting of food aid, is crucial to ensuring that the intervention has a positive impact, avoiding having a bearing on local volatile markets and depressing local production. Adequate complementarities should be developed between the distribution of food aid and the means of producing food. Moreover, the appropriate mixture of responses to address immediate entitlement needs should be carefully calibrated. Often cash distribution is undervalued compared to food, even when the context would permit it and would ensure more efficient and effective outcomes. Cash distribution is often more efficient and aimed at fostering a local production capacity, where availability is not a limiting factor. There are reports of successful cash distribution schemes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Somalia, where food is available either because of increased imports or local production.

Finally, the food basket should be adequately composed to meet the food needs of people, especially when the duration of a crisis allows for proper planning of the relief response. Supplying exogenous seed varieties for several years may contribute to the disruption of traditional food systems and also create structurally dysfunctional outcomes.

Interventions over the long term

Interventions to support rural development and enhance productivity are crucial to stability and predictability. Nevertheless, intervention options may be very different depending on the characteristics of the crisis, the social institutions in place and the stability of peace processes, if any. Enhancement of food production/supply and livestock is normally one of the very first measures to be adopted. When a crisis is protracted, a society's productive capacity and traditional technical knowledge may substantially decrease, increasing the danger of relief dependency. A Track One intervention should therefore focus on rebuilding such capacities through restocking and protecting assets

and rebuilding knowledge and agricultural and livestock investments. The earlier these interventions occur, the lower the risk of losing knowledge and capacity.

Production should be supported by actions focused on the rehabilitation and conservation of resources to augment opportunities for sustainable increases in production. Natural resources and wildlife are often negatively affected by a crisis, both because of actual fighting and because of the predatory forces unleashed by a breakdown in authority and the 'commoditisation' of the resources themselves. Warlords and other illegitimate power brokers are often linked to commercial networks outside the country or region of conflict and use the confusion caused by instability to mask the process of laundering their financial or political transactions (Global Witness, 2003, 2004).

Conservation is a sensitive issue, and the design and implementation of programmes must be participatory and based on community consensus (Neumann, 2001). This is difficult in a war zone or in societies where traditional negotiating structures or interlocutors are absent or attenuated (Anderson, 1999) and where bush meat and other wild game are either important sources of protein or cash or other assets. However, consideration of how 'specific resource environments (tropical forests or oil reserves) and environmental processes (deforestation, conservation, or resource amelioration) are constituted by, and in part constitute, the political economy of access to and control over resources' (Peluso and Watts, 2001, p. 5) is crucial in ecologically vulnerable areas, where the loss of access to natural capital could cause long-lasting damage to livelihoods.

Income capacity and entitlements must be improved quickly to increase social productive capacities, rural infrastructure and a belief in the rehabilitation process itself. Public works are a visible sign of a reassertion of social order and can provide meaningful work as well as income in cash or kind. Strengthening market capacities, improving local production mechanisms and mostly ensuring security and stability are key to enhancing income opportunities and prospects for acquiring food.

Institutions should be strengthened to ensure a smooth transition to local ownership once the international relief effort is over. Institution- and capacity-building should be included from the very beginning in any investment initiatives and the entire process should be transparent and based on consensus and equity of access. This approach requires thorough research of past and present interventions before any policy frameworks are developed. In late 2001, the large-scale intervention in Afghanistan was predicated on market-oriented policy frameworks. Planners soon realised, though, that massive capital investment was not only required, but also expected, for infrastructural repair and societal rehabilitation. Afghans who graduated from Kabul University's Faculty of Agriculture, and who became involved in planning agricultural policy after 2001, felt entitled to state-run extension and support services. So too did the farmers, despite their proven resilience in the face of drought and war. They had all grown up during the Cold War, when both the Soviet Union and the US invested heavily in extensive irrigation and extension projects, cultivating an expectation of centralised planning and resources for what had hitherto been an intensely local activity (Christoplos, 2004).

Land rights and justifiability are essential to, and some would argue the *sine qua non* of, long-term peace (Alden Wily, 2003). Sometimes the end of formal hostilities presents

an opportunity for vested interests to move in to 'uncontested' land (FAO, 2002), especially where written cadastral records have been destroyed or oral histories dispersed or intimidated into silence.

The return of refugees or the resettlement of displaced people or veteran fighters is another highly sensitive issue, particularly in a context of extreme brutality, where ethnic cleansing or maiming were characteristic of the violence (Daniel and Knudsen, 1995; Terry, 2002). The policy options here range from strengthening local customary rights to protecting returnees or internally displaced persons (IDPs) to a consensual land tenure approach based on equality of access and transparency.

It will be vital to monitor food security, vulnerability and the impact of the different responses, both in the short and long term. Information available is often very limited and controlled by a small elite. Yet it is crucial to ensure adequate support for institutional capacity and policy development and to guarantee transparency and accountability to different constituencies.

There are also policy domains that belong to both tracks. Markets have proven to be among the most resilient institutions, being able to recover quickly and to function in the absence of government. Nonetheless, the lack of rules, heavy transaction and transformation costs and the inefficiency of the overall economic system often prevent markets from functioning. Policy options during the reconstruction phase may include controlling transaction costs, strengthening infrastructure, ensuring access to markets and providing adequate security.

Also needed is a better understanding of informal markets to create conducive programmes that target the poor. Additionally, it is particularly important to focus on traditional safety nets and customary insurance mechanisms so that adequate access and stability can be guaranteed.

Depending on the context, different combinations of safety nets should be adopted to tackle specific crisis/recovery processes. Policy measures, as well as tools used (food or cash) and the targeting mechanisms, should be defined according to the community's capacity to absorb and manage resources. The policy options range from direct transfers to public works programmes and credit mechanisms, such as micro-credit. Safety net instruments are essential to a sound recovery process and should be incorporated into medium-term plans from the outset. The safety nets should be composed of both food and non-food tools, including income support, guarantees of a minimum level of consumption and expanded participation in socially beneficial programmes, such as health, education, sanitation and nutritional improvement schemes.

Conclusion

Protracted crises need to be acknowledged as complex, but not as unmanageable processes involving social and human interaction, institutions, policies, and knowledge systems across several dimensions of time and space. Analysis of each crisis in the context of the dynamics of resilience and vulnerability outlined above should enable interventions that support the resilience of endogenous food systems while addressing some of the main causal factors in the evolution of the crisis.

Enhancement of food systems affected by acute and recurrent shocks needs to occur within a clear and flexible policy framework based on the FAO Twin Track Approach adapted to the protracted crises. Furthermore, the implementation mechanisms should be based on the overall principles of flexibility, accountability and transparent management. Adequate funding, processed through appropriate and effective institutional mechanisms, should be guaranteed to ensure maximum efficiency in implementing the Twin Track Approach in responding to changing and multifaceted local, regional and national institutional processes.

Food system rehabilitation ought to be seen as an essential component of economic system revival, especially in those countries where agricultural and pastoral systems play a major role both in terms of global economic production or labour and the employment of a large section of the population.

The Twin Track Approach could also be considered in the context of recent programming tools developed by the UN system and international financial institutions (UNDG/World Bank, 2005). To ensure further development, it should build on information provided by local information systems and should inform and contribute to field research. Case studies should be developed to allow the framework to be utilised in current crises.

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Endnotes

[1] Prabhu Pingali is Director, Agricultural and Development Economics Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; Luca Alivovi is Senior Food Security Advisor, Agricultural and Development Economics Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; and Jacky Sutton is Information and Communication Specialist, Agricultural and Development Economics Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

[2] See http://www.fao.org/crisisandhunger.

[3] See FAO, SOFA, 2000; Peluso and Watts, 2001; Richards, 2001; de Waal, 1997.

[4] See Watts and Bohle, 1993; Abrahamsen, 2000.

[5] See Watts, 1983.

[6] See Ohlsson, 2000; Adebajo, 2002; Elmi Mohammed, 2001.

[7] See Klare, 2001; Collier and Hoeffler, 2000; Malone and Nitzschke, 2004; Global Witness, 2003, 2004; Lunde et al., 2003.

[8] See Reno, 2000, Le Billon, 2003; Mansfield, 2004; Giustozzi, 2003, 2004; Green and Ward, 2004.

[9] See USIP, 2001; UNSG, 2004; Harvey, 2004; ICG, 2004; Barnett, 2003.

[10] See Wisner et al., 2004; Wisner, 2003.

[11] See Collinson, 2003; Berdal and Malone, 2000.

[12] See Horst and van Hear, 2002; Maimbo, 2003; Bernal, 2004; Pain and Sutton, 2005; MacGaffey et al., 1991; Mwanasali, 2000; Donini et al., 2004.

[13] Personal communication with Anthony Fitzherbert, who was the senior agronomist for the FAO Afghanistan Programme in 2002 and 2003. Also, personal experience of Jacky Sutton, who was the Information Officer for the FAO Afghanistan Programme in 2002.

[14] Personal communication with Jean-Francois Gascon, who was the FAO Emergency Coordinator in Rwanda and currently heads the FAO Emergency Desk for Africa.

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Food security in protracted crises: building more effective policy frameworks

Margarita Flores Agricultural and Development Economics Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, **Yasmeen Khwaja** Agricultural and Development Economics Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and **Philip White** Independent Consultant

This paper considers the principal elements that underpin policy frameworks for supporting food security in protracted crisis contexts. It argues that maintaining the food entitlements of crisis-affected populations must extend beyond interventions to ensure immediate human survival. A 'policy gap' exists in that capacities for formulating policy responses to tackle the different dimensions of food insecurity in complex, fluid crisis situations tend to be weak. As a result, standardised, short-term intervention designs are created that fall short of meeting the priority needs of affected populations in the short and long term and only partially exploit the range of policy options available. The paper discusses key attributes of agency frameworks that could support more effective policy processes to address longer term as well as immediate food security needs. Additionally, it points to some main challenges likely to be encountered in developing such frameworks and, with the participation of beneficiaries, translating them into effective action.

Keywords: aid policy, complex emergencies, conflict, food security, international aid system.

Introduction

Over the past few years, concern has increased throughout the international aid system about the scope and nature of aid responses in protracted crises. The latter are understood here to entail situations in which large sections of the population face acute threats to life and livelihoods over an extended period (years or even decades), with the state and other governance institutions failing to provide adequate levels of protection or support. The term has been applied most often where vulnerability is associated with violent conflict or political instability, such as in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia or Sudan. Some would argue, though, that countries like Malawi and Zambia, afflicted by the impacts of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which are compounded by weak governance and periodic economic and natural shocks, are also in a state of protracted crisis.

Concern with protracted crises is of two kinds. One relates to their prolonged and indefinite duration: these are situations in which no smooth or automatic transition from humanitarian emergency to 'normal' development can be counted on. The needs and priorities of affected populations are diverse, dynamic and highly differentiated,

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geographically and socially. Appropriate responses range from immediate life-saving interventions, to the promotion and protection of livelihoods, to support for infrastructure, institutions and services. Under pressure to satisfy standards embodied in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), donors are increasingly seeking ways to progress beyond humanitarian programmes to meet these diverse needs in both the short and longer term. Quite apart from issues concerning humanitarian principles, this raises difficult questions as to how different intervention objectives, timeframes and providing agencies and organisations should relate to each other at a technical and managerial level.

The second kind of concern pertains to the political character of protracted crises and the challenges this presents for agencies seeking to uphold the fundamental humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence. Where there is conflict and instability, not only are interventions complicated by institutional collapse and insecurity, but there are major risks of unintended consequences, both for aid workers and target populations, stemming from the introduction of aid resources into a politically charged, resource-scarce environment. In particular, relations between aid providers and local political actors, both within and outside the government, who may be belligerents or party to human rights abuses, are fraught with ethical and practical dilemmas. Furthermore, the strategic interests of donor governments, always a central factor in aid policy, have recently come to the fore with the identification of protracted crises as key sites for the global, post-11 September 2001 'War on Terror'. In contrast to the situation that prevailed during the 1990s, when donors were generally unwilling to enter into development dialogue with 'failing' states, such security concerns now underpin a new level of commitment to using development aid to engender a liberal-democratic transformation of protracted crises, if necessary by working with non-state actors (Harmer and Macrae, 2004). Ultimately, interventions are increasingly judged on how they are inserted into national and local contexts and whether or not they contribute to the building or rebuilding of national trust, capacities and institutions.

These recent trends have led to a resurgence of interest in what has been recognised for some time as an intensely problematic interface between the humanitarian and development spheres of aid intervention in protracted crises. Of late, there are signs that these two domains, hitherto with separate institutional, funding and staffing arrangements, as well as distinct aims and principles, are showing a capacity for convergence. Spurred on by the MDGs, poverty, inequality, exclusion and vulnerability have become mainstream development issues. Alongside social protection, support for livelihoods and better governance, food security is one area in which there is substantial, but so far largely unrealised, potential for development and humanitarian actors to work together in protracted crises. This paper explores that potential by highlighting deficiencies in prevailing policy processes to guide food security interventions in protracted crises. It examines some of the main challenges facing policymakers in this realm, and identifies key requirements for tackling them.

Protracted crises often witness disparities in the interventions that various international, and national, agencies utilise to address food insecurity. Depending on their mandate, agencies differ fundamentally in their perceptions of what constitutes a food

security crisis and how best to deal with it—especially what priority should be accorded to programming beyond immediate relief. A recognised problem is the potential for tension between the very broad range of possible options. Short-term interventions can and do have an impact on long-term food security. While many immediate interventions can comfortably sit within the context of a longer-term framework for responding to food insecurity, others may inadvertently diminish the likelihood of sustainable food security. This tension, and prevailing uncertainty over how to overcome it, amounts to what we refer to here as a *policy gap*.

This food security policy gap can be seen as an aspect of the 'relief–development divide', the bridging of which has long been a subject of debate among practitioners and analysts concerned with disasters and emergencies. The rationale underlying linking (short-term) relief with (long-term) development is that '[b]etter "development" can reduce the need for emergency relief; better "relief" can contribute to development; and better "rehabilitation" can ease the transition between the two' (Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell, 1994, p. 2). In its original form of a 'continuum from relief to rehabilitation and development', proposed by the United Nations (UN) in 1991,[1] it was soon criticised as unrealistic because of an implied linear, staged response sequence. Alternative formulations rested on 'a contiguum', 'links' or 'synergies' that allowed for the coexistence of interventions that served relief, rehabilitation and development objectives. Application of the linking concept in political crises, however, has remained a contentious issue for humanitarians (a matter to which we return later).

In the past decade, there has been acknowledgement in both humanitarian and development camps that food security crisis interventions should, in principle, address more systematically the short- and longer-term food security concerns of affected populations. To some extent, this requires an understanding that short-term interventions have an endogenous effect that can be either positive or negative for longer-term food security.

In this paper, we argue that, given the constraints and opportunities present in protracted crisis contexts, the development of food security policies must be based on effective policy frameworks. Indeed, all interventions are the outcome of frameworks of some kind. A common problem, though, is that these frameworks have often tended to be rigid and restrictive in nature. The multidimensional (political, social, ethnic, religious and economic) and dynamic features of protracted crises have not been adequately factored in. Hence, food security interventions have frequently ended up remaining within a standardised set of responses, which has not taken account of the changing environment in which they are implemented.

In the next section, the paper briefly discusses the policy gap and its manifestations. This is primarily to illustrate ways in which failure to take note of the dynamics of crisis contexts may mean that interventions appropriate at the start can have perverse effects as crises evolve. The following section looks at food security in some detail. The paper asserts that food security crises, often emerging within broader crises, are multidimensional and not static in nature. Understanding how the overall crisis affects different dimensions of food security over time is critical to developing optimal policy

responses. Although there is limited value in defining crises according to type, history can provide important pointers for producing a broad tool kit of policy options and applying them in a flexible and context-sensitive manner. In the final section, the paper examines the characteristics of policy frameworks and what attributes would help them to address this policy gap. To illustrate the process, it also refers to the linkages between international and national actors with respect to defining and implementing food policies.

The food security policy gap

The nature of the lacuna

It is regularly observed that there are fundamental weaknesses in the processes and structures through which international organisations formulate policy to address food insecurity in protracted crises. In particular, there seems to be a policy gap. Crises that stretch into the longer term and are uneven across space and time appear to demand responses with a more extensive planning horizon and adapted to diverse circumstances. However, there is little in the way of established good practice in this regard, or even agreement on principles and approaches to guide such practice.

Figure 1 provides a generic representation of this policy gap in terms of the process via which international assistance policies to enhance food security in specific crisis zones are typically formulated. The large circle at the top represents a protracted crisis context, encompassing an assortment of often-interacting causal dimensions and their short- and longer-term food security impacts. People and communities are affected by, and respond to, these impacts (whether as perpetrators, beneficiaries or direct or indirect victims) in ways that influence the nature and evolution of the crisis itself, as do neighbouring states, world powers and informal cross-border and global networks seeking to satisfy their respective political and economic interests. These responses present opportunities for, and place constraints on, external assistance aimed at helping people survive and cope better.

The knowledge base for the formulation by international actors of food security and other interventions tailored to specific crisis contexts is supported by an array of research and information systems. These provide short-term data on natural and anthropogenic hazards and interpretations of their ramifications for the current humanitarian, food security and political situation, as well as background facts and figures on the country and affected areas. Such systems include international media networks, which are often important drivers of policy.

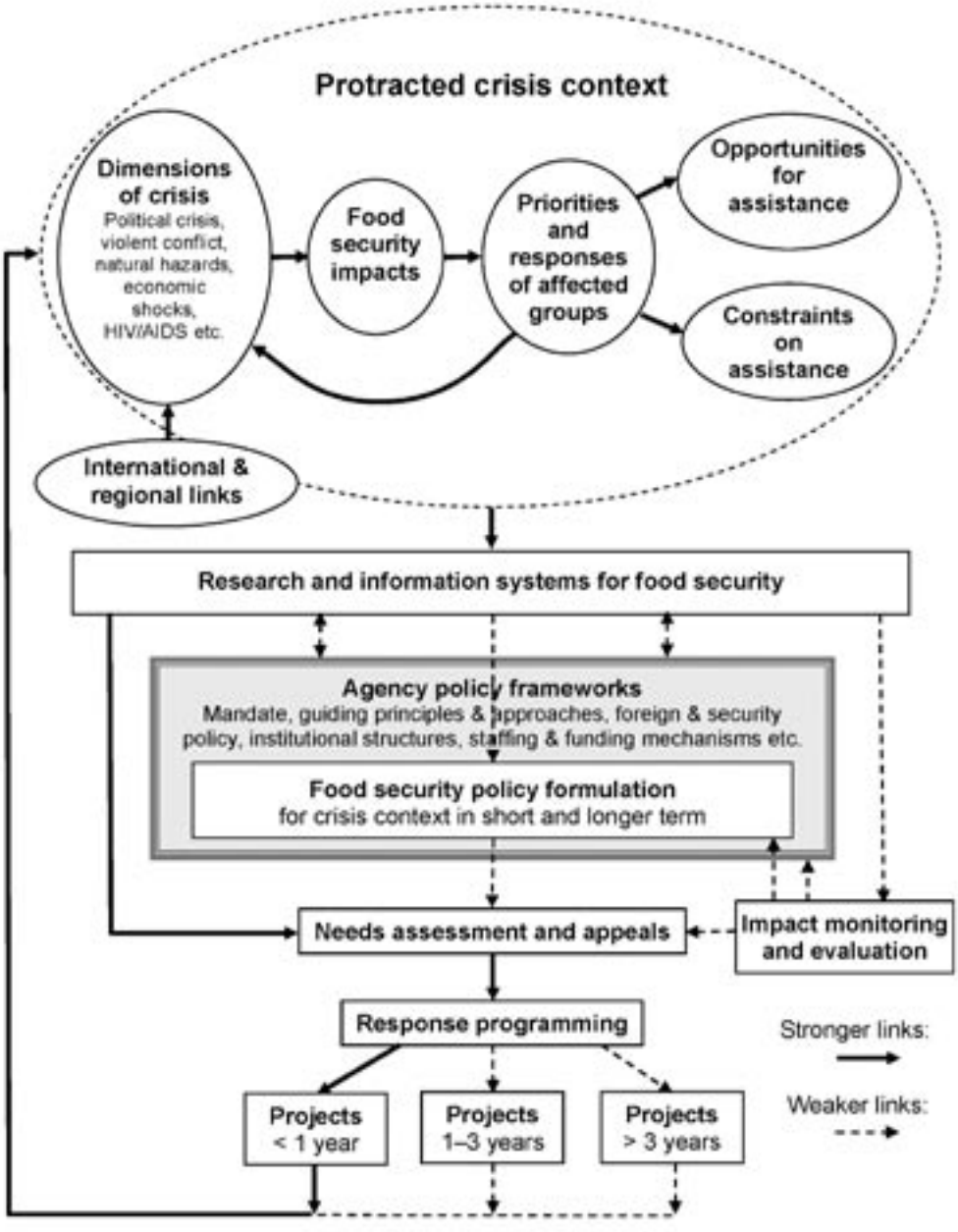
In principle, the design of short- and longer-term agency responses to a given context, including their rationale, priority objectives, target groups, strategies and methodologies, and broad content, is the product of a deliberative policy formulation exercise (in the centre of the diagram). The exercise may have a variety of overall aims, such as:

- anticipatory mitigation of a crisis through political, social or economic measures;
- humanitarian, in the narrow sense of immediate saving of lives, or broader with respect to protecting or promoting livelihoods and longer-term food security;

- rehabilitation or reconstruction of infrastructure, institutions and services; and
- influence on political systems, governance and social capital.

While based on the output of research and information systems, policy formulation for a specific context invariably occurs within and is conditioned by a broader *policy*

Figure 1 The policy gap: weak links in policy processes for designing food security responses in protracted crises



framework (represented by the grey box in the diagram). This comprises the extant set of approaches, principles, standards and goals to which an intervening agency subscribes.[2] Policy frameworks, as the diagram suggests, also guide the design of, and may themselves be informed by, research and information systems.

Policies are realised through a programming process that determines the detailed content, scale and targeting of interventions and their phasing over time. This requires a needs assessment exercise, which, in principle, provides information on the numbers and location of different target groups and the magnitude of their needs. Where UN agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are concerned, its scope and content may depend on the outcome of an appeal.

The distinction made here between policy formulation and needs assessment deserves a closer look. Policy formulation is characterised in this paper as a process aimed at determining the selection of appropriate policy options (including whether to intervene at all), the nature, purposes and methods of intervention and the identity of target groups. Needs assessment, meanwhile, takes these parameters as given, and goes further to quantify target groups and the mixture of inputs required for programming purposes. From a humanitarian sector standpoint, Darcy and Hoffman (2003, p. 26) take a broader view of needs assessment. They see it as informing decision-making in relation to: whether to intervene; the nature and scale of intervention; prioritisation and allocation of resources; and programme design and planning. Yet, they note that, in practice, the assessment process has certain weaknesses, which are largely in areas we would ascribe more to the policy formulation domain, and which we discuss below. They further accept (Darcy and Hoffman, 2003, p. 30) that strengthening livelihoods and reducing vulnerability have become central to humanitarian responses in protracted crises and that contextual factors will determine what forms of intervention are appropriate. Thus, if policy formulation is expected to address short- and longer-term objectives, needs assessment must cover not only food needs or immediate production inputs, but also broader sectoral and livelihood requirements within this longer-term perspective.

The output of programming is a series of projects, usually with predetermined duration, coverage and resources, which influence the crisis context—hopefully in ways that are intended. The nature and extent of this influence are in principle tracked through impact monitoring and periodic evaluation and lesson learning exercises. Using existing or ad hoc research and information outputs, these feed back in to, and allow for the modification or reorientation of, both policies and assessed needs, and, to a degree, of policy frameworks themselves.

The weak links in this process (portrayed by the dashed arrows in figure 1) constitute the policy gap:

1. Research and information systems are normally geared towards providing timely assessments of the dimensions of the crisis in terms of the evolution of a conflict and other hazards, their food security impacts, and, to some extent, the ways in which people respond and try to cope. They focus primarily on generating data that can be used to estimate needs for standardised, short-term, commodity-focussed responses.

They are less adept at generating knowledge relating to factors that determine the longer-term development of food insecurity, especially the dynamic impacts of a political crisis and violent conflict and how people demonstrate resilience in the face of such threats (Lautze, 2003). Consequently, they generally fail to provide a strong knowledge base for identifying opportunities for assistance and corresponding constraints. This makes for weak links between contextual assessments by research and information systems and policy formulation.

2. The contribution made by deliberative policy processes to programming for specific crisis contexts is often cursory. In addition to shortcomings in contextual analysis and knowledge, this also results directly from deficiencies, contradictions and inconsistencies in agency policy frameworks (which we focus on below). As a result, there is a lack of mechanisms and reference points for setting priorities to address food insecurity in the short and longer term in different local contexts in states in protracted crisis, based on people's needs and expectations.
3. By default, the programming of responses has been guided, therefore, more by a needs assessment exercise that takes the *nature* of the response (a policy issue) as given. As Darcy and Hofmann (2003, p. 16) assert, 'needs assessment is often conflated with the formulation of responses, in ways that can lead to resource-led intervention and close down other (perhaps more appropriate) forms of intervention'. Two reasons for this, noted by Darcy and Hofmann, are that needs assessments have a propensity to be one-off exercises and so fail to capture the changing nature of needs and risks as crises evolve, and they are inclined to be sector specific and thus weak on cross-sectoral analysis. Thus, the appropriateness of traditional, standardised, supply-driven emergency response activities has tended to be largely assumed, even into the longer term. Capacity to analyse and adapt to change has been restricted.
4. Hence, resulting projects have often been vehicles for short-term, commodity-focussed interventions, usually of less than a year in duration and dominated by food aid and, to a lesser degree, the provision of seeds and tools. There is uncertainty about—or just a lack of attention to—the relationship between short- and longer-term approaches, particularly over how far shorter-term life-saving measures, which are very likely to have longer-term effects on food security, can become embedded in longer-term policy frameworks.
5. It has proved difficult to identify the extent to which short- and longer-term interventions address the critical food security concerns of affected populations. Impact monitoring and evaluation, where carried out at all, have tended to focus on process aspects of interventions, that is, the efficiency and timeliness of implementation and, in some cases, the achievement of outputs (Longley et al., 2003; Hofmann et al., 2004). While some information may be fed back into needs assessment, in general, they rarely address impacts and the appropriateness of policies responsible for shaping the response.

Manifestations of the policy gap: some examples

The upshot of these weaknesses is that support for people's efforts to maintain their livelihoods and food security over the longer term within protracted crises is often

lacking. Well-targeted and well-timed emergency food aid interventions are vital for boosting short-term food availability and improving access for those in immediate need. However, they are relatively expensive and prone to procurement and logistical delays and often have adverse production, market and livelihood impacts. It is possible that, with the right kind of support, many who become dependent on food aid might have avoided needing it in the first place, and/or might be able to recover their livelihoods and reduce their need for food aid more quickly. Meanwhile, others who are food insecure but beyond the reach of food aid due to resource and logistical constraints might avoid starvation and ill health. A few examples will serve to illustrate this.

A study by Save the Children (UK) of food security interventions in the Great Lakes Region (Levine and Chastre, 2004) attests to the 'knee-jerk' quality of responses that result from weak policy frameworks tied to inadequate generation and use of knowledge. The appropriateness of interventions to address the food security constraints faced by people in seven case-study areas in Burundi, the DRC and Uganda was examined. Crisis contexts covered ranged from ongoing severe insecurity involving population displacement, to rural post-conflict environments marked by drought and an influx of returnees, to urban settings affected by conflict or a natural disaster. Available information on livelihoods and food security was collated to identify critical food security constraints in each case. These were compared with the food security interventions launched to see how and why they were implemented, how well they were targeted and what impact they had.

This study drew conclusions that accord with those of several others conducted in recent years and are broadly applicable in many other protracted crises. It found that: 'many, if not most, food security interventions failed to address the needs of people affected by crises'; 'agencies used the same narrow range of responses in nearly all circumstances ... [which] deal with symptoms not causes ... [which] focussed narrowly on food production ... [and which] were often not cost-effective';'[b]ecause of various pressures, organisations were unable to think through the appropriateness of responses'; and '[s]eed distributions and nutrition interventions ... [were] based on a series of questionable assumptions that remain largely untested'. While rapid assessment was shown to be possible despite insecurity,'[r]esponses often did not address the real issues because assessments were not done to determine what these issues were'. Finally,'most actors gave a low priority to learning lessons and finding out the impact of interventions' (Levine and Chastre, 2004, p. 21).

The study examined the 'menu' of interventions on offer in the Great Lakes Region: free food distribution; seed protection rations; food-for-work; cash-for-work; seed and tool distributions; demonstration gardens and cooking lessons; road reconstruction; and 'non-relief aid'. It then made some familiar observations on the conditions under which each might be appropriate—many of which simply did not apply in most areas under review. For instance, seed and tool distributions occurred in each case, yet in none had it been established that local availability of, and access by targeted households to, seeds or tools had hindered production. Based on an inaccurate model of a subsistence household economy, this had simply been deduced from the fact that many households did

not produce an overall marketable surplus. More appropriate in most cases were cash transfers to boost entitlements and road reconstruction to improve security and market access. Unfortunately, though, donor funds for the former were limited, while the latter was rarely included in programming aimed at food security. Likewise, 'non-relief' interventions were on a much smaller scale than was necessary to confront crisis conditions.

Both information systems and responses often reflect an inappropriate dominance of short-term approaches, particularly food aid, as Philip White's paper in this issue discusses in relation to the food security impacts of the 1998–2000 Eritrea–Ethiopia war and its longer-term historical context. In this case, both short- and longer-term responses fell victim to the policy gap. Policy paralysis set in until the international media exposed famine conditions, followed by a flood of food aid after the famine had peaked, creating its own problems and inhibiting subsequent restoration of pastoral livelihoods in the worst-hit areas.

Such weaknesses are typical of aid interventions to support livelihoods and food security in long-running crises, and are not confined to Africa. In a study of livelihoods programming in Afghanistan, Pain (2002, p. vi) found that:

> 'The dynamics of the chronic conflict in Afghanistan has been poorly understood, not least in terms of its effects on livelihoods. Aid practice has been driven by simplified stories about the country reinforced through short-term humanitarian based programming that has emphasised delivery and paid little attention to learning. The result has been a monotonous landscape of interventions'.

Another example offered by Dufour and Borrel (forthcoming) refers to the choice of methods to treat severe acute malnutrition in rural Afghanistan in 2001–02. The effectiveness of the large-scale emergency response was limited by the ability to manage aid supplies, as the need to invest in strengthening the capacities of the ministry of health had not been adequately considered. Funds were available in excess to provide therapeutic feeding but not to build local capacities.

Aid policy in Afghanistan still tends to be grounded in the assumption that agriculture is the mainstay of food security and that agricultural investment will itself address livelihood needs. This is in spite of contrary evidence that suggests that households are diversifying their income-generation strategies so that food security is now based more on trade, seasonal migration and remittances (Pain and Lautze, 2002). The case of Afghanistan highlights well how vulnerability relates to livelihoods in the context of recovery from war and ongoing violence. The design of programmes learns little from previous experience, even within the same international organisations. Christoplos (2004, p. 26) concurs, citing aid approaches in Afghanistan as an example of a 'yeoman farmer fallacy', which sees production on their own farms as the way virtually all rural dwellers try to alleviate poverty. According to Christoplos (2004, p. 1):

> 'Current agricultural rehabilitation and development efforts are supply-driven, and are poorly anchored in an understanding of what rural people themselves are striving to achieve as they rehabilitate and develop their own livelihoods'.

A further aspect of the policy gap is failure to appreciate the political economy of many protracted crises and its implications for the aid encounter. Aid interventions conceived and implemented as technical projects, without regard for the political context and the manner in which they are likely to become incorporated into the dynamics of conflict and subjugation, run the risk of deepening relations of exploitation for intended beneficiaries. Examples of this are many. The attempt by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 1992–93 to undermine warlords in Somalia by flooding the country with food aid to bring down food prices had the perverse effect of increasing the amount of food they appropriated while also undercutting local farm produce (Natsios, 1997). Similarly, attempts by aid agencies to boost the self-reliance of displaced Dinka communities in south Darfur, Sudan, in the mid-1990s by replacing food aid with agricultural inputs and loans programmes neglected the relations of subjugation in which Dinka were trapped vis-à-vis surrounding, mostly Baggara Arab, communities and actually increased their dependence (Duffield, 2002).

In Ituri, DRC, where Hema-Lendu disputes were stoked into open conflict in 1999 by a combination of economic spoils, the political manoeuvrings of national rebel groups, the foreign backing of neighbouring states and international economic interests, these processes follow a pattern rooted in social and land relations constructed in colonial and post-colonial periods. Pottier (2003) shows how access to land and its rich resources is central to the conflict. Under President Mobutu Sese Seko's 1973 *Bakajika* land law and in return for political support, Hema elites had been allowed to acquire land that Lendu farmers considered ancestral and inalienable. They established cattle ranches, many of which were encouraged by international aid projects during the 1980s. The rebel factions with which they are associated now control the land's mineral wealth. Lendu agriculturalists have been reduced to squatters on their former lands, working as miners and performing other services under a variety of forced labour regimes (driven by the threat of eviction). Allegiance to warlords is changeable and induced more by poverty and food insecurity than by political beliefs.

Pottier (2003) argues that those involved in peace-building and agricultural rehabilitation must examine the social dynamic that accords warlords their iron grip on the population. They need to look at land, institutionalised vulnerability, the resulting need for institutionalised protection, and labour. The challenge is to plan for the removal of the conditions of insecurity that give warlords coercive leverage over so-called ethnic followers. In addition to measures to protect and stimulate the post-conflict resumption of local food markets, a commitment by agencies to land reform in Ituri would help to reverse the region's extremely high levels of livelihood and food insecurity and thus weaken this stranglehold.

These examples point to two particular ways in which the policy gap has manifested itself in the tackling of food insecurity in protracted crises. Both have to do with the *responsiveness* of international engagement in complex, fluid contexts. At a technical level, there is a failure to think beyond the box of standardised interventions decided on at a distance, both in space and time, from the specific problems, opportunities and constraints that such contexts present. There are also shortcomings when it comes to

analysing and responding to needs creatively, monitoring impact and learning lessons. Second, there is a reluctance or lack of capacity to appreciate that aid interventions in protracted crises inevitably have political as well as technical and economic consequences, which can pervert intended benefits for affected populations. Neglect of this political dimension means that interventions can at best have mixed impacts, and at worst can exacerbate the plight of the most food insecure.

Understanding food security in protracted crises

The examples above illustrate a well-established feature of protracted crises: their complexity, diversity and propensity for dynamic change severely restrict the scope for establishing context typologies for which policies can be designed in advance, blueprint fashion. The food security policy gap has arisen partly out of a failure to understand this constraint. Agency interventions have often been based on experience gained in other environments (in many cases, natural disaster zones), and lessons from these experiences have tended to be uncritically applied to the situation at hand. Yet it is also the case that 'food insecurity' itself encompasses a very diverse range of circumstances, which vary greatly between contexts and over time and cannot be adequately addressed using a narrow, standardised portfolio of policy responses.

The dimensions of food security

Food security/insecurity has been defined in various ways—Maxwell (2001, pp. 15–16) lists as many as 32. Nowadays, however, it is generally accepted that a food security policy endeavours to ensure that 'all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life' (FAO, 1996). For analytical and policy formulation purposes, we may consider three dimensions to food security: *availability of food; access* to food; and *stability* of supply and access to food. With appropriate sanitary conditions for food utilisation, these are all necessary for an individual to be food secure.

People on the margins of the global economy tend to occupy numerous and varying positions along a food security–insecurity axis, according to the extent to which their changing social, political and economic circumstances put them at risk of not having enough to eat. Addressing food insecurity necessitates understanding what these circumstances are for different groups of people and how they are changing, so that mechanisms can be put in place to reduce the danger.

In any particular food security crisis, one or more of these dimensions are compromised. Effective support for restoring food security requires understanding how the full set of mechanisms that guarantees continued physical and economic access to food has been affected by a crisis. This demands an appreciation of crisis contexts that goes well beyond the domain of food provision. While the outward features of many food crises are similar, policies and interventions, for maximum impact, need to be based on an understanding of the underlying processes that have resulted in specific outcomes in relation to these food security dimensions.

Four elements need to be factored in when designing and implementing appropriate interventions in a protracted crisis. First, consideration of how the dynamic nature of a crisis affects the food security dimensions individually and collectively over time. Even when all three dimensions are affected, there is a need to comprehend the causal relationships between them. Second, the socio-political context of the crisis needs to be considered alongside the economic situation, precisely because it too determines how people move along the food security–insecurity axis. Third, the nature of the crisis itself can result in institutional and governance arrangements that prevent even the best-designed policies from being effectively implemented. Finally, agencies that do factor these three aspects into their responses must be aware of the interaction between short-term outcomes and the long-term objectives for food security.

For a long time, thinking on food security viewed mechanisms that ensured food availability (either through production, imports or food aid) as sufficient to prevent hunger. However, the distinction between the availability of food and people's ability to acquire it, given much weight by Sen's influential (1981) work *Poverty and Famines*, is an important one. While sufficient food in terms of *quantity* and *quality* must be available in the right place at the right time, households and individuals must have adequate resources to produce or acquire enough food for a nutritious diet, and should not be at a risk of losing such access (or 'entitlement' in Sen's terminology) (FAO, 2003). During a crisis, the instability generally associated with variability in prices and weather deepens the impact that economic and environmental factors have on availability and access, even as these interact with political factors to generate food entitlement failures. The 1998 drought in Sudan, for example, introduced a severe food availability constraint that took effect in ways that were strongly conditioned by the highly conflictual political landscape.

Food insecurity in different crisis contexts

As one of the most prominent and widespread forms of vulnerability, food insecurity exists both within and without situations recognised as 'crises'. A 'crisis' can usefully been seen as a time of danger when decisive action is needed to avert a disaster, and a 'food security crisis' as a time of extreme food insecurity when the main danger identified is one of widespread loss of access to food, perhaps leading to famine. Food security crises are not only or necessarily a subset of broader protracted crises, but the latter most often do have severe food security implications that often reach crisis proportions.

Walker (1989, p. 66) defines famine in terms of 'a socio-economic process which causes the accelerated destitution of the most vulnerable . . . to a point where they can no longer maintain a sustainable livelihood'. We would prefer to see famine in more extreme terms, involving starvation and excess mortality as well as loss of sustainable livelihood. This definition is, however, useful in highlighting not only the close connection between food security and livelihoods (or food insecurity and destitution), discussed below, but also a view of a food crisis, up to and including the point at which it becomes a famine, as the culmination of a process that, over time, results in failures in people's mechanisms for maintaining food security. Yet, food security crises are still regularly

treated as purely transitory phenomena (even when in practice they may last several years) with a primary focus on the shocks, natural or human-induced, that trigger them and on the immediate measures required to restore acceptable food consumption levels. The restoration of food security by concentrating on the mechanisms that led to crisis often is not defined as part of the response.

In this paper, we consider food security crises from this longer-term perspective. This leads us to the general proposition that short-term measures for maintaining food consumption in crises should be based, where possible, on an examination of underlying and trigger factors, and of how they may be tackled by a mixture of interventions with differing time horizons. This enables both synergies and frictions between short- and longer-term interventions to be assessed and addressed.

While crises tend to be diverse, their impacts are frequently broadly similar. History can provide useful insights in terms of observed outcomes for food availability, access and stability, the interventions applied and the subsequent evaluation of the policies put into place. However, a focus on food security dimensions alone can be misleading. Consideration must also be given to the very different sets of opportunities and constraints that different crisis contexts can engender for effective interventions to promote food security over both the short and longer term.

It is useful, therefore, for analytical purposes, to illustrate how different crisis contexts marked by food insecurity produce varying or limited opportunity sets in which interventions can occur. We consider below three broad types of crisis context. These are by no means comprehensive or mutually exclusive. Rather, they serve to demonstrate that organisations and local actors that are used to dealing with food emergencies may find that, even where they have good information on the most affected, the success of an intervention is very much the outcome of understanding the full crisis context and factoring this kind of knowledge in to the response. Failure to do so can prolong a food security crisis.

Sudden-onset food crises are often associated with 'natural' disasters triggered by climatic hazards, such as floods or hurricanes. Given the episodic nature of the shock, national governments and civil society often have significant capacity to mobilise resources and to respond to basic demands for food, water and shelter. The difficulties stem from the fact that resources destined for promoting long-term food security through human, social and physical capital investment dwindle in the crisis context. Thus, consideration of the current temporary context without reference to the implications for future food insecurity could potentially result (for poor countries in particular) in movement towards a situation where acute food insecurity becomes chronic. This depends on the extent of the geographic areas affected. For smaller economies, aggregate impacts can be severe.

Chronic food insecurity may exist within or without contexts recognised as 'crises', and is due to persistent uncertainties in people's access to food caused by a range of interacting demand and supply-side factors. In countries like Ethiopia, Malawi, North Korea, Zambia and Zimbabwe, large sections of the population—especially the poorest or those that are vulnerable in some other way—are chronically food insecure. This

is a consequence of combinations of recurrent drought or floods, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, poor governance and policies, lack of access to, or degradation of, land and water resources, social and political marginalisation and other factors. Additionally, many of these variables can have macro-level effects, leading to a cumulative drain on resources and undermining national capacity to respond. HIV/AIDS, for example, affects not only the current food security of the sufferer but also imposes a heavy burden on carers, family dependents, communities, social services and the economy at large, which stretches into the long term, impacts on all levels and further entrenches poverty and chronic food security. Where these impacts are widespread and severe and structures of governance too weak to prevent them, such situations take on the character of protracted crises.

Protracted crises, as defined above, have the potential to involve food insecurity due to people's mechanisms for ensuring food availability, access and stability being downgraded, constrained or wiped out altogether by factors that can include threatened or actual political violence—with a lack of governance capacity to protect against this. Extending Sen's view of starvation, and famine as its extreme expression, as a phenomenon derived from poverty-induced loss of (legal) command over or entitlements to food, others (such as Keen, 1994; de Waal, 1997) have focused their analysis on the political roots of food crises, especially in Africa, in which those hit hardest are the most politically vulnerable and suffer entitlement loss outside of any legal framework. Conflict in varying degrees can create uncertainties that hinder economic activity needed to develop food security, while economic activity can itself become a focal point for prolonging conflict because of the power relationships that emerge. Even if the worst impacts are confined to particular geographic areas, the involvement or destruction of wider governance institutions—particularly those of the state—has repercussions at the national level and eradicates or distorts the institutional and political means and motivation for ending the crisis. Most often there is a prevalence of low and declining levels of food consumption and production.

Unsurprisingly, there has been a strong call for interventions to focus on stability and peace-building as necessary foundations for food security where conflict is concerned. A lively debate is also taking place on the constraints that the political and security context imposes on agency attempts to take a longer-term, more 'developmental' view of interventions to support community efforts to put their livelihoods and food access on a more secure footing, and on the implications of these attempts for the upholding of basic humanitarian principles. We return to this issue below, but underline here that the highly differentiated, fluid and indefinite nature of 'protracted crises' tends to preclude any possibility of predetermining which kinds of food security interventions are appropriate and which are not. Also required is a more wide-ranging and politically informed analysis of options than is usually attempted.

Protracted crisis situations are not, of course, immune to disasters triggered by natural hazards, which in some cases lead to famine, as in Sudan in 1998 or Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1973–74 and 1984–85. Zimbabwe in 2002 and northern Somalia (Puntland and Somaliland) in 2003–04 are recent examples. Moreover, much of the food insecurity

seen in protracted crises is chronic in nature and difficult to distinguish from similarly deep-seated food insecurity elsewhere. These contextual categories of food insecurity are thus frequently blurred and overlapping, and the causal factors involved interact with each other and with effects in a way that renders unproductive attempts to apportion causality or to get down to 'root causes'.

What can be done, however, is to analyse the processes (social, political, economic and environmental) that shape hazards, vulnerability and resilience in terms of food availability, access and stability within as broad and long term a perspective as possible, and in this light to explore the likely consequences of alternative policy options over time. A policy framework that can support this process, rather than act as a straitjacket, is a necessary condition for this to happen. It must be acknowledged, though, that it is not a sufficient one, as even where such policy frameworks have evolved they have not always translated into effective action.

Building more effective policy frameworks for food security interventions

The pitfalls of attempting to implement standardised, off-the-shelf policies to promote food security in diverse protracted crises, especially where conflict and political instability are major ingredients, suggests that a prerequisite for plugging the policy gap is more responsive capacities for real-time—perhaps on-site—policy generation, closely adapted to the specificities of changing crisis contexts. The ability of relief and development organisations to deploy such capacities, and research and information systems to inform them, is a feature of what we earlier referred to as their respective policy frameworks, the nature of which is addressed in this section.

Characteristics of policy frameworks

As proposed above, we can define a policy framework as the principles, standards, approaches and objectives to which an intervening agency subscribes. It thus provides the strategic environment for agency policymaking in relation to any given context, along with a reference set of conceptual and analytical methods that guide programme formulation and intervention design.

Agencies and organisations intervening in crisis situations, whether bilateral or regional donors, international financial institutions (IFIs), NGOs or UN entities, have their own respective policy frameworks. For international organisations, these are likely to function at the global level, but also to exhibit a degree of regional- or country-level differentiation. In practice, these frameworks inevitably reflect two distinct kinds of influence. The first is altruistic and universal in the sense that it concerns issues of 'downward accountability'—how best to establish a capacity to improve the lot of affected populations within the limits of the agency's particular area of competence. The second is more inward-looking, reflecting agency mandates, structure and staffing and funding systems, or is motivated by different factors, such as foreign and domestic

policy objectives (in the case of bilateral donors), competition with other agencies for resources (necessitating 'upward accountability') and a stronger and more favourable media profile.

While there may be tension between these two kinds of influence within agencies, there is also interaction between the policy frameworks of different agencies and organisations. Elements of policy frameworks may be jointly developed or shared between agencies. Such sharing can signal relationships between donors and the implementing units that they fund (including national governmental bodies), or operational links between agencies working in the same location. But there is also the inevitable potential for tensions between the policy frameworks of different agencies that interact in a given context, for example those of donor governments pursuing a foreign policy or security agenda and NGOs striving to uphold the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality.

How can policy frameworks help to fill the policy gap?

What, then, are the essential attributes of policy frameworks that would make them more effective as a basis for formulating policies for food security in protracted crises, and thus help to fill the policy gap identified above?

Clarifying objectives

A starting point is to clarify the overall objectives of intervention. Immediate and longer-term food security is the general focus here, but policy frameworks need to provide a more nuanced specification of how objectives for availability, access and stability relate to each other in the short and longer term, and how these aims are influenced by, or linked to, other goals. These include protecting or promoting livelihoods, combating HIV/AIDS and other major epidemics, assisting refugees and displaced persons, reducing chronic poverty, promoting peace or combating terrorism.

Supporting improved contextual knowledge

Our analysis of the policy gap suggests that policy frameworks need to promote as well as be informed by broader strategies for the generation, sharing and use of contextual knowledge, involving what Doornbos (2003) has termed 'a light-footed, flexible research capacity'. Food security assessments in crises have placed strong emphasis on short-term food needs. Yet the assessment timeframe for rapid life-saving responses is unlikely to be adequate to meet knowledge needs for more comprehensive policy formulation. Understanding of the *nature, scale and history* of the crisis and the evolution of different dimensions of food security as conditions change *throughout* the crisis is insufficiently developed. Nevertheless, this broader informational base—expanded to include selecting, specifying and targeting information on who is hungry and why—is critical for comprehending the full nature of needs and suitable responses. It is essential to gain *knowledge* of and from the people and institutions—formal and informal—living and dealing with a crisis and the degree to which they can act to promote food security.

The capacity of rolling policy frameworks to generate learning processes for this purpose is an important aspect of developing policy appropriate to the time and place.

This relates closely to *setting priorities* for interventions that are consistent with people's own primary concerns. While difficult survival conditions can limit the expression of these priorities—a manifestation being coping strategies that may undermine livelihoods—the means to empower people and build or rebuild social capital are part of a policy framework. Contextual analysis should bring to light what policies are needed, outline constraints and opportunities vis-à-vis implementing food policies and programmes, and identify the actors that may implement them, including international organisations, and how they relate to each other. The longer an emergency lasts, the deeper such an analysis may have to be.

Figure 2 illustrates the linkages between institutions and actors that need to be included in a contextual analysis and factored in to processes to formulate policy for protracted crises. A thorough assessment—not always feasible at the onset of an emergency—should provide the building blocks for a better understanding of the cause-and-effect relationships driving the crisis, the type and depth of impacts with regard to the different food security dimensions, and, importantly, the social actors and their different roles in the crisis. As Cliffe and Luckham (2000) have argued, a key factor in protracted crises is the role and fate of the state (and 'quasi-state' authorities at the sub-national level), which affects the humanitarian assistance agenda and the scope and capacity for local, national and international action to support food security. Also needed is a socially differentiated analysis of the situation and of the parts played by different population groups, whether as victims or perpetrators (or both), as well as of those who may maintain or recreate forms of organisation to moderate the crisis.

Understanding the roles of these national actors is crucial for donors and international agencies seeking to build alliances and partnerships to mitigate the crisis. It is only through such interaction that priorities can be set and programmes implemented to respond to people's food security needs. This participation accompanies the necessary process of rebuilding trust within and between communities. In many cases, it will also require the building of capacities.

Generating a broader range of policy options

Policy frameworks need to establish a broader 'tool kit' of policy options, which can be referred to in designing responses to further the overall objective of securing longer-term food security in the face of immediate needs. This could include some guidance on the conditions under which each option is likely to be appropriate or inappropriate as an instrument for promoting food availability, access or stability, and considerations to be borne in mind in assessing its cost-effectiveness, targeting, implementation and likely impacts on political and other dimensions of the crisis. When it comes to evaluating options in the light of knowledge, experience and contextual analysis, a broader tool kit should assist in avoiding many of the problems associated with rigid and narrowly preconceived policy responses.

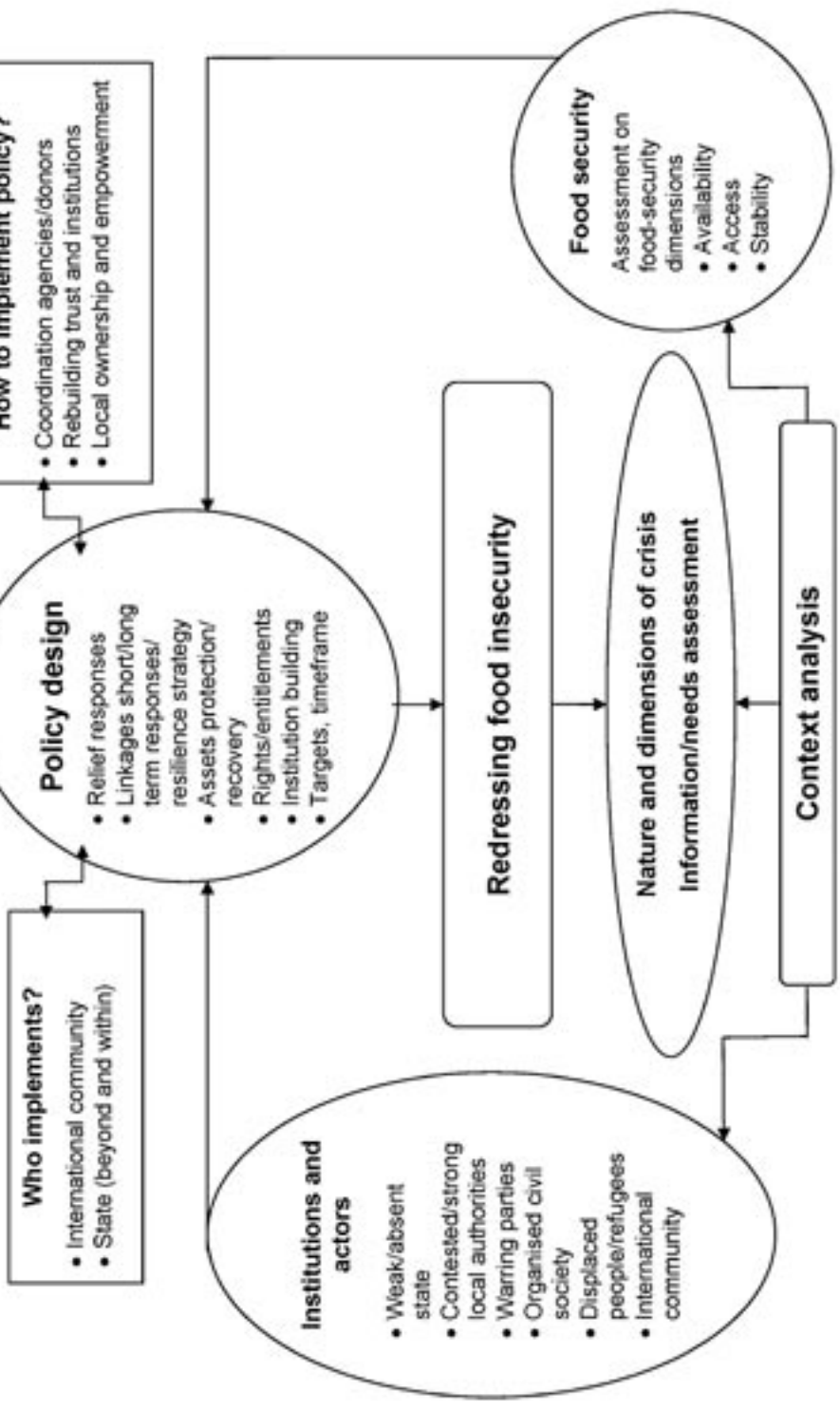


Figure 2 Formulating food security policy n protracted crises: institutional linkages

Policy options for food security are not and should not be confined to the agricultural sector. They should exploit the potential for improvements with respect to each dimension of food security, according to assessments of the crisis context and its food security consequences. They could include protection and recovery of productive assets, promotion and recuperation of knowledge and technology, regularisation of entitlements to land, improving access to markets through investment in roads and transportation, and regulation of markets to enhance food availability. Off-farm income-generation activities, short- and longer-term arrangements for transfers of food aid, cash-based interventions, such as those aimed at relieving indebtedness, diversification of economic activities and development of safety nets should contribute to improving access to food. Others, such as small-scale infrastructure projects, access to rehabilitation funds, rebuilding of social capital, including initiatives connected to ethnic and cultural support networks, interventions that link food security with health and education objectives, improved personal security, security-sector reform initiatives and small arms control, can all yield improvements related to the stability dimension.

Several of these policy options fall within the domain of what has become widely known as livelihoods-based programming. The conceptual basis for this approach, as depicted in the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) developed by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), centres on the household and its access to, and management of, assets (human, natural, financial, social and physical). The significance of such assets is related to the prevailing context of different vulnerabilities and is influenced by social and governance relations at different levels. These sets of factors mediate the success or otherwise of household strategies to sustain or improve livelihoods, thus determining livelihood outcomes in terms of, for instance, income, well-being, vulnerability, food security and sustainability of resource use. Outcomes feed back iteratively in to new configurations of vulnerability, assets and social and governance relations. A livelihoods approach to programming is one that, in principle, is people-centred, responsive and participatory, multi-level, conducted in partnership with both the public and private sectors, sustainable, dynamic and holistic (DFID, 1999). Operationally, livelihoods-based programming aims 'to identify critical constraints in the livelihood system and identify leverage points for intervention that maximise impact' (Longley and Maxwell, 2003).

There is very substantial, although arguably not complete, overlap between sustainable livelihoods and food security concerns. Food insecurity is a core dimension of vulnerability and food security a key desirable livelihood outcome within the SLF. Sustaining livelihoods at the household level, through safeguarding productive assets within a favourable social and governance setting, is central to the promotion of food security. These days, livelihoods approaches are an integral component of the food security policy frameworks employed by organisations and agencies like CARE, DFID, the European Commission (EC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Oxfam. For example, the latter seeks to identify a variety of interventions that protect livelihoods, which may include seeds and tools, cash-for-work, water programmes, or de-stocking and fodder projects for livestock, as well as food aid

(Young et al., 2001). FAO has proposed a 'twin-track approach' to fight hunger, which combines the concerns of sustainable agricultural and rural development with targeted programmes to enhance direct access to food for the most needy (see Pingali, Alinovi and Sutton in this issue). The idea of 'saving lives and livelihoods' in crisis contexts has grown out of the 'linking relief and development' (LRD) debate referred to earlier, and implies a broadening of programming options in many of the same directions to those noted above (Lautze, 1997). Moreover, because of their cross-sectoral and multi-level focus on social and governance factors, livelihoods approaches have much to offer to contextual assessments in the important area of political economy analysis (considered earlier) (Collinson, 2003).

Yet, as Longley et al. (2003, p. 5) note, 'there has been limited practical programming experience to date in applying livelihoods approaches to relief and rehabilitation in chronic conflict situations'. Lautze and Raven-Roberts (2003) identify some of the reasons why this is the case, with the exception of routine provision of seeds and tools. These include their roots in a sustainable development agenda, concerns about neutrality, donor unwillingness, difficulties associated with working in violent contexts and lack of understanding of livelihood systems and how they are affected by, and respond to, violence. Both Lautze and Raven-Roberts (2003) and Collinson (2003) propose adaptations to livelihoods frameworks that would make them more valuable as an element of policy frameworks for food security in protracted crises.

A variant of the livelihoods approach specifically oriented towards assessing impacts of wider livelihood changes on household food access is the 'food economy approach' (or 'household economy approach') initiated by Save the Children (UK). This constructs a picture of how households normally secure food and other essentials from various sources across different food economy zones and socio-economic groupings, and provides a qualitative assessment and quantitative estimate of the food shortfall likely to result from shocks and other changes affecting each source. Food economy analysis has been applied for the purposes of early warning and humanitarian needs assessment in a growing list of countries and territories, most in Africa and several in protracted crisis, such as Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Somalia (see Hemrich in this issue), Sudan and Zimbabwe. According to Boudreau and Coutts (2002), however, the methodology has potential for identifying and targeting interventions that go beyond food aid and other emergency interventions. This they attribute to its capacity to shed light on household food security strategies and to track changing political economy contexts in protracted crises.

Establishing clearer implementation principles and standards

Policy frameworks need to set out the principles and standards that govern the manner in which an organisation or agency puts policy options into effect. Many of these are widely accepted by international bodies involved in protracted crises. For example, there is broad consensus that, in addition to the key humanitarian principles enshrined in the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief* (IFRC, 1996), policies for food security need:

- to be designed from the perspective and in accordance with the priorities of those suffering most as a result of crisis-related impacts;
- to be flexible, efficient and managed as close as possible to those in need;
- to keep in mind the double objective of assuring access to food for the most needy (for survival), while, at the same time, and to the greatest extent possible, establishing conditions conducive to protecting or recreating livelihoods;
- to be alert to opportunities to pursue a third and complementary aim in protracted crises caused by conflict: to help prevent and resolve conflict and build peace—a major precondition for fulfilling the stability dimension of food security; and
- to incorporate a clear evaluation and monitoring process to measure the impact of interventions on all dimensions of food security.

While not specifically pertaining to protracted crises, the recently proposed Sphere Project (2004) minimum standards relating to food security have reinforced this consensus. They usefully cover food security under four headings: general food security issues, including survival and asset protection; primary production matters; income and employment; and market access. A basic principle inherent in the Sphere Project standards is to maintain a *long-term perspective* on short-term food security interventions. The benefit of a quick or pre-designed response should not be outweighed by the long-term costs to sustainable food security (such as induced changes in local diets, depletion of natural resources to meet immediate food needs or loss of local knowledge).

Providing a clear rationale for funding decisions

Finally, a policy framework helps to provide a clear rationale for donors to resource policy development and implementation. Criteria can be established against which policies can be evaluated and guide the flow and direction of future funding. Longer-term programming for food security often falls foul of the organisational separation of the emergency and development activities of large bilateral and multilateral agencies and the associated separation of funding arrangements. As long as humanitarian funding arrives in unpredictable, short-term bursts and development assistance is supplied without reference to the protracted dynamics and political dimensions of crises, operationalising any links between relief and development will be fraught with difficulties. Moreover, competition between the two groups hinders the implementation of effective policy.

Major challenges for food security policy frameworks

Relating short- and longer-term food security perspectives

Any discussion of longer-term frameworks for interventions in protracted crises inevitably comes up against a broad set of questions concerning how interventions aimed at generating immediate life-saving outcomes should relate to those that seek to achieve a longer-term reduction in people's vulnerability to hazards and, consequently, in their need for life-saving interventions. Such discussion has tended to be polarised into two camps.

On the one hand, 'humanitarian maximalist' approaches have advocated a broadening of the humanitarian agenda to include developmental and conflict-prevention or peace-building goals, as well as emergency humanitarian assistance. This is a 'new humanitarianism', in which (learning the lessons of the 1994 Rwandan genocide) there is coherence between humanitarian, political and developmental interventions, and between the short and the longer term. On the other hand, 'humanitarian minimalists' have warned that such a broadening amounts to de facto politicisation of humanitarian assistance, which dilutes the basic humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality.

This matter has tended to revolve around debates on the LRD principle. Towards the end of the 1990s, the LRD concept came under attack for its uncritical application in protracted political crises, such as in Sudan (Macrae et al., 1997). Attempts by UN agencies and NGOs to implement 'developmental relief' interventions were perceived as putting humanitarian independence, neutrality and impartiality at risk because they tended to mean working with, or in the interests of, authorities implicated in human rights abuses. Besides, donors had disengaged from development aid, so there was nothing for relief to link to. There was also concern that developmental models of relief were making possible a 'normalisation of crisis'. This was characterised by creeping international acceptance of increasing vulnerability, malnutrition and morbidity in crises, associated with a premature developmentalism in which a winding down of humanitarian assistance was justified by assuming an early return to 'normal' development and ignoring the protracted nature of many crises (Bradbury, 2000). The work of Anderson (1996) had been (mis)interpreted in such a way that humanitarian actors, to satisfy a peace-building agenda and to avoid doing harm, had switched from life-saving to developmental assistance, even while the former kind of assistance was still needed (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2003, p. 21).

Others, such as White and Cliffe (2000), suggested that these risks stemmed not from any inherent distinction between short-term humanitarian and longer-term, more 'developmental' intervention objectives, but from the political nature of partnerships involved in any kind of intervention, about which agencies need to exercise some judgement. Although humanitarian principles dictate that immediate life-saving assistance should remain unconditional rather than subject to 'consequentialist' ethics, there is a need to develop a broader ethical framework to guide interventions, especially those that have longer-term goals.

After more than a decade of debate on this issue, the appeal of 'saving lives and livelihoods' in protracted crises has proved to be a durable one. As indicated in the introduction, the terms of this debate have shifted with the emergence of new global security agendas favouring a re-engagement with failing states through development assistance. Nevertheless, many of these questions remain central to the task of addressing food insecurity in protracted crises.

Dealings with national and local authorities

In protracted food crises caused by conflict, insecure conditions and confrontation may jeopardise any food security initiative. Faced with national or local institutional

breakdown and the presence of warring parties, the identification of national and local actors suitable and willing to be part of a food policy intervention with international organisations is critical, but fraught with difficulties. On one side, in localised conflicts, warring parties will try to maintain control over assets, food production and distribution, or even destroy food and productive resources and evict populations from their homelands. National authorities and contested regional governments will attempt to maintain the status quo. On the other side, however, there may be strong local authorities or civil society groups that are organised and ready to support people affected, displaced, or living in precarious conditions in their own home areas. The work of international and national NGOs in El Salvador in the late 1980s was vital to rebuilding the livelihoods of, and establishing food security for, returnee populations at the end of almost 12 years of war. There are cases, though, where NGOs and other associations have been destroyed, and actions in support of displaced people—left aside from development and social programmes by the national government due to their perceived alliance with guerrillas—have been channelled through associations of schoolteachers or religious groups. This was part of the history of some regions of Guatemala in the early 1980s (Durnston, 1999; Flores and Rello, 2002).

Interventions with a longer-term food security objective may be 'developmental' in the sense of investing in physical, social, institutional or human capital with the expectation of long-term sustainability and cost recovery. Empowering local institutions and rebuilding trust and social capital are commonly expressed goals among agencies seeking to advance this process. In some cases, this may involve local or national authorities as active partners or, in some way, as beneficiaries. Yet, as Harvey (1997) has pointed out, there has often been a simplistic assumption that external agencies can engender a move from conflict and crisis to peace and development through interventions to re-establish civil society and to marginalise predatory elements. This is rarely borne out in practice, as the task is usually a slow, complex and largely indigenous one. Moreover, as noted by Harmer and Macrae (2004), this means making implicit judgements about the relative legitimacy of different local and national authorities. Who is qualified to do so, and under what authority?

Such dilemmas can be intensified in cases where foreign military forces are engaged in humanitarian and development work. This was brought into sharp focus by attacks in 2004 on the staff of CARE and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Iraq and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Afghanistan. These agencies attributed the assaults to the blurring of boundaries between the military, humanitarian and development activities of coalition forces involved in 'hearts-and-minds' campaigns. As a result, it became harder for target populations to maintain a distinction between these neutral foreign NGOs and coalition forces.

Fielding expertise and delegating decision-making

Responsive real-time policymaking implies delegating decision-making to experienced field-level personnel. Such staff members must be capable of conducting requisite political economy and technical analyses and coping with the problems of balancing

immediate and longer-term objectives in insecure environments. A key question is whether this level of expertise can realistically be deployed. As a 2005 DFID scoping study on disaster risk reduction (DFID, 2005, p. 41) notes:

> 'In responding to acute crises around the world, [agencies] may rely heavily on young, mobile expatriate staff who are not always appropriately experienced and may have little local knowledge and little time to acquire it … High staff turnover militates against the building up of institutional memory, especially at national and local levels. The tying of staff and funds to projects also results in a lack of resources for strategic, longer-term planning'.

Conclusion

While protracted crises often involve actual or threatened breakdowns in people's access to sufficient food, international engagement to bolster food security in such contexts has been characterised by a failure of responsive policymaking, attuned to varied and changing economic, social and political conditions on the ground. Interventions in the realm of food security have tended to reflect a narrow range of standardised, supply-driven policy responses, which do not take proper account of the circumstances under which they may or may not meet the priority needs of affected populations. There is a bias towards short-term projects, dominated by the provision of food aid and agricultural inputs, with only limited reference to the much broader set of options that exist to promote food security over the short and longer term.

This 'policy gap' partly stems from inadequacies in systems for generating up-to-date information and knowledge about the complex web of social, economic and political factors that determines food availability, access and stability. It also arises, though, from a lack of capacity to generate timely, context-specific policy responses using the considerable amount of information and knowledge available. This in turn reflects an aid system structured in such a way that the most dominant policy frameworks (those that command the greatest aid resources) are often the least responsive to the problems that aid is (or should be) intended to address. Hence, traditional modes of response in protracted crises, in particular food aid, tend to predominate by default.

Scope for advance formulation of effective and efficient 'blueprint' responses based on an abstract typology of protracted crisis situations is very limited. A more promising approach is to focus on ensuring that agency policy frameworks can support both improved information and research systems and *effective use* of the knowledge they generate within a real-time, context-adapted policy process. For these policy frameworks to be operationalised in a manner that addresses the problems identified in this paper, a variety of challenges must be confronted. These relate to the difficulties of understanding and functioning in crisis environments, the practical and ethical dilemmas that arise, deploying appropriately qualified staff, and the foreign and security policy agendas and resourcing behaviour of donor governments.

Endnotes

[1] In UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 on 'Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations'. See http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r182.htm.

[2] Confusingly, the term policy framework is sometimes also used to describe one or more policies that guide the design of specific programmes and projects (that is, a framework *of* policies). Here we follow the more common approach, using the term to describe the normative framework within which policies to respond to a specific situation are formulated (that is, a framework *for* policies).

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A 'principled' approach to complex emergencies: testing a new aid delivery model in the Nuba Mountains

Sara Pantuliano Lecturer in Conflict Analysis and Development, Institute of Development Studies, University of Dar es Salaam

This paper provides an analysis of the Nuba Mountains Programme Advancing Conflict Transformation (NMPACT) as an example of an operational response in a complex emergency that innovatively addressed an incipient food security crisis. NMPACT is notable for having brought together an array of actors around a common principled agenda and for being the only operational programme in the Sudan to which both warring parties subscribed during the conflict. The key features of the programme are presented and the main innovative elements are reviewed, including the role of the principles of engagement and the 'political humanitarianism' of NMPACT. The paper looks at how NMPACT broke from traditional externally driven responses to food insecurity, and, drawing on lessons from Operation Lifeline Sudan, adopted an approach that focuses on capacity building, sustainable agriculture and market revitalisation, alongside conflict transformation and peace-building. The limitations of the model are also assessed, and preliminary lessons regarding its replication in other complex emergency contexts are presented.

Keywords: complex emergencies, conflict sensitive programming, peace-building, politics of humanitarian aid.

The context

Historical background to the conflict

The Nuba Mountains are located in the centre of the Sudan in the state of South Kordofan and are part of the state of West Kordofan (Lagawa province). The region covers an area of roughly 80,000 square kilometres and its current population is estimated to be 1.4 million. The people, commonly known as the Nuba, represent a cluster of originally disparate, culturally diverse, black African ethnic groups that started to settle in the mountains of South Kordofan over 500 years ago, primarily in an effort to avoid the incursions of slave traders. Today, more than 50 different groups with 50 different, often unrelated, languages and dialects distinguish themselves as Nuba. Despite the apparent racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity of the Nuba, there are homogeneous elements among the various groups that can be identified as common 'Nuba culture' (Saeed, 2001, p. 11). These include traditional religious beliefs, such as in the *kujur* (the tribal priest or traditional healer with magical powers), marriage rules and sowing and harvesting festivals.

Culturally and economically, the majority of the Nuba are settled farmers, although they share the region with Arab cattle and camel herders, mainly Baggara Hawazma and Shanabla, as well as with the nomadic Fallata of West African origin (known elsewhere

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as Fulani). The area has always been seen as one of the richest and most fertile rain-fed areas of the Sudan. In the past, surplus food production was registered on a fairly regular basis, and the region was one of the few in the country not to be affected by the 1984 drought. Unfortunately, the inception of conflict in 1985 and its intensification in 1989 led to a total breakdown in the local production system, dramatically increasing the vulnerability of the local population.

The roots of the conflict are to be found in a history of isolation and unbalanced policies that have affected the Nuba Mountains since Turco-Egyptian times. During the Turkiyya (1820–81) and the Mahdiyya (1881–98), the Nuba were victims of slave raids, which forced the bulk of the people to take to the hills, away from the fertile clay plains. The British administration (1899–1955) made several attempts to bring them down from the hilltops and to regulate relations between Nuba farmers and the various Arab pastoralist groups that travelled across the region under the Native Administration system. The British, however, struggled with a dilemma of whether to 'preserve' and isolate the Nuba from Arab influence or to assimilate them into the north. A policy of isolation prevailed for a while.

The Nuba Mountains became a separate district (from Kordofan) under the Closed District Ordinance of 1922, which stipulated that Arab traders, preachers and other northern Sudanese needed a special permit to gain entrance. Then Governor of Kordofan J.A. Gillian felt that this measure would enable the Nuba to determine their own development and to decide on their own terms how they should be integrated into the rest of the Sudan (African Rights, 1995, p. 17). Unfortunately, no further measures were introduced to stimulate the endogenous development of the region, aside from encouraging small-scale cotton cultivation and the establishment of a few mission schools. Consequently, many Nuba men migrated to northern towns in search of work or looked to the Gezira scheme (the most established of the large-scale irrigation schemes) for employment. Ironically, this brought the Nuba into close contact with the north and Arab-Islamic culture, something that the Closed District Ordinance set out to prevent. The migrants, who inevitably had inferior status in the north, became the most potent force promoting Arabic and Islam in the Nuba Mountains.

Under pressure from the Baggara and merchants from the Nile valley living in the region, the Closed District Ordinance was revoked in 1937 and the Nuba Mountains were reintegrated into the northern region of Kordofan (Johnson, 2003, p. 131). Ten years later it was decided that Arabic would become the medium of instruction in the Nuba Mountains, thus integrating the Nuba, by default, into the northern social and political system. However, lack of education in, and the underdevelopment of, the region did not allow the Nuba to play an active role in Sudanese politics and put them at a structural disadvantage vis-à-vis northern Sudanese (African Rights, 1995, p. 18). The launch of an aggressive campaign to assimilate them into the north put the Nuba under pressure to conform closely to northern culture and to convert to Islam. Nuba Muslims were frequently the most zealous promoters of such change.

The Nuba, though, did not join the fight of the southerners, who first went to war against the government in 1956—as the Anyanya movement—mainly because of their

limited political awareness at the time and because of the largely anti-secessionist feelings of those who were politically active. The first all-Nuba political party, the General Union of Nuba (GUN), was set up in 1963 to represent Nuba interests within the central government, but its political platform was different from that of the Anyanya.

In the 1970s, the Native Administration was abolished and new land laws were introduced that, de facto, deprived many Nuba of their land and favoured northern merchants. The latter invested in large mechanised farming schemes, while local Arab groups invested in smallholder projects. This generated a great deal of resentment among the Nuba population and brought new elements into Nuba politics. Land alienation continued at an increasing rate throughout the 1970s and 1980s as many Nuba villages found themselves surrounded by the mechanised schemes, with village farmers often being fined for trespassing.

The large mechanised schemes produced considerable profits for many of their owners. In 1979, a calculation of the distribution of revenues from mechanised schemes in the Nuba Mountains between owners and workers (that is, between capital and labour) found that 53% went to one or two owners and 47% to the several hundred workers. The skewed income pattern, coupled with the increased vulnerability of the once self-sufficient, but now wage-dependent, rural poor, further strengthened the already dominant position of the northern merchants. Conversely, local farmers (and poor migrants from the south) became poorer and increasingly reliant on the schemes for their livelihoods (Manger et al., 2003, p. 10).

The mechanised schemes also cut across the transhumance paths of Baggara nomads, who in order to avoid incurring fines for trespassing regularly re-routed their herds through Nuba farmland. With the Native Administration gone, there was no longer an instrument in place to settle land disputes locally, and government courts frequently sided with the Arab Baggara against the Nuba. Many dispossessed farmers started to seek employment on the schemes or to migrate to northern towns. The dearth of education opportunities for young people further compounded the sense of frustration and marginalisation among Nuba youth at the beginning of the 1980s.

It is against this backdrop that the Nuba became sympathetic to the plight of the southerners, although their grievances were different. Many decided to support the new civil war, led by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), when it erupted in May 1983. The Nuba Mountains became embroiled in the conflict for the first time in July 1985, under the leadership of Yusuf Kuwa, who was an elected member of parliament at the time and was the head of an underground Nuba movement called Komolo. They joined forces with the SPLM/A to bring about fundamental change and a restructuring of the country.

The Nuba Mountains conflict

The first incursions by the SPLM/A into the Nuba Mountains in 1985 met with strong reaction from the government, which began to arm the Baggara militia as well as Nuba youth forcibly conscripted into the Popular Defence Force (PDF). The Baggara militia launched a violent and aggressive campaign against Nuba civilians indiscriminately

accused of supporting the struggle of the SPLM/A. In 1988, the government introduced a policy of systematic elimination of educated Nuba and village leaders, resulting in a rise in the number of SPLM/A recruits. The following year, Kuwa returned to the Nuba Mountains with a large SPLM/A force and established a permanent SPLM/A presence in the region. He called for strong political mobilisation and reorganised the civil administration in the areas under SPLM/A control (Johnson, 2003, p. 132).

The escalation of the conflict in the 1990s led to widespread destruction of traditional livelihood sources and massive (often forced) internal displacement, with few Nuba retaining access to their traditional farmland. The latter became a key factor in what has become a situation of recurrent food insecurity. Many Nuba fled to the hilltops, where they had no access to the productive clay soils found in the plains. Many areas saw their harvest yields diminish approximately ten-fold. People were forced to cultivate their main farms on the rocky slopes, in plateaus or next to the mountains, where few areas are suitable for cultivation and where the soil quality means that heavy labour is required. Livestock rearing also declined significantly, since insecurity in the plains made it very difficult to access pasture land and water points, especially in the dry season.

Since the late 1980s, the Nuba Mountains have been divided between two administrations, namely: that of the government, which controls most of the farmland on the plains and the urban centres; and that of the SPLM/A, which controls the crowded hilltops. The communities that have been most affected have been those living in areas administered by the SPLM/A. Before the war, men would migrate to towns in search of work, or look to agricultural schemes and northern markets. Those who stayed away for long periods would send back remittances. The war, though, eliminated this option for those living in SPLM/A areas, as access to government-controlled zones was blocked. Access to formal markets for goods was also curtailed by the war in SPLM/A areas. Northern traders exploited the isolation of the latter by selling commodities at high prices in 'Arab markets', which would irregularly take place in SPLM/A areas.

The war was characterised by serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian principles. In many cases, civilians were the prime target of the abuse. Raids on villages, farms, settlements and households, the expropriation of livestock, abduction and systematic rape, killing and maiming were reported in the region and thoroughly documented by external observers (cf. African Rights, 1995). The war also led to a total collapse of social services, including healthcare and education.

During the second part of the 1990s, the conflict in the Nuba Mountains started to attract widespread international attention, both because of the reported human rights violations and because of the blockade on humanitarian assistance imposed by the Government of the Sudan (GoS) on the population living in SPLM/A areas. In GoS-controlled areas, people had access to external assistance, such as food relief, throughout the 1990s. Such assistance largely stopped in 1999–2000, when a number of humanitarian agencies withdrew from the region mainly because they were unable to reach people with greater needs in SPLM/A areas. In the latter, since the escalation of the conflict in 1989, the GoS never allowed the dissemination of external assistance, as provided by Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) in other conflict-affected zones in southern Sudan.

A very limited amount of aid was distributed, however, by agencies prepared to risk working contrary to the wishes of the government, which actively targeted any such 'illegal' forms of assistance. This situation pertained until a Cease-Fire Agreement (CFA) was brokered in January 2002, after which international aid agencies were granted access to all areas of the Nuba Mountains. This in turn led to the initiative of the United Nations (UN) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) known as the Nuba Mountains Programme Advancing Conflict Transformation (NMPACT).

A humanitarian response based on policy dialogue

International assistance during the conflict years

The political and security situation in the Nuba Mountains at the end of the 1990s was such that a humanitarian response was required that took into account the difficulty of operating in an environment where aid served as a weapon of war. It became apparent to many of the actors involved that only a concerted effort based on policy dialogue between the belligerents and key external players could end the impasse regarding the provision of humanitarian assistance in the region.

In the late 1990s, a dozen or so agencies were working in the Nuba Mountains in both GoS and SPLM/A areas, although the responses of those operating in the SPLM/A-controlled areas were largely limited to funding the main indigenous body, the Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organisation (NRRDO). In government areas, the interventions were mainly restricted to the distribution of food aid, the provision of support for primary healthcare, immunisation assistance and the drilling of boreholes near the main towns where the security situation was better. The only programme of a significant scale undertaken in the Nuba Mountains during the second half of the 1990s was the Area Rehabilitation Scheme (ARS) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kadugli. Its main aim was to encourage agricultural rehabilitation in order to tackle the problem of inadequate food production, to 'pave the road for sustainable development' and to 'reduce dependence on emergency assistance in areas affected by civil strife' (UNDP, 1996, p. 1). The approach of the ARS, however, came under intense criticism in a review of the OLS commissioned in 1996 (Karim et al., 1996). A number of international humanitarian workers and donors operating in the Sudan also expressed great concern about the impact of the programme (Philippe Borel, Bernard Harborne and others, personal communication, 1999). The OLS review observed that the objectives of the ARS included helping the local Peace Administration to 'resettle returnees in peace villages and then promote agricultural development to strengthen their attachment to land' (UNDP, 1996, p. 10, quoted in Karim et al., 1996, p. 217). The OLS review team concluded that, given that the Nuba had been dispossessed of their land, the strategy pointed towards a disturbing ignorance of local realities and de facto accommodation by the UN of the disaster-producing policies of the GoS (Karim et al., 1996, p. 217).

The experience of the ARS and the increasing use of humanitarian aid as a weapon of war, as with the blockade on assistance to SPLM/A areas in the 1990s, highlighted the

need for a more conflict-sensitive approach to programming in the region. The Office of the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (UN RC/HC) for Sudan took it upon itself to try and develop a coordinated response, after a period during which it engaged in intensive efforts to gain access to SPLM/A-controlled areas. After years of pressure being applied from the highest levels, including by the UN Secretary-General himself in 1998, the GoS finally granted the UN access to SPLM/A zones in 1999 to make an assessment. A proper humanitarian intervention did not begin, however, until 2002.

The findings of the 1999 Inter-agency Assessment Mission to the Nuba Mountains of South Kordofan emphasised that assistance to the population in the Nuba Mountains (in GoS- and SPLM/A-controlled areas) would be best provided through a comprehensive, multi-sectoral, multi-agency rehabilitation programme. This would be implemented outside of the OLS framework, for reasons of expediency, given the government's strong opposition to extending Operation Lifeline Sudan to the Nuba Mountains, and so that a response could be formulated that was more appropriate to the Nuba Mountains. The proposal for a single cross-line programme was unprecedented in relation to the humanitarian response in the Sudan and, as such, required that the two warring parties, as well as other partners involved, 'buy in' to the process.

The Nuba Mountains Programme Advancing Conflict Transformation

The OLS had been operational for more than a decade and had utilised two separate structures in GoS- and SPLM/A-controlled areas. Additionally, there was a high degree of mistrust between the international organisations working on the two sides of the political divide, let alone between the belligerents. Nonetheless, the report of the Inter-agency Assessment Mission to the Nuba Mountains of South Kordofan (UNCERO, 1999) showed very clearly that the Nuba Mountains lent itself well to experimentation with a new model of external assistance that sought to bridge the political divide and to foster reconciliation between communities at the grassroots level. Besides, it was clear that a single, coordinated operation would maximise the benefits of aid for the local population, since costs would be cut considerably.

Reducing the level of suspicion between the disputants and the international partners working on the two sides of the political divide proved to be a major undertaking in itself. In order to close the gap between the 'north' and the 'south' (as the two sides were commonly referred to), and to develop the intervention for the region, the Office of the UN RC/HC initiated an intensive, year-long consultation process involving all potential programme partners. The process was highly inclusive and several meetings were held with all partners involved in the Nuba Mountains, Khartoum and Nairobi. The aim was to build a common platform among actors, national and international, who had long been working on the opposite side of the political divide. After a year and half-long consultation process with programme partners, which saw the strong involvement of Nuba members of various civil society organisations and the backing of numerous donors, a joint programme document was endorsed in March 2002. Emphasis was placed on encouraging national ownership and adhering to a set of principles of engagement spelled out in the document.

The new initiative was called the Nuba Mountains Programme Advancing Conflict Transformation. NMPACT was designed as a phased, multi-agency, cross-conflict programme aimed at enabling all stakeholders to contribute to a Nuba-led response to address the short- and long-term needs of the people of the Nuba Mountains. Its overall strategic goal was, and remains: 'To enhance the Nuba people's capacity for self-reliance within a sustained process of conflict transformation guided by the aspirations, priorities and analyses of the Nuba people themselves' (Office of the UN RC/HC, 2002a, p. 2).

In developing its plan and implementation strategy, NMPACT was able to capitalise on the lessons learned from the OLS and to build on the criticism levelled against the operation from various quarters (Karim et al., 1996; African Rights, 1997). The OLS was set up to act as an access mechanism, allowing a rapid response to be launched to a critical humanitarian crisis in the south at the end of the 1980s. Subsequently, and gradually, it also became an umbrella for coordinated programming. NMPACT, by contrast, from the start, was constructed around a joint coordinated programming framework. The main lesson learned from Operation Lifeline Sudan was the obvious need to straddle the north–south divide and to establish one single, synchronised, cross-line initiative. NMPACT, therefore, represented a departure from the OLS mode of coordination in that it was the first substantial attempt to narrow the long-established gulf between agencies based in Khartoum, Sudan, and Nairobi, Kenya. The change in approach resulted in a large number of NGOs becoming involved in NMPACT, many of which had refused to join the OLS and which were not part of its Consortium. By the end of 2003, only two NGOs operating in the Nuba Mountains, Médecins Sans Frontières and Samaritan's Purse, had not signed up to the programme, along with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which developed a large-scale programme in government areas only and decided to remain outside the NMPACT framework. However, all three agencies liaised closely with the NMPACT partners, attended the NMPACT multi-stakeholders meetings (known as Partners' Fora) and provided the partners with logistical support when needed.

Another distinction between NMPACT and the OLS was that the new endeavour was based on a set of principles of engagement. NMPACT partners and Nuba representatives developed these principles, which provided a cohesive programmatic framework governing involvement. They felt that coordination would be more efficient if the disputants and other actors agreed to respect a set of principles when carrying out their work. The NMPACT Programme Coordinator was to promote adherence to the principles through specific initiatives and to monitor regularly the performance of the partners as work progressed. The principles focused on the sustainability of programmes, national ownership, equitability of interventions across the political divide, transforming conflict and 'doing least harm', as the 'do no harm' approach (Anderson, 1999) was renamed by those engaged in NMPACT.

The NMPACT design process was complemented by strong and harmonised advocacy directed at Western diplomats and aimed at ending the humanitarian impasse in the Nuba Mountains. This was of particular significance in light of the fact that a food security crisis was evolving in SPLM/A-controlled areas. The action culminated in the

collective decision of most agencies operating in GoS-controlled areas (between 2000 and 2001) either to suspend their operations in the north or to initiate activities in SPLM/A zones where the GoS denied access. The move was intended to put pressure on GoS officials to open up SPLM/A regions, where needs were known to be increasingly acute. The decision to withdraw from GoS areas was a difficult one to take, as it meant depriving considerable numbers of needy people of external assistance. The partners believed, though, that aid was being used to lure people away from SPLM/A areas to GoS areas, thus exacerbating the conflict in the region. For this reason, it was felt that a temporary withdrawal from government-controlled sections was the most ethical short-term option.

Those participating in NMPACT were aware that they needed to attract more international attention to the situation in the Nuba Mountains in order to resolve the problem concerning access to SPLM/A areas. The UN RC/HC, Roger Guarda, therefore, used his influence to intensify advocacy targeted at Western diplomats on behalf of all involved. This action was a major factor in catalysing the interest of senior diplomats, resulting, in January 2002, in the brokering of the CFA between the GoS and the SPLM/A. (The accord was aided by the good offices of US Senator John Danforth, who had been appointed US Envoy for Peace in Sudan by President George W. Bush on 6 September 2001.) The signing of the CFA presented the process to develop a response in the Nuba Mountains with a major opportunity. NMPACT finally had a chance to become operational. In its final design it became closely linked with implementation of the CFA and it was stipulated that there was to be close cooperation between the programme and the Joint Military Commission/Joint Monitoring Mission (JMC/JMM), set up to monitor the ceasefire. Once again, this represented a novel development in the context of assistance to the Sudan in that a humanitarian intervention was expressly connected to a political initiative.

Framework innovation and success: the principles of engagement and political humanitarianism

Bridging the political divide: HAC and SRRC working together

As stated above, NMPACT was designed as a phased, cross-conflict programme that sought to enable stakeholders to contribute to a Nuba-led response to the short- and long-term needs of the people of the Nuba Mountains. The extensive consultation process that had accompanied its development produced a large amount of consensus. By the end of 2003, nine UN agencies, 16 international NGOs (INGOs) and 24 national NGOs (NNGOs) were on-board, and the GoS Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) and the SPLM/A Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA)—later renamed the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SRRC)—had endorsed the programme. This is the only joint initiative that the belligerents opted to sign up to while the conflict was in an active state. Many regard the involvement of the warring parties in a single programme and the cross-line focus of the initiative as the most significant achievements of NMPACT.

Through extensive consultation and dialogue, NMPACT succeeded in engaging government officials and their SPLM/A counterparts in programme coordination, thereby conferring ownership of the process to the national authorities. The NMPACT Coordination Structure and the partners, though, did not manage to extend this ownership to Nuba NGOs and the community on the ground in the first phase. This remains one of the principle challenges facing NMPACT. However, as of early March 2005, more efforts are underway to involve the Nuba at the grassroots level in all stages of the programme cycle. An NMPACT Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, comprising staff from the Nuba Mountains, was set up in late 2004 with the support of the World Bank. The unit is training the members of the communities of the Nuba Mountains in participatory planning and observation and assessment techniques. The underlying notion is that trained communities will be empowered and will have the capacity to set priorities for rehabilitation and development interventions in their areas, to monitor implementation of programmes and projects and to review the performance of external agencies vis-à-vis the principles of engagement.

The involvement of HAC and the SRRC in the Coordination Structure provided the partners with a channel through which to address issues with official counterparts both at the central (Khartoum and Nairobi) and the field levels, thereby facilitating prompt resolution of problems when they arose. It is important to note that these counterparts were traditionally perceived as unhelpful and often obstructive, but by working together around a common platform they neutralised each other's more extreme positions and engaged with international actors in a very constructive manner. Bringing key players on the two sides of the political divide into the programme helped to create a new environment based on trust and collaboration, which spilled over to other areas of assistance in the Sudan. Under the NMPACT umbrella, the GoS and the SPLM/A met on Sudanese soil several times between July and December 2002 and again in February 2005 in an impartial context. Many programme stakeholders also saw this as making a substantial contribution to the conflict transformation process in the region, which remains the ultimate goal of NMPACT (Office of the UN RC/HC, 2003).

The principles of engagement

Much of the uniqueness and effectiveness of NMPACT is derived from the principles of engagement. These provided the partners with an overall framework to buy in to and ensured that the joint response had a strong conceptual foundation. Although it has proved difficult to assess the level of success of the Coordination Structure in guaranteeing that partners observe the principles, all involved undoubtedly regard them as extremely valuable for programming. The vigorous advocacy action that was spawned by the collective adherence of NMPACT participants to the principle of 'do no harm' (Anderson, 1999) was largely prompted by the need to avert a severe food security crisis evolving in SPLM/A-controlled areas of the Nuba Mountains. Staving off famine was the objective that drove the ceasefire negotiations and became the primary aim of the CFA. While the ceasefire was being negotiated and prior to the arrival of the international monitors, the agencies that later came together in NMPACT

worked with Nuba organisations and representatives to discern how best to address the predicament without undermining the Nuba food economy. The SPLM/A-controlled areas of the Nuba Mountains had not received international assistance since 1988 and hence there was a danger of destabilising the local economy and encouraging a dependency syndrome through the provision of food aid—as had happened in many parts of southern Sudan. Thus, a new approach was designed for NMPACT: food delivery was coupled with programme interventions that focused on nurturing local capacity and enhancing sustainability by strengthening the local food economy. The NMPACT food security approach emphasised capacity building over the provision of external inputs (food aid and infrastructure) from the outset. This was the reverse of the approach employed in southern Sudan under the OLS umbrella, where the focus on capacity building emerged much later.

NMPACT partners invested significant resources in trying to gain a better understanding of the local food economy and in identifying points of entry to strengthen it. This continuous process of collective learning involved joint assessments and reviews. Region-wide surveys of production, productivity, market access and marketing issues were undertaken and the findings evaluated at Partners' Fora. International and national agencies, both NMPACT partners and other interested parties (civil society organisations, community-based organisations and bilateral and multilateral donor agencies) and counterparts (HAC, SRRC and representatives of the GoS's State Ministry of Planning and SRRC's Policy Advisory Committee) attended the Partners' Fora. Key programming issues, including those concerning food security, were discussed in these meetings and decisions agreed with local authorities and donors.

An internal review conducted in 2003 revealed that, as a result of the principles of engagement, NMPACT had been effective in generating a strong sustainability focus that cut across the work of the partners, particularly because of its emphasis on capacity building. This focus was particularly significant in an environment where there was no fully fledged peace and it represents an important departure from the model of assistance employed in other conflict zones in the Sudan.

NMPACT partners subdivided the population of the Nuba Mountains according to the livelihood activities in which people were engaged, that is, farmers, pastoralists, urban dwellers and the occupants of camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). The reason for this was to help the agencies tailor their response to the specific needs of the people and to ensure that aid was distributed fairly among the different groups. The partners recognised that there was some sort of general hierarchy among the groups—urban dwellers were the best off, followed by pastoralists, farmers and IDP camp occupants. The policy of equitable assistance, one of NMPACT's fundamental principles of engagement, required that assistance be provided in an even-handed manner on the basis of need. This meant that the partners had to prioritise camp occupants and farmers in order to remove barriers to food security and to recover the assets required to re-establish security over their livelihoods. The findings of a region-wide, cross-line survey carried out in late 2002 highlighted the need to make displacement within the Nuba Mountains a main concern, particularly with regard to people confined to

IDP camps, so as to facilitate the return of people to their homeland and to allow them to access a sustainable resource base.

The aforementioned survey also underlined the need for partners to concentrate on questions of land tenure. Several studies were carried out between 2003 and 2005, including a three-month assessment that covered all parts of the Nuba Mountains. The latter looked at traditional land ownership, existing land titles and illegal land alienation to non-Nuba owners. This work was designed to buttress advocacy efforts to ensure that IDPs could reclaim territory taken in the past and return to their farmland in contested areas of the Nuba Mountains.

The results of all of the reviews were used to inform the special negotiations on the contested areas that took place in Kenya under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Different rounds were held between March 2003 and December 2004 within the context of the wider Sudan peace process. In addition, they have provided the basis for developing the Terms of Reference of the Nuba Mountains Land Commission envisaged by Protocol on the Resolution of Conflict in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States agreed in Naivasha, Kenya, on 26 May 2004.

NMPACT partners promoted advocacy action aimed at donors to guarantee that local purchases of food from the Nuba Mountains could be maximised and that food aid could be limited to areas of extreme need, where cultivation was not possible. In addition to the above, a great deal of peer pressure was placed on the World Food Programme (WFP) and other large agencies and donors by other NMPACT partners to ensure that local purchases were prioritised over food from external sources. The advocacy action yielded limited results during the first two years of operation of NMPACT, although it was successful in assuring adequate targeting of communities and more strategic use of food aid. Increasingly, though, food was used to support diverse initiatives, including the de-mining operation that some NMPACT partners were conducting in the Nuba Mountains.

'Political humanitarianism'

An important constant in the NMPACT approach was its vigorous interaction with key political and military actors involved in the Nuba Mountains débâcle. From its inception, NMPACT actively engaged with the JMC/JMM, the international force mandated to monitor the ceasefire and the military and policing roles of the parties in the region. Furthermore, there was regular and structured contact between NMPACT and the Friends of Nuba Mountains, a group made up of senior diplomats working in the Sudan, which provided political leadership to the JMC/JMM. The actors concerned, though, particularly the JMC/JMM, were not always entirely amenable to the concerns raised by NMPACT. However, a commitment to active, constructive engagement cemented relations and, over time, proved crucial in ensuring that a number of important issues—which were beyond the remit of humanitarian organisations, but which affected the response—were addressed in a timely and adequate manner. These included land tenure matters, conflict between nomadic and farming groups and harassment by the authorities of civilians returning to their farms.

The multiple forms of advocacy and engagement with a range of national and international political bodies under the aegis of NMPACT have added, in the view of some partners and observers, an important new element to the Sudanese humanitarian context (Office of the UN RC/HC, 2003). The joint advocacy promoted by UN agencies and collaborating NGOs since 1999 has allowed NMPACT to forge unprecedented links (for a humanitarian operation) with the political sphere. Some of the partners asserted in a 2003 review of the programme (Office of the UN RC/HC, 2003) that, especially in the early phase of the CFA, NMPACT was a key factor underpinning the first extension of the ceasefire in June 2002, since it was seen as an important aspect of the peace dividend. Thereafter, NMPACT facilitated greater interaction between the parties and consolidated relations in such a way that it has made the main aim of the CFA—to avert a food security crisis in the Nuba Mountains—a reality.

Limitations in delivering the model: institutional and equity failings

The success of NMPACT in its early days was due, to a large extent, to the fact that it had a dedicated Coordination Structure at both the local and central levels, facilitating the flow of information between those involved. In an internal review of the programme carried out in September 2003, many NMPACT partners observed that the framework and the Coordination Structure had been instrumental in helping them to define, prioritise and synchronise activities. In their opinion, the NMPACT framework also provided networking opportunities for agencies working in the Nuba Mountains, especially through the regular monthly meetings and stakeholder meetings. They felt that NMPACT had been instrumental in helping member agencies to establish new partnerships, particularly with local organisations, and that the framework had ensured greater efficiency of ongoing and planned assistance to the Nuba region through information-sharing and the mainstreaming of approaches (Office of the UN RC/HC, 2003, p. 10).

The importance of a dedicated Coordination Structure was further underlined by a one-year staffing gap, both at the central and field levels. This left the programme without leadership and support and, above all, it disturbed the concentration of the partners on the principles of engagement and affected interaction between the counterparts. In the internal review of September 2003, the partners commented that, 'without a fully staffed Co-ordination Structure in place, the bridge built between HAC and SRRC last year has become weaker and there has been no direct interaction between the two counterparts on Sudanese soil since late January 2003' (Office of the UN RC/HC, 2003, p. 26). The absence of field coordinators on the ground led the counterparts and partners to complain that insufficient attention was being paid to peripheral areas of the Nuba Mountains, with the consequence that the 'doing least harm' principle was being neglected. The resultant dearth of information on needs and disparities undermined the development of a focus on equitable responses across the region, particularly along political lines.

Crucially, collective decision-making, which had so marked the evolution of NMPACT, was curbed by a change of leadership within the UN system. Unilateral decisions concerning the programme were made, which did not involve either the parties or the partners. This had negative ramifications for the building of trust and ownership, which had been key features of work in preceding years. The official counterparts were especially disappointed with this turn of events and relations gradually deteriorated. The SPLM/A, in particular, felt that certain decisions had considerably affected its interests.

The changes that occurred during the implementation of NMPACT reflect weaknesses within the UN coordination system as a whole. NMPACT was born out of the vision of an array of national and international actors and many within the UN system provided it with guidance. However, there was a systematic failure within the UN to recognise and reward innovation. Despite the presence of a number of influential backers, including the Bretton Woods institutions, and the fact that the warring parties and numerous UN agencies and INGOs bought into the process, the Office of the UN RC/HC was ultimately in a position to override consensual decision-making. The very considerable autonomy enjoyed by the UN RC/HC and the lack of a clear accountability structure meant that NMPACT was extremely vulnerable to changes in priorities and policy introduced from the top. Fortunately, a further change of leadership in late 2004—at both the programme level and at the highest levels of the UN operation in Sudan—has allowed the project to get back on track with respect to its original objectives and the principles of engagement and to rebuild its partnerships with national counterparts and institutions. The Coordination Structure is currently (in early 2005) carrying out a review to examine the continued relevance of NMPACT in a post-peace scenario, and to analyse ways in which the programme can readjust its goals and principles in order to contribute to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between the GoS and the SPLM/A in Nairobi on 9 January 2005 to end the war in southern Sudan and in the transitional belt.

Lessons to be learned from NMPACT

The experience of NMPACT, albeit short, and the processes that led up to its initiation, offer significant lessons for programming in complex political emergencies, be that in other areas of the Sudan or in countries that find themselves in similar circumstances. NMPACT developed out of the OLS and capitalised on its shortcomings to bring about changes that were unprecedented in the history of humanitarian engagement in the Sudan. In particular, it set out to incorporate a long-term perspective into an emergency context through its focus on the principles of engagement and their emphasis on national ownership, participatory development vis-à-vis programme design and decision-making and collective advocacy. Strong inter-agency coordination around the principles allowed the programme to break with the pattern of traditional externally driven responses to food insecurity and to adopt an approach that concentrated on capacity building, promotion of sustainable agriculture and market revitalisation,

alongside conflict transformation and peace-building. The shift away from short-term emergency intervention and externally driven aid delivery has proven effective in enhancing the potential for recovery and strengthening the resilience of local communities in the Nuba Mountains.

It has to be acknowledged, though, that the full impact on the ground of the collective intervention of NMPACT partners in support of the recovery of local food systems is yet to be understood. Recently, a number of actors in the region have also expressed concern about lack of adherence to the principles of engagement on the part of some of those involved in NMPACT, including the employment of the principle of equitable assistance throughout the region. A Monitoring and Evaluation Unit has been set up to correct such inadequacies and to enhance the learning process.

The NMPACT framework has also been successful in using aid to foster dialogue between the warring parties. The adoption of the 'do no harm' approach resulted in joint advocacy to end the humanitarian blockade and to demand a ceasefire. The response has been characterised by extensive engagement with the GoS, the SPLM/A, key diplomatic players and the ceasefire monitoring operation. The 'political humanitarianism' of NMPACT can be viewed as a model with which to tackle livelihood issues in a complex emergency by focusing on responses based on political analysis, advocacy, the fostering of links with major actors in the political and peacekeeping spheres and strong local ownership of the recovery process. The significant results achieved by NMPACT in a relatively short space of time indicate that much can be learned from a response that is informed by political analysis of food insecurity and loss of entitlements and which departs from the more conventional technical and community centred responses of aid agencies to such crises.

Much remains to be tested and comprehended with respect to programming in complex political emergencies. The experience of NMPACT shows that there is a clear role for applying long-term development thinking to emergencies and encouraging analysis and appreciation of the deep-rooted causes of a crisis, to generate informed responses. While rapid external aid delivery remains essential in the event of a major crisis, there is definitely room to test new models in environments where such emergencies have become chronic and where there are political questions that need to be resolved in order to move things forward. Its relevance to the Sudan is particularly great at a time when peace and confidence building are very much on the agenda and when the situation in Darfur could morph into a chronic emergency. The current international response in Darfur centres on the provision of external inputs and has so far made little effort to understand the political economy of the conflict and the complex interrelated livelihoods systems of the area.

By promoting reconciliation and change at various levels, even when the issues at the heart of the conflict are far from resolved, NMPACT illustrates what can be done to narrow a gap between belligerents with a history of acute and entrenched antagonism. While any given situation will always have certain peculiarities, the fact that NMPACT was strongly rooted in various developmental principles means that it can offer lessons for the region and beyond.

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Matching food security analysis to context: the experience of the Somalia Food Security Assessment Unit

Günter Hemrich Food Systems Economist, Agricultural and Development Economics Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

This case study reviews the experience of the Somalia Food Security Assessment Unit (FSAU) of operating a food security information system in the context of a complex emergency.[1] In particular, it explores the linkages between selected features of the protracted crisis environment in Somalia and conceptual and operational aspects of food security information work. The paper specifically examines the implications of context characteristics for the establishment and operations of the FSAU field monitoring component and for the interface with information users and their diverse information needs. It also analyses the scope for linking food security and nutrition analysis and looks at the role of conflict and gender analysis in food security assessment work. Background data on the food security situation in Somalia and an overview of some key features of the FSAU set the scene for the case study. The paper is targeted at those involved in designing, operating and funding food security information activities.

Keywords: conflict, context analysis, food security analysis, food security information system, protracted crisis, relief–development linkages, Somalia.

Introduction

This case study examines the experience of the Somalia Food Security Assessment Unit (FSAU)[2] of conducting food security information and analysis work in a complex emergency. In particular, it explores the linkages between specific qualities of the protracted crisis context in Somalia and selected conceptual and operational features of food security analysis work.

Characteristics of the Somalia context that have a strong bearing on food security analysis include:

- the prolonged absence of a central government;
- the dispersed nature of violent conflict;
- the degradation of common property resources;
- the high degree of agro-ecological, economic and socio-cultural diversity within the country;
- the existence of a well-established external assistance community network; and
- the central role of remittances in food security.

Emphasis is placed on how these context characteristics influence the way in which the FSAU undertakes its field monitoring, collaborates with decision-makers in food

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security policy development and programming and meets the diverse information needs of different audiences. The linkages between food security and nutrition analysis are explored and the role of conflict and gender analysis in food security assessments is appraised. Overviews of the food security situation in Somalia and of some primary facets of the FSAU set the scene.

The study focuses on the period between 2000 and 2002, when the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) started to operate the FSAU. It is based on a review of documentation and key informant interviews with FSAU staff, partner agencies and information users, during a two-week visit to Nairobi, Kenya, in July 2002. Subsequent e-mail correspondence with current FSAU staff has allowed some reference to recent FSAU changes and adjustments.

The paper is targeted at those involved in designing, operating and funding food security information activities. The intention is to contribute to the discourse on how the key characteristics, challenges and dynamics at play in complex and protracted emergency contexts can be incorporated into the design of tailor-made approaches to food security information work through the sharing of experiences and insights across countries.

The status of food insecurity and vulnerability in Somalia

This section reviews some basic features of food insecurity in Somalia in order to shed light on the broad conditions under which the FSAU is operating. Statistical data for Somalia are rather thin and unreliable and should be treated with some scepticism. There is a dearth of quantitative trend analyses of the food security situation in terms of availability, access and stability in the medium and longer terms. Food security information frequently consists of snapshots that alert one to food crises or provide updates on defined geographic regions at specific points in time. Weaknesses in relation to basic data availability and consistency can be illustrated using the example of population estimates, which are a critical component of food security analysis. Recent population estimates for Somalia range between 6.8 million (UN, 2004) and 11.1 million people (EIU, 2005). Any aggregate quantitative calculations of food availability, access or stability thus change dramatically, depending on which population estimate is employed.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Index (HDI), Somalia ranks among the five least developed countries in the world (Marchal et al., 2000). FAO placed the country second to last in terms of the proportion (71%) of undernourished members of the total population (FAO, 2003). Global acute malnutrition rates (W/H < -2 z) are high, reaching 15–20% in some areas, with significant regional differences. Among the proximate causes underlying the consistent high levels of malnutrition are seasonal fluctuations vis-à-vis access to key foods, limited dietary diversity, poor early child feeding practices and low level of contact with health services for young children and women of reproductive age (FSAU, 2004c).

Table 1 Annual cereal production in Somalia, 2000–04 (metric tons)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Gu (April–June)	226,280	123,140	217,820	184,540	142,400
Deyr (October–December)	95,980	140,560	172,300	100,970	122,530
Total	**322,260**	**263,700**	**390,120**	**285,510**	**264,930**

Source: FAO/FSAU

From a broader perspective, 13 years of near continuous warfare have taken a heavy toll on the civilian population, causing injury, disease, displacement and hunger. War-related injuries and deaths have remained consistently high throughout the past decade. Since 1997 alone, an estimated 1.2 to two million landmines have been laid, inhibiting free movement, trade and humanitarian access. In addition, 49% and 77% of the population live without access to sanitation and safe water, respectively. Regular outbreaks of epidemic diseases, such as cholera, leishmaniasis (kala azar), malaria and tuberculosis, and chronic food shortages contribute to the death of nearly one-quarter of all children before their fifth year, and to an average life expectancy of only 46 years.[3]

Food security trends have fluctuated because of changing environmental, security and market conditions. UNDP has estimated that one in every five harvests in Somalia is a partial failure and one in ten is a complete write-off (UNDP, 2001, p. 67). Table 1 shows fluctuations in cereal harvests between 2000 and 2004.

Prolonged food insecurity and vulnerability resulting from limited employment opportunities, inflation, volatile markets for cereals and a ban on livestock exports, combined with successive years of crop failure, flooding, conflict and demographic changes, have created a protracted emergency. There is, though, considerable variation in the degree of vulnerability, insecurity and economic viability among different regions (UN, 2002).

Population sub-groups most vulnerable to food insecurity in recent years include (UN, 2002, p. 72):

- Riverine Bantu agricultural communities in the Middle and Lower Juba regions (classified as the most chronically poor in Somalia);
- internally displaced populations in urban areas (identified as the group that suffers most from acute malnutrition, according to nutritional surveys conducted since 1980);
- returning refugees;
- poor agro-pastoralists in southern Somalia; and
- the urban poor in southern Somalia.

Food insecurity was traditionally more pronounced in southern Somalia. In the north, nomadic pastoralists were able to move their assets and hence were in a better position to cope with conflict and climatic stress than sedentary farmers (UNDP, 2001, pp. 68–69).

In recent years, however, macroeconomic shocks have not spared pastoralists and livestock traders, who have been hit hard by the ban on livestock imports from Somalia (due to RiftValley fever) in countries along the Arabian Peninsula. The latter has generated a substantial decline in trade-related employment and income and has affected the livelihoods of pastoral households. Consecutive drought over the past four years has led to massive livestock death in northern Somalia—up to 80% of the herd, depending on species and area (FSAU, 2004b).

In December 2004, the United Nations (UN) launched a Consolidated Appeal (CAP) for USD 164 million of humanitarian aid for 2005, an increase of over 35% on the 2004 CAP (EIU, 2005). Based on a Food and Livelihood Security Phase Classification System

Table 2 Food and Livelihood Security Phase Classification

Phase		General characteristics and key indicators	Implications
Humanitarian emergency	Level 1	• CMR: > 5 deaths/10,000/day • Wasting: > 40% (W/H z-score) • Large-scale, concentrated destitution • Widespread civil conflict	• Critically urgent resource transfer (such as food or cash assistance) • Critically urgent assistance to satisfy basic needs (for example, health, shelter and water)
	Level 2	• CMR: > 2/10,000/day • Under 5 years death rate: > 4/10,000/day • Wasting: > 15% (W/H z-score) • Widespread, diffuse destitution • Near complete asset depletion • Credit limits nearly exhausted • Large-scale natural resource degradation • Acute or widespread civil conflict	• Urgent resource transfer (for instance, food or cash assistance) • Provision of water and health services etc. • Preventative interventions • Environmental protection and rehabilitation
Livelihood crisis		• CMR: 1–2/10,000/day • Under 5 years death rate: 2–4/10,000/day • Wasting: 10–15% (W/H z-score) • Large and increasing debt • Natural resource degradation • Critical asset depletion • Unusual large-scale human migration • Acute civil conflict	• Urgent livelihood support (food/ cash for work, water supply assistance/rehabilitation, transportation assistance, health services support, education, etc.) • Preventative interventions • Environmental protection and rehabilitation
Alert		• Wasting: 5–10% (W/H z-score) • CMR: 1–2/10,000/day • Lack of access to credit • Declining terms of trade • Livelihood shock • Civil conflict • Increased attendance at health clinics	• Careful monitoring • Preventative interventions
Non-alert		• Near normal conditions • Includes areas of chronic vulnerability	• Longer-term development • Sustained assistance to vulnerable groups

Source: FSAU, 2004c, p. 2

(see table 2) recently developed by the FSAU, the CAP 2005 estimates the number of people in need of assistance at approximately 700,000. An important distinction is drawn between two broad categories of vulnerable people: those exposed to a humanitarian emergency (242,000); and those exposed to a livelihood crisis (458,000) (UN, 2004).

The Food and Livelihood Security Phase Classification System integrates multiple food and livelihood security criteria into a short statement indicating the level of severity and outlines general implications for humanitarian responses (FSAU, 2004c, p. 2). The connection between primary indicators and response implications indirectly addresses the concern of Bradbury (1998) regarding normalisation. According to Bradbury (1998), in situations of chronic instability, humanitarian crises tend to be redefined as opportunities for development. In other words, what would have once been viewed as an unacceptable level of malnutrition leading to an emergency response is seen with time as normal and is addressed through a development intervention. Therefore, the following questions arise: will the new FSAU Food and Livelihood Security Phase Classification System guard against normalisation by establishing clear triggers for different types of responses? Will it become a tool to link rationally humanitarian and rehabilitation responses in transition processes? How well will the triggers work, and how timely will the information required for its indicators be?

Specificity of the Somalia protracted emergency context

In the following section, six context-specific characteristics of the protracted emergency in Somalia[4] are reviewed, along with their implications for the conceptual and operational aspects of early warning and food security information work.

Prolonged absence of a central government

A distinct characteristic of the political emergency in Somalia is the long-standing absence of a central government. In fact, the sudden collapse and implosion of the Somali state following the overthrow of President Siad Barre's regime in 1991 by opposing clans has been described as a unique event in the history of nations (Coletta and Cullen, 2000, p. 60). Somalia has been without a central government ever since. State collapse, lawlessness, banditry and inter-clan warfare over the past decade resulted in widespread famine that claimed the lives of some 250,000 Somalis (Hansch et al., 1994, p. 24). The fighting destroyed agricultural communities in the south and generated enormous refugee flows and internal displacement.[5]

State fragmentation and localisation of political power produced varied structures of governance and authority at the community, district and regional levels aimed at filling the vacuum left by a defunct central government. Polities emerged in the northwest 'Republic of Somaliland' and in the northeast 'Puntland State of Somalia' after 1991 and 1998, respectively, with public administrations fulfilling some basic functions of government. In the two southern regions of Bay and Bakol, the Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA) set up an administration in 1999 (UNDP, 2001, p. 34).

A Transitional National Government (TNG) was created in August 2000, whose mandate expired in August 2003. In October 2004, new Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed formed a Transitional Federal Government (TFG)—replacing the TNG—consisting of a 275-member parliament. The TFG is scheduled to move from Nairobi to Mogadishu in mid-2005. However, fighting between warlords and factions is continuing for control of Mogadishu and other regions in the south of the country.[6]

The prolonged absence of governmental structures has had critical implications for food security information work, in terms of the agents involved in setting overall policy, information audiences and operating and maintaining a field data collection system. Moreover, what will be the ramifications for the FSAU if the new government does indeed move from Nairobi to Mogadishu?

Dispersed inter-clan nature of conflict

Since 1995, Somalia has been less vulnerable to major armed clashes but more prone to smaller, localised and less predictable armed hostilities that occur within, rather than between, major clans (Menkhaus, 1998a). In the context of a weak state, warlords have exploited clan divisions in their fight to control resources (Nafziger et al., 2000, p. 37). Such hostilities affect food security and access, as well as agricultural recovery.

The United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), deployed in March 1993, succeeded in ending the famine in some regions and facilitated the return of refugees and displaced persons. UNOSOM II left the country in March 1995, though, without achieving national reconciliation and without having generated limited support for the massive task of reconstruction. In a 2002 report, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan described the nation as one of the most dangerous from a security standpoint and thus UN plans to dispatch a peace-building mission were indefinitely postponed.[7] The African Union (AU) is currently considering the possibility of providing security forces.

The dispersed nature of the conflict has a bearing on how linkages between conflict and food insecurity feature in food security analysis, conceptually and operationally. Clan, state, aid and agricultural system dynamics are important determinants of conflict, which need to be considered in food security analysis. So, too, are the different ways that men and women are affected by conflict and how they contribute to conflict resolution.

Degradation of common property resources in prolonged conflict

Prior to the collapse of the Somali state, a triple land classification system had been reduced to a double land classification system. In Bay region, land used to be classified as private farmland, communal, clan or village land, and remote 'open access land'[8] (Shepherd, 1988, p. 6). In the attempt to create a modern nation state, the government abolished the clan as a political entity, and, with it, communal land rights. Thereafter, communal land was treated along with open access land as state land. Only the sanctity of private farmland was upheld.

The withdrawal of communal land rights combined with the later collapse of the state and an intense and violent struggle over natural resources led to a massive degradation

of common property resources. Examples of negative environmental impact are manifold. For instance, the lack of state control exacerbated deforestation through charcoal burning and silting of rivers. Furthermore, private control over land restricted access to communal water points.

A letter written by the Horn of Africa Relief and Development Organization (Horn Relief)—presented at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 26 August–4 September 2002—underscores the gravity of the environmental decline:

> 'The illegal charcoal trade in Somalia is devastating the fragile arid and semi-arid ecosystems and turning the country into a useless desert. Currently 70–100 year old acacia trees are being clear cut to feed the enormous demand for charcoal in Saudi Arabia and the UAE [United Arab Emirates]. Hundreds of square kilometres of trees and shrubs are cleared every month and turned into wastelands that are unable to support vegetation or livestock, while each month boats loaded with 10,000–30,000 tons of charcoal set sail for the Gulf countries. The most visible effect of harvesting trees and bushes for charcoal is deforestation, soil erosion, and ultimately desertification. Deforestation and desertification will have major adverse effects on rainfall availability, capacity of soil to hold water and support vegetation, and local climates. Areas that have been cleared by charcoal burners no longer hold life, and remain uninhabitable by Somalia's pastoralists'.[9]

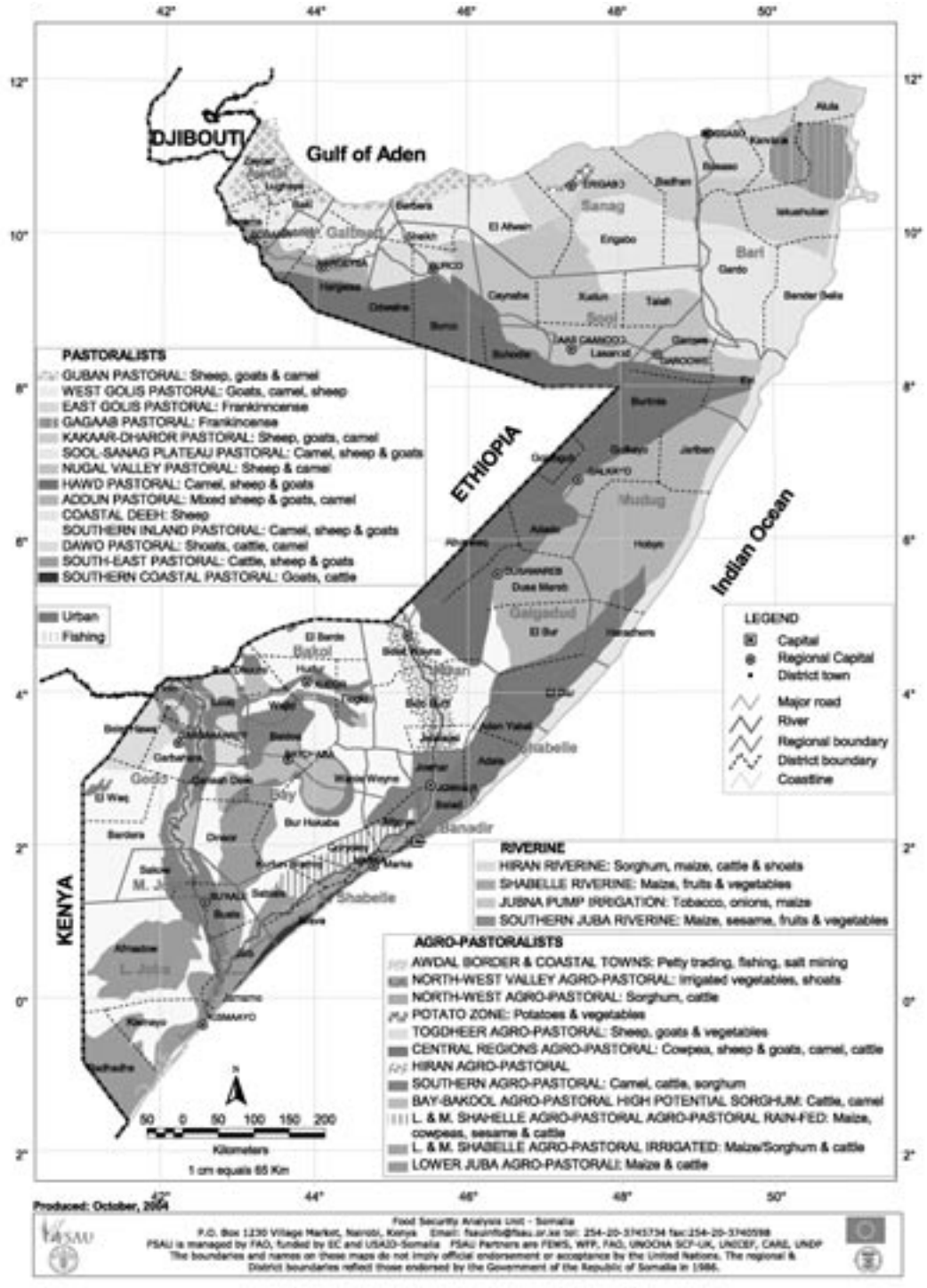
The degradation of communal and state land affects long-term food security, thereby constituting an integral component of food security analysis. In particular, it highlights the need to address not only short-term but also medium- and longer-term food security information issues.

Agro-ecological, economic and socio-cultural diversity: pastoralism, agro-pastoralism and riverine farming

Given the importance of intra-clan relationships in localised conflict, as described above, the socio-cultural dimension of people's livelihood strategies needs to be taken into account in efforts aimed at improving food security and agricultural livelihood strategies (Longley et al., 2001). Somalia is highly diverse in terms of agro-ecological conditions and the prevailing livelihood strategies of its people.[10] The three main agricultural livelihood systems are pastoralism, agro-pastoralism and riverine cropping, as illustrated in figure 1. Nomadic pastoralists or semi-nomadic herders make up around 60% of the population. Farmers, mostly in southern Somalia near the Juba and Shabelle Rivers, comprise approximately 20–25%. Town dwellers account for 15–20% of the population.[11]

Livelihood patterns are differentiated along ethnic lines. For example, agro-pastoralists and riverine farmers tend to come from the minority Bantu and Rahanweyn ethnic groups. They have traditionally been regarded as second-class citizens by the four main pastoral clans and have been both socially and politically marginalised over time. As agro-pastoralism is becoming more common among traditionally pastoralist Marehan communities, conflict over agricultural resources is likely to increase (Longley et al., 2001).

Figure 1
Main livelihood and food economy zones in Somalia



When allocating relief, rehabilitation and development resources to different livelihood groups, it is important to consider that such resource allocations can easily become sources of tension. Thus, food security information cannot be limited to bio-physical and economic aspects of food and agricultural systems, but needs to be integrated into socio-cultural and political information.

Southern Somalia has two very distinct cropping systems: irrigated; and rain-fed. Riverine farmers and agro-pastoralists alike undertake both types of cropping. Irrigated areas are dependent on the flow of water from the Juba and Shabelle Rivers, which is affected by rainfall in the catchment areas of eastern and southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. This is one reason why food security analysis has to cut across national borders.

Rain-fed agriculture, the main form of settled crop production, accounting for some 77% of total cultivated land, is concentrated in the inter-riverine belt and follows a weak bi-modal rainfall pattern. The complex interaction between the seasons and among different agro-ecological zones needs to be captured in food security monitoring of bi-modal rainfall patterns. Despite existing insecurity, there is movement of goods and people both within and between the rain-fed and irrigated areas with important implications for food and seed availability. Since *total* crop failure is unlikely to occur simultaneously in irrigated and non-irrigated areas, commodity exchange between different areas needs to be considered in food security analysis.

An external assistance community network: the Somalia Aid Coordination Body

Since the withdrawal of UNOSOM troops in early 1995, the expatriate presence in Somalia has gradually dwindled in response to a succession of security incidents. Consequently, programme implementation and information collection are largely dependent on Somalis (ENN, 1998)—a large segment of the international Somalia assistance community is posted in Nairobi, Kenya.

The Somalia Aid Coordination Body (SACB) plays a key role in inter-sectoral coordination of international assistance to Somalia. Comprised of donors, UN agencies and international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the SACB operates at the policy level (through an Executive Committee chaired by a donor) and at the operational level (through a Sectoral Steering Committee chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator). As most users of FSAU information are members of the SACB, the existence of the FSAU has a strong bearing on the structure and operations of the SACB.

The central role of remittances in food security

Remittances play a crucial role in household food and livelihood security and in the national economy. Accordingly, factoring remittance flows into food security analysis is essential. The Somali diaspora, itself largely a by-product of protracted conflict, has been estimated at over one million. Remittances are mostly used for household consumption (food), children's education, family events, including weddings and funerals,

and the establishment of micro-enterprises, such as kiosks and shops (Africa Action, 1998). Annual flows of remittances into Somalia are estimated at between USD 750 million and USD 1 billion, of which USD 360 million makes a direct contribution to levels of household income (UN, 2003; Horst and Van Hear, 2002).

Factoring remittances in to food security analysis is complex, as they have different implications for different population groups. In the 2003 CAP, for example, it was argued that internally displaced persons (IDPs) may find it more difficult to access clan support systems and receive remittances than people returning from exile to their communities (UN, 2002, p. 17). Capturing these differences in entitlements needs to figure in food and livelihood security analysis and interventions.

Food security information in Somalia: the Food Security Assessment Unit

The World Food Programme (WFP)-Somalia and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) set up the FSAU in 1994 to supply the international community and the Somali authorities with comprehensive information on, and analysis of, the food security and nutrition situation in Somalia. Initially, the FSAU was designed to provide early warning of humanitarian emergencies and livelihood crises, pinpoint population groups in need of assistance and quantify relief needs. Since FAO started to manage the unit in January 2000, with European Commission (EC) funding and the additional backing of USAID, assessing the underlying causes of food and livelihood insecurity and malnutrition, as well as supporting the development of longer-term policy and programming responses, have become increasingly important elements of the unit's agenda.

The early years: estimating food aid needs

Between 1994 and 1997, the focus of FSAU food security assessments was on satisfying the information needs of food relief interventions. Initially, Field Monitors (FMs) reported by radio to the unit's head office in Nairobi on a variety of indicators, covering crop performance, livestock sales and conditions and market prices. These were evaluated and results issued in a monthly report. Gradually, information from other sources was also collected.

From 1997, the Household Economy Approach (HEA) became the unit's core methodology. The HEA identifies how rural households make ends meet both under regular circumstances and stress conditions as a way of estimating emerging food gaps (Seaman et al., 2000). Somalia was divided into four main livelihood groups: pastoralist; agro-pastoralist; urban; and riverine (see figure 1). Additional field analysis subdivided these four groups into 22 food economy zones (FEZs). Households in each FEZ were assumed to access food and income in a similar way and share certain livelihood characteristics.

Baseline profiles for the 22 FEZs described how in a normal year households in a FEZ managed to access the food they needed, given their income and expenditure patterns.

The profiles detailed this information for a 'reference' year, indicating as well 'usual' coping mechanisms and a wealth breakdown. Baseline profiles were stored in the FSAU database. Through spreadsheet analysis the impact of a food security shock, such as drought, crop failure or the livestock ban, was assessed and predictions made of how households will respond based on wealth group and season. Spreadsheet-based analysis considered the multiple dimensions of a food security problem, including crop and milk loss, declines in livestock price and staple food price increases, and calculated food deficits.

The food security analyst then translated the deficit into a quantifiable food gap for the FEZ for the period of the external 'shock'.[12] The HEA brought into sharp focus food access rather than merely food availability, and underscored how risks and shocks have different potential impacts, depending on the socio-economic status of households and their ability to expand or extend existing food and income sources to meet food shortfalls (McEwan and van Roosbroeck, 2002). Thus, the HEA painted a contextual and dynamic picture, adding significant value to other food security pointers.

Additional indicators on which the FSAU reported on a regular basis include those set out below.

- **Crop data** for the main *gu* cropping season and the secondary *deyr* cropping season (maize and sorghum). Information is stored by district, region and FEZ.
- **Market price information:** weekly collection of data on 30 items in 35 markets, in collaboration with the Famine Early Warning and Systems Network (FEWS NET).
- **Rainfall data:** FSAU Field Monitors gather quantitative information from ten rainfall stations. This is crosschecked with information derived from satellite imagery, in conjunction with FEWS NET.
- **Import and export data** from Berbera and Bossasso sea ports.
- **Trend data:** information on rainfall, pasture, grazing, livestock, crops, food consumption, coping mechanisms, displacement and migration, market, health and security. Trends are analysed by district and provide essential early warning information.
- **Nutrition surveillance:** malnutrition rates and patterns, and rapid screenings where there are IDPs and other vulnerable populations.
- **Food aid data** collected by CARE, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WFP at the regional and district levels and some impact assessments.

According to evaluation reports, FSAU information led to adjusted estimates for food aid requirements and improved targeting of geographical areas and population groups most in need. It has also enabled the SACB to plan an early response to identified food security problems and hence has contributed to improved coordination within the humanitarian community. However, the strong focus on the HEA also led to some shortcomings. For example, the FSAU was criticised for overly concentrating on establishing a food gap, resulting in a bias towards food aid, rather than in a more balanced menu of food security response options. Additionally, it largely catered for the information needs of the international community, neglecting local audiences. Some of these concerns are being addressed in the current project phase.

Broadening the framework: towards a Food Security Analysis System

Given the shift in donor and broader stakeholder interest towards rehabilitation and development-oriented interventions, a perceived need emerged over the past few years to expand FSAU analysis beyond the HEA. Thus the unit increasingly aims to ensure that a broad range of information users have access to up-to-date, relevant information to enhance decision-making on short- *and* longer-term livelihood interventions. Since 2003, the new management of the FSAU has been concentrating on consolidating the unit's various assessments within a comprehensive framework, integrating the numerous conceptual, analytical and operational elements for understanding livelihoods-based food security analysis within a Food Security Analysis System (FSAS).

The FSAS expands on household food economy analysis in the following ways:[13]

- It explicitly includes an appraisal of livelihood strategies (behaviour analysis drawing from the HEA) and livelihood assets (structural analysis drawing from the broader sustainable livelihoods approach).
- It increasing relies on indicator-based analysis, including the creation of a robust food and livelihood security monitoring system based on a spatial understanding of objective, quantitative indicators.
- It establishes stronger linkages between macro-level quantitative data and analysis at the meso- (for example, livelihoods) and micro-levels (for instance, household).
- It forges a stronger connection between information and response by defining a Food and Livelihood Security Phase Classification System. Distinguishing 'livelihood crises' from 'humanitarian emergencies' can create space in which relief and development actors are able to work together. The Food and Livelihood Security Phase Classification System served as the format used by the UN to present its needs in the 2005 Humanitarian Action Plan (UN, 2005) (see table 2).

The revised FSAU operational framework contains the following core analytical activities:[14]

- Baseline Livelihoods Analysis.
- Annual Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis and Projections.
- Rapid Food Security and Nutrition Assessments for early warning and intervention design.
- Livelihoods Indicator Monitoring System.
- Nutrition Surveillance and Analysis.
- Food and livelihood-oriented research to explore the underlying causes and long-term dynamics of food insecurity.

Communicating results: FSAU information products and services

More than 150 international NGOs, donors, UN agencies, embassies and institutes subscribe to FSAU information products. Key FSAU information products and services include regular publications, such as the *Monthly Food Security Report* and the *Monthly*

Nutrition Update. Occasional *Focus* bulletins examine specific food security questions, such as the implications of the livestock ban, in more depth. *Flash* alerts draw attention to deteriorating food security conditions and act as an early warning instrument. In addition, there are numerous ad hoc reports, presentations and press releases.

Along with the development of the FSAS, a client-based communication strategy will be devised, to allow for further rationalisation of the range of analytical products and their distribution mechanisms. Plans include the preparation of a technical paper series, a diaspora website and radio programmes.

Implications of the Somalia emergency context for the work of the FSAU

This section highlights how selected features of the FSAU have evolved given the specific characteristics of the Somalia protracted crisis context. Its purpose is to illustrate how contextual variables can and need to be taken into account in designing operational approaches to food security information work.

Creating local capacity through a strong field assessment team

The widespread absence of government in Somalia and the lack of institutions at various levels in large parts of the country have critical ramifications for the structure and operations of the FSAU. According to the FSAU's former Head of Information, Charles Rethman, '[i]n countries with a government in place an information system would usually have a network of field staff at its disposal at [the] district level . . . In Somalia, such a network is not in place'.[15] As a result, the unit's field monitoring structure was set up and financed entirely from the project budget.

In 2002, the FSAU field team was composed of 22 Field Monitors. Between 1994 and 1998, these Somali professionals participated in seasonal crop surveys during the planting (establishment) and harvest stages of the two major cropping seasons (*dyer* and *gu*). Many were taken on permanently at the end of 1998 (Shoham and Kangyangwa, 1998). All of the FMs were male; most were agronomists concentrated in southern Somalia. Four senior FMs were appointed as focal points in March 2002, with a view to creating zonal analytical teams.

The recruitment of FMs was sensitive and a number of factors have added to operational costs. Expatriate staff selected all FMs, as local personnel, and even the field staff manager, feared retaliation, in case a clan felt disadvantaged by the recruitment process. By 2002, all FMs still received the same emoluments and a concerted effort was made to avoid creating a hierarchy among them. Security constraints complicated in-country travel by field staff to the assessment sites. Special travel and car-rental arrangements entered into to minimise the risk add to the cost. Payment of staff is organised through moneylenders, involving substantial transaction fees. In addition, the lack of a counterpart structure means that donor funding is required for the foreseeable future to maintain the field network.

Despite these difficulties, the FSAU field network has been one of the unit's core assets. According to former FEWS NET Regional Director Nick Maunder, '[t]he FSAU network of field monitors is critical for maintaining field data collection in areas of conflict'.[16] Unique to the FSAU field assessment team is the fact that its evaluation capacity is not compromised by other tasks. It is rather rare for field staff to be assigned the single job of carrying out a food security assessment, as is the case with the FSAU. Often FMs are given dual roles. In the case of FMs with Operation Lifeline Sudan, for example, the food security assessment is combined with monitoring implementation of food aid programmes.[17]

Enhancing the analytical capacity of the FMs has been a central concern of the FSAU. Former FSAU Chief Technical Advisor Buzz Sharp asserted that: '[t]he ability to collect information has improved, but the ability to process it lags behind'.[18] The creation of local teams among the FMs themselves is expected to strengthen local analysis. FSAU Analytical Zones have now been delineated, matching the operational zones of the major implementing agencies, and are expected to fortify the links between information and decision-making.[19]

As FMs have increased their visibility, they have also developed working relationships with NGOs and UN agencies at the local level and now carry out decentralised assessments with Somali beneficiaries, encouraging dialogue and joint analysis among different stakeholders. In the words of the Somalia Representative of the NGO Intersos, Tiziana Greco, '[f]ield monitors are more than mere providers of information. They also support NGOs in developing local intervention programmes'.[20]

The role of FMs has thus shifted considerably, from an initial focus on information collection and transmission of data to the FSAU office in Nairobi, to acting as a focal point in support of local development initiatives. While this may satisfy the multiple needs of the FSAU and help to link relief, rehabilitation and development responses, it also raises the question of how broad or how specific the role of FMs should be to ensure their effectiveness.

Intensifying links with decision-makers: the forum approach

A distinct feature of the Somalia emergency context is the sophisticated coordination response mechanism in place among members of the assistance community. Most FSAU partners and users are affiliated with the SACB,[21] a voluntary coordinating body that provides a common framework for allocating international aid to Somalia.

The FSAU encourages its partners to share analysis and to engage in consensus building via a 'forum approach',[22] which actively involves stakeholders in the analysis and in the process of interpretation of its findings, as shown by the overlapping circles on the right side of figure 2. It goes beyond the traditional approach to data collection, processing and evaluation, which generates information without following up with decision-making fora and interactive communication with decision-makers (as shown on the left side of figure 2).

Information can significantly influence how decision-makers prioritise interventions. According to the ICRC's former Deputy Head of Delegation in Nairobi, Juerg Montani,

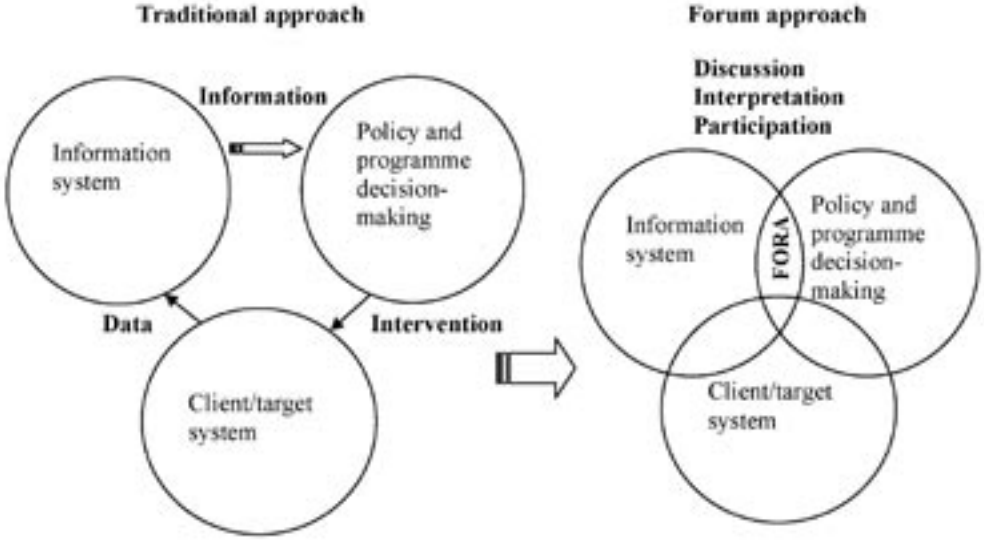
'FSAU information is used by ICRC for prioritising interventions in terms of focusing on those areas that are most vulnerable and in terms of what kind of interventions to choose ... As a matter of fact, FSAU information influenced our change in approach, away from merely providing relief towards livelihood-oriented interventions'.[23]

As developmental aspects become part of the FSAU's mandate, interaction and consultation with, and the participation of, stakeholders and target beneficiaries at the local level will become increasingly important. This is shown in figure 2 by the overlap of the target group/client circle and the circles representing the information and programming agencies. Initial steps to strengthen target-group participation were taken through the employment of a Field Staff Development Officer, whose task was to reinforce linkages between FMs and local NGO staff and beneficiaries via joint capacity-building activities.

The forum approach not only includes monthly presentations and discussion of assessment results, but also involves consultations with major partners prior to the release of the *Monthly Food Security Report*. Close interaction with decision-makers and information users, however, is controversial. The National FEWS NET Representative for Somalia, Sidow A. Ibrahim, for example, stated that 'information units need to be free and independent', and asked 'how much consultation can be justified while preserving an information unit's independence?'[24] This points to the need to find modalities to involve information users while safeguarding the neutrality of assessments and recommendations.

The forum approach enhances the depth of food security analysis, facilitates joint learning between those involved in the provision of information and those implementing assistance programmes and creates a platform for discussing intervention options. This approach does not imply that the FSAU assumes ownership of the decisions to be

Figure 2 Forum approach to food security information work



made. According to the former Manager of the FAO Africover Project, Luca Alinovi, the FSAU focuses on providing decision-makers with scenarios rather than on defining interventions. To a large degree, the forum approach is facilitated by the existence of a highly formalised and well-organised coordination mechanism under the SACB. Whether the forum approach can be replicated in other complex emergency settings is likely to depend on the willingness of donors to invest in coordination assistance.

Gender in the analytical framework and in FSAU operations

As highlighted by the former Food Security Analyst of the FSAU, Thierry Antoine, 'gender aspects have hardly featured in FSAU analysis'.[25] One reason is that the HEA framework was not designed to investigate intra-household issues. Therefore, it did not offer a gender-disaggregated analysis of the effects of shocks and stresses on the household economy and of the coping strategies of men and women (McEwan and van Roosbroeck, 2002, p. 33). Furthermore, as noted above, there were no females among the FMs, largely due to cultural, safety and security considerations, which severely restrict the ability of women to travel alone. While FMs claimed that they tried to seek the opinion of women (as key informants), in practice, few were reached and the information collected was unlikely to reflect the needs, interests and constraints of both genders.

Assessing food security analytical and operational frameworks from a gender standpoint is particularly important in the Somali context. This is because the traditional division of roles and responsibilities between men and women may be shifting due to conflict and protracted emergencies. The effects of the conflict on the division of labour between the genders have been considerable: '[t]he hardships of war have forced women to become more responsible for their own and their families' livelihoods. Many men have been lost in the fighting, and women have picked up the burden of men's home responsibilities' (Coletta and Cullen, 2000, p. 105).

While gender-disaggregated data are difficult to assemble in the Somali context, earlier baseline surveys incorporated data on the division of labour by gender and age, offering a good basis for making gender analysis more prominent in food security assessments. Under the proposed FSAS, it is now foreseen that: separate focus group interviews will be held with men and women; gender-disaggregated analysis of nutrition and coping strategy data will be carried out; and gender-relevant gauges will be added to the Livelihoods Indicator Monitoring System.[26] Further efforts to 'engender' the work of the unit in terms of data collection and analysis could benefit not only the FSAU but also the activities of food security information systems in other emergency contexts.

Responding to the diverse information needs of relief, rehabilitation and development interventions

The political, agro-ecological, socio-economic and socio-cultural landscape of Somalia is highly diverse with respect to administrative structures and economic development. Such regional variations have a bearing on information requirements for the planning

and programming of food security interventions, depending on whether they are focused on short-term relief of a food crisis or longer-term structural changes that address the underlying causes of food insecurity in different settings (urban, farming, agro-pastoral or pastoral).

The experience of the FSAU has shown that it is extremely difficult to cater for such a broad spectrum of user demands (McEwan and van Roosbroeck, 2002, p. 39). It has been easier to satisfy the requirements of users planning short-term (food aid) interventions—the unit's initial focus[27]—because this need is acute, concerns a specific point in time, and the type of response is pre-determined as food aid (McEwan and van Roosbroeck, 2002, p. 39).

The various components of the proposed FSAS are meant to help address relief and development information needs simultaneously. While humanitarian emergencies will continue to require close attention, baseline studies, the Livelihood Indicator Monitoring System and special research into the underlying causes of food and livelihood insecurity will contribute to fulfilling development information needs.[28] As such information needs expand, partnerships and networks are likely to become increasingly important, resulting in a change in the operational priorities of the FSAU, from primary data collection towards data and information coordination. Adapting to changing needs will be facilitated if the FSAU maintains a capability to boost and contract its resources according to the intensity pressures associated with addressing emergency-related requirements.

Analysing linkages between food security and conflict

Civil conflict, political tension and insecurity are major constraints on the pursuit of livelihood and thus are key determinants of structural food insecurity in Somalia, along with natural disasters and resource scarcity. Food insecurity dynamics are closely related to the nature of the conflict, in which the frontlines are often diffuse and constantly changing. As underscored by the former Chief of the United Nations Coordination Unit (UNCU) for Somalia, Calum McLean, this calls for a 'more comprehensive understanding of vulnerability'.[29]

Linkages between food insecurity and conflict can be appraised by incorporating objective conflict pointers into the Livelihoods Indicator Monitoring System, as foreseen under the proposed FSAS. However, these may need to be limited to avoid the politicisation of food security information work. Additionally, collaboration with institutions engaged in a political examination of conflict, such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), will also be helpful in integrating conflict into food security and vulnerability analysis. UN OCHA has already developed a framework that promotes a crosscutting livelihoods approach and also considers protection issues (Narbeth and McLean, 2003).

Integrating food security and nutrition information

In recognition of the close linkages between food security and nutrition, the FSAU is hosting the Somalia Nutrition Surveillance Project, which aims to improve the quality,

reliability and coverage of nutrition information. Funded by USAID, this project calls, most notably, for:

- the establishment of an efficient nutrition surveillance system;
- the conduct of nutritional surveys, as part of the FSAU's regular assessment work;
- analysis and interpretation of data using relevant contextual information; and
- dissemination of nutrition information.

The project has contributed substantially to coordination and standardisation of nutritional assessments in Somalia. All USAID-funded nutrition assessments now include an FSAU representative, thereby ensuring that food security-related determinants are adequately considered in causal analyses of malnutrition.[30]

Nutrition information has been used in crisis-response and -mitigation planning as:

- a general welfare gauge in the absence of other demographic, health and economic indicators;
- a food security pointer—demonstrating the impact of climatic, environmental and political influences on the population; and
- a component of the food intervention monitoring system.

Presently, the primary results of the FSAU nutrition project are published in the *Monthly Nutrition Update,* which appears alongside the *Monthly Food Security Report*. In light of further integration of food security and nutrition assessments, it is anticipated that the two bulletins will be combined into a *Food Security and Nutrition Monthly Report*.

Chastre and le Jeune (2001) have compared key features of household economy analysis and nutrition surveys, which help in assessing the scope of food security and nutrition integration. Table 3 shows that differences in the unit of analysis, in the method of categorisation and in the time span of data need to be considered when integrating food security and nutrition information.

FSAU nutrition activities consider the predictive value and the seasonal dimension of household economy analysis when planning nutritional surveys. An HEA-informed

Table 3 A comparison of the Household Economy Approach and nutrition surveys

	Household Economy Approach	Nutrition surveys
Unit of analysis	Household	Individual (children between six and 59 months)
Method of categorising data	Breakdown by socio-economic category	Prevalence rates relate to the entire child age bracket of six to 59 months. No breakdown of data by wealth groups
Time period covered by results	Analyses situation over previous months and makes predictions for coming months Captures seasonal variation	Reflects the situation at one point in time

Source: Chastre and le Jeune, 2001

nutrition analysis is more likely to allow for the separation of the food- and health-related causes of malnutrition. Hence, it will result in a more comprehensive evaluation. Conversely, according to the Coordinator of the Somalia Nutrition Surveillance Project, Noreen Prendiville, using a nutritional lens to define livelihood baselines may be one way in which a food security analysis can benefit from closer alignment with nutrition. A joint examination of food security and nutrition can lead, therefore, to better programming and more appropriate interventions.

Conclusion

This case study illustrates how selected contextual features of the Somalia protracted emergency influenced the setup and operations of the FSAU. Key characteristics of the Somalia protracted emergency that affect food security information work highlighted in this paper include:

- *A lack of government structures and authority throughout much of the country.* This remains a determining factor in the setup and operations of the FSAU field monitoring component and means that tailor-made strategies are required to ensure medium-term institutional sustainability of food security information work.
- *The dynamic and diverse nature of instability and conflict*. This adds to the operational field monitoring cost and calls for an approach to food security analysis that is able to capture conflict determinants and impacts.
- *The heterogeneity of agro-ecological conditions, people's livelihood systems and the socio-economic situation*. This implies that food security information must cater for different clients, covering a wide range of aspects, from quantifying and qualifying relief needs to helping plan longer-term programmes that address the underlying causes of food insecurity.
- *A well coordinated external assistance community under the SACB umbrella*. This is a core audience for the FSAU, with significant implications for the unit's structure, data analysis and communication strategies.
- *Remittances from the Somalia diaspora*. These play a key role in the short-term coping capacity of some vulnerable livelihood groups. They also need to be better understood with regard to their longer-term implications for food security.
- *The degradation of the natural resource base.* This has become a threat to long-term food security and needs to be adequately considered in food security analysis.

The study derives a number of lessons from exploring how the institutional setup, the analytical framework and the operational modalities of the FSAU have been influenced by the crisis context. Such lessons have relevance for the development of the FSAU's work, as well as for the design of food security information activities in other complex emergencies.

The lack of an indigenous data collection capacity prompted the FSAU to establish a comprehensive *field monitoring structure.* While FMs initially kept a low profile, they

have increasingly assumed the role of local food security information focal points. Under conditions of continued insecurity and in the absence of government structures, the operational cost of this field component to the FSAU has remained high. Innovative approaches for the institutionalisation of information work and for building local capacity under such constraints need to be devised.

Assisted by the well-organised SACB coordination mechanism, the FSAU has created a *forum approach,* whereby those involved in the provision of information and those implementing assistance programmes can come together to develop a joint platform aimed at deepening food security analysis, discuss findings, outline various intervention options and facilitate joint learning. Replication of the forum approach in other complex emergency settings is likely to depend on the presence or the possibility of establishing effective coordination structures among the members of the assistance community.

The transition from acute emergency to protracted crisis in Somalia has increased the *breadth of food security information requirements.* The FSAU has been asked to provide information support for programmes in regions and locations that differ in terms of their relative stability and security, their level of functional governance and socio-economic development and the livelihood base of their population. This goes hand in hand with the appearance of a rising number of diverse actors. The unit therefore faces the challenge of offering food security data to address acute food shortages as well as to inform policies and programmes that tackle the underlying causes of longer-term food insecurity. When moving from relief to rehabilitation and development programming, information must not only cover *food security outcomes* (as required for identifying relief needs and targeting), but also, increasingly, *food security determinants* and livelihood assets (financial, human, natural, physical and social).

The FSAU's conceptual, analytical and operational framework is evolving continuously, adapting to broadening and diversifying needs. As information needs expand, partnerships and networks will become ever more necessary, resulting in a change in the FSAU's operational priorities, from primary data collection to information coordination. Adjustments are also being made to the conceptual framework used by the unit in recent years: the Household Economy Approach. A broader *Food Security Analysis System* is currently being operationalised, extending analysis beyond the identification of food needs and paying greater attention to the underlying causes of food insecurity. The FSAS comprises a tool for Food and Livelihood Security Phase Classification that serves both humanitarian and development actors. The tool aids the design of interventions in emerging crisis situations, thus allowing for the prevention and mitigation of humanitarian emergencies at an early stage.

Remittances have been identified as the primary source of foreign exchange for the Somali economy. Valued at between USD 500 million and USD 1 billion per year, they are consequently a critical food security factor in the Somalia context. Remittances are a common feature of protracted complex emergencies that produce extended expatriate communities. As such, there is a need to comprehend better their short- and long-term implications for food security. Remittances not only determine the short-term

coping capacity of vulnerable livelihood groups, but also they need to be factored in to rehabilitation and developing programming (as potential investments). An assessment of the relative impact of remittances on food security (as compared, for example, to contributions made under the CAP process) will be useful in enhancing the assimilation of remittance flows into policy and programming.

Natural resource degradation and its effects on food security is another important variable that needs to be incorporated into food security analysis. For that reason, practices such as the burning of charcoal for export to the Gulf States need to be evaluated simultaneously in terms of their contribution to household income as well as their long-term ramifications. As the FSAU is increasingly called upon to support longer-term programmes, as well as to inform short-term responses, there is a need to find ways to integrate better ecological dangers and other factors affecting long-term food security into food security analysis.

During the early years of the FSAU, the *gender dimension* of food security analysis was largely overlooked. The composition of the monitoring team was imbalanced from a gender standpoint, there was a shortage of gender-disaggregated data, and a gender-focused analytical framework was absent. The lack of gender sensitivity in food security information work in emergency contexts is so widespread that a consultancy project tasked with examining ways to 'engender' the work of the unit vis-à-vis data collection and analysis could benefit not only the FSAU but also food security information systems in other emergency settings.

The dynamic and diverse nature of instability and conflict has implications for the *modalities of combining conflict analysis and food security analysis*. While conflict analysis needs to be an integral part of food security analysis in complex emergency contexts, mechanisms that feed conflict analysis by expert partners (such as the UNCU/UN OCHA) into food security assessments appear to be preferable to those that would require the direct involvement of FSAU Field Monitors. The core tasks of FMs could be compromised and security risks may be heightened when openly conducting conflict analysis. Assimilating conflict analysis not only entails assessing the implications of conflict for food security, but also for early warning of conflict. In the case of the latter, closer partnerships between food security early warning systems and conflict early warning systems can be forged, both at the national and international level.

Given its involvement in both *food security and nutrition work,* the FSAU is in a good position to *integrate these two variables further,* conceptually and operationally. A food security-informed nutrition analysis will be more likely to allow for a separation of food- and health-related causes of malnutrition and will thus result in a more comprehensive evaluation. At the same time, an integrated food security and nutrition framework may also support food security analysis as it helps in defining livelihood baseline profiles. A combined appraisal of food security and nutrition can lead, therefore, to better programming and more appropriate interventions.

In conclusion, the experience of the FSAU demonstrates how food security analysis is matched to the specific complex emergency context of Somalia. It also reveals how the unit responded to the change in stakeholder approach (from relief and humanitarian

action to rehabilitation and development-oriented interventions) by expanding its analysis beyond the Household Economy Approach. The newly adopted Food Security Analysis System offers a promising and comprehensive analytical framework, integrating conceptual, analytical and operational elements that can help one to understand food security and people's livelihoods in more detail.

For global initiatives aimed at strengthening food security analysis and assessment activities, an evaluation of the contextual features of emergencies (for which information support is to be provided) is critical. This will establish a sound basis for tailoring food security information activities to the requirements of specific contexts, as well as create a platform for a meaningful exchange of experiences among actors in different emergency situations. The experience of the FSAU suggests that customised methodological or practical approaches, such as the Food and Livelihood Security Phase Classification or the forum approach, can be instrumental in rationalising the choice of interventions. This is necessary to avoid the 'normalisation' trap and to contribute to constructive interaction between local institutions, governments and relief and development entities.

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Endnotes

1 For information on the organisational setup of the FSAU, and its activities and products, see http://www.unsomalia.net/FSAU/index.htm.

2 Now the Food Security Analysis Unit.

3 See ReliefWeb, 2002.

4 For a detailed context analysis, see Menkhaus, 2000.

5 Between one and two million Somalis are believed to have been displaced either internally or across borders (Refugee Policy Group, 1994, p. 114).

6 See CIA, 2005.

7 'Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia' (S/2002/189), cited in ICG, 2002, p. 5.

8 The term 'open access lands' should be used with caution in Somalia, as communities and sub-clans/clans can make exclusive claims to a grazing area (either temporarily or permanently). Even today, 'open access lands' are scarce because certain groups (often through raw force) hold claims to land. Even though they may abuse it by harvesting charcoal or selling those rights to outsiders, the land

nonetheless is not `open access land'. Personal communication with Peter D. Little, Professor of Anthropology, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KT, US, September 2004.

[9] Petition by Fatima Jibrell, Managing Director of Horn Relief, Somalia, to Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and, to His Excellency King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz Al-Soud, King of Saudi Arabia. Cited in correspondence on Horn Relief's report on the World Summit on Sustainable Development, 12 September 2002.

[10] Livelihood analysis provides information on how and why people survive (or fail to survive) in difficult times. The product of livelihood analysis may be as simple as a national livelihood zone map or may include in-depth baseline profiling of livelihood patterns among different wealth groups in selected livelihood zones (see http://www.fews.net/livelihoods/).

[11] See http://www.unsomalia.net/infocenter/factsheets.htm.

[12] For more information, see http://www.unsomalia.net/FSAU/methodology.htm.

[13] Personal communication with Nicholas Haan, Chief Technical Advisor, FSAU, 23 July 2004.

[14] Draft White Paper on the FSAU Food Security Analysis System, June 2004.

[15] Personal communication with Charles Rethman, former Head of Information, FSAU, 1 July 2002.

[16] Personal communication with Nick Maunder, former FEWS NET Regional Director, 28 June 2002.

[17] Personal communication with Anne Witteveen, former Household Food Security Coordinator, south Sudan, 8 July 2002.

[18] Personal communication with Buzz Sharp, former Chief Technical Advisor, FSAU, 5 July 2002.

[19] Personal communication with Nicholas Haan, Chief Technical Advisor, FSAU, 23 July 2004.

[20] Personal communication with Tiziana Greco, Somalia Representative, Intersos, 28 June 2002.

[21] The ICRC and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies remain autonomous but collaborate closely. Other international and regional bodies, such as the Arab League, the AU, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the World Bank, maintain ad hoc membership, mainly as observers.

[22] Correspondence with Buzz Sharp, former Chief Technical Advisor, FSAU, 16 December 2002.

[23] Personal communication with Juerg Montani, former Deputy Head of Delegation, ICRC Somalia, 2 July 2002.

[24] Personal communication with Sidow A. Ibrahim, National FEWS NET Representative for Somalia, 1 July 2002.

[25] Personal communication with Thierry Antoine, former Food Security Analyst, FSAU, 2 July 2002.

[26] Personal communication with Nicholas Haan, Chief Technical Advisor, FSAU, 23 July 2004.

[27] A mid-term review conducted by Oxford Policy Management in 1998 found that the FSAU was overly influenced by programming needs related to acute emergency interventions. It further indicated that the information provided by the FSAU was less useful for those agencies interested in shifting their focus from emergency programming to rehabilitation and development activities and suggested that the unit determine the food security information needs of all agencies working in Somalia.

[28] Personal communication with Nicholas Haan, Chief Technical Advisor, FSAU, 23 July 2004.

[29] Personal communication with Calum McLean, former Chief, United Nations Coordination Unit for Somalia, 2 July 2002.

[30] Personal communication with Noreen Prendiville, Coordinator, Somalia Nutrition Surveillance Project, FSAU, November 2002.

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War and food security in Eritrea and Ethiopia, 1998–2000

Philip White Independent Consultant

This paper examines the 1998–2000 'border' war between Eritrea and Ethiopia and its continuing legacies from the perspective of food security.[1] Focusing on the food crisis that hit both countries during the same period and was allowed to develop into a famine in southeast Ethiopia, it argues that this was linked with the war in more ways than hitherto recognised. Such connections can be appreciated only by taking a longer-term view of the decline of the rural economy of which this food crisis was part, factoring in the role played by this and other conflicts that have flared up in the region. An analysis of this kind might have helped donors and aid agencies to respond more effectively both to short-term humanitarian needs in the midst of an inter-state war and to the need for longer-term support for food security in a region beset by endemic conflict.

Keywords: aid policy, conflict, Eritrea, Ethiopia, food security, Horn of Africa, international aid system.

Introduction

The 1998–2000 war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, triggered by a dispute over the course of their mutual border, which had never been officially delineated, claimed an estimated 80,000 lives and displaced up to one million people. The economic costs to both countries have been enormous, and the political implications for the two leaderships and the region remain unresolved. Ethiopia refuses to accept the April 2002 Decision of the Eritrea–Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), set up under the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Netherlands, and a return to hostilities is feared. The war was not only a humanitarian disaster in itself, but it also had adverse food security consequences beyond the immediate conflict zone and following the June 2000 ceasefire.

Two months before Ethiopia's all-out offensive of May 2000, which led to Eritrea accepting a ceasefire, the world's media woke up to the threat of famine in the Horn of Africa. The United Nations (UN) had warned that up to 16 million people in the region faced starvation due to drought, half of these in Ethiopia, the rest in neighbouring areas of Kenya, Somalia and Uganda. Food reserves in Ethiopia had been depleted and relief commodities were in short supply. Television images of starving children in the southern and western lowlands of Ethiopia prompted comparisons with the famine of the mid-1980s and raised questions as to why such a situation had been allowed to develop once again. Only then did substantial humanitarian assistance begin to flow into drought-affected regions, whereupon a major famine was deemed to have been averted. Yet the food crisis was a year old by then and had arguably already peaked.

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During the major Ethiopian famine of the mid-1980s, centred in the north of the country, neither the belated international media coverage nor contemporary aid agency reports paid much attention to the war being waged by Ethiopia's *Derg* regime against the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Links between conflict and famine, including the use of food as a strategic weapon, were largely overlooked at the time. In 2000, by contrast, the networks devoted a great deal of airtime to debates on this issue, although these were mostly limited to arguments about providing relief aid to two governments locked in an expensive, pointless war.

This paper is based on research and consultancy work on food security and conflict in Eritrea and Ethiopia that the author has been involved in since 1987,[2] as well as on related published and 'grey' literature. It asserts that the conflict and food insecurity were linked in ways that went beyond diversion of government resources to the war effort. Moreover, while drought may prompt the hunger that grabs the headlines, there is a substantial degree of continuity in the variables responsible for food insecurity in Ethiopia and Eritrea over the past few decades, including failure to resolve this and other conflicts as successive food crises have unfolded.

One way in which the war affected food security was through its impact on donor attitudes. It is suggested here that the tragically slow donor response to the impending food crisis was a reflection of international pressure to end the war. This occurred in spite of the policy announced at the time by major donors of cutting development aid to the two warring governments while maintaining support for humanitarian assistance. Moreover, this donor policy of 'principled conditionality' is inherently problematic, as much of what is characterised as development aid comprises initiatives necessary for addressing food insecurity and reducing the risk of famine.

Two hungry states

The 1998–2000 war was fought between two of the poorest, most food insecure countries on the planet, as well as the most conflict-ridden. Both are food deficit, famine-prone nations, with among the highest rates of chronic under-nourishment found anywhere: 44% and 58% of the population in Ethiopia and Eritrea, respectively (FAO, 2002). Per capita cereal production has been falling since 1973–74, despite some recovery during the 1990s, with an annual national cereal deficit averaging 700,000 tons (nine percent of total production) over the past 15 years. In Ethiopia, humanitarian assistance is required each year for at least five million people or around eight percent of the population (FDRE, 2001).

The Horn of Africa has a long history of drought and drought-related famine. Ethiopia has seen at least ten major drought–famine episodes in the past four decades, the famines of 1973–74 and 1984–85 being among the worst in Africa's history. The attempt to engineer coercively a socialist transformation of agriculture during the *Derg* period (1974–91) through land reform, rural cooperatives, state farms, 'villagisation' and resettlement schemes fell short of its objectives and left a legacy of failed rural institutions, with

which subsequent federal and regional governments have had to contend. While the *Derg's* land reform measures represented a significant advance, the largely unchanged usufructuary basis of tenure offers little land security for smallholders.

During the inter-war period, 1991–98, both countries experienced improvements in food security that can partly be seen as a 'peace dividend'. In Ethiopia, grain production was boosted by a concerted campaign to promote wider use of 'green revolution' packages, with fertiliser use rising by 64%. The World Bank has claimed that these gains were part of a general reduction in poverty during this period, which can be credited to liberalising reforms and resulting increases in agricultural producer prices (Dercon, 2002). There were even expectations that the country would soon become a surplus food producer in normal years, reinforced by bumper cereal harvests in 1996 and 1998 that allowed the build up of cereal reserves.

However, others question the evidence regarding a general reduction in poverty in the 1990s and point to studies like the 'household food economy' assessments carried out by Save the Children (UK) in Wollo, which suggest that 'a subgroup of virtually assetless rural Ethiopians is emerging who are effectively destitute' (Devereux, 2000, p. 8). According to Save the Children (UK) (2000), people in Wollo were more vulnerable to food shortages at the end of the decade than they had been at the time of the 1984–85 famine. Significant sections of the population remained prone to food insecurity and malnutrition. Even in years of relatively good harvests, some 26 million people (over 40% of the population) were unable to meet their basic nutritional requirements through their own crop production and depended on other food sources (FAO–WFP, 1998). For some communities, post-famine recovery of livestock and farming equipment was still incomplete in the mid-1990s (Heyer and Campbell, 1999).

In the adjoining drought-prone highlands and pastoral lowlands of Eritrea, a parallel situation prevailed. Between 1991 and 1998, the country rarely produced more than half of the food that it needed and was structurally dependent on food imports from commercial and donor sources. Until 1998, a significant portion of food imports came from formal and informal cross-border trade with Ethiopia.

Successive food crises are characterised as having been triggered by drought, with rural overpopulation and land degradation serving as underlying causes. A more nuanced analysis would highlight a range of interrelated factors:

- Overwhelmingly rural populations (86% of Ethiopia's 63 million people) whose livelihoods are heavily, but not exclusively, reliant on agriculture and pastoralism.
- In the wetter highlands, where agricultural livelihoods prevail, landholdings are too small to provide subsistence under current farming systems, and access to new land is hindered both from physical and legal standpoints. In the drier lowlands, where pastoralism and agro-pastoral systems predominate, livestock diseases and periodic drought are major constraints.
- Annual population growth of around three percent further reduces landholdings and exacerbates 'landlessness', and results in shorter fallow periods and expansion of cultivation on to hillsides and grazing land. This leads to land degradation and interrupts mobility in pastoralist systems.

- Intensification of smallholder agriculture through yield-enhancing technologies is limited by unfavourable input–output price ratios and poor infrastructure. Productivity gains during the early 1990s without concomitant development of domestic and external marketing systems ultimately depressed grain prices to levels at which commercial production became uneconomic. A slump in the global market for Arabica coffee resulted in the prices obtained by Ethiopian growers falling from more than 100 US cents per pound in the mid-1990s to less than 40 cents in 2001 (ICO, 2003). In the mid-1990s, Arabica coffee generated approximately 60% of Ethiopia's export revenue (RESAL, 2000, p. 12) and was a vital source of agricultural wage labour on commercial farms and an essential smallholder cash crop.
- Marked inter- and intra-seasonal rainfall variability both for the *kiremt* rains on which the main *meher* agricultural season (May–October) depends, and for the minor *belg* season (February–April). Changing weather patterns have meant that the *belg* season has become shorter and weaker.
- In both countries, livestock are of prime importance. Ethiopia's national herd is the biggest in Africa. Cultivation remains dependent on oxen, yet fodder scarcity has led to a shortage of livestock and thus of draft power, manure and saleable assets. Downward rainfall trends, loss of pastures and mobility and an adverse policy environment favouring settled agriculture have eroded the viability of pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods in ways that are difficult for food information systems to detect. Rebuilding herds between droughts has proved increasingly difficult.
- Most rural households depend on multiple livelihood sources, but with poor infrastructure, health status and levels of literacy access to markets is restricted. Livelihoods lack resilience. They are increasingly vulnerable to periodic shocks, including drought, disruption of the food trade, displacement and price fluctuations, as well as to the longer-term impacts of HIV/AIDS and endemic malaria and tuberculosis. When shocks oblige households to sell productive assets to buy food, they are tipped towards destitution. Vulnerability has also increased within households. For example, when household dissolution leaves women without oxen they are often forced to migrate in search of employment.

Alongside these explanations, several analysts have examined the role of conflict in the decline of food security and livelihoods in these two countries during the period of Eritrea's liberation struggle (1962–1991) (Bondestam et al., 1988; Cliffe et al., 1991; Cliffe, 1994; Duffield and Prendergast, 1994; Rock et al., 1997). These studies highlighted a complex web of interactions between drought, food security and the direct and indirect effects of several conflicts over many years. The latter included conscription, displacement, loss of access to arable land and pastures and consequent changes in farming systems and herding strategies, disruption of trade and access to markets and relief supplies, diversion of resources to the war effort, and problems associated with demobilisation and reintegration. Many of these impacts ended with the advent of peace in May 1991; many re-emerged in various forms with the eruption of the 1998–2000 conflict. Some were longer term, and persisted during the inter-war years but received little attention.

Together these developments, despite post-war rehabilitation efforts in both countries after 1991, left large numbers of rural households in Ethiopia and Eritrea at the threshold of survival. Multiple threats to livelihoods and food security, nutrition and health go beyond periodic drought-induced production shortfalls and are facets of a progressive impoverishment in which conflict, including the 1998–2000 war, is one important factor.

Food security developments during the war

The situation at the start of the conflict

The two countries embarked on hostilities in the wake of what was for Ethiopia a significant reversal of the steady upward trend in food production since 1991. Grain output, which had reached a record level in 1996, fell dramatically in 1997 following widespread failure of the *belg* rains, erratic rains during the *meher* season, and a 20% decline in fertiliser use in key agricultural areas due to the removal of subsidies and a credit squeeze. Livestock in all areas were weakened by the *belg* failure, and drought in lowland agro-pastoral zones of Ethiopia in 1996 and 1997 caused livestock prices to drop by up to two-thirds as pastoralists off-loaded stock. The government appealed for assistance for nearly one million pastoralists in early 1997, but, by August 1997, estimates of numbers in need had increased to 3.4 million. The donor response was slow and ration sizes were reduced in many areas. In addition, there was concern about the fact that the level of the emergency food security reserve (EFSR)—set up in 1992 to bridge the five-month lead time required for food aid delivery—was down to 65,000 tons from a target of more than 300,000 tons.

Eritrea's national food security was in an even more parlous state. Agricultural conditions in 1996 and 1997 had been poor, depressing grain production by nearly one-third from the previous five-year average (FAO–GIEWS, 1997). The January 1996 government directive that all food aid must be monetised rather than distributed directly abruptly ended food-for-work projects and cut volumes of food aid, thus increasing reliance on commercial food imports, including normal cross-border inflows from Ethiopia. With the introduction of the new Eritrean currency, the nakfa, in November 1997 and Ethiopia's response insisting on trade in hard currency under a letter of credit system, these cross-border flows were also threatened. Ethiopia later announced an exemption from these conditions for cross-border trade valued at under ETB 2,000, yet it moved to regulate such trade through licensing and border posts. Eritrea's rejection of these terms was followed by a suspension of official bilateral trade, although cross-border trade continued at a reduced level until the closure of the frontier when hostilities began in May 1998 and the introduction by Ethiopia of a boycott on Eritrean ports. Substantial cross-border grain price differentials resulted, affecting consumers on the Eritrean side and producers in Ethiopia, especially in Tigray. The uncertain status of the nakfa also affected remittances by the many Tigrayan workers in Eritrea. These developments had ramifications for food security in both Eritrea and Tigray even before the fighting started.

Impacts in 1998

The most immediate and severe impacts of the war on already food insecure communities were associated with population displacement from conflict zones. Eritrean advances into Ethiopian-administered territory on the Badme plains and around Zalambessa during the war's first phase (May–June 1998) meant that the displaced were mostly Ethiopian, most of whom gravitated towards the towns of Adigrat, Adwa, Axum, Enda Sellasie and Mekele. While a minority was from Zalambessa and other towns and a few thousand were Ethiopian port workers and their families previously based in Assab, most of the displaced came from rural farming households. Some could take their belongings with them, while others had to leave everything, including animals and farm tools. Occurring just after the main planting season, this displacement meant that crops were left untended and were not harvested. The displaced were completely dependent on the help of others. A similar number of households on either side provided them with lodging, despite being close to the margins of survival themselves.

Initial humanitarian responses on each side of the border were instigated respectively by the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) and the Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (ERREC), and by Red Cross brigades with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). By mid-June, the Ethiopian government's Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) had launched an international appeal for food and non-food relief supplies for 150,000 displaced people, with a 'planning figure' of 300,000 likely to need assistance due to displacement over the coming six months. The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Ethiopia broadly verified these findings in the Regions of Afar and Tigray, noting that a needs assessment was complicated by difficulties in distinguishing between conflict- and drought-affected people. The displaced were being accommodated within communities in accordance with REST's policy of avoiding camps, strongly associated with the horrors of 1985, yet these same host communities had also been severely affected by drought.

The flow of displaced persons on the Ethiopian side continued during the second half of 1998, swelled by sporadic artillery exchanges and by the decision to evacuate people from areas thought to be most exposed. By the end of the year, the Tigrayan authorities calculated that 315,000 displaced people needed assistance, excluding 40,000 Ethiopians who had returned from Eritrea, and conceded that some may have to be housed in camps. An estimated 24,000 people had already been displaced in the Afar Region, bringing the total to close to 380,000 (UNEUE, 1999a).

On the Eritrean side, a September 1998 UN Appeal set out emergency needs for 275,000 people affected by the conflict, including 100,000 displaced from the border zone and 17,000 'Eritreans' expelled from Ethiopia. Items requested included shelter materials to put up people in camps and agricultural inputs and implements so that beneficiaries given land in their new locations could replant crops. Looking ahead, the appeal assumed a 'no peace, no war' scenario, in which the uneasy calm following the May–June hostilities would persist throughout 1999, with no further mass displacement from the border zone. This was, as it turned out, sadly over-optimistic.

For Ethiopia, closure of the border and its boycott of the Eritrean ports of Assab and Massawa meant that, for now, all of its maritime trade had to be channelled through

Djibouti. Hitherto, Djibouti had handled only about ten percent of Ethiopian transit trade. Furthermore, it was equipped for container rather than bulk cargo and had inadequate road and rail links with Addis Ababa and other Ethiopian centres. This posed problems for the importation of much-needed food assistance, as well as of fertiliser and oil. Ethiopia allocated $3 million immediately to help Djibouti expand its port capacity, and set about improving transport links. For Eritrea, the border closure meant not only the immediate loss of substantial port handling revenues and its Ethiopian market for manufactured products, but also the loss of a vital supply of Ethiopian grain.

In late 1998, food security prospects appeared to improve dramatically. In Ethiopia, the pre-harvest assessment exercise led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) noted that *meher* season crop conditions had been good, and high prices and the new National Extension Package Programme encouraged use of improved inputs (FAO–WFP, 1998). The grain production forecast of 12 million tons was only slightly below the record level of 1996, and the estimated overall surplus of 540,000 tons would permit stock replenishment and even grain exports to Kenya and Somalia (although not to Eritrea, because of the closed border, or to Sudan, which also had a food surplus).

The mission did observe, though, that 1.9 million people would still require food assistance in 1999 due to localised 'unusual' factors, such as flooding, drought or an outbreak of malaria. Significantly, and apparently for operational reasons,[3] this assessment excluded people displaced from the Eritrean border zone, numbered by the DPPC at 400,000, as well as the needs of the 40% of Ethiopian farm households considered to be chronically food insecure. It also excluded pastoralist populations, mainly in Afar and Somali Regions. However, it did recognise they had failed to recover from losses in 1997 due to drought, the Saudi ban on livestock imports and the blocking of herd movements into Eritrea.

Reinforcing these latter observations, the United Nations Emergency Unit for Ethiopia (UNEUE) warned in January 1999 of an 'emerging crisis in the Somali region', made worse by an influx of similarly affected pastoralists from Somalia and Somaliland. Rates of malnutrition had already climbed to alarming levels in the Region, and the DPPC (as part of its appeal of December 1998) included 220,000 people from these areas in its national estimate of 2.2 million needing food assistance in 1999. Donors largely ignored these caveats, however. In early 1999, they believed the food situation in Ethiopia to be generally good and accorded little attention to the pastoralist areas (Hammond and Maxwell, 2002).

Eritrea also benefited from a better-than-average main cropping season in 1998, with estimated grain production of 460,000 tons, three times more than in the previous year. This was expected to meet 90% of national needs in 1999, excluding stock build-up (FAO–GIEWS, 1999), and occurred despite the displacement of the farming population in the border zone. The winter rains on which the coastal Northern and Southern Red Sea Regions depend, though, failed in 1998–99, and here, too, pastoralists were pushed further into decline.

Impacts in 1999

The optimism engendered by these early food supply forecasts for 1999 soon evaporated. In February and March 1999, hostilities resumed near Badme, Bure and Tsorona, as Ethiopia launched its 'Operation Sunset' counter-offensive to penetrate Eritrea's Badme front, as well as its suicidal, yet unsuccessful, assault on Eritrean positions south of Tsorona. The humanitarian situation deteriorated further. Although journalists and aid workers were denied access to the war zone, it was clear that additional waves of displacement were occurring. In February, ERREC reported that another 100,000 Eritreans had been displaced in the recapture of Badme by Ethiopian forces.

Authorities in Kassala, Sudan, began to report refugee flows from both Eritrea and Ethiopia. There were also accounts of increasing landmine casualties among those who had returned during lulls in fighting to inspect their homes and crops or retrieve livestock and other possessions. An Ethiopian government document on de-mining operations highlighted the large areas of farmland mined in the border zone (UNEUE, 1999b)

Table 1 Estimates of numbers in need, June 1998–February 2001

Date	Eritrea	Source	Ethiopia	Source
June 1998			150,000 war-displaced	DPPC
September 1998	275,000 war-affected, including 117,000 displaced	UN Appeal		
December 1998			1.9m in need, excluding war-affected and pastoralists 2.2m in need (220,000 in Somali Region), including 400,000 displaced	FAO/WFP DPPC
February 1999	217,000 war-displaced	ERREC		
April 1999	550,000 in need	ERREC	3.3m in need	DPPC
May 1999			4.6m in need	DPPC
July 1999			5.4m in need	DPPC
October 1999			7m in need, including 360–400,000 war-affected	DPPC
December 1999	600,000 war-affected, including 333,000 displaced	ERREC		
January 2000	584,000 in need, most war-affected	UN Appeal	7.8m in need, excluding war-affected 349,000 war-displaced	FAO/WFP DPPC
June 2000	1.2m war-displaced 300,000 drought-affected in Anseba	ERREC Red Cross	10.2m in need	DPPC
February 2001	2m in need, of which two-thirds war-affected	UN Appeal		

Thus, despite the good cropping season, ERREC was obliged to appeal in April 1999 for food and other humanitarian assistance for 550,000 war-affected people, including 100,000 war-displaced and 60,000 deportees from Ethiopia. At the same time, it noted that only one-third of the funds called for in the 1998 appeal had been provided. The weak donor response was partly attributable to the government's 1997–98 decision to expel international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), through which much aid had been channelled. It partially reversed this decision in 1999, inviting Oxfam International and Save the Children (UK) to return to Eritrea to participate in the assessment and to provide humanitarian assistance.

During 1999, the DPPC made a series of updates to its December 1998 appeal for Ethiopia. The previous main harvest was less outstanding than had been predicted due to heavy pre-harvest rains and hail. Moreover, the 1999 *belg* rains almost completely failed, especially in Haraghe and Wollo. The severity of livestock losses in these highland areas led to late planting of the principal *meher* crop. Evidence of a deteriorating nutritional situation in many parts of the country mounted during the year. In the lowland pastoral areas of the south and east, the main March–May rains were the worst in several years. The estimated number needing assistance rose to 3.3 million in April, 4.6 million in May, 5.4 million in July and peaked at seven million in October. Of these, the number *directly* accredited to 'man-made causes' (that is, the war) remained in the 360–400,000 range. Although May and June had seen further serious fighting in the western sector and around Bure, as well as bombing by the Ethiopian Air Force, this did not add significantly to the displacement of civilians on the Ethiopian side. A further appeal was made in November to cover the needs of 5.8 million people during the first quarter of 2000 pending the findings of the 1999 assessment exercise, reflecting expectations of a lower *meher* harvest and limited carry-over stocks.

Donor responses to these Ethiopian appeals were slow. The December 1998 appeal for 283,000 tons of food assistance yielded just one pledge from the European Union (EU) of 30,000 tons. Subsequent appeals and reports of a deteriorating food situation did result in additional pledges, but deliveries lagged significantly behind requirements. Relief rations had to be diluted, with families, in some cases, receiving as little as 12.5 kilograms of cereals per month. By the end of 1999, 405,000 of the revised request of 461,000 tons for June–December 1999 had been promised and 352,000 tons 'delivered'. Significantly, however, the bulk of the latter (294,000 tons) was borrowed from the EFSR against confirmed pledges not yet delivered. While the EFSR had helped to avert a major disaster in 1999, its depletion and the slow rate of replenishment were to prove major factors in the crisis that followed.

In Ethiopia, the January 2000 FAO–WFP needs assessment of 764,000 tons of relief was the highest in eight years, representing the needs of 7.8 million people for an average of six months at 15 kilograms per month. It followed a 1999 *meher* season in which planted area and per hectare yields were both less than in 1999, partly because of war-induced disruption and people switching to short-cycle but lower yielding crops. The overall *meher* harvest forecast was down six percent, but in the normally deficit areas of the north, east and south the decrease was far greater—12% in the Southern Nations

Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) and 35% in war-affected Tigray. This assessment, while attempting to account for both 'current' and 'chronic' vulnerability, again excluded the needs of the war-displaced, which the government had numbered at 349,000. Gode and Fik in Somali Region were highlighted as having the highest proportion of people requiring relief (more than 75%).

As in Ethiopia, 1999 grain production in Eritrea suffered from drought and delayed sowing, and was put at 160,000 tons, barely one-third that of the previous year. Spring rains had failed, the main rains in agricultural areas started late and the drought in coastal areas continued, as did disruption due to population displacement in the war zone. By the end of the year, 600,000 war-affected people were in a precarious food situation and faced unseasonably high food prices. These included 266,000 war-displaced and 67,000 deportees from Ethiopia, of which almost one-half was accommodated in camps. The figure also included 77,000 people in communities in Debub and Gash-Barka (which were hosting the displaced), in which women head 50% of households. Of the $31 million requested for emergency relief in January 1999, less than one-half had been pledged—for food, this proportion was better, 70%, but for non-food assistance (around 50% of the total), only one-fifth of needs had been covered. Moreover, the food pledges were late and almost exclusively comprised cereals with very little pulses or vegetable oil. The January 2000 UN Appeal was for $43 million, targeted at 584,000 people, of whom most were war-displaced, and their hosts in Debub and Gash-Barka. The remainder were drought-hit farmers in Northern Red Sea and Anseba Regions. As in 1998, the appeal considered a range of future scenarios, opting for one that assumed a continued stalemate in the conflict, but with a contingency plan to assist up to 70,000 people should hostilities resume (UNCT Eritrea, 2000).

The food crisis of 2000

Not until late March 2000 did the prospect of famine in the Horn begin to receive international media attention. Surveys in different parts of Ethiopia were increasingly confirming what in-country agency staff already knew. True famine conditions had emerged in some areas, particularly in Somali Region—malnutrition levels in Gode had stood at between 32% and 55% since December 1999. As estimates of numbers in need of emergency relief climbed to 10.2 million and relief requirements to 1.3 million tons by mid-2000, the donor response finally began to gather pace. Yet the food crisis was almost a year old by this time. In June 1999, the WFP had warned of a 'potentially major humanitarian crisis' in Ethiopia; NGOs had attempted to alert donors even earlier. Given the low level of food reserves available for relief efforts in mid-1999, the failure to replenish them fully in the subsequent November–January period (when the main harvests become available), and the lead-time required to turn pledges into deliveries, alarm bells should have been sounding in donor headquarters around the world long before the end of 1999. This sluggish donor reaction was a significant factor in the deepening of the crisis.

In early 2000, the relief effort in Ethiopia was also hampered by problems with the food assistance pipeline. The port of Djibouti could not match Assab and Massawa in

terms of capacity to handle food imports. Attempts were made to bring the Somaliland port of Berbera into play, although its capacity was even more limited. Haulage constraints affected the movement of relief supplies from both ports, especially from Berbera, as well as their distribution within Ethiopia. In April–May, the unloading of a shipment of 16,000 tons of EU-supplied food at Djibouti took more than 20 days to complete due to a lack of trucks. Above all, as already noted, the EFSR was depleted because of donor borrowings in 1999, which had not been repaid. As Hammond and Maxwell (2002, pp. 273–274) observed:

> 'throughout the worst of the crisis, the EFSR was owed a total of nearly 300,000 MT of food—over 80 per cent of its total reserve capacity—which was the main factor crippling its capacity to bridge the gap in the pipeline'.

During the first quarter of 2000, only around one-third of food assistance requirements were met. Even when the momentum of food distribution picked up, supplies to target groups consisted of little over one-half of the recommended full ration of 15 kilograms per person per month, and in some needy areas only supplementary rations of 4.5 kilograms per *family* per month were available (FAO–WFP, 2001). Moreover, throughout the year, pledges and deliveries of non-food assistance, including for agriculture and livestock, were seriously inadequate. This represented a significant missed opportunity to assist recovery.

Reliable measures of excess human mortality attributable to the 2000 food crisis are not available. Although the verdict of the major agencies involved was that this was a 'famine averted', it is probable that at least 10,000 people died (IDS, 2002). One study, based on a household survey in Gode Zone, suggested that the total in Somali Region—the worst hit part of Ethiopia—may have been as high as 100,000 (Salama et al., 2001). There is also evidence that death rates were falling by April 2000, but that the concentration of people at major distribution centres, such as the one in Gode, led to a disease-induced resurgence of mortality (IDS, 2002).

Longer-term impacts on livelihoods were also severe. In Somali Region and parts of Oromiya, cattle losses were put at up to 80% just for the year until May 2000 (Sandford and Habtu, 2000). Many who lost their herds and settled near the Gode distribution centre were still there two years later, completely dependent on food aid and lacking assistance to recover their livelihoods (IDS, 2002).

The food security situation in Eritrea in early 2000 was overshadowed by the crisis in Ethiopia and received relatively little attention. The appeal of January 2000 met with no response at all until March, when 12,000 out of 63,000 tons of assessed food aid requirements were pledged. By 1 July, only 39% of the appeal had been funded. Yet the events of the following May meant that needs had to be drastically revised. First, an assessment by the International Federation of the Red Cross in Anseba Region provided evidence that the food situation in the drought-hit north was worse than had been thought, with widespread resort to 'famine foods' and perhaps 300,000 people in the Region needing relief rather than the originally stated 100,000 (IRIN, 2000). These revised drought-related needs were included in a new UN Horn of Africa drought appeal in June 2000.

Eclipsing this, however, were the impacts of the Ethiopian invasion between 12 May and 18 June 2000. The immediate humanitarian consequences were immense and far exceeded the worst-case scenario envisaged by the January appeal. ERREC reported in June that numbers displaced by the war had trebled to over 1.1 million, many on the move and searching for safe havens. A further 94,000 had fled into Sudan, adding to the 160,000 Eritrean refugees already in camps there. Food security ramifications were profound. The two regions most affected by the fighting, Debub and Gash-Barka, were responsible for 80% of Eritrea's agricultural production. As the offensive took place just before the main planting season for food crops, an entire season's production was lost. Infrastructure for the provision of government services, including those relating to agriculture and livestock, and herds and other assets had been abandoned and destroyed or appropriated by the invading forces. In July, the UNCT revised its January appeal of $43 million for 2000 to $87 million for the remaining half-year.

A two-stage aid response was planned for Eritrea: focusing first on life-saving interventions for the war-affected, then on return of the displaced and community-led reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes. The relief operation faced severe difficulties due to the poor state of Massawa port facilities, lack of haulage capacity and the remoteness of needy populations. In light of the high-profile events of May and June 2000, donors responded with funding to cover 96% of food needs in the July 2000 appeal. But non-food components (such as equipment and supplies for shelter, cooking and emergency health, agricultural and veterinary activities), which were important for survival and food security, and comprised over one-half of the total, were only covered to the tune of 41 percent. The difference was even more stark in the June 2000 drought appeal, where donor coverage of food and non-food assistance was 100% and 20% respectively (UN CAP Eritrea, 2001)

With the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in June 2000, the displaced began to return home, and by the end of the year, most had done so. Many found their homes destroyed, their possessions looted and their land mined. Those who still had livestock discovered that preferred dry-season grazing areas in the border region were now inaccessible. In February 2001, the first UN Consolidated Appeal for Eritrea estimated that there were almost two million people needing assistance, two-thirds categorised as 'war-affected'. The appeal highlighted the need for the coverage of non-food as well as food needs, in order to address the longer-term challenge of restoring livelihoods to pre-war levels.

Multiple linkages between the border war and food security

The above has detailed the direct humanitarian and food security impacts of the war in the conflict zones:

- over one million people displaced from agricultural lands and deprived of assets and livelihoods;

- a humanitarian operation constrained by security conditions, the border closure and Ethiopia's inability to access Eritrean ports; and
- loss of food entitlements for many in terms of ability to produce food, or to acquire it though trade, selling labour or transfers.

Yet there are wider links between the war and food security for these two countries, which extend beyond the conflict zones and the war period.

Food as a weapon of war?

In 1998–2000, food was not manipulated as part of a war strategy to the same extent as it had been in 1984–85. At that time, the *Derg* used the international famine relief effort in Tigray and Wollo to corral the hungry into feeding centres from where they could be forcibly resettled, ostensibly to give them more productive land, but also to depopulate rebel-held areas. Less well known, however, is an incident that contributed to the souring of EPLF–TPLF relations during the 1980s and thus ultimately to the outbreak of war. When ideological and political differences between the two fronts led the TPLF to move to support rival Eritrean factions, the EPLF responded by cutting TPLF food supply lines from Sudan into Tigray through western Eritrea at the height of the famine of the mid-1980s. To maintain access to food supplies, the TPLF had to mobilise a labour force of 100,000 from the rural population in order to construct rapidly an alternative road bypassing Eritrean territory (Gilkes and Plaut, 1999, p. 9).

Also worth noting is Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's justification for the May 2000 offensive. He had called for a 'quick end to the war because his drought-stricken country cannot afford another year living in a state of conflict' (BBC News Online, 2000a). While the impending election must also have been part of the rationale for the timing of the offensive, the fact that it closely followed the main planting season and hence meant that Eritrea lost its staple food crop for that year may well have been a further element in the military calculus.

Donors, the media and resource diversion

We have seen how in the year leading up to the 'discovery' of the food crisis by the international media in March 2000, donors were reluctant to respond to appeals for assistance, despite warning signs of nutritional deprivation and inadequate emergency reserves. It is worth considering why. We know that representatives of a number of donors, including the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the European Commission (EC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, voiced concern that the war was soaking up resources that were needed to prevent humanitarian suffering, and that some had espoused a policy of 'principled conditionality'—cutting development and financial aid to signal their disapproval to the two warring states while maintaining humanitarian assistance. Total non-emergency official development assistance to Ethiopia during the war period fell by over one-third in real terms compared with the previous six years, while both countries saw a dramatic increase in aid after 2000 (OECD, 2005). British development aid to Ethiopia was halved

during the war, and that to Eritrea was put on hold. Then UK Secretary of State for International Development Clare Short defended this by saying:

> 'I do not believe that anyone in the UK believes we should be providing long-term assistance to a country which is increasing its spending on arms, year on year' (BBC News Online, 2000b).

Yet it appears that this neat separation between humanitarian and development aid was not observed in practice, and that the diplomatic/political aims of donors spilled over into the humanitarian sphere and impeded a timely relief response. As Hammond and Maxwell (2002, p. 276) put it:

> 'Off the record, many field staff of donor agencies were willing to suggest that political and diplomatic considerations had a lot to do with slow response to the worsening situation in 1999'.

If this suggestion is well-founded, famine victims in Somali Region paid a heavy price for an unsuccessful diplomatic strategy.

The idea that donors use non-humanitarian criteria to decide on humanitarian aid allocations is not new. A similar phenomenon was witnessed during the emergence of famine in Malawi in early 2002, when donor preoccupation with governance failures and the disappearance of the strategic grain reserve delayed an effective humanitarian response by several months (Devereux, 2002). More broadly, the politicisation of humanitarian aid has been a central issue in humanitarian policy debates for over five years (see, for example, Curtis, 2001; Macrae, 2001, 2002). For evidence of the phenomenon on a global scale, one has only to look at the wide discrepancies in humanitarian allocations per affected person in different regions and countries, as UK Secretary of State for International Development Hilary Benn recently acknowledged (Benn, 2004). These differences cannot be adequately explained by varying needs or cost structures, but tend to correlate more closely with the foreign policy and security agendas of donor governments.

The prompt acceleration of food aid pledges and deliveries once the media story on the famine broke, even though the worst of the crisis was over by then, and the poorer response to non-food emergency needs, which received less press attention, lends weight to another familiar hypothesis: that one of these 'non-humanitarian criteria' is media pressure. From that point on, donors seemed keener to see the war and the food crisis in the southeast as separate issues, a view already strongly expressed by both international NGOs and the Ethiopian government itself. While some writers (see, for instance, Robinson, 2001; Olsen et al., 2003) have questioned the much-vaunted 'CNN effect' in influencing donor policy, there is little reason to doubt its potency in Ethiopia in March 2000—any more than in October 1984 when Michael Buerk and Mohammed Amin's fortuitous television report from Korem pricked donors into responding to a famine that was already two years old.

The two governments had themselves been engaged in a sophisticated propaganda war in the international media since 1998, much of it over the internet. Once the media debate began, Zenawi played an active part, asserting that sovereignty is not a 'luxury for the rich . . . You do as much as you can to save lives and at the same time protect your sovereignty'. Eritrea countered that Ethiopia 'expected Western governments to feed their hungry while they went on an arms shopping spree' (BBC Africa Media Watch, 2000).

A second problem with this donor approach of 'principled conditionality' was that the embargo on non-emergency aid was contradictory in that much of this aid in Ethiopia had been aimed at longer-term 'developmental' improvements in food security, which would reduce the need for humanitarian assistance. These improvements would include measures to tackle extreme chronic poverty, boost the resilience of livelihoods to drought and other periodic shocks, enhance the timeliness, coverage and accuracy of early warning systems and do more to prepare for food crises. This exemplifies another issue that is at the heart of recent debates about aid to 'poorly performing' countries with governments that fail to live up to donor expectations (see, for example, Harmer and Macrae, 2004; Flores et al. in this issue). While humanitarian assistance can justify bypassing state institutions by appealing to principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality, development aid has traditionally been defined in state-centric terms and, as donors replace project aid with general budget support, is set to become more so. To some extent, the gap was filled in Ethiopia (as elsewhere) by international NGOs using humanitarian resources to implement developmental interventions, but the essential dilemma remained.

From a technical and management point of view, this dividing line between humanitarian and development aid suffered from the same arbitrariness as that between successive food emergencies and underlying downward trends in food security. This is an issue that continues to exercise government and donor policymakers in Ethiopia, who are now seeking to establish a predictable multi-annual safety net for the chronically poor, while separate ad hoc humanitarian provision is made for those affected by (unpredictable) disasters. The World Bank, for example, is funding a $170 million per year Productive Safety Nets Programme, which aims to divert resources from year-on-year emergency humanitarian (mostly food) assistance to 'productive' cash transfers, implemented through a different institutional channel and linked to public works programmes that would have developmental value. Even in the climate of donor–government partnership which presently prevails despite ongoing tensions over Ethiopia's failure to comply with the border arbitration decision, distinguishing between the 'predictably' and 'unpredictably' food insecure will be difficult in practice. But, if war breaks out again, donors will face much harder choices over whether to continue funding such programmes.

For the two countries, this re-routing of aid resources compounded the effects of the diversion of public expenditure to the war effort, which preoccupied the international media. As Styan (2005) points out, estimated immediate costs to the Ethiopian exchequer range between seven percent and 20% of gross domestic product (GDP), and the percentage is far higher on the Eritrean side, with its much smaller economy.

This level of public expenditure, if devoted to humanitarian assistance and longer-term food security, could have had substantial positive impacts.

Resources were diverted in other ways. Above, mention was made of haulage constraints affecting food shipments from Red Sea ports. In May 2000, the Ethiopian government introduced a national coordination mechanism in which hauliers and transport requests were channelled exclusively through regional transport coordination cells controlled by the Road Transport Authority, and had to adhere to officially sanctioned tariffs (UNCT Ethiopia, 2000). Combined with a ten percent surtax on imported goods imposed during 2000, this caused aid agencies to fear that the government was seeking to tax emergency aid to fund the war. Once shipments gathered pace, there was a severe shortage of trucks for the distribution of relief supplies within Ethiopia, especially multi-axle ones that could handle wet-season roads in remote areas. Logic suggests that this problem was not unconnected with the huge transport demands of the military build-up and subsequent invasion to the north.

Finally, the scale of conscription and displacement in these two countries constituted a massive diversion of personnel, especially in Eritrea, with its much smaller population. The men and (on the Eritrean side) women of the opposing forces were drawn from farming communities, although the economic loss to their households was mitigated to some extent by remittances of military pay. Education was sacrificed. Perhaps most critical was the mobilisation of middle-level officials who formed a key link between central authorities and rural communities.

The war and the longer-term livelihoods crisis in Somali Region

White and Cliffe (2000) have shown how the conscription drive had particular consequences in Ethiopia's famine-affected Somali Region. These need to be viewed in the context of a longer-term crisis of pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods in the Horn of Africa, resulting from decades of conflicts (some still unresolved) interspersed with drought. While it takes years to rebuild herds after a crisis, the poor often have to dispose of all of the natural increase, even in good years, to repay debts, buy essentials, re-equip themselves with tools and meet social obligations. The prolonged and mutually reinforcing effects of drought and war have eroded standby survival mechanisms, such as grain stores, access to emergency grazing or 'borrowing' beasts from kin.

Their ability to recover herds and livelihoods has been further limited by the fact that very little rehabilitation aid has satisfied their special needs. Agriculturalists were given replacement seed, tools, even plough oxen. Seldom, though, have there been adequate post-drought restocking programmes for herders or even timely in situ food aid to help them avoid the need to sell animals. Governments that view development for pastoralists in terms of their conversion to sedentary farming systems have further compounded these problems.

Cliffe (2005) documents how the border war followed the pattern of other conflicts in the Horn: essentially internal in origin, but spilling over into neighbouring countries through refugees and mutual support for insurgencies. Ethiopia's Somali Region has been embroiled in conflicts for more than a generation. In the late 1970s, its people were

involved in the Ogaden war and over a million sought refuge in Djibouti, Kenya and Somalia. Those in the latter nation became caught up in its growing political divisions in the 1980s and were forced to return when civil war broke out, along with other refugees produced by that conflict. Their return without any support programme, plus the extra numbers of refugees, put great stress on land and other resources and led to heavy livestock losses. These pressures amplified the effect of fighting initiated by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), which had developed in the area as one of several regional movements seeking to overthrow the *Derg*.

The *Derg's* counter-insurgency measures involved destroying animals and crops, withholding food relief, interrupting herd movements and markets, and divide-and-rule tactics that restricted travel between the three administrative areas that had been created. These additional constraints on herd mobility limited people's ability to cope with the 1991 drought. Local over-grazing intensified in the early 1990s with the influx of more refugees from Somalia, which were not subject to the mechanisms of the Ogaden clans for managing water and land access and for conflict resolution.

Since the overthrow of the *Derg,* the ONLF has occupied an uneasy place in Ethiopia's new political dispensation and low-intensity conflict has persisted. Many Somalis were at best ambivalent toward their regional government, and the administration of the regional assembly has not been effective, specifically in delivering relief programmes.

All of these pressures and disruptions have had a cumulative effect on opportunities for herd recovery and rehabilitation or diversification of livelihoods. Furthermore, they have undermined the 'coping mechanisms' on which people in such a harsh and arid environment rely, including underground crop storage, trading in myrrh and frankincense and control of access to wells. Past conflicts and those continuing today have also interrupted the movement of people and herds across political borders in search of grazing land.

Against this background, the border war had two main impacts in Somali Region. First, the ONLF reported that the government's conscription drive had involved 'voluntary' patriotic exactions every two months or so, often in kind—one beast from every household, just when herds were being decimated by drought. The alternative was for poor families to yield up a young man to the military. Therefore, the youth pre-emptively fled to towns, to Somaliland or to Somalia to escape conscription in a war that they often did not see in 'patriotic' terms. This further reduced labour availability for herding in this drought season with its extra demands. To what degree these claims are true and how great any impact was in turning drought into famine are subjects that should be explored—at the time, though, independent observers were barred from entering the region.

Second, these pressures were heightened by the fuelling of local conflict by Eritrea as part of a proxy war against Ethiopia. Similar patterns emerged elsewhere in Ethiopia, where Eritrea began to support the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and elsewhere in the Horn, as Cliffe (2005) describes. This intensification of fighting throughout the drought-affected areas of the Horn further restricted the mobility of people seeking pastures for their herds further afield.

The legacy of mistrust and its food security consequences

The war's legacy of mistrust, with the two governments failing even to begin to normalise bilateral relations since the December 2000 peace agreement, has distinctly adverse food security consequences for both Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Styan (2005) details the considerable economic cost to Ethiopia of its ongoing boycott of Eritrean ports and diversion of maritime trade via Berbera, Djibouti and Mombassa, and corresponding opportunity costs in terms of support for food security. These include the effects of widening the gap between import and export parity prices for cereals and the consequent increase in price instability faced by both producers and consumers. Similarly, Eritrea's loss of port commissions on Ethiopian transit trade has deprived its government of significant revenues that could have been used to combat the effects of drought.

The post-war rearmament programmes of both countries, continuing in 2003 when famine threatened once again, have also limited the fiscal capacity of government food security programmes. Critics have attributed the 2003 Ethiopian food crisis in part to government preoccupation with Eritrea, as well as to its contentious 'voluntary resettlement programme'. With continuing tension over the border, Eritrea's demobilisation programme has ground to a halt, and its public finances, which deteriorated substantially during the war years when defence spending reached 20% of GDP, have yet to recover (IMF, 2003).

For Eritrea, the closed border means the loss of its main export market (almost two-thirds of all exports in 1997 went to Ethiopia, mainly crude materials and manufactured goods), and an important source of imported grain and livestock (Ethiopia provided one-third of these imports in 1997). These developments have direct food security consequences with respect to prices and the required lead-time for food imports. The plight of Eritreans displaced from the border zone and deprived of land and livelihoods has yet to be made good, and they and their host communities are among the most food-insecure groups in Eritrea. Pastoralist livelihoods have been particularly hard hit by the loss of cross-border mobility as well as of large numbers of livestock.

Both countries have lost external trust and support at a time when it is sorely needed to address food insecurity. For Eritrea, post-war curbs on civil liberties have led to donors limiting aid to humanitarian assistance and reducing their backing for the stalled demobilisation programme, and, more seriously, to a decline in remittances from a disillusioned Eritrean diaspora. Ethiopia's intransigence over implementing the EEBC Decision has influenced donors to use aid conditionality to encourage Ethiopian compliance, again unsuccessfully and with direct and indirect food security ramifications. The cost of UNMEE must also be considered in this light: $750 million to date is money that might have been spent on food security programmes.

Conclusion

The return of the threat of famine in 2003, again triggered by drought, meant that more than 14 million people in Ethiopia and some two million in Eritrea depended on a massive

international humanitarian operation. Yet, as Lautze et al. (2003) point out, this was as much a crisis of livelihoods and healthcare as one of food. In 2004, some seven million chronically food-insecure people in Ethiopia were still in need of assistance even after a bumper harvest, along with 1.5 million in Eritrea, including 150,000 war-affected. It is increasingly recognised that successive food crises in these two countries are better seen not as isolated episodes but as part of a longer-term trend of rising livelihood and health vulnerability among sizeable populations that live at the margins. Food and other emergency aid can successfully treat periodic crises. Reversing the secular decline in people's resilience to shocks, however, necessitates a longer-term commitment to measures that are more imaginative, holistic and participatory and based on a better analysis of complex livelihood processes and their regional and international dimensions.

Interconnected conflicts have long been a key element in the nexus of cause and effect determining livelihood outcomes in the Horn, and must be included in such an appraisal. The 1998–2000 border war and its unresolved tensions have had adverse effects on livelihoods that continue to be felt in many ways, which are not easily separated out from each other and from other political, social, demographic and environmental factors.

Aid donors can draw a number of lessons from this experience. There is clearly a need for humanitarian responses to be rapid, genuinely unconditional and sensitive to needs that extend beyond food aid. But donors also need to give more thought, especially where authorities are involved in conflict, to an ethical framework within which decisions can be taken about what kind of conditionalities, if any, should be applied to aid interventions beyond emergency relief. Such decisions should reflect not only diplomatic objectives informed by sounder political economy analysis, but also a wider and longer-term perspective on what is happening to livelihoods and food security between crises, for pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, as well as for other rural and urban communities.

Endnotes

[1] This is an abbreviated and edited version of White, P. (2005) 'Sovereignty and starvation: the food security dimensions of the Eritrea-Ethiopia war'. In Dominique Jacquin-Berdal and Martin Plaut (eds) *Unfinished Business: Eritrea and Ethiopia at War*. Red Sea Press, Inc., Trenton, NJ, and Asmara. pp. 201–228.

[2] This includes: a food and agriculture assessment in Eritrea in 1987 for the Emergency Relief Desk, Centre for Development Studies, University of Leeds (Bondestam et al., 1988); work on the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD)'s regional food security early warning system in 1993–94, its regional disaster preparedness strategy in 1998 and on regional capacities for conflict prevention, management and resolution in 2001; Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded research on conflict, the environment and food security in Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1995–96; UK Department for International Development (DFID)-funded research on complex political emergencies in the Horn of Africa in 1997–2000; studies on the voluntary resettlement programme in Oromia, Ethiopia, in 2001–02; and Eritrea and Ethiopia conflict monitoring for SwissPeace in 2003.

[3] 'Due to the special circumstances of the internally displaced and pastoralists, assessment of their relief food needs was beyond the scope of this mission' (FAO/WFP, 1998, sec. 6.4.3).

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