

Linking livelihoods and protection analysis and programming in practice

Background and Rationale

There is a strong interaction in situations of violent conflict between threats to physical security and threats to livelihoods and subsistence. In times of stress, people often adopt choices that promote one at the expense of the other. Livelihoods interventions can serve to minimise the security risks that conflict-affected people face. For example, interventions that increase income, reduce expenditure, or the need to venture into unsafe areas (for example fuel efficient stoves in Darfur), can reduce the recourse to strategies that entail risks to security. In many cases, well designed programmes (based on comprehensive analysis of need and risk), which are implemented well (in terms of quantity, quality and method) can go a long way towards ensuring protection. Crucially, there are strategies that conflict-affected people themselves use to improve their security and reduce risks, but these are rarely considered in either livelihoods or protection work by humanitarian actors.

The starting point for this research is an analysis of the different strategies employed by key actors – warring parties, at-risk populations and humanitarian agencies – which can either reduce or increase threats to physical security and livelihoods in conflict settings. It will examine how analysis and support for local peoples' risk avoidance strategies can become a part of both protection and livelihoods work in conflict, and how other forms of livelihood support can contribute towards people's protection. The working hypothesis of this study is that closer linkages between the two approaches, at both analysis and intervention stages, could lead to more effective action to reduce risks to both livelihoods and physical security.

A more coherent protection-livelihoods analysis could promote a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of links between the security and protection risks associated with violent conflict and the strategies undertaken by affected populations. This in turn should lead to better design and implementation of humanitarian programmes more specifically, livelihoods interventions which can improve people's protection and/or protection interventions which enhance people's livelihood strategies.

Methodology

The objective of this project is to review the links between livelihoods and protection analysis and action, from a conceptual, programmatic and institutional perspective. The aim is to understand how greater complementarity between humanitarian protection and livelihoods approaches might strengthen analysis and intervention to reduce the risks that conflict affected population face. The aim is also to provide recommendations for humanitarian programming so as to achieve maximum impact on both protection and livelihoods.

The key research questions include:

1. What are the linkages between protection and livelihoods conceptual paradigms and assessment methods? How can livelihoods and protection analysis frameworks and methods be used in tandem in situations of conflict to examine power relations, war economies, exposure to risks and threats to civilians?
2. Both protection and livelihoods analysis in theory examine the political economy of the conflict to identify the causes of crisis and to identify the most politically vulnerable groups. Who should be responsible to carry out the political economy analysis, and if and when it does take place, why it is so rarely used to inform programming?
3. What are the strategies that different actors (warring parties, at-risk populations and humanitarian actors) use and how do they increase or reduce threats to physical security and livelihoods?
4. What is the evidence that livelihoods support interventions can minimise the security risks that people face?
5. What are the benefits of greater complementarity between livelihoods and protection programming? How can analysis and support for local peoples' risk aversion strategies become a part of both protection and livelihoods work of organisations working in conflict?
6. What are the constraints (including institutional / organisational) to greater coherence between protection and livelihoods approaches? What can be learned from contexts where this has been possible?

The Project

This cutting edge research project will bring together the livelihoods and protection expertise of two leading humanitarian research centres: the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at the Overseas Development Institute and the Feinstein International Centre (FIC) at Tufts University. The project will take place over two years and will involve a group of livelihoods and protection specialists analysing current and potential links between livelihoods and protection analysis and action, the details of which are outlined below.

Phase I: Conceptual Analysis

- Literature review of livelihoods and protection conceptual models and approaches;
- Interviews with livelihoods, protection specialists and programme managers in key agencies to identify current technical and programmatic links and to gather practical examples of linkages between approaches;
- Development of methodological approaches, including elaboration of analytical frameworks;

- Agreement of potential collaborating partners and case study countries based on literature review, examination of agency practice and understanding of contexts with greatest potential for engagement;
- Drafting of background paper including conceptual frameworks and literature review and analysis.

Phase II: Examination of risks, strategies and responses

- Literature review of protection and livelihoods situations, strategies and interventions (assessments and approaches) in three selected case study countries;
- Field research (approximately 20 days per country) in three selected case study countries to understand risks faced by communities and livelihood/protection strategies employed to reduce/mitigate these risks as well as interventions by humanitarian agencies;
- Interviews with field-level livelihoods and protection specialists/emergency managers in key agencies (and follow-up interviews at HQ, as required) to identify the potential for and challenges to greater complementarity between approaches;
- In-country seminars in each selected country with livelihoods and protection practitioners to discuss findings, lessons-learnt and recommendations for analysis and programming;
- Analysis and synthesis, development, publication and dissemination of final report.

The conceptual analysis phase will involve a review of published and grey literature on livelihoods and protection analysis, programming and theory. Interviews with key humanitarian agencies undertaking protection and livelihoods work will be carried out to understand the conceptual frameworks underlying agency practice in these two areas, how livelihoods and protection programming develop in different contexts and the impact of livelihoods programming on protection and vice versa. The group will use this analysis to agree methodological approaches, including the determination of collaborating partners and case study countries. Case studies will be chosen to ensure a cross-section of geographical areas, conflict causal factors, stage in the 'conflict cycle', and the level and nature of livelihoods and protection programming. Suggested countries include: Sudan (Darfur, transitional areas or South Sudan), DRC, Uganda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and East Timor.

The second phase will involve in-depth field research in three case study countries. This will involve an examination of the risks and threats that vulnerable populations face and the strategies they employ to mitigate or reduce these threats. The extent and nature of livelihoods approaches and the impact of these on the protection of conflict affected populations, and how livelihoods and protection specialists work together in practice (both within and between agencies and with government institutions) will be explored. Interviews with technical and managerial staff will be undertaken to understand opportunities and challenges to greater complementarity between approaches, with an in-country seminar in each selected country with livelihoods and protection

practitioners to discuss findings and lessons-learnt. Analysis on how protection-livelihoods programming can be linked conceptually, programmatically and institutionally to achieve maximum impact will be synthesised into a final HPG report. Throughout the research process, the team will explore opportunities for testing recommendations with operational agencies. A third phase of ‘applied research’ may thus result, involving the piloting of programmatic recommendations or models.

This study builds on earlier work on the practical integration of livelihoods and protection as a thoroughly integrated framework undertaken by HPN; in-depth livelihoods and protection research by FIC in different conflict settings and HPG work on the political economy of conflict, livelihoods analysis in situations of chronic conflict and protection in practice. The team will include the following livelihoods and protection researchers: Sara Pantuliano, Research Fellow and Sorcha O’Callaghan, Research Officer with the Humanitarian Policy Group and Dan Maxwell, Associate Professor and Research Director and Elisabeth Stites, Instructor and Senior Researcher with Tufts University, working with leading livelihoods specialist, Susanne Jaspars, as a Research Associate.

An independent reference group involving expert analysts and practitioners in livelihoods and protection will provide guidance and technical input to the project at the conceptual and synthesis stages. This group will help ensure the intellectual rigor of the study and a close connection between analysis and practice, through the addition of external viewpoints, testing the validity of research findings and promoting research outcomes that take account of operational realities.

Collaboration with key agencies involved in livelihoods and protection work will also be sought. Support and involvement will be sought in particular from ICRC, WFP, Oxfam, CARE and ACF in order to embed the analysis in agency practice. HPG and Tufts researchers and the Research Associate already have links with these agencies from their previous work.

Outputs and communication

The outputs of the project include an HPG report and Briefing Paper, an academic journal article, as well as a number of web based reports on the different components of the study, including the findings of the literature review and key informant interviews, the case studies and workshop reports from each of the field studies. The reports and articles will be launched in London. The launch will be followed by a series of dissemination meetings with key agencies and donors in Geneva, Boston and in some of the case study countries.