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Report

Power, livelihoods and conflict: case studies in political economy analysis for humanitarian action

Edited by Sarah Collinson

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War as a general economy no longer necessarily implies that those who have weapons oppose each other. It is more likely to imply a conflict between those who have weapons and those who have none (Mbembe, 2001:50).

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Acronyms

AAA	German Agro Action
ADB	African Development Bank
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (Sierra Leone)
AJAC–APRAN	Association des jeunes agriculteurs de la Casamance – Association pour la promotion rurale de l’arrondissement de Nyassia (Senegal)
AMA	Association des musulmans d’Afrique
APC	All Peoples’ Congress (Sierra Leone)
AREU	Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (formerly the Strategic Monitoring Unit (SMU))
ATTA	Afghan Transit Trade Agreement
CAP	Community Action for Progress (Sierra Leone)
CBO	community-based organisation
CDF	Civil Defence Force (Sierra Leone)
CEO	Chief Education Officer (Sierra Leone)
CFA	Communauté Financière Africaine
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CRRP	Community Reintegration and Rehabilitation Project (Sierra Leone)
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DDR	disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ERT	Emergency Response Team
ESF	Emergency School Feeding
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FCO	UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FDD	Forces for the Defence of Democracy (Burundi)
FMPU	Financial Management and Procurement Unit (Sierra Leone)
GDP	gross domestic product
GGLS	Guaranteed Group Lending Scheme (Afghanistan)
GMI	Groupe mobile d’intervention (Senegal)
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
IDA	International Development Association
IDP	internally displaced person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMU	Islamic Movement for Uzbekistan
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence (Pakistan)
MCCC	Micro-Credit Chiefdom Committee (Sierra Leone)
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund (Sierra Leone)
MFDC	Mouvement des forces démocratiques de la Casamance
MLC	Mouvement de Libération du Congo
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NaCSA	National Commission for Social Action (Sierra Leone)
NARICOM	National Relief Committee of Sierra Leone
NCDDR	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (Sierra Leone)
NCRRR	National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (Sierra Leone)
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council (Sierra Leone)
NRC	National Recovery Committee (Sierra Leone)
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OSLEG	Operation Sovereign Legitimacy
PIU	Project Implementation Unit (Sierra Leone)
PRA	participatory rural appraisal
RCD	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie
RUF	Revolutionary United Front (Sierra Leone)
SAPA	Social Action and Poverty Alleviation (Sierra Leone)
SLPP	Sierra Leone Peoples' Party
SOMIGL	Société des Mines des Grands Lacs
SOMINKI	Société minière et industrielle du Kivu
TSA	Transitional Safety Net Allowance (Sierra Leone)
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNAMSIL	UN Mission to Sierra Leone
UNDCP	UN Drug Control Programme
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USGS	US Geological Survey
WFP	World Food Programme
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Executive summary

Over the past decade, the focus of international relief to conflict-affected populations has shifted away from external assistance to refugees towards assistance and protection efforts within countries affected by conflict and political instability. This has confronted humanitarian agencies with immense and often quite new challenges: in these environments, the principles and laws underpinning humanitarian action have been stretched to the limit. High-profile failures in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, plus mounting evidence that assistance can exacerbate violence or undermine local capacities, have encouraged relief agencies to adapt their programming and strengthen the political analysis behind it. Tools to assess the impact of aid on conflict have proliferated, and initiatives have been developed to link relief to rehabilitation, peacebuilding and the promotion of rights. There has also been increasing interest in the relationship between emergency assistance and international political and military action. The international humanitarian agenda has broadened, and humanitarian principles and objectives have diversified under the influence both of donors and political actors outside the system, and of humanitarian agencies themselves.

Despite this growing preoccupation with the need for improved political analysis, there is no strong analytical tradition within the humanitarian system, and detailed conflict analysis remains largely at the margins of most programming in complex emergencies. Supply-side considerations still predominate, and needs assessments prioritise material assets and market conditions, rather than political, military and protection issues. Programming emphasises logistical competence and efficiency, monitoring and reporting focus on project-level assistance activities and outputs and evaluations often have little to say beyond matters of shelter, food, water, sanitation and health. Where agencies are actively engaged in political analysis and monitoring, this is often distant from the focus of decision-making for humanitarian operations.

There are clearly a number of reasons why agencies find it difficult to develop an analysis of the environments in which they are working. These include short project cycles, rapid staff turnover and competing demands from other forms of information collection and management. Effective policies and principled approaches can only emerge from an adequate understanding of the situation that one wishes to ameliorate. Thus, if predatory local political structures are the key factor in an emergency, the humanitarian response needs to take full account of the importance of local political relations. Humanitarian action must be about more than technical issues of logistics or good practice (Duffield, 1994).

This report documents the findings of a study looking at the application of political economy analysis to

humanitarian programming in complex environments. The study, conducted in 2001 and 2002, looked at four cases: Afghanistan, the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sierra Leone and the Casamance in Senegal. The case studies had two principal objectives. The first was to identify and test the analytical and methodological tools that humanitarian agencies can use to help them understand the often complex and difficult environments in which they work. The second was to identify the key themes arising from political economy analysis that could have direct or indirect implications for humanitarian aid interventions.

What is a political economy approach?

Political economy analysis is concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes in a society: the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time. When applied to situations of conflict and crisis, political economy analysis seeks to understand both the political and the economic aspects of conflict, and how these combine to affect patterns of power and vulnerability. According to a political economy approach, vulnerability should be understood in terms of powerlessness rather than simply material need. Vulnerability and power are therefore analysed as a political and economic *process*, in terms, for instance, of neglect, exclusion or exploitation, in which a variety of groups and actors play a part (Le Billon, 2000). People are most vulnerable when their livelihoods and coping strategies are deliberately blocked or undermined, or if their group identity, political position and/or material circumstances mean that they are especially exposed to violence (Le Billon, 2000; Keen, 1994). A political economy approach should incorporate a wide historical and geographical perspective, explain why the relative power and vulnerability of different groups changes over time, and explain how the fortunes and activities of one group in society affect others. The view that it encourages is therefore *dynamic, broad, longitudinal and explanatory*.

Analytical frameworks

This study does not set out to provide a set of rigid frameworks to support the analysis of conflict for its own sake, or as a stand-alone exercise. Because conflicts, political crises and associated humanitarian crises are so varied and dynamic, and because agencies' time and research resources are usually scarce and staff over-stretched, it is important that humanitarian actors integrate strategic analysis into their operations on an ongoing basis, and in a way that is specifically intended to inform both policy and practice. This implies that any analytical frameworks used to support

and inform political economy work need to be applied flexibly and interchangeably. A number of discrete frameworks might be used to highlight and investigate particular aspects of the local or wider political economy. These could supplement and expand a number of assessment and other frameworks already used by operational agencies, such as household economy and other needs assessment frameworks, early-warning systems and evaluation frameworks. Two approaches – commodity chain analysis and livelihoods analysis – lend themselves particularly well to supporting political economy analysis, particularly where it seeks to link the local level to the meso (sub-national) and macro (national and international) levels.

Commodity chain analysis

The Afghanistan, DRC and Casamance case studies all used commodity chain analysis for selected resources connected with war economies. This technique identifies power relations, governance structures and exchange relationships within commercial networks, from primary production through to consumption, and from the local up to the international levels (see Raikes et al., 2000). Of particular interest to political economy analysis is the identification of who controls commodities and exchange at particular levels. A commodity chain may be predominantly controlled and driven by producers or by commercial intermediaries, or by buyers at the consumer end of the chain.

Livelihoods analysis

Many of the issues and questions of concern to political economy analysis can alternatively be viewed through the lens of livelihoods analysis. Livelihoods analysis is cross-sectoral, and seeks to take into account the totality of economic, political, social and cultural factors affecting people's lives and livelihoods, from the local up to the national and international levels. It thus has the potential to complement or be combined with more conventional political economy analysis, which is often approached from the 'top down', and frequently fails to connect effectively with the local level.

Most of the livelihoods literature has focused on relatively stable development situations, and so says little directly about how this approach could help humanitarian and other agencies working in situations of conflict and political instability. Nevertheless, it can provide much of the data that political economy analysis requires concerning local and meso-level political and economic relationships and processes in society; it provides a framework and a methodology for researching these processes at the local level that is largely missing from the political economy literature; and it is grounded in poor people's own perspectives. It also has the advantage of providing a

comparatively safe way of investigating sensitive issues in insecure environments, since these are only tackled indirectly through exploring how people live.

Methodological steps

Understanding the political economy of a society in crisis will not help humanitarian programming unless it is related to the lives and needs of the people that agencies are trying to assist, and to agencies' own activities on the ground. An important aim of this project was therefore to look at the links between different levels of political economy, to relate political and economic processes at the macro level to vulnerability and need at the local level. To do this, the study adopted a 'bottom-up' approach, seeking to link local conditions to the wider political and economic environment at the national and regional levels.

The research for this study relied principally on informal qualitative ethnographic and participatory methods, including observation, semi-structured and group interviews and the collection of personal testimonies. These testimonies proved especially illuminating; conversations with traders were particularly valuable for documenting how particular markets and livelihoods had changed over time, and the implications of these changes for local people. In Afghanistan, local community-level surveys were conducted during July and August 2001. The study explored a number of overlapping themes, including livelihoods, commodity chains, conflict and security, social relations and social capital, governance and local institutions. Field research in eastern DRC was conducted in September 2000, July 2001 and April 2002, and examined the interface between the lower links of the tantalum ('coltan') commodity chain, local livelihoods, and the political economy of vulnerability in the Kivus. In Sierra Leone, field studies were conducted between January and March 2002, centring on the interface between aid agencies' humanitarian and reconstruction activities, and the often volatile community relations at the local level. Finally, the research in Casamance drew on field work conducted during three extended visits between 2000 and 2002, and explored the complex war economy of the region, particularly at the micro and meso levels.

Key themes from the case studies

Each of the case studies describes a different type and level of conflict and humanitarian crisis, from high-intensity regionalised conflict in eastern DRC to low-level but prolonged violence and insecurity in Casamance. Yet despite these differences, key common themes emerged. These highlight the potential value of political economy analysis for humanitarian programming in complex environments; some of the issues that successful political economy analysis would need to address; and some of the challenges that face agencies seeking to apply this approach.

First, war economies, 'shadow' economies and formal, coping and survival economies are closely intertwined; there are no clear boundaries between them. Each has distinctive features, but all are interconnected, with many actors engaged in more than one type. In this context, concepts such as 'licit' and 'illicit' economy fall short. A particular community may, for instance, be primarily engaged in subsistence agriculture within the coping economy, yet at the same time may also be participating in the shadow and 'war' economies. Likewise, the systems and networks essential to the functioning of the formal economy may also be central to the war economy; in Casamance, for example, 'conflict' cashews, mangoes and citrus are traded and marketed in the same way as the civilian harvest, and benefit the same dealers. Understanding the typically complex relationship between war economies, shadow economies and coping and survival economies will help agencies to better evaluate the impact of relief goods in local conflict-affected environments, and the implications of their own dealings with local commercial and other actors. This analysis can also help agencies to recognise the links between local vulnerability and the wider economic and political forces driving conflict.

The second key conclusion of this research is that generalisations about the impact and implications of conflict for people and their livelihoods are unlikely to explain adequately what is happening at local level. People's livelihood strategies and ways of coping with conflict depend upon a broad range of factors, including location, security regimes, the strength of local governance and social networks, and access to roads, markets and water. There may consequently be a great deal of variation among areas, groups and even villages and households within the same area. The transformations that conflict brings about in the wider political economy are mirrored in varied, profound and often irreversible changes in people's lives at the local level. This kind of local-level understanding is vital in identifying the most vulnerable and needy people requiring assistance or protection, and in anticipating how external shocks, such as drought or collapsed markets, might affect particular groups.

Third, an understanding of warring parties and the role of violence is important in understanding how the vulnerability of different groups is affected. In any conflict, different forms of violence are likely to co-exist: from organised warfare and systematic economic violence perpetrated by the state or other military actors, through to more individualised forms of violence linked to criminality and economic opportunism, and violent and destructive survival strategies. Enlisting in a militia group or joining a criminal band may for many individuals represent a livelihood strategy. Reducing the vulnerability of rural communities to predation may thus depend as much on finding suitable livelihood options and alternatives for those involved in banditry and militia violence as on any peace deal reached among the leadership of the main parties to the conflict. Understanding what motivates

violence should help agencies to recognise and anticipate changing patterns of vulnerability among beneficiary populations, and to reach principled decisions about the appropriate actions to take in direct dealings with warring groups or in response to violence.

The fourth message is that a historical, regional and international perspective is crucial to understanding complex emergencies. Complex emergencies cannot be understood adequately without understanding the history of the crisis and the broader regional and international processes involved. In Sierra Leone, for instance, antipathy towards chiefs among rural communities and the implications of returning chieftaindom authorities for the management of aid resources at the local level cannot be fully appreciated without understanding chiefs' past roles.

Fifth, these case studies highlight how economic imperatives and commercial agendas become intertwined with social and political crises; in other words, the debate between the relative importance of 'greed' and 'grievance' in causing and sustaining conflict may in fact miss the more complex relationship between economic agendas and motives and patterns of political power. Thus, in eastern DRC the economic changes wrought by the coltan trade have altered local structures of political power: traditional authority has been challenged by young people emboldened and enriched by their access to coltan. Similarly, the perception that Rwandans dominate access to coltan wealth has adversely affected the position of Congolese *rwandophones*. In these conditions, patterns of vulnerability may change rapidly with the shifting fortunes of different religious or ethnic communities, classes and regions, or different livelihood or social groups. Endemic insecurity, uncertainty and vulnerability can itself generate extreme local political sensitivities. These may sustain grievances in which agencies may become directly embroiled. Agencies have to tread a fine line, not getting entangled in local politics, while also engaging with the local political structures that have a crucial role to play in local governance during and after conflict.

Finally, in societies in conflict rumour and innuendo can be as important as fact. It is crucial for humanitarian actors to seek as objective a view as they can of a conflict. However, it is also important for them to remain sensitive to rumour and propaganda, both to monitor how their own activities and status are perceived, and to keep track of changing patterns of power and vulnerability. In Sierra Leone, for example, rumours about uneven assistance – whether well-founded or not – are important for local political relations and the position of humanitarian actors.

The wider application of a political economy approach

Questions about changing power and wealth relations are especially pertinent to societies affected by conflict, since

conflict is usually associated with particularly acute political and economic change, with potentially catastrophic consequences for large sections of the population. Yet at the same time, a political economy approach is not primarily or exclusively about war economies. Although this research focused on situations of chronic conflict and instability, it has, in fact, been largely concerned with the political economy of poor societies and local livelihoods as much as it has with conflict. All of these studies highlight in different ways how difficult it can be to disentangle the causes and effects of violence and conflict from wider processes at work in poor societies. Likewise, it is difficult to be sure whether activities linked to the war economy, such as smuggling or unregulated resource extraction, are part of people's responses to the stresses of war, or whether they would be happening anyway, war or no. Many of the key themes from the case studies are applicable to many societies suffering extreme poverty, political instability and weak governance institutions, whether violent conflict is present or not.

It is also clear that responsibility for good political and economic analysis extends to all aid actors operating in countries with weak or distorted governance institutions, frail economies and the potential for political instability and violence – both humanitarian and development agencies. Just as humanitarian organisations need to adapt and enhance assessment and other frameworks designed for short-term relief operations, so development actors need to adapt poverty reduction and development frameworks designed for 'peaceful' contexts.

Conclusions and implications for aid agencies

Humanitarian agencies acknowledge the need for better political and economic analysis of the societies in which they are operating. Yet there are clearly a number of difficulties associated with doing this effectively and well, including the short time-frames of much relief programming, the competing demands from other forms of information collection and management, and the detailed monitoring and reporting required of project inputs and outputs. Another factor may be a lack of appropriate analytical tools, though this research strongly suggests that these tools are to some extent already there; much of what relief agencies need to know about a particular political economy can, for example, be had from a close examination of changing livelihoods. This implies that, instead of adopting entirely new frameworks and ways of working, improved political analysis is probably best conducted *alongside* existing operational activities. This may entail integrating political economy analysis into existing assessment and other frameworks already being used to support field operations, such as household and food economy analysis. Where agencies are engaged over extended periods, they should be able to draw on a wide variety of sources and frames of reference on a continuing

basis, including the knowledge of individual field staff and local partners.

There are also likely to be important constraints on acting on this kind of analysis. Analysis and understanding may exist in one part of an organisation, but may not be linked to ground-level operations; or individual staff or partners at field level may have a very good understanding of the context in which they are working, but this is not shared within the organisation, and is therefore easily overlooked amid rapid staff mobility and turnover. A handful of organisations may have a good understanding of the context and be acting upon it effectively, but this might not be transferred to other actors working in the same place. Many economic and political forces identified by an agency – such as the changing international price of a particular commodity, the structure of a key commodity chain or the causes of an upsurge in militia violence – will probably be beyond the agency's influence or control. Humanitarian agencies may also ask whether it is appropriate for them to seek to exert such influence; analysis could be incomplete and the consequences of a particular action difficult to gauge and manage. There are important challenges in terms of defining the scope of humanitarian action, and measuring the impact of advocacy.

Much will depend on individual organisations' objectives and motivations, and judgements about how to use political economy analysis appropriately will be agency- and context-specific. In some cases, it may encourage a broadening of agency activities, to encompass advocacy for instance. In others, it may lead agencies to restrict their activities, perhaps avoiding direct engagement with a particular faction, or suspending peacebuilding activities where it is not clear who the peacebuilders really are. It is where humanitarian relief meets protection, peacebuilding, rights-based programming and livelihoods support that these judgements may be most difficult, and where good analysis may matter most.

Perhaps the greatest and most crucial challenge facing agencies is to start asking new types of questions. For many agencies, this may require a significant cultural and philosophical shift. Currently, a great deal of relief programming is primarily short-term and technical. In essence, it has asked 'what' questions: what groups are facing food insecurity, what commodities are being exchanged at what price? Political economy analysis centres much more explicitly on asking *why* and *how*. How have patterns of relative vulnerability and power come about? If a group is facing acute food insecurity, for instance, why is this? How have political, economic and other processes contributed to that group's predicament? If food insecurity has increased because prices have gone up, why has the market changed in this way? If agencies can ask and answer these types of questions, they should be in a stronger position to assess, anticipate and monitor vulnerable people's assistance and protection needs accurately, and be better equipped to plan and refine appropriate responses.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Sarah Collinson

1.1 Background

In his study of the famine suffered by the Dinka of Sudan in the 1980s, David Keen observes that ‘famine, like disease, is a process with beneficiaries as well as victims’ (Keen, 1994: 237). In Sudan, this process involved the forced transfer of assets from politically powerless victims; for powerful beneficiaries, the primary goal was often to use war, violence, famine and relief so as to achieve economic ends. As Mark Duffield has argued, in these circumstances ‘one is not dealing with a temporary emergency involving normally robust and self-sustaining populations which can eventually resume normal life’ (Duffield, 1994: 63). To develop appropriate responses, agencies need to understand what created the crises in the first place.

Work by Keen, Duffield and others during the 1990s reflected a growing loss of confidence in the efficacy of the humanitarian system and traditional approaches to relief in the face of complex political and humanitarian crises and conflicts (see also, for example, De Waal, 1997a; Prendergast, 1996). The end of the Cold War transformed international systems of response to people in need. Thus, there was a shift away from external assistance and protection for refugees towards the containment of refugee flows and an expansion of assistance and peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding *within* countries experiencing complex political and humanitarian emergencies (Collinson, 1993; Macrae, 2002; Leader, 2000). This was associated with a huge expansion in the number and range of NGOs and other agencies involved in emergency relief, most of whom were poorly equipped for the complex situations to which they were responding. Not only had the humanitarian system changed, but so too, it seemed, had the conflicts and crises causing these emergencies. Civilians became more explicitly the targets of powerful military and political actors operating without legitimacy, accountability or regulation. The ‘ideological’ struggles of the past gave way to ‘criminal conflicts’ driven by the greed of war-makers as much as by the grievances of those they claimed to represent (Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

Debates around the relationship between relief and development, or the so-called ‘relief–development continuum’, appeared increasingly misplaced in these circumstances. As it became clear that humanitarian crises could not simply be understood as a breakdown in an otherwise ‘normal’ development process, so too many failings in the international aid system could not be attributed to gaps between relief and development programming alone. Rather, they were more directly the

result of a failure by the whole aid community to fully grasp the implications of the conflicts and crises at the heart of both the emergencies *and* development failures to which they were trying to respond (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000).

The traditional principles and laws underpinning international humanitarian action have been of only limited help to agencies struggling to assist and protect vulnerable populations in war-affected countries. As Leader notes, since ‘belligerents in recent wars have increasingly chosen to ignore humanitarian principles, humanitarians have been forced to rethink the principles of humanitarian action’ (Leader, 2000: 12). This was made abundantly clear in the former Yugoslavia, which saw devastating failures to protect vulnerable populations despite a massive international effort to assist those in need. A recent lesson-learning review of the humanitarian response in Kosovo concludes that, overall, ‘(relative) survival’ came ‘*in spite of* the humanitarian effort’:

If saving life is part of any definition of humanitarian action, it is simply not credible to ignore the issue of protection (including armed protection) in an analytical account of humanitarianism. Whether or not military involvement compromises humanitarian principles or service, the danger of excluding armed-protection from the framework and analysis of the humanitarian system is that it will be seen as, and/or become, the sole responsibility of actors with non-humanitarian objectives, priorities and agendas (ALNAP, 2001: 74–75).

A large part of the blame for failures in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda was laid at the door of aid agencies and other international actors, who had based their actions on a poor understanding and analysis of the conflicts concerned. In a large-scale evaluation of Danish humanitarian assistance in the Great Lakes, DANIDA notes that inadequate attention to protection and an inability to design adequate interventions resulted from poor conflict analysis, including a narrow focus on socio-economic matters to the exclusion of political issues (ibid.: 46; DANIDA, 1999). In its assessment of the international response in the Great Lakes in 1994, the joint evaluation pinpointed a lack of coherence in international policy and strategy formulation, particularly within the political/diplomatic/military domain. This resulted from a lack of understanding of Rwanda’s complex situation, combined with conflicting interests within the international community (JEEAR, 1996: vol. 3, chapter 9). It is important to note, however, that ultimate responsibility for the failure to protect populations in the Great Lakes lay primarily with political actors, not relief workers.

These high-profile protection failures have led to a growing awareness among humanitarian agencies that their efforts in conflict-affected countries may be ineffective or counterproductive unless founded on a firm understanding of the broader political context of the emergencies concerned (Cliffe and Luckham, 2000). This is reflected in the proliferation of conflict impact assessment tools and initiatives seeking to link relief to rehabilitation, peacebuilding and the promotion of rights, and in renewed concern with the relationship between emergency assistance and international political and military action.¹ As a consequence, the international humanitarian agenda has broadened and humanitarian principles and objectives have diversified under the influence, not only of donors and political actors outside the system, but also in response to the concerns of humanitarian agencies themselves (Leader, 2000: 3, 46–47; Macrae and Leader, 2000).

There is, however, no strong tradition of political analysis within the humanitarian system, and detailed conflict analysis remains largely at the margins of most programming in complex emergencies. Supply-side considerations and blueprint approaches frequently hold sway (ALNAP, 2001: 93). Where needs assessments are carried out, these tend to be based on food security and public health models developed for responses to natural disasters, which prioritise material assets and market conditions and downplay political, military and protection issues. Programming systems tend to emphasise logistical competence and efficiency, and sectoral and technical issues usually dominate in the design and delivery of projects on the ground. Monitoring and reporting systems focus on project-level assistance activities and outputs (for instance the amount of food distributed) and short-term results (such as the number of people fed). Evaluations are often relatively weak in assessing impacts beyond shelter, food, water and sanitation and health (ibid., pp. 125–31). Inter-agency initiatives to improve performance and accountability across the system – such as Sphere and the Humanitarian Accountability Project – remain largely apolitical, with the emphasis, as in evaluations, on technical and logistical concerns within specific sectors. A small number of inter-agency coordination mechanisms, such as the Ground Rules in Sudan and the Principles and Protocols of Humanitarian Operation in Liberia, have promoted principled, ‘smart’ and effective aid interventions in specific emergencies, but these have tended to be restricted to ‘health’ agencies. These instruments appear to have made little impact on food agencies’ approach to distribution (Leader, 2000: 37–40). Where agencies are actively engaged in political analysis and monitoring, this is often undertaken by parts of the organisation or in the context of activities such as advocacy, and are distant from the focus of decision-making for humanitarian operations.

¹ For example, the Canada-based International Development Research Centre’s Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment initiative; the inter-agency Local Capacities for Peace Project; CARE International’s ‘Benefits–Harms’ approach; and the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan.

Ian Smillie argues that part of the problem relates to the culture of emergency assistance: ‘Of necessity, much takes place in fast-evolving ad hoc situations. Assessing short- and longer-term impacts in unstable environments is difficult and sometimes impossible’ (Smillie, 1998). Where agencies are engaged on a long-term basis in situations of chronic or recurring crisis, there is likely to be extensive knowledge and understanding among individual field staff and the agencies’ partners. However, this does not necessarily translate into *institutional* knowledge, particularly where there is rapid staff turnover and poor communication and information-sharing between the field and national and regional offices and international headquarters. There is also frequently a reluctance within agencies to factor explicitly political information or concerns into programming on the grounds that this could jeopardise the ‘neutral’ or ‘non-political’ nature of their operations. And there is a danger that, given institutional structures and resource constraints, data collected is not linked effectively to programming decisions. Although it is customary for programme and project plans and evaluation reports to include a section on ‘context’, discussion or analysis of the broader context of operations is rarely linked to the detail of operational activities. According to a recent review of humanitarian evaluations:

reports did not tend to make good use of contextual information. They provided narrative history of events and actors, but often failed to make necessary linkages between these events and the intervention to illustrate constraints and opportunities. Context was included, perhaps [only] because it is conventional to introduce evaluation reports with it or because it was demanded by the Terms of Reference (ALNAP, 2001: 128).

1.2 Rationale and aim

Over the past two years, ODI has led research exploring how improved political analysis might strengthen relief interventions. This project has not been concerned with the contribution of relief to peacebuilding, rights or the conduct of war, but rather with how political analysis can be used to inform emergency programming that aims to reduce mortality and morbidity and preserve dignity. While recognising the inherently political character of humanitarian action, the study was concerned to inform a ‘humanitarian politics’ (Forsythe, 1977). In other words, the purpose of political economy analysis as understood here is not to feed into either the partisan politics of belligerents, or into the geopolitics of international diplomacy. Rather, it argues that a good understanding of the political economy of the contexts in which relief is supplied is critical to informed, effective and principled programming. Thus, for example, the concern was to understand how political economy analysis might be applied to short-term needs assessment and vulnerability mapping, and how it might be used to inform negotiations for access and protection strategies.

A central rationale for this project is that it is not enough for agencies to seek to 'do no harm' (see Anderson, 1999). In the midst of complex and intractable conflicts and political crises, overwhelming levels of human suffering and abuse, and limited aid budgets, agencies need also to do everything they can to do the maximum good. To do this, they need to make themselves accountable not only for running relief operations efficiently, to acceptable technical standards or in accordance with particular humanitarian principles or narrowly defined short-term goals, but also for the strategic impact of their activities, measured in the real outcomes for the people and societies concerned. This, in turn, depends on agencies first having a good understanding of the societies that they are working in, and for this to inform the planning, implementation and assessment of relief interventions at all levels and stages.

Understanding the political economy of a society in crisis will not, of course, help humanitarian programming unless it is related to the lives of the people that agencies are trying to help, and to agencies' own activities on the ground. An important aim of this project was therefore to look at the links between different levels of political economy, to relate political and economic processes at the macro level to vulnerability and need at the local level. To do this, the study adopted a 'bottom-up' approach, seeking to link local conditions to the wider political and economic environment at the national and regional levels.

The research looked at four country case studies. In the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), field research was conducted in September 2000, July 2001 and April 2002. The study, reported in Chapter 2, examines the interface between the lower links of the tantalum ('coltan') commodity chain, local livelihoods and the political economy of vulnerability in rural and urban areas. Chapter 3 examines the complex war economy of the Casamance in Senegal. This study drew on field research conducted during three extended visits between 2000 and 2002. In Sierra Leone, field studies were conducted between January and March 2002. The research, described in Chapter 4, centres on the relationship between agencies' humanitarian and reconstruction activities and the sometimes volatile community relations at the local level. Finally, in Afghanistan local community-level surveys were conducted during July and August 2001 (and hence before the events of 11 September 2001, the fall of the Taliban and the investiture of a Western-backed regime). The resulting study (Chapter 5) explores a number of overlapping themes, including livelihoods, 'commodity chains', conflict and security, social relations and social capital, and governance and local institutions.

This work does not aim to come up with yet more frameworks for assessment or monitoring, a large number of which are already used or promoted in the field. Nor was it the intention to advocate political analysis for its own sake or as a stand-alone exercise. Conflicts, political crises and associated humanitarian crises are varied and

dynamic, agencies' time and research resources are usually scarce and staff over-stretched, and any form of political and economic inquiry in an unstable environment needs to be undertaken extremely carefully and sensitively (Collinson et al., 2002). It is thus crucial that humanitarian actors integrate strategic analysis into their operations on a continuous basis, and in a way that is specifically intended to inform policy and practice on the ground.

Reliable political analysis has resource implications. Larger agencies might be in a position to create specialist posts, to provide relevant training for incumbents, or to commission external advisers to work alongside staff and partners on the ground. Smaller agencies might be more reliant on the analysis provided by their larger counterparts, with implications for the coordination and sharing of information and analysis among different agencies in the field. But however well it is resourced, there will never be a single 'right' analysis or understanding, and the information and data available to agencies will vary a great deal in scope, reliability and detail. For this reason, agencies need to draw on a wide range of sources over time, and all information and analysis will need to be constantly checked and cross-referenced against that from other sources. Thus, although the research for this project was conducted on the basis of discrete case studies, the aim is not to advocate that humanitarian agencies should undertake large-scale research exercises drawing on unwieldy frameworks that bear little relation to the 'real life' constraints of delivering relief on the ground. Instead of adopting entirely new frameworks and ways of working, improved political analysis is probably best conducted flexibly and creatively alongside and within agencies' and their partners' operational activities. This may entail, in the first instance, adapting existing assessment and other operational frameworks, widening the scope of issues examined, and incorporating new questions and data.

This is by no means a modest agenda. Probably the greatest and most crucial challenge is the need to start asking new types of questions. For many agencies, this will require a significant cultural and philosophical shift. As things stand, a great deal of relief programming is concerned primarily with the 'what' – reflecting the short-term, technical and essentially apolitical approach that has traditionally characterised the majority of relief programming: what groups are facing food insecurity, what commodities are being exchanged at what price? Political economy analysis and assessment exercises must centre much more explicitly on asking *why* and *how*: how have patterns of relative vulnerability and power come about? If a particular group is facing acute food insecurity, for instance, why is this? How have political, economic and other processes contributed to that group's predicament? If food insecurity has increased because the price of food has gone up, why has the market changed in this way? If agencies can ask – and answer – these types of questions, they should be in a stronger position to assess, anticipate and monitor vulnerable people's assistance and protection needs

accurately, and be better equipped to plan and refine appropriate responses. As Mark Duffield has argued, realistic policies can only emerge from an adequate understanding of the situation that one wishes to ameliorate. Thus, if predatory local political structures are the determining factor in a complex emergency – as they frequently are – humanitarian policy must be premised upon the centrality of indigenous political relations. In these circumstances, agencies cannot afford to focus narrowly on technical matters of organisation or good practice (Duffield, 1994: 65).

1.3 The ‘political economy’ approach

The ‘political economy’ approach that underpins this project seeks to answer these questions by examining the nature of power in the societies concerned. Conflicts and political crises will affect people’s lives and livelihoods in a variety of ways, creating new forms and patterns of economic, political and social vulnerability. According to a political economy approach, vulnerability should be understood in terms of powerlessness rather than simply material need or the failure of basic ‘entitlements’ (De Waal, 1997b; Keen, 1994). Power and powerlessness determine the distribution of access to food and other key commodities and assets among and within different groups. Those who lack power cannot safeguard their basic political, economic and social rights, and may not be able to protect themselves from violence. Vulnerability and power are therefore analysed as a political and economic *process*, in terms, for instance, of neglect, exclusion or exploitation, in which a variety of groups and actors play a part (Le Billon, 2000). People are most vulnerable when their livelihoods and coping strategies are deliberately blocked or undermined, or if their group identity, political position and/or material circumstances (in some cases their wealth) expose them to violence.

Political economy analysis is therefore essentially concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes in a society. It focuses on the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and on the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time. When applied to situations of conflict and crisis, political economy analysis seeks to understand both the political and the economic aspects of conflict, and how these combine to affect patterns of power and vulnerability.

There is an extensive and growing literature on the political economy of conflict. This includes work on the economic causes, costs and consequences of conflict (see, for instance, Nafziger, Stewart and Vayrinen, 2000; Stewart, Fitzgerald and associates, 2001; Keen 1998; Berdal and Malone, 2000) – including sometimes dramatic declines in economic growth, investment, exports and imports, a switch to subsistence and informal activities, falling consumption and increased aid dependence. The overall human costs are

usually considerable, related to increased food insecurity, raised infant mortality rates and deteriorating nutritional, health and educational standards. One important conclusion of this body of work is that the costs of conflict are not borne equally across a society, as some groups gain and others lose: women and men, different generations and different livelihood groups are usually affected differently. People who rely on exchange for their food, for instance, may be more vulnerable to trade disruptions than those who produce their own. Farmers may find it harder than traders to recover from disruption, and people growing labour-intensive annual food crops may be more vulnerable than farmers growing perennial cash crops.

Work by Duffield and Keen among others demonstrates how sustained and deliberate asset-transfer or asset-stripping can result in the destitution of particular groups (often minority ethnic or religious groups) to the benefit of those in positions of political and/or economic power, who are able to exploit and control key markets. Thus, as well as looking at the costs of war, recent conflict analysis has also focused on the role of economic agendas and motivations in *causing and sustaining* violent conflicts (Duffield, 1994; Keen, 1998; Collier and Hoeffler, 1998; Berdal and Malone, 2000; Le Billon, 2000). Keen argues that the violence in civil wars cannot be understood without understanding the economics underpinning it: conflicts create war economies, armed gangs benefit from looting, and regimes use violence to deflect opposition, reward supporters or maintain access to resources. Violence may be initiated by powerful groups trying to defend their economic interests, and ordinary people may turn to violence out of fear, need or greed. Civil wars that appear at the outset to be political often mutate into conflicts primarily driven by short-term economic interests (Keen, 1998: 11–12).

Other analysts have focused more on the political processes associated with conflict. Lionel Cliffe and Robin Luckham, for example, argue that conflicts cannot be understood without appreciating the crisis in political authority and governance that lie at their root (Cliffe and Luckham, 2000). In turn, conflict challenges the state, and transforms the power relations within it, enhancing the power of groups that control the means of violence or enjoy access to aid and other resources, while diminishing the power of groups that do not.

The relative weight of the political and the economic in creating and sustaining conflict is a matter of some debate. Paul Collier, for instance, argues that conflicts are far more likely to be caused by economic opportunities than by political grievance. Others emphasise the interaction of economics and politics. Mats Berdal and David Malone, for example, note how organised violence may serve a range of different purposes, particularly within politically fragmented and economically weak states (Berdal and Malone, 1998: 4). As noted above, Duffield highlights how economic assets flow from the weak to the politically strong (Duffield, 1994) – although this is not restricted to societies

in conflict. Cliffe and Luckham also acknowledge the close relationship between the economic and political causes and consequences of conflict.

In a situation of entrenched political instability and conflict, individuals and groups may use violence to gain or assert power or wealth, such that the perpetuation of the conflict becomes an end in itself. Prolonged conflict leads in turn to new political structures and processes; the state or political and military elite may no longer seek or need to establish territorial or bureaucratic control, and political authority in the conventional sense may become superfluous (Cliffe and Luckham, 2000; Keen, 1998; Chabal and Daloz, 1999). Often, there is neither total war nor total peace, but a more-or-less chronic state of instability and vulnerability, with widespread violence and human rights violations, recurrent political crises and humanitarian emergencies (Le Billon, 2000: 4).

Political economy analysis should not be understood simply as a form of conflict analysis. Although the ODI project described here focuses on situations of chronic conflict and instability, it has, in fact, been largely concerned with the political economy of poor societies and local livelihoods as much as it has with conflict. In the Casamance in Senegal, for instance, many phenomena that might easily be attributed to conflict, such as inadequate public services, the unequal distribution of resource revenues or widespread poverty, are endemic in the region, at war or at peace. Likewise, it is difficult to be sure whether activities like cannabis and timber trafficking are part of people's responses to the stresses of war, or whether they would be happening anyway. Many of the key themes from the case studies – relating, for instance, to the significance of unregulated resource extraction, or the importance of rumour and innuendo in generating local political grievances – are applicable to many societies suffering extreme poverty, political instability and weak governance institutions, whether violent conflict is present or not. All the case studies highlight in different ways how difficult it can be to disentangle the causes and effects of violence and conflict from wider processes at work in poor societies.

Nor should a political economy approach be seen as primarily or exclusively concerned with war economies and the political economy of what the literature has dubbed 'greed'. While three of the studies looked closely at war economies, all of them point to the intimate and complex relationship between 'greed' and 'grievance', and between war economies, parallel economies and coping and survival economies.

Of course, questions about changing power and wealth relations are especially pertinent to societies affected by conflict, since conflict is usually associated with particularly acute political and economic change, with potentially catastrophic consequences for large sections of the population. Conflict and associated war economies and political crises transform local political economies, and

communities must constantly adapt to the opportunities and constraints that these transformations bring. Frequently, the issue is not 'a conflict' but a complex and multi-layered 'conflict system', in which a number of different conflicts interact with one another. In Afghanistan, for instance, micro-level conflicts around land and water have become entwined with the wider national and regional conflict.

1.4 Linking political economy to local vulnerability and livelihoods analysis

An important innovation of a political economy approach is to demonstrate that conflict transforms society, rather than simply destroying it, causing people to adapt their behaviour and their livelihoods in order to survive or to minimise risk, or to capitalise on the opportunities that conflict presents. In any crisis situation – whether associated with conflict or not – relief is only one of a range of survival and coping mechanisms for people affected by crisis. Understanding the political economy of a society in crisis will not help humanitarian programming unless it is related to the lives of the people that agencies are trying to help, and to agencies' own activities. An important aim of the case studies conducted for this project was therefore to look at the links between different levels of political economy and to relate political and economic processes at the macro level down to vulnerability and need at the local level.

Given the range of factors of concern to political economy analysis, the dynamic nature of socio-economic and political processes and the variety of agencies' own concerns in the field, any frameworks used to support political economy analysis need to be applied flexibly and interchangeably. A number of discrete analytical frameworks might be used to highlight and investigate particular aspects of the local or wider political economy. These could supplement and expand assessment and other frameworks already used by operational agencies, such as household economy and other needs assessment frameworks, early-warning systems and evaluation tools (Collinson et al., 2002).

A number of humanitarian and development agencies base their assessments and analyses of household and local food economies on the 'entitlements' approach developed by Amartya Sen (Sen, 1981). Sen's concept of entitlements refers to the 'commodity bundles' that a person or group can access or command using the rights and opportunities open to them. This shifts the focus away from food availability and towards the inability of groups to acquire food, for instance because of their poverty. In this reading, famines may be the result of certain groups' declining access to food, irrespective of overall food availability (see Devereux, 2001; Edkins, 1996). This encourages attention to specific households and groups at the local level. Instead of studying populations and food per capita, the focus is on particular household groups and their vulnerability and

coping strategies. Save the Children (UK)'s Household Economy Approach (HEA), for instance, aims 'to provide an understanding, in quantified terms, of the way in which typical households in defined income/wealth groups gain access to food and non-food goods and the relationship between these households and the wider economy. This information permits modelling of the likely effect of changes in economic context, e.g. the inclusion or removal of food aid or a price change, on the economy of defined households' (Seaman et al., 2000).

Sen encourages a view of famine as an 'economic disaster', and so avoids attention to the politics of famines identified by Keen (1994; De Waal, 1997b; Devereux, 2001). The entitlements framework does not incorporate the possibility of deliberate asset-stripping or other forms of economic violence, or the systematic political exclusion of certain sections of the community. Political economy approaches challenge this by examining famine as a process, rather than a breakdown, in which benefits accrue to one section of the community while losses fall on the other (Rangasami, 1985; De Waal, 1997b; Keen, 1994). Thus, to supplement the 'what' questions contained within entitlements-based food security assessments (what are the criteria that differentiate poor and rich households?; what proportion of the population falls into each group?; what are the sources of food and non-food income?), a political economy perspective might encourage agencies to ask why some household groups are wealthier than others, and how and why the fortunes of these different groups have changed over time. Have sources and proportions of food and non-food income changed for particular groups, and if so, how and why? A political economy perspective would also widen the scope of vulnerability factors included in household needs assessment, for instance by encouraging attention to political and social exclusion, as well as food insecurity.

Many of the issues and questions of concern to political economy analysis can alternatively be viewed through the lens of livelihoods analysis. Livelihoods analysis is cross-sectoral, and seeks to take into account the totality of economic, political, social and cultural factors affecting people's lives and livelihoods, from the local up to the national and international levels. It thus has the potential to complement or be combined with more conventional political economy analysis, which is often approached from the top down, failing to connect effectively with the local level.

Most of the livelihoods literature has focused on relatively stable development situations, and so says little directly about how this approach could help humanitarian and other agencies working in situations of violent conflict and political instability. Nevertheless, it can potentially provide much of the data that political economy analysis requires concerning local and meso-level political and economic relationships and processes in society; it provides a framework and a methodology for researching these

processes at the local level that is largely missing from the political economy literature; and it is grounded in poor people's own perspectives, and hence, unlike most political economy analysis, related directly to the beneficiaries of aid (compare Moser and McIlwaine, 2001). Livelihoods analysis also has the additional advantage of providing a comparatively safe way of investigating sensitive issues in insecure environments, since these are only tackled indirectly through exploring how people live (Collinson et al., 2002).

Different social groups within a community or population typically experience differing risk factors in their livelihoods, and people's ability to exercise choices may be constrained by social and governance factors that are not immediately obvious. Analysis of livelihood strategies should therefore include questions such as: What does the livelihood 'portfolio' of a given social group look like? How and why is this changing over time? Is it a long-term response to environmental change, a response to changing market conditions, or a short-term reaction to a direct threat? How long-term is people's outlook, and how is this reflected in the way they use and manage their assets? Are they saving their assets, or depleting them for the sake of immediate survival?

There are a number of disparate and overlapping methods of studying livelihoods. Murray, for example, outlines three core principles for livelihoods research:

- It is carried out at the micro-level of households and communities. It involves empirical investigation of combinations of modes of livelihood and of the relationships between them, and changes in these over time.
- This micro-level investigation is placed clearly within a macro context, with a clear time-frame and recognition of key variables and trends.
- It seeks to explain the circumstances of, and reasons for, poverty and vulnerability through analysing social relations in a particular historical context. This implies a relational view of poverty, and an understanding of the persistence, intractability or deepening of poverty driven by questions about inequalities of power (Murray, 2001).

The dominant livelihoods approach is represented by the sustainable livelihoods (SL) framework developed by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) (see DFID's guidance sheets at www.livelihoods.org). This focuses on people's human, natural, financial, physical and social 'assets' – such as education, land, waged income, access to water, and kinship and other social networks – and how people convert these into livelihood outcomes. A single asset can generate multiple benefits: if someone has secure access to land (natural capital), for example, they may also be relatively well endowed with financial capital because they can use the land for productive activities, lease it out,

or use it as collateral for loans. It is important to look beyond individual assets such as land to explore how these are related to others, such as young people to farm the land. It is also important to incorporate a time dimension into the analysis: information needs to be collected on trends in overall asset availability – social capital might decline if societies fragment during conflict, for instance – and on which groups are accumulating assets, which are losing them, and why. Where ‘social exclusion’ is at work, those who are already poorly endowed may well become more marginalised.

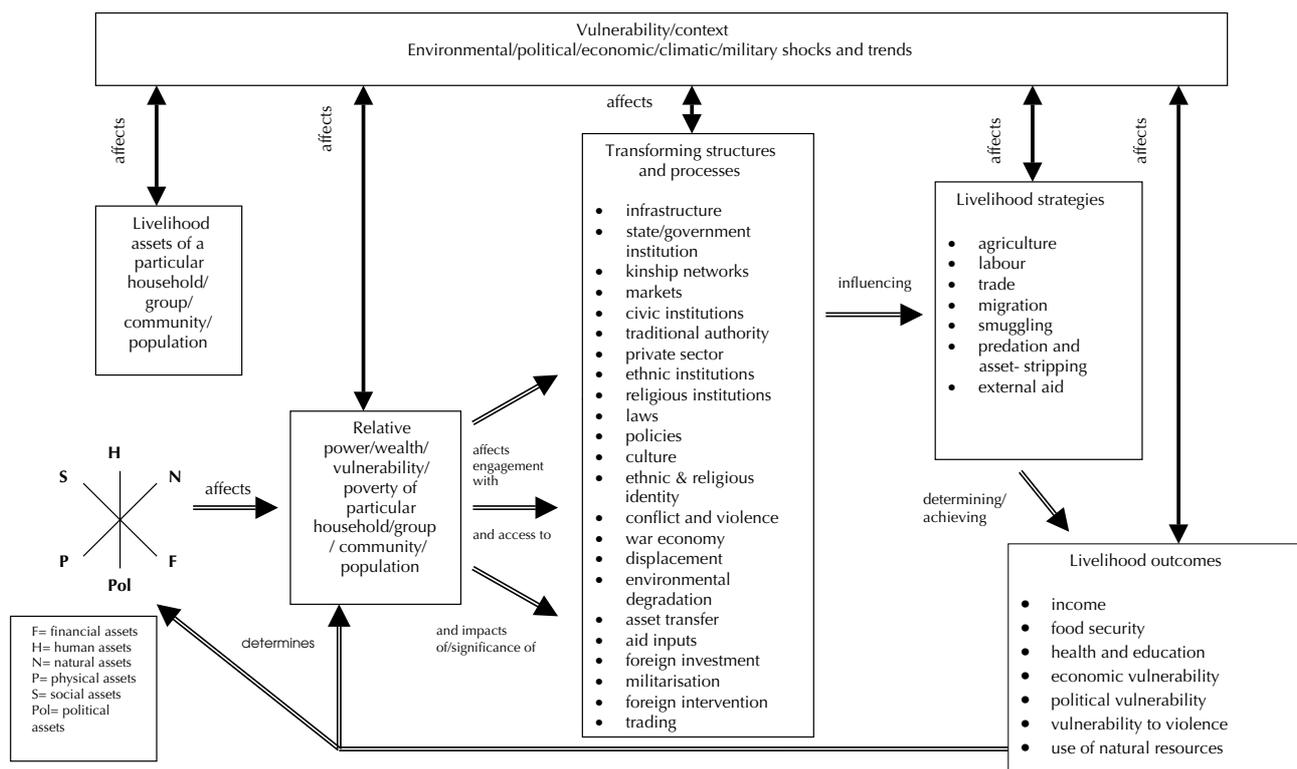
Three of the case studies conducted for this project – on Afghanistan, Casamance and DRC – incorporated elements of livelihoods analysis to inform and supplement political economy analysis at the local level. This was partly because, in insecure environments, it was felt that the best and safest entry-point for exploring the local political economy and/or war economies would not be through direct questioning, for instance about opium in Afghanistan, but instead through an analysis of people’s changing livelihoods, coping strategies and social institutions (Goodhand, 2000: 88–99).

Extensive and comprehensive livelihoods surveys are unlikely to be possible or practical in all crises, whether due to the sheer pace of events and the pressured nature of relief, or because conditions are such that anyone engaged in activities of this kind will need to keep a low profile so as to avoid raising expectations or jeopardising their own or their respondents’ security. The research for the case studies relied principally on informal qualitative

ethnographic and participatory methods, including observation, semi-structured and focus-group interviews and the collection of personal testimonies relating to particular aspects of the political economy and livelihoods. More formal and extensive livelihood surveys were undertaken in Casamance, focused on four sites reflecting different security environments. These surveys were very time-consuming and proved a more dilute source of information on the political economy than key-informant interviews and stakeholder surveys, but provided important insights into economic strategies employed by combatants, without asking for such information directly.

Like Sen’s entitlements approach, livelihoods analysis has been criticised for not sufficiently incorporating or addressing issues of power and politics (see for example Baumann, 2000). The livelihoods framework used by DFID, for example, says relatively little about competition and exploitation between individuals, households and groups. The potential for competing livelihood strategies is partially acknowledged in the guidance sheets accompanying DFID’s framework, where it is noted that ‘people compete (for jobs, for markets, to secure better prices, etc.) ... [which] makes it difficult for everyone to achieve simultaneous improvements in their livelihoods’, but the issue is not tackled directly. In any society, understanding competitive and sometimes destructive relationships between the livelihoods of different groups is essential for understanding how livelihood strategies translate into power and wealth relations and, potentially, violence and/or the systematic marginalisation and exclusion of particular groups. This is a key area where other frames of reference

Figure 1.1: A sustainable livelihoods framework in situations of conflict and political instability



that bring in a stronger political economy dimension might strengthen livelihoods analysis. Figure 1.1, based on DFID's livelihoods framework, illustrates how questions focused on changing livelihoods at the local level might incorporate the local and wider political economy.

1.5 Political economy analysis and commodity chains

Three of the case studies – Afghanistan, the DRC and Casamance – drew on commodity chain analysis to explore political and economic issues associated with particular resources implicated in war economies, such as coltan, opium, hashish, timber and tree crops. Commodity chain analysis identifies power relations, governance structures and exchange relationships within commercial networks, from primary production through to consumption, and from the local up to the international levels (see Gereffi and Korzeniewicz, 1994; Gereffi, 1995; Raikes et al., 2000). Of particular interest to political economy analysis is the identification of who controls commodities and exchange at particular levels. A commodity chain may be predominantly controlled and driven by producers or by commercial intermediaries, or by buyers at the consumer end of the chain.

It must be stressed, however, that the direct investigation of commodity chains in situations of conflict and political crisis is likely to be highly sensitive, and so conventional research methods appropriate for peaceful situations will not be suitable. The safety and security of researchers, respondents and the agencies and beneficiaries that they are connected with is paramount; any investigation should err on the side of caution if it is unclear whether a particular approach or line of inquiry is safe to pursue. As in other areas of the political economy of potential interest to relief agencies, understanding is best developed incrementally and indirectly, drawing on a wide range of sources. Agencies, or their field staff and partners, may already have or be collecting much of the information that they need concerning commercial activity in the areas where they are operational. A key challenge is to draw effectively on this existing knowledge, including relevant information collected through household economy and other assessments and field surveys.

Gereffi identifies four dimensions of global commodity chains: the input–output structure of the chain, the territory it covers, its governance structure and the institutional framework. The governance structure includes notions of barriers to entry and coordination within the commodity chain, and distinguishes producer-driven from buyer-driven (and intermediary-driven) structures and processes. The institutional framework determines how key or 'lead' actors within the commodity chain involve less powerful or subordinate commercial actors through their control of market access or information, for example by monopolising export and marketing networks (Gereffi, 1995).

In the eastern Kivus in DRC, the coltan commodity chain was highly fragmented during a boom in the international price of coltan at the end of the 1990s and into 2000/2001, with a large number of independent miners and intermediaries involved at the lower levels. Primary production was concentrated in mines in the east, while purchasing, processing and sale onto international markets was concentrated in Rwanda. At the tail-end of the boom, the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD)/Rwandan authorities tried to centralise all coltan purchasing under a single buyer, SOMIGL, but this was abandoned following a price crash in 2001, after which military control of the commodity chain was consolidated, forcing out most of the independent producers and intermediaries who used to operate at the lower levels of the chain and making the trade increasingly violent. This in turn affected patterns of vulnerability in the region, such as for poor and vulnerable communities at risk of forced displacement from areas where the mining is concentrated. The commodity chain is buyer- and intermediary-driven: an unknown proportion of coltan flows through informal channels, with profits probably accruing to Rwandan politicians and military officers; meanwhile, primary producers have little control – indeed, some Rwandan-controlled mines have reportedly been manned by forced prison labour.

The case studies conducted for this project have not focused directly on the political economy of food as a commodity. The Casamance research, for instance, looks at the role of crops in export markets, but not directly within the local food economy. The research on Afghanistan looks more broadly at survival, coping and war economies, without isolating political and economic factors relating to food. The Kivus study includes discussion of how markets in coltan and other minerals have affected local food markets and poor communities' access to them, but there is no commodity chain analysis of those markets. The work on Sierra Leone looks at the political economy of food, but only to the extent that mechanisms for distributing food at the local level have implications for local governance institutions in the 'post-conflict' context. But it is undeniable that, in poor and war-torn societies, food is often the commodity 'most sought after and most abused by belligerents' (Leader, 2000: 51). In any famine situation, or any conflict where there is a risk of food being diverted by warring parties or being used as a weapon of war, an understanding of the relationships and processes governing power and control over key food commodities is crucial if agencies are to maintain humanitarian principles, 'do no harm' and do maximum good. Commodity chain analysis may help agencies to understand the political economy of food in these circumstances – but it would be essential for this analysis to factor in the role of all donors and relief agencies as central actors within the political economy concerned.

1.6 The case studies: key insights and conclusions

Each of the studies included in this project describes a different type and level of conflict and humanitarian crisis. Eastern DRC, for instance, has seen high-intensity regionalised conflict and massive casualties, whereas the separatist conflict in the Casamance has generated low-level but prolonged violence and insecurity. In Afghanistan, chronic conflict combined with drought to create high levels of vulnerability, displacement and destitution. The conflict in Sierra Leone has, officially at least, come to an end and local governance structures are being re-established, but many aid agencies continue to operate on a relief model. Yet despite these differences, key common themes emerged.

1.6.1 War economies, 'shadow' economies and survival economies

Three broad types of economy usually operate in a conflict zone: the war economy, the parallel or 'shadow' economy, and the coping/survival economy. Any society's political economy will be transformed by, or in, conflict; some people will profit, but the majority will see their assets decline and their vulnerability increase. Although conflict and political crisis may bring about greater differentiation between 'winners' and 'losers', all the case studies demonstrate that, in practice, there are usually no clear boundaries between 'war economies' and other parts of the economy, including local coping and survival economies. Each has distinctive features, but all are interconnected, with many actors engaged in more than one type.

Terms such as 'licit' and 'illicit' economy look inadequate in these situations (as they do in many peacetime environments – see Chabal and Daloz, 1999). For instance, a particular community may be primarily engaged in subsistence agriculture within the 'coping economy'. At the same time, people may also have diversified their livelihood strategies to spread risk, including participating in the shadow and 'war' economies, for example through unregulated mining, smuggling or poppy cultivation.

In one village in Afghanistan's Jaji District, for instance, the number of families engaged in growing cannabis increased from five to over 20 between 2000 and 2001. Likewise, different commodities – some essential to poor people's livelihoods and survival, others a key part of the war economy – may travel along the same commercial routes. In Afghanistan, for instance, warlords, conflict profiteers, traders and aid agencies all use the same informal money-changers and money-transfer systems. In Casamance, armed groups have become involved in the existing civilian trade in nuts and fruit. Thus, 'conflict' cashews, mangoes and citrus are traded and marketed in the same way as the civilian harvest, and benefit the same dealers. Cashews leave Dakar or Bissau on the same Indian

ships. Timber, traded by Senegalese army servicemen through an illicit parallel market, benefits some local people by providing jobs and trade. In eastern DRC, coltan mining appears initially to have functioned as a coping and survival mechanism amid the contraction of other livelihood possibilities. This appears to have changed since the global price of coltan collapsed in 2001, and many independent miners and traders were driven out. The political and economic significance of coltan shifted considerably: it became less directly important to ordinary people's coping and survival, and more important for the war economy.

Understanding the relationship between war economies, shadow economies and coping and survival economies will help agencies to better evaluate the impact of relief in local conflict-affected environments, and the implications of their own dealings with local commercial and other actors. In Afghanistan, for example, using the money-transfer system can only be properly weighed up if agencies first have a good understanding of the relationship between that system and the wider conflict. This kind of analysis can also help agencies to recognise the links between local vulnerability and the wider economic and political forces driving conflict. This should help them to identify vulnerable groups' coping strategies, and their need for assistance, protection or livelihoods support. In the case of eastern DRC, for instance, the move to one form of coping strategy – coltan mining – took young men off the land, damaging local agricultural productivity and increasing food insecurity for many communities in areas where 'coltan fever' took hold.

Recognising the interaction of war economies with people's coping strategies may also help agencies – particularly multi-mandate agencies – to achieve more effective links between advocacy and their operations at field level. The emergence of coltan and other minerals as a key component of livelihoods in the Kivus, for instance, suggests that international advocacy to improve the governance structure around mining might have better results for local people than calls for an outright boycott. In this way, international advocacy concerned with resource exploitation from zones of conflict – for instance, calling for 'smart' sanctions – dovetails with action on the ground to assist and support communities trying to adapt their livelihoods to cope with war.

1.6.2 The diversification of livelihoods and coping strategies

People cope with and survive conflict and humanitarian crisis first and foremost by adapting and diversifying their livelihoods. The transformations that conflict brings about in the wider political economy are therefore mirrored in varied and often irreversible changes in people's lives.

In all four of the case studies, the general picture is one of

growing vulnerability across most of the population, with a gradual erosion of asset bases, compounded by the weakening or collapse of governance institutions and a range of external shocks to poor communities' coping strategies. A top-down political economy analysis may stop at this general level of observation. However, the bottom-up approach adopted by this study – exploring power, wealth and vulnerability principally through an examination of local livelihoods – suggests that generalisations about the impact and implications of conflict for people and their livelihoods should be treated with caution. People's livelihood strategies depend upon a broad range of factors, including location, security regimes, the strength of local governance structures and social networks, and access to roads, markets and water. There is consequently a great deal of variability among areas, groups and even villages and households within the same locale. In Faryab in Afghanistan, for instance, villages relatively close together had markedly different economies, with considerable household differences in their main sources of income and access to food.

Coping strategies too can vary enormously. In Afghanistan, people have responded to the various threats to their livelihoods posed by conflict and drought in a wide range of ways, from reducing food consumption and disposing of assets to moving to Iran, Pakistan, Europe and Australia. The relative significance of particular livelihoods for different households and communities varies greatly. Afghan families with members working in the Gulf or Europe are often able to profit and increase their asset base through remittances, while those dependent on workers in Pakistan and Iran are more likely to be using the remittances simply to cope or survive. In the Kivus, meanwhile, coltan mining may have represented a coping or survival strategy for some households or communities, but for others it threatened their ability to cope because young men quit agriculture to make a profit from mining, without contributing assets back to their families or communities.

The case studies also highlight considerable local variation in the role that mutual support mechanisms play in people's coping and survival strategies. In some communities, social capital is destroyed by conflict, in others it is strengthened. In some villages in the Qaramqol region of Afghanistan, for instance, extended ties of economic interdependence and a strong sense of mutual support have been maintained; in others, particularly where there have been periods of settlement by different ethnic groups and asset ownership patterns have been more highly differentiated, fault-lines between social groups have emerged, and in some cases kinship systems have broken down.

Recognising and understanding the adaptations and transformations in people's livelihoods at the local level is vital in identifying the most vulnerable and needy groups requiring assistance or protection, and in anticipating how particular groups might be affected by external shocks such as drought or collapsed markets. Exposure to a threat does

not necessarily mean a household or group will be susceptible to that threat – much will depend on the assets that the group or household can draw upon, including political and social assets, and whether they are the target of sustained or deliberate social exclusion and asset-stripping. Different groups' assets, and therefore their vulnerability, will depend crucially on local and wider power relations.

In essence, the adaptation and diversification in people's livelihoods and coping strategies need to be matched by diversification and adaptation in the humanitarian response. A key challenge for humanitarian action, therefore, is to move beyond formulaic delivery to allow for greater flexibility and differentiated responses over space and time. A wide range of aid interventions might be suitable in different places and at different times, and these will need to be sequenced according to particular groups' changing needs and recovery processes. Food transfers may be the initial focus, and food inputs might themselves be deployed in a variety of ways to support or maintain community and household assets. But greater use of non-food interventions could also help to sustain livelihoods and reduce vulnerability if fine-tuned appropriately at the local level, including cash and capital inputs.

1.6.3 Understanding warring groups and the wider role of violence

Getting to grips with a war economy and its significance for the vulnerability of different groups depends on understanding warring groups and what motivates them, and the broader role of violence in society (Richards, 1996).

The political economy of armed groups is usually a highly sensitive subject, and potentially dangerous to investigate. For this reason, agencies and researchers need to tread extremely carefully when seeking any information that relates directly to the interests and activities of actors and groups involved in fighting (Collinson et al., 2002). Nonetheless, it is important for agencies to understand as much as they can of how they and local and beneficiary populations and potential partners might be affected by or implicated in the activities of armed groups, directly or indirectly, and what the implications might be for programming. The greater agencies' knowledge and understanding of the actors involved, the better able they will be to manage their own operational security and to protect vulnerable populations (Van Brabant, 2000).

In any conflict, there is usually a continuum of different forms of violence, from organised warfare and systematic economic violence by the state or other organised military actors, through to more individualised forms linked to crime and opportunism, and violent and destructive survival strategies. We also need to ask questions about the political and economic role of violence at different levels in society.

What forms of violence predominate at particular levels and/or in particular areas, and what is the purpose and cause of this violence?

Understanding the nature and extent of communities' vulnerability to predation and asset-stripping by warring groups – and thus designing effective protection and prevention measures – depends on understanding the significance of these violent activities for the groups concerned. Enlisting in militia bands may for many represent a livelihood strategy. Reducing the vulnerability of rural communities to predation may therefore depend more on finding suitable livelihood options and alternatives for those involved in banditry than it will on any peace deals.

Understanding warring groups should help humanitarian agencies to recognise and anticipate changing patterns of vulnerability among different groups over time, and to monitor their assistance and protection needs more effectively. In Casamance and DRC, rural communities have been displaced and farmers' access to land and other resources has been restricted by warring parties seeking to extend or maintain control of key commodities in the war economy. But the nature of the violence these warring parties employ is radically different in the two cases. With conflict now at a relatively low level in the Casamance and the conduct of armed forces greatly improved, servicemen maintain access to resources primarily to supplement their own livelihoods, mainly by forbidding or restricting access by civilians to certain areas of insecurity 'for their own safety', or to prevent them from sheltering or supplying *maquisards*. The threat or use of violence is not necessarily deployed, and much of the civilian population benefits from the military's involvement in exploiting and trading in local commodities. In DRC, by contrast, the exploitation of local resources has become progressively and violently militarised, with military actors increasingly using force to acquire and maintain control of mines. Labour is sometimes coerced and population displacement is frequently engineered. Most of the profits from mineral extraction are siphoned off to external military, political and commercial interests, and so contributes little to local livelihoods and development.

Humanitarian actors also need to try to understand the nature and motivations of warring groups so as to recognise the links between local violence and broader national or regional conflict, designing and adapting their local protection, assistance and advocacy policies accordingly. In Afghanistan, for instance, changing national and international security conditions have affected local governance structures, local patterns of violence and local livelihoods in different ways at different times. The nature of the local Taliban administration and the level of violence that it perpetrated against communities appear to have differed according to the movement's calculation of the locality's orientation, composition and independent power.

1.6.4 The historical and regional perspective

A key theme emerging from these studies is that an understanding of conflict and associated political and humanitarian crises requires an understanding of its history. Mary Anderson has suggested that immediate causes are more significant than 'root causes' (Anderson, 1999: 9). However, these case studies demonstrate that the more proximate causes and implications of conflict and crisis – and the implications for aid programming – cannot be understood in isolation from the historical and international context. At the most general level, a broader historical and international perspective is important if agencies are to be in a position to answer the 'why?' questions that need to underpin a comprehensive analysis of the context – for instance, to explain why the state has collapsed, why a particular ethnic group is being persecuted, why trust has broken down between local communities and government institutions, or why particular markets have expanded, changed or disappeared.

The case studies point to the particular importance of this broader perspective for informing the protection, rehabilitation, human rights and peacebuilding activities that run alongside relief operations in many conflict situations, and in which many humanitarian actors are often directly involved. In Sierra Leone, contemporary antipathy towards chiefs among rural communities and the implications of returning chiefdom authorities for the management of aid resources at the local level cannot be fully appreciated without understanding the role that chiefs and the grievances against them have played in the past (Fanthorpe, 2001; Richards, 2001). In the Kivus, today's grievances among local Congolese against 'Tutsi' and 'Rwandan' landowners – fuelled by resentment over Rwanda's control of coltan and other resources – owes a great deal to historical tensions over land.

A historical and international perspective is also important in informing agencies' early-warning systems and contingency and preparedness measures and, potentially, their local and international advocacy. In all the countries looked at in the study, weakened, absent or collapsed state institutions have exposed vulnerable communities to regional and global market forces. In eastern DRC, for instance, most aid agencies see themselves as engaged in relief, and thus not directly concerned by structural issues to do with the war economy. Yet the cycle of boom and bust in the coltan trade indicates that economic changes at a global level can be just as much 'disasters' in humanitarian terms as a drought or military offensive.

1.6.5 The interaction of 'greed' and 'grievance'

Some analysts have argued that economic agendas ('greed') have become more important than political agendas ('grievance') in causing and sustaining conflicts (see, for instance, Collier and Hoeffler, 1998). However, the research

for this paper highlights that economic imperatives and commercial agendas are in fact intimately intertwined with social and political crises. In eastern DRC, for instance, coltan has transformed local power relations: young people enriched by coltan have challenged elders, and traditional authority has given way to military power. In these conditions, patterns of vulnerability – a function of political powerlessness – may change rapidly and radically in line with the shifting fortunes of different religious or ethnic communities, classes and regions, or different livelihood or social groups. In Afghanistan, for example, some areas have been better able to exploit the ‘bazaar economy’ than others. This has transformed the relative power of different groups, particularly Pashtuns with commercial links to markets in Pakistan, relative to non-Pashtun populations. Worsening poverty and inequality, and the gains made by conflict entrepreneurs and war profiteers, feed grievances that may centre on ethnic or religious identities. Even early on in the Kivus’ coltan ‘boom’, violence around coltan was linked with mounting ethnic tension.

Conflict also transforms social relations. In Sierra Leone, for instance, divisions between young people and traditional sources of authority were a key cause of the conflict; as in the DRC, conflict has further transformed relations between youths and older generations, posing a significant challenge for post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts. In Afghanistan, the Taliban’s gender policies affected men as well as women by taking authority out of the hands of male family and community members.

Endemic insecurity, uncertainty and vulnerability often generate extreme political sensitivities at the local level among conflict-affected populations. These sensitivities may sustain grievances that are difficult to unravel, but in which agencies may become directly embroiled. There is a fine line between getting caught up in local politics and engaging with local political structures that may have a crucial role in governance during and after conflict. In delivering important food and other resources, humanitarian agencies need to know which political and commercial actors to work with, and how. Aid initiatives risk falling foul of local actors seeking control of resources entering their domains, particularly where there is widespread suffering and deprivation, weak or distorted local political institutions, extreme inter-group tensions and a largely unregulated economy. The return of Western donors to the Casamance, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and, potentially, to eastern DRC after years of absence may create new problems, as local and international operational agencies jostle for funding and local political interests engage in a potentially divisive scramble for aid resources.

1.6.6 Fiction and fact

Political economy analysis gives weight to both the moral and material aspects of power: imagined threats, grievances or violations may be as significant as any objective

differences in economic wealth or political or military power. Fear is easily reinforced and manipulated by those in power, and can prove as effective a means of control as overt violence.

While it is crucial for humanitarian actors to seek as objective a view as they can of a conflict, it is also important for agencies to remain sensitive to the subjective rumour, innuendo and propaganda that circulate in every conflict situation, both to monitor how their own activities and status are perceived, and to keep track of changing patterns of power and vulnerability. In Sierra Leone, for instance, local resentment and grievance tend to trace back to charges of patrimonialism and personal favouritism. Here, gaps in the coverage of NGO assistance generate considerable local anger. Whatever the truth, rumours themselves are significant for local political relations and the position of NGOs. In turn, complaints of exclusion from aid disbursements and other charges against aid agencies may be an important political weapon of the weak.

1.7 Conclusions

A political economy approach, focused on changing power and wealth relations, takes context analysis beyond a ‘snapshot’ assessment of the status and needs of particular groups or communities. Not only should it incorporate a wide historical and geographical perspective, but it should also seek to explain why the relative power and vulnerability of different groups changes over time, and explain how the fortunes and activities of one group in society affect others. The view that it encourages is therefore dynamic (by focusing on change), broad (by connecting changes in one place or group to those in another), longitudinal (by incorporating a historical perspective), and explanatory (by asking why certain people are affected by conflict and crisis in the way that they are).

If, by using this approach, agencies can assess, anticipate and monitor vulnerable people’s assistance and protection needs more effectively, it follows that they will be better equipped to plan and refine appropriate responses: humanitarian action should be based on a firm understanding of the reasons for beneficiaries’ vulnerability and need, and of the interaction between the livelihood strategies of different groups (since some groups may gain at others’ expense).

For some time, humanitarian agencies have acknowledged the need for political and economic analysis of the societies in which they are operating, irrespective of whether there is open conflict there. But accepting the need for such an analysis is not the same as working out how to go about getting it, and doing it does not necessarily imply that the results are acted upon. There are clearly a number of reasons why this is so, including the short time-frames of much humanitarian programming, the competing demands from other forms of information collection and management,

and the detailed monitoring and reporting required of project inputs and outputs.

Another factor may be a lack of appropriate analytical tools – something that this project has addressed. Where the humanitarian community is engaged on a long-term basis, the most appropriate approach for many agencies may be to draw on a wide variety of sources and frames of reference (including the knowledge of their own field staff and local partners) on a continuing basis, and to try to integrate political economy analysis into the assessment and other frameworks that they are already using in their operations, such as household economy analysis. This research also demonstrates that much of what relief agencies need to know about the political economy can be obtained from a close examination of changing livelihoods.

While the practical, methodological and institutional constraints to effective political and economic context analysis are considerable, the constraints on *acting* on this kind of analysis may be even greater. Often, the necessary analysis and understanding may exist in one part of an organisation, perhaps at regional or headquarters level, but is not linked to ground-level operations; or individual staff or partners at field level may have a very good understanding of the environment in which they are working, but this is not shared within the organisation as ‘institutional knowledge’, and is therefore easily overlooked amid rapid staff mobility and turnover. Equally, a few organisations may have a good understanding of the context and be acting upon it effectively, but this is not transferred to other actors working in the same place.

Even if the understanding is there, it will not always be clear what the implications are for individual humanitarian agencies or programmes, or for the wider humanitarian community. Often, the key economic and political forces identified by an agency – such as the changing international price of a particular commodity, the structure of a key commodity chain or the causes of an upsurge in militia violence – will be far beyond the agency’s influence or control. Humanitarian agencies may also legitimately ask whether it is appropriate for them to seek to exert such influence.

Much will depend on individual organisations’ objectives and motivations – whether their focus is on short-term relief, or whether their activities extend to a broader range of protection and other interventions including livelihoods support, peacebuilding, advocacy or rights. Judgements about how to use political economy analysis appropriately will be agency- and context-specific. In some cases, it may encourage a broadening of activities, to encompass advocacy for instance. In other situations, it may lead agencies to restrict their activities, perhaps avoiding direct engagement with a particular faction, or suspending peacebuilding activities where it is not clear who the peacebuilders really are. In DRC, for instance, understanding the coltan commodity chain might lead multi-mandate agencies to refine or expand their advocacy related to mineral extraction in the Kivus; in Sierra Leone, understanding the complex political grievances surrounding chieftdom authorities should encourage agencies to tread carefully in their dealings with chiefs and in the distribution of relief goods at district and local levels. It is where humanitarian relief meets protection, peacebuilding, rights-based programming and livelihoods support that these judgements may be most difficult, and where good analysis may matter most.

Given the scale of the global humanitarian caseload and the limits on international humanitarian aid, it is crucial that humanitarians are able to account for their actions not only in terms of whether they do ‘no harm’, but also whether they do maximum good. No agency will be able to answer this question convincingly unless its operations are based on a sound knowledge and understanding of the social, political and economic environments that they are working in, and of the role that their own operations play. This has long been recognised in the development domain. While the practical constraints are considerable, the tools are there. The most significant challenge is institutional – how to integrate political economy analysis into the mainstream of agencies’ activities at all levels, and how to ensure that this analysis is linked effectively to, and informed by, operations at field level.

Chapter 2

Fortunes of war: the coltan trade in the Kivus

Stephen Jackson

2.1 Introduction and methodology

This chapter examines the micro-level patterns and structures of the trade in 'coltan' – a form of tantalum ore – in the context of the war economy in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). While considerable research has illuminated the macro-level nature of the war economy, this study seeks to add to available literature at the micro level, detailing the war economy's impact on ordinary people's livelihoods beyond the obvious but compelling statistic that more than two and a half million have lost their lives (IRC, 2001).¹ Existing macro studies have tended to damn the war economy out of hand, focusing on how profit prolongs the conflict and recommending sanction without considering the likely negative impacts on survival livelihoods already under very considerable stress.

Drawing on field research, this chapter tracks a cycle of boom and bust in the world price of tantalum. Locally, the boom – a ten-fold price increase – incited 'coltan fever', an exodus from agriculture into mining in rural areas of the eastern Kivu provinces and the 'dollarisation' of rural and urban economies. The bust – a ten-fold price crash – did not cause the trade to cease but to consolidate, further increasing the domination of war entrepreneurs. The present war in the DRC did not begin with explicitly economic objectives. Rather, as the war reached a stalemate nationally, so belligerents turned inwards to the territory they controlled, capitalising – personally as well as collectively – on the rich resources available. Coltan both finances violence *and* provides an incentive for it. However, mining has also become a major survival mechanism for people at the grassroots. This, together with the convoluted nature of the coltan commodity chain at its upper levels, means that a global boycott is both unwise and difficult to implement.

Key issues addressed include:

- The evolving structure of the coltan commodity chain, from digger through intermediaries to the international market.
- The penetration of this chain by entrepreneurs of violence: Congolese, Rwandan and international.
- The mutations in rural and urban livelihoods caused by the conflict in general, and the cycle of boom and bust in coltan in particular.

The chapter concludes with brief remarks on the implications for political, diplomatic and humanitarian policy towards the DRC and its neighbours.

The methodology was predominantly ethnographic, combining interviews with observation during three periods of field research in September 2000, July 2001 and April 2002. As a bottom-up study, this research examined the interface between the lower links of the coltan commodity chain and other elements of rural and urban society in the Kivus. Interviews began with general discussions of livelihoods before inquiring about particular commodities or actors. Interviews were cross-checked with local and international agencies researching the same area. Plans to extend this study with a local research team were prevented by logistical difficulties, serious harassment by rebel authorities and the irreplaceable loss of field materials in the January 2002 volcanic eruptions in Goma.

The whole DRC is characterised by an institutionalised and consolidated war-based economic exploitation. One major criticism of the first (April 2001) UN Panel of Inquiry Report was its seeming partiality in singling out war economics in Rwandan- and Ugandan-controlled territories of eastern Congo, leaving relatively undiscussed the economisation of violence in the west, controlled by Laurent Kabila with the backing of Angola and Zimbabwe. Why, then, focus this study on the Rwandan-controlled Kivus? First, they are this researcher's zone of expertise. Second, access to the Kivus was relatively secure compared to more contested parts of the country. Third, in southern North Kivu province, the commoditisation of war is particularly stark around a small number of commodities researchable with relative ease. Nonetheless, there is war-based economic exploitation on *all* sides, and this case study begins by placing coltan within the national war economy.

Inquiring into war economies is necessarily sensitive. But surprisingly, it was easier to ask questions about coltan than first feared. Many NGOs are understandably nervous about this kind of research project. Without wishing to underestimate the risks to programmes and people, it is suggested that these topics can be covered with an acceptable degree of safety. The successful programming of aid hinges on an understanding of the Congolese war economy. NGOs must, therefore, develop a capacity to ask the necessary questions safely, both for themselves and for others.

¹ For macro-level research, see UN Panel of Inquiry (2001a, 2001b, 2002); Lumbi (2000); Global Witness (2002). Micro-level analyses include POLE Institute (2000, 2002); Jackson (2001).

2.2 The war economy of the DRC

The Zaire of President Mobutu Sese Seko became a by-word for an idiosyncratic corruption and ingrained economic resilience known as '*débrouillez-vous*' ('fend for yourself'). Around borders in particular, trading networks generated profits for the wealthy and well-connected, and also provided basic livelihoods for those at the grassroots (MacGaffey, 1986, 1988, 1991, 2000; De Boeck, 1996, 1999). So predominant did this kind of activity become that terms like 'unofficial economy' or 'second economy' start to look inadequate: 'What is the use of distinguishing between formal and informal or parallel economies when the informal has become the common and the formal has almost disappeared?' (De Boeck, 1996: 91).

Conflict has bent this spirit of making-do to the business of violence, and the DRC has become the epitome of an 'economy of war'. War has afflicted the Kivus since 1993, and the DRC as a whole since 1996. The present, so-called 'second war of liberation' broke out in August 1998 when Rwandan- and Ugandan-backed Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD) rebels launched a campaign to replace their former ally Laurent-Désiré Kabila as president of the renamed Zaire. Initially there were three stated imperatives: the suppression of insurgency movements operating from Congolese territory; the defence of the small but significant Congolese Tutsi population; and the overthrow of Kabila and his 'Katangan clique'. This war reached a stalemate with an effective partition of Congolese territory between the east (rebel-controlled) and the west (Kabila-controlled). This was thanks to military support for the government from Angola, Chad, Namibia and Zimbabwe; proliferating splits within the RCD; a divergence in strategic objectives between Rwanda and Uganda, resulting in major confrontations on Congolese territory; and the mutation of political and military objectives into economic ones.

Of the rebellion's original goals, only Rwandan security against insurrection has been achieved, at the price of exporting the problem to eastern DRC. Locally, war has never come to a halt. Maintaining the Kivus as a violent buffer zone, Rwanda gains internal security while individuals in Kigali and the Kivus profit enormously from the mineral wealth within the war economy. The humanitarian consequences have been extremely grave. Over four years, the war in the DRC has claimed more lives 'than have died in all of the other wars in the world combined over this period' (IRC, 2001:19).

Based on Le Billon's (2000) categorisation, the broad features of the Congolese political economy of war can be summarised as follows:

The war economy

- Domination of primary resource extraction, intermediary activity and export – including gold,

diamonds, tantalum, niobium and tin ores, tropical hardwoods and coffee – by military and militia actors backed by regional powers and multinationals.

- Military occupation of the eastern half of the DRC financially sustained by part of the profits realised from the exploitation of these resources in a 'self-financing war'.
- Forced labour and/or prisoner labour in mining controlled by military or militia forces.
- Asset-stripping in the early stages of the war by combatant armies.
- Mineral contracts concluded with multinationals in return for financial support in the early stages of the 'first liberation war' of 1997.
- Exchange of mineral wealth for drugs and guns (International Commission of Inquiry, 1998).
- Economically-motivated militia activity through the organised exploitation of mineral wealth, the looting of villages and individuals and intra-militia fighting over resources.
- Long-term dollarisation of the urban economy; more recent dollarisation of mineral-rich rural areas.

Collateral impacts of war

- Abandonment of agricultural production stimulated by 'coltan fever'.
- Diminished agricultural production because of insecure access to fields.
- Destruction of the longstanding cattle-ranching industry in the Masisi, North Kivu Province.
- Blocked access to towns and markets because of degradation and/or destruction of major routes: concomitant reduction in supply of produce to those markets, leading to increased prices and greater food insecurity in towns.
- Considerable heightening of popular anti-Rwandan, anti-Tutsi and anti-Congolese *rwandophone* sentiment as a result of Rwanda's involvement in 'illegal' resource exploitation.
- Greatly increased sexual violence (Human Rights Watch, 2002).
- Almost total international donor disengagement from the eastern DRC since the late 1990s. This has particularly affected middle-class town dwellers dependent on aid salaries.

Economic strategies of war

- Strategic military objectives increasingly realigned towards capture of major mineral deposits.
- Instances of collaboration and economic alliances 'across the lines' in the exploitation of resources.

- Rebel-controlled monopoly in the purchase and export of tantalum ore (subsequently abandoned).
- Militia forces progressively turning from ethnic protection to protection-racketeering and economic exploitation of populations and resources.
- A systematic and intimate relationship between economics and military activity in the DRC (UN Panel of Inquiry, 2001a, 2001b, 2002). In a trenchant and concise statement the first UN Panel report states that there is a 'vicious circle' of war. Amongst other commodities, coltan:

has permitted the Rwandan army to sustain its presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The army has provided protection and security to the individuals and companies extracting the mineral. These have made money which is shared with the army, which in turn continues to provide the enabling environment to continue the exploitation (UN Panel of Inquiry, 2001: Paragraph 130).

2.2.1 Macro and meso levels of the war economy

Late President Laurent-Désiré Kabila concluded deals with Western mining interests even before attaining power in Kinshasa, granting access to diamond and copper reserves in the south and south-east (Willame, 1999). Zimbabwe has been among the major beneficiaries. The first UN Panel report found that Kabila 'gave strong incentives in the form of access, exploitation and management of mineral resources [that] "convinced" the Zimbabwean authorities to remain engaged in the Democratic Republic of the Congo' (2001: para 170). The director of Congolese mining concern GECAMINES, a close friend and business partner of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, acted for Zimbabwean and foreign interests, which won lucrative contracts in return for vital Zimbabwean military support. GECAMINES even made direct payments to the Zimbabwean military in Katanga.

The mineral sector is only one part of 'the powerful and intricate corporate web created over the past few years by Zimbabwe's ruling party, Zanu-PF, and the Zimbabwe Defence Forces, in an attempt to capture both foreign and domestic state and private assets. This network has presumably been created to enhance the personal wealth of those involved, to maintain Zanu-PF's power base and to recoup some of the costs of Zimbabwe's chaotic military intervention in DRC' (Global Witness, 2002). Operation Sovereign Legitimacy (OSLEG), the corporate entity created by the Zimbabwean Defence Forces, has negotiated a large Congolese logging concession, comprising some 33 million hectares of forest, or 15% of Congo's total land surface. This deal goes ahead even if peace negotiations lead to the withdrawal of foreign troops. A number of Zimbabwean officers have been suspended from duty on charges that they organised a million-dollar racket in which

food meant for their forces in Congo was diverted and sold on the black market (Zimbabwean Financial Gazette, 2002). The DRC government finances rations for Zimbabwean troops fighting in the DRC, so this dealing comes at Kinshasa's expense.

Since 11 September, connections between Zimbabwe's part in the Congolese war economy and the al-Qa'eda network have emerged. Reports suggest that Lebanese intermediaries have sold Congolese diamonds to known al-Qa'eda operatives (Farah, 2001). Some diamonds originated from Rwandan-controlled Kisangani; others from Zimbabwean-controlled areas or those with ambiguous status. Some analysts suggest that a US foreign policy shift against Zimbabwe (and Rwanda) towards Uganda indicates a belief that Zimbabwe could not control this flow, even if it was willing to try.²

While Zimbabwe clearly has no strategic reason for involvement in Congo, Angolan claims for strategic self-interest carried some weight, at least until the death of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi in February 2002. Although some mineral contracts favourable to Angola were struck, they were minor by comparison with Zimbabwe's (UN Panel of Inquiry, 2001). Despite Savimbi's death, it is too early to write UNITA off as an *economic* actor in the war economy. The long-term connections between Congolese and Angolan diamond smuggling have been well-researched (De Boeck, 1996).

Namibia has finally stopped denying involvement in the war economy. Namibia's mining minister has admitted that the country was part of a joint venture with an unnamed US company and the DRC government. The Namibian corporation concerned, 'August 26', a holding company belonging to the Namibian Defence Forces, lists the chief of the army, the deputy inspector-general of police and the head of the Namibian Internal Revenue Services as board members, together with the Belgian Honorary Consul to Namibia – himself a local director of international arms brokerage firm ACS International (Grobler, 2001).

For Uganda, the principal commodities concerned are gold, tantalum, diamonds and oil. According to government figures, annual gold exports from Uganda doubled between 1998 and 1999. Ugandan production, however, remains insignificant. Tantalum exports increased more rapidly, by a factor of 27 from 1997 to 1999. Niobium was unknown as a Ugandan export until 1997, after which its value quickly climbed to three-quarters of a million dollars. Diamond deposits are unknown in Uganda. The rapid increase in these lucrative exports can only represent minerals filtering back from the DRC to Ugandan syndicates. It is no coincidence that 1997 saw Ugandan troops on Congolese territory for the first time.

² Off-the-record briefing to the author by a senior analyst, Nairobi, April 2002.

Table 2.1: Ugandan mineral exports and domestic production (1994–2000)

Year	Gold exports (tons)	Gold production (tons)	Coltan production (tons)	Coltan exports (tons)	Niobium exports (US\$)	Diamond exports (US\$)
1994	0.22	0.0016	n/a	0.435	n/a	n/a
1995	3.09	0.0015	n/a	1.824	0	n/a
1996	5.07	0.0030	n/a	n/a	0	n/a
1997	6.82	0.0064	2.57	n/a	\$13,000	\$198,302
1998	5.03	0.0082	18.57	n/a	\$580,000	\$1,440,000
1999	11.45	0.0047	69.5	n/a	\$782,000	\$1,813,500
2000	10.83	0.0044	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$1,263,385

Sources: Coltan and gold figures derived from Ugandan Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development; niobium figures based on World Trade Organisation (WTO) aggregated data; diamond figures from the Diamond High Council. (All figures originally appeared in the UN Panel of Inquiry Report, 2001. All 2000 figures are to October.)

Reports strongly suggest that population displacement around Ugandan-controlled Ituri has had much to do with clearing territory for gold exploitation. Ituri, the scene of vicious clashes between ‘ethnic’ militias, is also the location for a major new development in the economy of war: the concession to Canadian company Heritage Oil of a stretch of 30,000 square kilometres along the Ugandan–Congolese border (Die Tageszeitung, 2002). This concession has officially been granted by Joseph Kabila in Kinshasa, even though Ituri is under the control of the RCD-ML (the Ugandan-aligned RCD). Peace talks in Sun City, South Africa, produced a new and unstable realignment between Kabila, the RCD-ML and Jean-Pierre Bemba’s Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC) rebels, who are also Ugandan-backed. The OSLEG logging deal is, apparently, the first fruit of this new relationship. However, even as it was being negotiated, tensions were mounting between the RCD-ML and the MLC concerning key diamond and gold mines around Watsa, some 1,800km north-east of Kinshasa (MISNA, 12 June 2002).

Rwanda’s security buffer zone in eastern Congo pays for itself: President Paul Kagame describes this as a ‘self-financing war’. The UN Panel estimates an annual cost of \$51.6m for maintaining 25,000 troops in Congo. Rwanda keeps a further 20,000 troops on its own territory. The official annual Rwandan defence budget is just \$63m: the deficit is likely to be covered through official receipts from mining exports (predominantly diamonds and coltan). Individual Rwandans, in both military and political circles, have also gained substantially from mineral exploitation.

Rwanda controls most of the three Kivu provinces. These are rich in cassiterite (tin oxide), gold and coltan. Rwanda has no diamond production of its own. Once again, figures supplied to the UN Panel of Inquiry show accelerated exports since the war broke out.

Table 2.2: Rwandan mineral production (1995–2000)

Year	Gold production (kg)	Cassiterite production (tons)	Coltan production (tons)	Diamond exports (US\$)
1995	1	247	54	n/a
1996	1	330	97	n/a
1997	10	327	224	\$720,425
1998	17	330	224	\$16,606
1999	10	309	122	\$439,347
2000	10	437	83	\$1,788,036

Sources: Coltan, cassiterite and gold figures derived from Rwandan Official Statistics (No. 227/01/10/MIN); diamond figures from the Diamond High Council. (All figures originally appeared in the UN Panel of Inquiry Report, 2001. All 2000 figures are to October.)

2.3 The coltan economy: from boom to bust

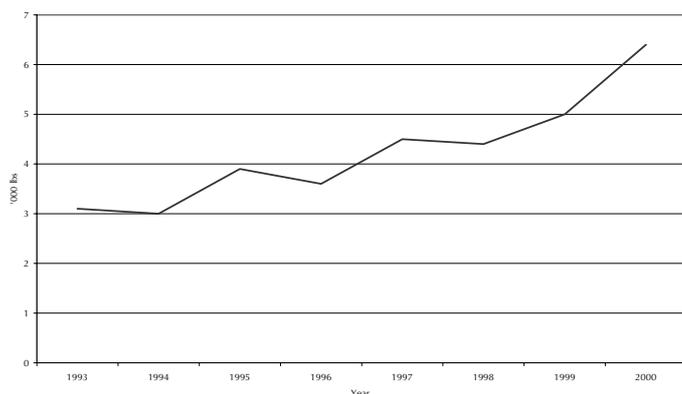
Cassiterite has been mined in the Kivus since colonial times. Tantalum and niobium were known to be mixed with the tin, but until the 1990s had not been exploited. Rising global demand in the 1990s provided incentives to begin exploiting tantalum separately, and new technologies meant that separating coltan from cassiterite became profitable.³ Tantalum production in the Kivus began with the first year of war in 1996, and accelerated with the second conflict. Production would almost certainly have started, even without the war, given global market conditions. However, as a consequence of these wars vast possibilities for profiteering have opened up.

2.3.1 Fluctuating global conditions

West Australian company Sons of Gwalia is the world's biggest tantalum producer, with 25% of the global market. In 2001, the company noted that 'unlike many of the more common metals ... tantalum is not traded in a central market; it is consequently very difficult to determine the tantalum price'.⁴ It goes on to state that 'African supply from a number of countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Rwanda and Ethiopia is from a large number of very small operations'. The nature of this fractured market – it does not note – opens it up to manipulation and distortion.

As Figure 2.1 shows, demand for tantalum more than doubled in the seven years from 1993.

Figure 2.1: Tantalum concentrate demand, 1993–2000



Source: Sons of Gwalia, <http://www.sog.com.au/web/tantover.htm>.

³ 'Geologically tantalum often occurs with tin and until relatively recently, tantalum was regarded as an impurity that attracted penalties to the tin price'. Sons of Gwalia, www.sog.com.au/web/tantover.htm.

⁴ Sons of Gwalia, www.sog.com.au/web/tantover.htm.

Average prices did not increase so dramatically up to 1999, suggesting that rapid growth in output roughly kept pace with demand.

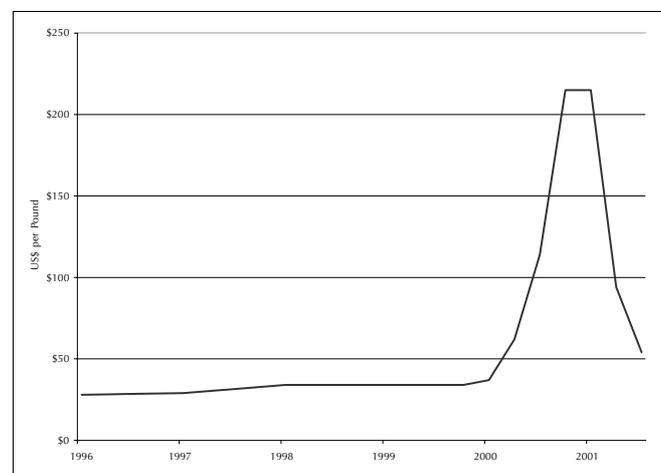
Table 2.3: Global coltan prices (US\$ per pound), 1995–99

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Average price	26.98	27.75	28.76	33.80	34.00

Source: US Geological Survey (USGS), Mineral Commodity Summaries, February 2000.

However, global consumption surged dramatically in 2000, to approximately 5,000,000lb – a 38% increase. Now supply could not keep pace, leading to a deficit of at least 500,000lb.⁵ This resulted in raw tantalum spot prices of as much as \$300/lb by the year's end. The following figures, from three separate sources, illustrate the global origins of what, local to the Kivus, became 'coltan fever' and the subsequent 'crash' a year later.

Figure 2.2: Tantalum: world price movements, 1996–2001



A number of factors engendered the precipitous return to the 1999 position. First, while major producers – particularly Sons of Gwalia – did not exactly 'flood' the market, they did rapidly increase production to meet demand. Sons of Gwalia works on fixed contracts with two major tantalum processors, Cabot and Stark; new forward contracts negotiated in 2001 permitted increased production confident that there would be a market for it. Second, the overheated price in 2000 was based on inflated demand projections over the short to medium term. These were revised downwards with the global economic

⁵ Central African Mining Company, www.camec-plc.com/tantalum.html.

Table 2.4: Global coltan prices (US\$ per pound), 2000 and 2001

Price/source	2000				2001		
	1 st Qr	2 nd Qr	3 rd Qr	4 th Qr	1 st Qr	2 nd Qr	3 rd Qr
<i>Metal Bulletin</i>	\$28–32	\$49–50	\$95–130	\$180–240	\$180–240	\$75–95	\$30–40
<i>Ryan's Notes</i>	\$45–48	\$65–85	\$95–135	\$250–300	\$250–300	\$70–80	\$38–45
<i>Platt's Metals Week</i>	\$33–35	\$55–65		\$145–175	\$145–175	\$100–45	\$75–95

Note: Differences in price are explained, in part, by differences in the purity of ore being sought in these separate markets.

downturn at the start of 2001, further accelerated by 11 September. One commodity price expert suggested similar demand overestimation fuelled an almost identical price speculation in 1979–80, before the market corrected.⁶

The shock of the price collapse was felt all the way down the commodity chain. However, according to Central African Mining, 'future growth expectations remain between 10–20% per annum and will require additional raw material production capacity to meet such demand.'⁷

2.3.2 The coltan commodity chain

Mining

The coltan commodity chain begins in the Kivus' hills and forests, where it is mined artisanally. Work is in small teams: after digging a few metres, one person bails water from the hole, one person digs up from the hole onto a pile by the sluice (a flat, clay-lined pit with walls made of slates on three sides), one refills the sluice periodically with materials from the pile, and one sluices, continuously turning and scraping the materials with a spade. The dirt runs away in the water; turning it brings the bigger stones to the top to be skimmed. The heavy ore, in tiny pebbles, sinks to the bottom. Working in this way, a team of four can produce two kilos of ore a day. When separated, coltan is a grey rock unremarkable other than for its extreme heaviness (its high density is one of its valuable qualities).

Coltan ore is exploited in a number of territories of the three Kivu provinces: Masisi and Walikale (North Kivu) and Kalehe (South Kivu) are the principal focus of this case study. Masisi, north-west of Goma, North Kivu's capital, is a verdant upland similar to neighbouring Rwanda in topography. Until the late 1990s, the landscape was dominated by enormous cattle ranches mostly farmed by a small elite. The destruction of these ranches between

1993 and 1998 opened land to exploitation at just the moment when coltan was turning profitable, and local people were in desperate need of livelihoods other than agriculture. Kalehe, to the south of Goma, is administratively in South Kivu province, but its history and geography are similar to Masisi, and it is often conflated with it.

Walikale is geographically, geologically and socio-historically distinct. Although administratively in the western extreme of the Kivus, geographically it is at the verge of the great equatorial rainforest covering central Congo. Between Masisi/Kalehe and Walikale lie mountain ranges, the tail end of the East African Rift Valley and the watershed dividing the sources of the Nile and the Congo. This is also something of a socio-historical division, the meeting point of 'forest culture' and 'lake culture' peoples, though precolonial migrations muddled these anthropological divisions. Walikale's climate is sweltering rain forest. In Masisi/Kalehe, coltan is found mainly on open verdant hillsides; in Walikale, deposits are deep inside the forest.

Differences in 'traditional' land tenure (much modified by colonial rule) between Masisi/Kalehe and Walikale accounted at the beginning of the boom for differences in organisation and in the scale of production: on the whole, Walikale was more artisanal and individual. Subsequently, differences have emerged in the degree and nature of military domination of production between the two areas. Walikale's remote terrain is more easily contested by fragmented militias operating as economic actors. In Masisi/Kalehe, much coltan is exploited on former ranch land. Some ranchers have accepted exploitation by other entrepreneurs for now; others are trying to make money themselves from coltan. Although from a multiplicity of ethnicities, these ranchers are popularly resented as 'Tutsi' or 'Rwandan'. This confusion is one source for the belief that coltan is Rwandan-controlled. Masisi and Kalehe are also comparatively much closer to Rwanda than is Walikale, and fairly well-served by roads and transport. These areas are, however, quite vulnerable to militia attacks.

⁶ Interview, September 2001.

⁷ Central African Mining and Exploration Company, www.camec-plc.com/tantalum.html.

In Walikale, coltan is generally found in remote rain forest controlled by local chiefdoms with a comparatively horizontal social structure. Hence, coltan was initially open to anyone prepared to undertake the remote trek. Equally, in the forest, diggers (*creuseurs*) were at the mercy of intermediaries also considered 'Rwandan' (whether or not they actually were so), again increasing generalised resentment. Walikale is isolated – main routes leading to Bukavu (South Kivu's capital) and Goma are barely practicable and extremely insecure. Walikale was the birth place of the Mayi Mayi militias and the forests are highly insecure. The Mayi Mayi, along with their enemies, the RCD rebels/Rwandan army, profit in organised fashion from coltan.

In both locations, then, 'there is a system of control now and it is not everybody that can get involved whereas before there was a *laissez-aller*, everybody could get involved'.⁸ However, even at the beginning entry was not perceived as entirely free and there were signs of mounting communal tensions because of coltan:

At the moment [coltan] is a high-risk job especially if you are not a Hutu or a Tutsi. Our young Hunde miners are shot at point-blank range. In the mines, when people talk of armed groups they are mainly Interahamwe who systematically kill the Hunde but leave out the Hutu after they have robbed them. The young Hunde who manage to escape from the Interahamwe are then victims of the Tutsi army on the road (Interview by the POLE Institute, December 2000: Pole, 2002).

One young miner described his entry into mining in the following way:

I started in the business because my Uncle had a field which showed some promise. I employed three diggers to work for me, all from the Matanda area ... To begin with the business went really well, we dug perhaps 10kg a week. It was on the basis of exchange ['troc'], with five kilos to the diggers, five to me. I never did any digging myself. With the 5kg I sold, I would pay my children's school fees in Matanda ... The coltan would be sold to purchasing companies. These would even come as far as the mines themselves. Lots of different people would come representing those companies, coming from Matanda, Karuba, Goma itself. At that time, the price we would get would be about \$8 Kg, but now it has fallen to \$4 or \$5.

From initial artisanal exploitation, with small teams digging close to the surface, mines typically develop to more formal exploitation of seams that go horizontally along the surface, or penetrate down some ten metres. Numbi mine near Minova, South Kivu, is one example. As one digger describes it: 'There is a very big mine there, with many diggers. They are from Bukavu, from South Kivu all over. You can't count the number.'

Over the last four years, direct military/militia involvement at the lower ends of the commodity chain has increased, as the global price crash has forced out independent operators. Many military elements – both Congolese and foreign – operate their own concessions, or do so in the name of their armed group. In other areas, the military offers protection for mining in return for a percentage of the ore. Increasingly, labour-intensive mines are worked by diggers under the direct control of Rwandan or RCD officials or the military. In some cases labour is paid; in others, it is coerced. Child labour has been reported, as has the press-ganging of local villagers (UN Panel of Inquiry, 2002) and the use of prison labour from Rwanda (ASADHO, 2000; Société Civile, 2001).

Military actors have increasingly employed force to acquire and control mines. In the analysis of the UN Panel, 'direct confrontation among the principal adversaries that are parties to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement has all but disappeared' (2002: para 35), replaced by localised combat to control resources. Population displacement from mineral-rich areas is frequently engineered – particularly in Ituri, north of the Kivus, where fighting has concentrated around gold deposits, but also in Kivutien areas such as Karuzi-Biyega forest.⁹ In South Kivu, villages around Kalonge and Bunyakiri were completely emptied in 1999 and 2000 to enable coltan production. After fighting in 2001 between RCD and Mayi Mayi/Interahamwe militias, ethnic Nyanga and Hunde from near Pinga, Walikale, were displaced towards Kichanga, where they were sheltered in Hunde households, adding to the already heavy livelihood burden. In May 2002, the Kaka Sawa Mayi Mayi faction (the 'Pure Brothers') seized control of Kampene, Maniema province, deep in the forest 500km south-west of Bukavu, an area rich in gold and coltan. In June, an RCD attempt to regain the town displaced the entire population into the forest (MISNA, 8 June 2002).

Violence has also been used to loot minerals already mined. Large stockpiles were seized during the RCD takeover of the eastern DRC in 1998. Losses of the Société minière et industrielle du Kivu (SOMINKI) in South Kivu are estimated at \$42.5m (SOS Grands Lacs, 2002). Significant amounts of ore continue to be looted in militia/military attacks. Interahamwe militias in Katoyi forest, for example, frequently make sorties against the coltan-producing Kibabi area. This looting demonstrates a rule of thumb: that the more rebel groups splinter, the more they turn from political to economic objectives. In the eastern DRC, self-styled 'national resistance forces' possessing no strong unifying logic operate as independent raiding parties. Some young men are said to join the militias purely because 'they are the ones who have access to the parts of the forest where the mines are for coltan, gold etc'. On 29 April 2001, more than 100 people were reportedly killed at Kakelo, Bakano *collectivité*, Walikale, when Commandant Manyoanyoa's Mayi Mayi raided to seize coltan and were repulsed by other

⁸ Interview with local NGO official, Goma, 30 July 2001.

⁹ Interview with senior UN official, Bukavu, 12 April 2002.

Mayi Mayi holding the area. In many rural areas, rumours of militia attacks are enough to empty an area for looting. Rwandan army/RCD forces are also alleged to attack in this fashion for 'harvesting'.

There is evidence of collusion between apparent military enemies. Some mines have grown so huge that RCD officials frankly admit 'you will find maybe two or three thousand people mining and you can't tell who is who – Interahamwe, everybody. When it reaches Bukavu or Goma you really can't tell if it has been mined by Negative Forces [militias] or whoever!'¹⁰ Despite anti-Rwandan rhetoric, many Mayi Mayi sell to the same coltan dealers as Rwandan army and RCD entrepreneurs; these, in turn, will sell to *comptoirs* controlled by Rwandan interests.

Intermediaries and syndicates

Mining sites are remote, and there will frequently be two or more layers of intermediaries before the ore reaches a major town such as Goma or Bukavu. The first will be a local person of means who journeys to the site and perhaps swaps supplies – manioc flour, dried fish, beer – for ore, though they may also pay cash (US dollars or Congolese francs). This intermediary then brings the ore to a major local market, such as Walikale Centre or Matanda, before selling to a second-level intermediary. These, the so-called 'Papas Coltan', arrive with dollars, buying in quantity with a reasonable knowledge of the percentage of tantalum the ore contains. The exact percentage is assayed with spectrography machines, but previous purity establishes trust beforehand. The second intermediary then arranges transport to Goma, Bukavu, or direct to Rwanda. Frequently this must be by air, though some productive parts of the Masisi are accessible by pick-up truck.

In the major towns mineral-purchasing syndicates, or *comptoirs*, buy ore from second-level intermediaries. Workers crush, wash, grade, separate, extract and assay it. Packed into barrels, it is then air-freighted to Europe. Trading companies shepherd the product until it reaches international cargo and expediting companies, which forward it to processing plants in Europe, Asia or North America. The ore is refined into tantalum sheet, powder or alloy before sale to electronics component manufacturers, satellite and armament manufacturers and other end-users. The US government maintains a strategic stockpile of tantalum last drawn down at the end of the 1980s. It is not known whether that stockpile comprises only US tantalum, or whether Congolese tantalum finds its way there.

In terms of the distinction between producer-driven and buyer-driven commodity chains, coltan is clearly buyer-driven (Raikes et al., 2000: 9). Producer-driven commodity chains generally have high, capital-intensive barriers to entry; buyer-driven chains subordinate producers to key agents controlling activities such as marketing. At the level of

primary intermediaries, there is still freedom of entry for non-military individuals, though reports suggest that some military officers – Congolese and Rwandan – moonlight as coltan buyers and sellers. At the level of secondary intermediaries and syndicates, however, military predominance has become consolidated over the years of boom and bust:

*There has been a real crunch where the diggers now come into contact directly with military buyers. The buyer organises the diggers, he takes them to a particular part of the forest, he pays their taxes for them, takes their coltan, gives them some kind of receipt, takes the stuff saying 'I will test it in Bukavu and let you know'. Then he comes back and just dictates to them 'You had 10% purity, you had 15% etc' ... Now it is really the buyer who has all the advantage because he knows very precisely the quality but the seller has no idea.'*¹¹

Threat of force has allowed military entrepreneurs to deny crucial facts to those doing the mining (a situation known to economics as 'asymmetric information'). But this is only one way in which the coincidence of violence and the global squeeze have altered the structure of the coltan commodity chain. Together, these two forces have driven out a stratum of independent intermediaries who flourished during the brief boom, replacing them with militarily-connected actors able to capitalise on vertical integration and tight control. 'Violette', for instance, is a former intermediary: a Congolese *nvandophone*, in 2000 she regularly flew to Walikale from Bukavu with a large financial stake assembled from friends, neighbours and investors, buying in Walikale market at about \$25 a kilo, paying \$1.50 per kilo air transport and some further kickbacks, before trying to sell in Bukavu at about \$30 to the commercial *comptoirs*.¹² Many independent intermediaries at this level were ethnic Bashi, a 'trader people' considered culturally and linguistically 'almost Rwandans' as far as Walikale people were concerned, and resented for their control of intermediary trade. According to one NGO worker, 'the Rwandan businessmen are imposing the price, they want to control the market ... The principal *comptoirs* there make money for Rwanda, they are Rwandan'.

'Violette' was driven out of business in 2001:

Even the comptoir my neighbour ran has closed ... I lost \$13,000. The price collapsed when the Australians pushed out product. The business continues, but it is only the Rwandan government that buys. Even the diggers are giving up because they can't make a profit at the price that is being imposed. We used to pay \$1,200 for the licence to operate as intermediaries and now it is just \$100 or so and it is still not worth it. The comptoir licence was

¹⁰ Interview with RCD mining official, Bukavu, 9 April 2002.

¹¹ Interview with NGO researchers on coltan, Goma, 13 April 2002.

¹² The ten or so commercial 'syndicates' which are the sanctioned buyers of the mineral ore. *Comptoirs* purchasing a variety of minerals were legalised by Mobutu during his 'economic liberalisation' phase; see Vwakyankazi (1991).

\$40,000 now it's \$15,000 ... A few years ago, everybody here in the town had money because of coltan. You know, to have \$100 was nothing – you would just spend that in half an hour, 'blow' it. Now there is nothing.

Secondary intermediary activity has become oligopsonistic, with a restricted number of sellers. Fewer *comptoirs* trade in coltan than during the boom; those that do have connections to Congolese or Rwandan politico-military elites, making it easy to circumvent RCD 'customs arrangements' in the Kivus. A taxi driver interviewed in Bukavu in April 2002 recounted how he made several trips as a primary intermediary around October 2001 to mines near Kamituga, Maniema Province, swapping dried fish for raw ore:

Once I bought my 55kg of coltan, I took the plane back. By then, the flight had gone down in price. \$50 for me and \$1 per kilo. I paid by borrowing the money from X [a well-known Rwandan businessman] in the purchasing house against the coltan I had. He gave me \$1,050 in total for the coltan, about \$19 the kilo. I sold it all to X. And he was the one, his comptoir, was the one who arranged things with the customs when I arrived so I don't know. They would measure the quantity and so on. The coltan remains in the plane and the comptoir sends a truck for it to Kavumu [Bukavu airport]. X sends it from there to Kigali and then to South Africa. He doesn't have to deal with the customs, it just passes. X is a Rwandan ... I don't know how he does it!

Briefly, at the tail-end of the boom, the RCD/Rwandan authorities centralised all coltan purchasing under a monopsony (a monopoly buying organisation) called the Société des Mines des Grands Lacs (SOMIGL). Two of the four partners were the RCD-Goma itself and a controversial Bukavu businesswoman whose concerns include management of the Sportsman cigarette factory and *comptoirs* in Goma and Bukavu. In 2000, she was a major backer of the Hutu rebel group Forces for the Defence of Democracy (FDD) in Burundi. (That she could be selected by the Tutsi-aligned RCD to manage a lucrative coltan monopsony added weight to the view that Rwanda's calculus in eastern Congo was now mercenary, rather than political.) The monopsony was peremptorily abandoned in April 2001 after the businesswoman failed to keep up the \$1m a month in licence payments to the RCD. Sources suggest that independent *comptoirs* simply went underground during this period, smuggling their coltan to the international market and undermining the monopsony. Ultimately, however, SOMIGL was one of many casualties of the global price crash.

Some dealers claim that, after the crash, coltan from DRC has become prohibitively expensive; as one put it, 'The Congolese are like ... How shall I say ... They are a bit hard. They fight on the price, they need a big price which I can't pay ... So I am dealing with guys that have concessions [in Burundi]'. There are not known to be

deposits of tantalum in Rwanda or Uganda; concessions in Burundi are unconfirmed and their existence is contradicted by other sources. If tantalum is being exploited in Burundi, this will link the war economics of the regional conflict in the DRC to Burundi's own FDD guerrilla insurgency (the concessions discussed are in Ndora, northern Burundi, near the Rwandan border, and in Muramvia, central Burundi, both of which are embroiled in Burundi's civil war). Alternatively, there may be no concessions in Burundi or Rwanda and the coltan exported from there remains Congolese, falsely described in order to distract international attention and avoid 'taxation' by the RCD. Although hard to quantify, informants assert that the 'majority' of coltan originating in the Kivus goes straight to Rwanda for processing and export.

Governance, licensing, taxation and profit

From the beginning, the RCD rebels, the Rwandan army and the administration have profited from formalised licensing fees, taxation and customs duties on coltan and other minerals. Establishing the exact level is difficult, however, given great variation over time in the official fees and, of course, the extent to which those fees are applied. All licence fees – from *comptoirs* to lowly *creuseurs* – have fallen since the crash. However, formal governance structures such as licensing arrangements for extraction or marketing in many instances distract from the underground and quasi-informal nature of business arrangements from individual to individual, between apparent enemies and across borders.

One estimate (Jackson, 2001) suggests a surplus of approximately \$17m a month in late 2000, based on an estimated 100MT of coltan a month exported over an 18-month period (UN Panel of Inquiry, 2001) at a prevailing world price of \$200/kg, with a reported average of \$30/kg being paid to intermediaries. Clearly, this margin must have fallen substantially. But exports have not fallen much, if at all: RCD mining sources interviewed for this research suggested that, in 2001, 1,066MT of coltan was exported from South Kivu alone. Moreover, this figure was admitted to represent perhaps 60% of the true amount once 'uncontrolled trade' was factored in.

How these amounts split across individual senior figures within the RCD and Rwandan politico-military elite is unclear. Some researchers (Lumbi, 2000; ASADHO, 2000) name particular individuals said to have benefited enormously. It has not been the remit of this study to verify or refute these accusations. Conjecturally, however, the following argument can be advanced: prices have fallen, margins have been squeezed and licence fees have decreased. However, export quantities may have increased. Finally, politico-military presence at all levels of the chain has consolidated. Cumulatively, these facts suggest that, while official revenues to the RCD in taxation and fees have contracted since the global fall in price, private profits – in many cases to the same actors but in a private capacity – have held steady or even increased.

Export connections

Comprehensive research by the International Peace Information Service (IPIS, 2002) demonstrates how European companies have aided and abetted the domination of military actors in the purchasing and export of coltan to international markets. First, it documents the relationship between certain Belgian companies and the rebel monopsony SOMIGL, estimated to have generated \$600,000 in revenue for the RCD in December 2000 alone; between SOMIGL and a company with a fictitious address in Belgium; and between a Belgian subsidiary of a transnational firm which was a partner of the *comptoir* MDM before losing out to SOMIGL.

Second, a German corporation was involved in three separate coltan deals amounting to the export of 75MT from June to September 2001. Taking \$40 as the approximate world price prevailing at this point, and depending on the purity, this amounts to some \$3m-worth of ore. IPIS suggests that the volume of the export implies that the ore originated in old stocks from SOMIGL after its collapse.

Third, the IPIS research documents a sequence of joint ventures between European trading concerns and the upper echelons of the Rwandan army and Rwandan political circles. Offshore companies belonging to a Swiss businessman buy from Rwanda Metals, a commercial front for the army, selling it on to a processing plant in Kazakhstan. Meanwhile, a Dutch/American joint venture has as its Kigali representative Rwandan President Kagame's brother-in-law. While the firm denies trading with Grands Lacs Metals, another army-controlled operation, it would not specify from where it *does* purchase.

2.4 The war economy and changes in livelihoods

While the literature on the 'second economy' in Zaire is rich (MacGaffey, 1986, 1988, 1991, 2000; Vwakyankazi, 1991; De Boeck, 1999), relatively little has been published about survival strategies since the advent of a 'war economy' in the late 1990s. Survival at the margins in Zaire always entailed fending for oneself. The Kivu border regions, mineral-rich and economically linked to East Africa and the Gulf states more than to Kinshasa, offered opportunities for quick enrichment for some. War has radically modified economic modes of life rather than introducing profoundly new ones.

It needs to be underlined again that the war's humanitarian impact has been vast. Since August 1998, more than two and a half million people have died (IRC, 2001). Of these, 350,000 were killed by acts of direct violence (IRC, 2001:15), with the remainder dying from the impact of economic collapse, displacement, loss of livelihood, malnutrition and communicable disease. One indicator of

the scale of this crisis, shocking in its apparent ordinariness, is the advent of evening markets in the Kivus. Markets conventionally took place in the mornings in rural centres. However, despite increased insecurity, more and more are held in the early evening because people need the whole working day to generate any income at all.¹³ Many people carry forward no margin of economic comfort *whatsoever* from day to day.

2.4.1 The state of assets

A recent framework for analysing livelihoods amidst war (ODI, 2002) identifies six sets of assets whose status are critical.

i) Financial assets. For ordinary people, financial assets are almost non-existent. Years of war have affected the provincial agricultural market, depressing both supply and effective demand, interrupting delivery, hyperinflating currency and severing economic linkages. This last is particularly important: a coherent picture of market behaviour for basic foodstuffs is almost impossible to achieve since these fluctuate from month to month and village to village as fields and routes open or close due to insecurity. While analysis confirms a remorseless upward trend in the prices of all commodities, there are also localised price falls; one NGO worker interviewed in July 2001, for example, reported:

Before, in 1997, a 100kg bag of beans cost \$50 in the markets. Now it might sell for only about \$10 – this is in the local markets in the Masisi, such as Kirotshe, Bweremana. But in the main Goma market there is a transport premium, so a bag might go for perhaps \$25 or \$30. Where the price is lower than normal this reflects failure of effective demand, not abundant supply.

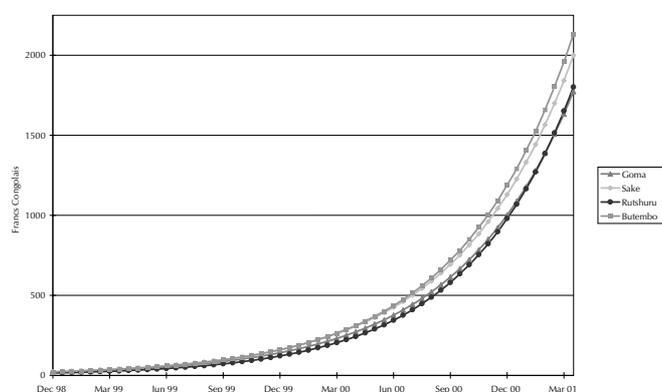
Fortnightly data from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) indicates precipitous price increases over two years (through the coltan boom to the beginning of the bust)¹⁴ in four significant markets: Goma, Sake (a major Masisi market), Rutshuru (capital of Rutshuru territory, bordering Masisi) and Butembo (a trading centre in northern North Kivu, controlled by the Ugandan-aligned splinter of the RCD, the RCD-ML, and thus somewhat distant economically from Goma). Three graphs based on this data are presented. The first tracks the price of a 'cossete' (about 50kg) of manioc, in Congolese francs, presenting estimated price trends based on raw data provided by the FAO. The second repeats this analysis with prices adjusted to dollars at the local market rate (varying week on week in each location). Finally, a comparative graph of exchange rates in Goma and Sake is presented.

¹³ Interview with senior UN official, Bukavu, 12 April 2002.

¹⁴ Yet another casualty of the January 2002 volcanic eruptions in Goma was the loss of agricultural statistics by FAO.

Both dollar and Congolese franc graphs are given since significant parts of the population are either functioning almost exclusively in dollars (military and political elites, commercial people, the higher links in the coltan commodity chain) or exclusively in local currency and barter (peasants, petty commercial actors, the lowest links of the coltan chain). All four markets have seen exponential increases in Congolese franc prices as a result of war-based hyperinflation – as much as 9,000% over a two-year period. Given this, it is almost impossible to imagine that anyone without access to dollars could be a purchaser, rather than a subsistence producer or barterer.

Figure 2.3: Manioc price trends (Congolese francs), 1999–2001



Examining the first graph, it is notable that hyperinflation in Rutshuru, while considerable, has been greatly lower than in the other markets. This may be because of comparatively better security there, the comparative lack of ‘coltan fever’ in Rutshuru and/or its proximity to the Rwandan border (enabling trans-border livelihoods, which may be more stable). This difference is even more apparent in the dollar analysis.

While times have been tough for Goma, they have been even tougher for those purchasing basic foodstuffs in Butembo, which is severed from the rest of North Kivu by the split between wings of the RCD, and in Sake, which is closest to the coltan areas. Price increases in Sake are partly due to a radical drop-off in local food production as people moved into mineral exploitation instead. One informant described this as ‘le syndrome Kasaien, le syndrome Kilomoto: everything that is consumed comes from elsewhere, even though the soil is very fertile’. This is a reference to the long-term impact of intensive mineral exploitation in the Casai area and around Kilomoto gold mine.

Dollar price trends perhaps more accurately reflect the reality for purchasers. While urban areas have been dollarised for some time, coltan has dollarised many relatively remote rural areas:

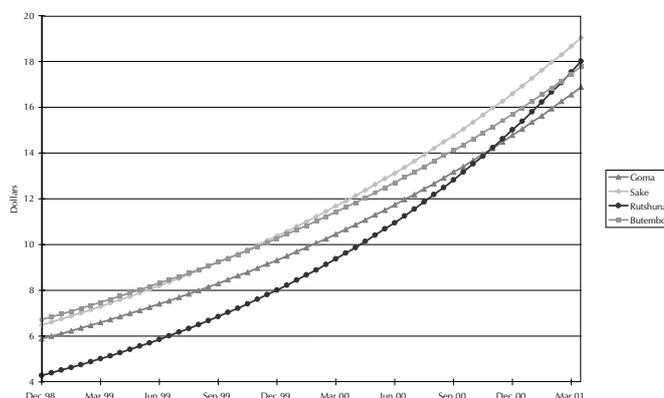
It's been dollarisation completely [up around the coltan areas] – and without reference to the market. 300 CF per

dollar, a beer sold for \$3 etc. When you have dollarisation there is always a rise in prices. And there is a gravitation of all kinds of other activities towards the mines.¹⁵

Since these dollar prices are calculated on the basis of local market exchange rates, they reflect not just inflation in prices but also loss of dollar purchasing power as dollarisation accelerates.

Even in dollars, over the same two-year period price increases have been enormous, ranging from 300–400% for manioc. Again, Rutshuru is relatively better insulated.

Figure 2.4: Manioc price trends (US dollars), 1999–2001



While all three other markets experienced pronounced increases, around August/September 2000 Sake (a rural market) overtook Goma (an urban one). Since Goma’s agricultural markets are normally supplied from Sake (to the north-west, in the Masisi) and Kalehe (south), this is shocking: rationally, consumers in Goma should pay higher prices because of transport and other overheads. But September 2000 was the high-water mark for ‘coltan fever’, when the world price hit an all-time high. The graph of exchange rates in Goma and Sake shows that, in the same period, dollars in Sake were buying more Congolese francs than in Goma, presumably because there was a high demand for dollars in Sake for payments and salaries within the coltan trade. This effect offset the increase in the manioc price in Congolese franc terms. Had this not been the case, the dollar price of manioc would have increased still more radically.

The following conclusions can be drawn about financial assets and livelihoods during the period of coltan fever in Sake, Masisi:

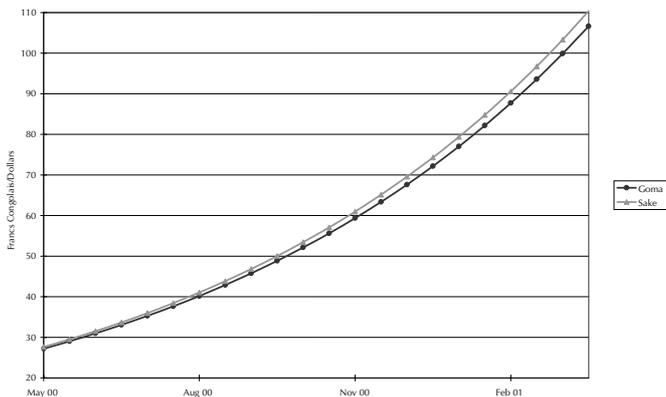
- Demand for dollars grew considerably compared with Goma.
- Supply of manioc (and other staples which broadly follow the same trends) decreased, thus inflating the price in dollar and franc terms.

¹⁵ Interview with local coltan researcher, Goma, 30 July 2001.

- Hyperinflation affected franc prices across the board in North Kivu, but particularly strongly in coltan areas.

What of the financial assets of more successful players in the war economy? The coltan boom brought considerable quantities of dollars into the urban economies of Goma and Bukavu, fuelling particularly a building craze.¹⁶

Figure 2.5: Exchange rate trends



Almost all industries in the Kivus – exceptions are the brewery, tobacco and, of course, mineral *comptoirs* – are now looted and abandoned. Cattle-ranching, once hugely intensive, with several hundred thousand head grazing on immaculate pastures in the Masisi, has been wiped out. During a day-long field trip into the Masisi from Goma, this researcher counted just one cow and one goat. As for the formal mining sector, premises and stocks were looted at the start of the 1996–97 war.

ii) Human assets. The war has, overall, decreased labour value. Coltan revalued certain kinds of labour. In the boom years, even ordinary diggers were able to make significant sums of money. With the price collapse, wages have fallen to such an extent that many now see coltan digging as 'seasonal', attractive only when agriculture is off. For the middle classes, tertiary education and foreign-language proficiency offer access to employment in the aid economy. Aid is still at historic lows; most bilateral cooperation was severed as early as 1991, and what aid does still flow trickles down to a throng of local NGOs and associations.

iii) Natural assets. Aside from minerals, the principal asset is land. The Kivus are amongst the most fertile and densely populated parts of Africa. Land tensions were one of the triggers for the 1993 war, and they remain explosive. While the destruction of the cattle ranches opened up land to temporary exploitation by displaced people, access remains precarious. The militias are mobile and unpredictable, which means that many work only small plots close to their homes, not larger ones further into the hills. This, in turn, means subsistence levels of production rather than traditional surplus, contributing to agricultural price inflation.

iv) Physical assets. Although markets continue to function, the Kivus are increasingly segmented into discontinuous economies as a result of deterioration in the road system and the presence of threats along it.¹⁷ The system itself profoundly degraded under the atrophying Zairean state. Many major routes are impassable during the rains. Additionally, the principal routes are logical targets for militias, with commercial actors frequently looted from and/or killed. While goods still make it through to urban markets by lorry, pick-up truck or boat on Lake Kivu, the volume is considerably lessened.

In March 2001, German Agro Action (AAA), the principal international NGO concerned with road repair, commissioned an independent study of the socio-economic impact of its work on the road between Sake, Mweso and Kanyabayonga (Endanda, 2001). Amongst the many beneficial indicators of impact, the study noted that food prices in local markets dropped by between 30% and 50%, bringing them back down towards prevailing prices in Goma.

v) Social assets. The predominant social assets are networks of kinship and identity, enabling claims upon people in positions of relative power and responsibility. People displaced by violence are often offered protection by relatives, adding to the economic burden. Religious networks, often closely overlapping with ethnic affiliations, offer access to resources and support. Ethnic identity permits or excludes land claims on customary authority. Finally, professional networks – originating in the small number of tertiary institutions in eastern Congo – determine job opportunities within the local NGOs almost as much as do ethnic considerations.

vi) Political assets. For rural people, connection to structures of customary power remains a key political asset. However, many young people in rural areas have entered militia movements. An economic decision as much as one of political protest or 'national resistance', this also for some represents resentment towards customary authority (Van Acker and Vlassenroot, 2001). A connection to RCD cadres or the military clearly operates as a political asset, as do links to occupants of positions of administrative responsibility, such as customs or tax officials.

¹⁷ This detachment and segmentation predate the war, but have been considerably amplified by it. Fairhead (1993: 20, 21) argues that 'to talk of "the market" in Zaire is as problematic as to talk of "the state"'. Just as the state is ultimately made up of territorially-based hierarchies of power, so too one finds that markets for land, labour and goods are locally bound, politically managed and thus anything but free'. Moreover, 'widening road networks affect the entire structure of resources available to various kinds of people, not simply the price of traded commodities. And even more important, perhaps, the impact of the market is felt not only among households (promoting social stratification and the coalescence of classes) but within them. Members of households experience market changes differently, with implications for the structure and meaning of community and family life'.

¹⁶ Interview with Rwandan security officer, Bukavu, 7 April 2002.

Two final political assets are the ability to deploy violence and the ability to spread rumour. Violence remains the principal form of political discourse in the Kivus: those who direct it, from the local to the regional, dictate terms for everyone else, hence the bewildering proliferation of movements capitalising on either the 'Mayi Mayi' or the 'RCD' brand-names. Circuits for the dissemination of rumour and disinformation – underground publishing and distribution of tracts, but also semi-formalised *samizdats* in print and on the internet – are also an asset of political power.

2.4.2 Rural livelihoods in the Kivus

In many rural areas, increased insecurity has reduced agricultural production to subsistence levels. During the 1993 war, urban centres were the usual targets and populations tended to flee into the 'bush' for safety. Nowadays, rural communities have been targeted more, triggering migration into towns ill-equipped to cope. Major Kivutien towns have seen their populations swell, as have smaller and more remote centres like Nyabiondo and Sake. For people displaced to urban areas, livelihoods are much more constrained than in rural areas, where host populations traditionally make productive land available to new arrivals. For some Congolese *rwandophones*, labour migration to Rwanda has been an option, but one chosen reluctantly.¹⁸

Enlisting in proliferating militia bands has become a rural livelihood strategy. Young people initially attracted into coltan by the possibility of dollars and then forced out by the crash swell militia ranks or 'borrow' their cover. One local NGO worker interviewed reported:

If there are diggers who now have no activity, they probably go stealing the cows or the goats of others. I think that they have transformed themselves into thieves and so on ... And they take the name Mayi Mayi to cover themselves. They are a long way from home – I've seen people who walked from Bukavu to Shabunda (300 or 400km). You don't even need a gun, you can use a machete or a spear, although it is also easy to get arms ... You can even use the rumour that 'the Mayi Mayi are coming'. People flee and then you steal. Some of them are natives back there [where they operate], some are displaced there but marry, stay.

At the local level, 'militias' blur into 'bands'. While continuous propaganda asserts a central command structure for the Mayi Mayi, for example, at local level this is far from evident. To a large extent, the same is true of the Interahamwe, Mongoles, Lingilima and others. The

¹⁸ While for many 'indigenous' ethnic groups this is further proof that the *rwandophones* were 'only pretending to be Congolese', many Congolese *rwandophones* deeply dislike the 'Kigali option': 'what would I know of Kigali? I'm Congolese – I know *nothing* of Rwanda' said one Congolese Tutsi taxi driver to me in Kigali in 2001.

ordinary population attribute meaning to attacks against them by naming particular militias as responsible. But much of the violence exhibits the raiding tactics of tiny, armed criminal groups, rather than the strategic thinking of an organised movement.

Desperate Congolese resourcefulness, making a margin on the smallest trades, continues to offer survival livelihoods. Women in rural areas, in particular, manufacture a microeconomy out of repackaging and reselling products of all kinds – charcoal, flour, vegetables. The margin made in breaking and reselling a couple of kilos of flour into cupfuls may be as little as FC20. The size of units being sold in the marketplace – a biro cap of salt, a paper twist of flour – is indicative of the scale of economic collapse.

The borders with Rwanda and Uganda continue to provide opportunities for trade- and/or smuggling-based livelihoods for people at a variety of economic levels. However, the traditional direction of agricultural commerce – from the Kivus to neighbouring Rwanda – has largely reversed as a result of war.

'Coltan fever' has had more specific impacts on rural livelihoods. According to a local NGO director:

We have already seen the beginning of a bad impact of coltan on agricultural production. Kibabi, Ufamando and Katoyi: almost all of the young, from the age of ten up, are involved in this, and they would normally be the labour force for agricultural production. There has been a rural exodus: the youth who are making money out of selling coltan all want to install themselves here in Goma and other urban centres.

The degree of this impact is hard to quantify. Land left behind might be abandoned altogether, but is more likely to have been looked after by women, children or the elderly. Agriculture has not ceased, but combined with insecurity, the exodus of young people accounts for the drop in production. According to a Congolese UN officer in Goma:

When we talk about a transformation from agriculture to mining is that directly to do with the war? Or is it do with insecurity? Is it not the case that coltan is where there is more security economically? I think in general the problem is more economic than insecurity. Is that not why people are doing coltan? During war he [a peasant] is not at all sure that he will harvest [so coltan can seem attractive]. Particularly the intermediaries make so much out of it, buying at \$1 the kilo and then selling for \$25.¹⁹

In the Masisi and Kalehe zones, coltan is being exploited in areas that were previously highly productive agriculturally. Kibabi, an area previously famous for its beans which were exported to Goma town, is now a major coltan

¹⁹ Interview with Congolese UN officer, Goma, 3 August 2001.

centre; purportedly, beans (a major local staple) now travel from Goma's markets to Kibabi for consumption by coltan miners and others.

During the boom, dependent commerce quickly emerged around coltan mines: sale of food and drink, gambling, brewing and prostitution:

There have been deaths in the mines as a result of inexperience. Mines collapse and so on. The kids leaving school, for the first time touching ten or 12 dollars, they drink, take drugs, prostitution is a real danger for them – and of course sexual diseases are a real problem. Leaders are saying that these kids will become irredeemable. They don't see the need for education, they just dream of getting a big rock [of coltan] which will buy them a car, entry into the business of ranching etc. They criticise their parents: 'OK, I wanted to study, but my parents couldn't pay, so I was chased from school and I decided that I should just rely on myself. None of the business people in this region have studied, why should I?'²⁰

Easy dollars during the boom fuelled a pattern of conspicuous expenditure and largesse which analysts have noted elsewhere as associated with Congolese notions of masculinity and status (De Boeck, 1999).

Once the coltan price collapsed, what became of the young people who had quit agriculture for the easy dollars of mining? The picture across North Kivu is varied and difficult to establish. First, while margins have fallen, some find they can still make a livelihood at the new price if they mine 'seasonally' on land close to their agricultural plots. Others have quit coltan altogether to return to their fields and resume agriculture full-time.

Those miners lucky enough to have held on to gains from coltan have joined the urban migration. 'They are working as money-changers, *kadafis* [street-sellers of petrol] and so on, those with a little money. There has never been so much building in Bukavu in all the independence years until this war period.'²¹ Small numbers of former coltan miners, having developed a taste for dollars, are now trying their hands at mining other minerals: pyrochlore (colombium), niobium, cobalt, gold or diamonds, tourmaline. These other minerals are found in quantity towards places like Shabunda, already hotbeds of clashes between militias and the military. Those who amassed small capital from mining have graduated to small-scale intermediary activity.

2.4.3 Urban livelihoods in eastern DRC

It is difficult to be precise about present urban livelihoods in the Kivus. However, the following broad conclusions can be hazarded. First, effective unemployment is at

enormous levels, due equally to the non-payment of administrative salaries since 1990, the suspension of most aid since 1991 and the end of the 'HCR economy'²² in 1996.

As in rural areas, individual strategies for 'making do' proliferate, many built around buying in bulk and selling in small quantities. 'Dieudonné', for example, works as a taxi-motorbike driver in Goma. He is working to buy the motorbike from his cousin, who works at the mission hospital and receives a regular salary. Dieudonné has so far paid off just \$450 of the agreed \$2,000. He works every day, giving what he earns to his cousin, keeping less than 50 cents with which to eat. A ride within Goma costs about 30 cents, a luxury affordable only on a regular income. 'I pray every day that the good God will keep me healthy so that I can keep working and have my own bike. Then I can finally get married'.

On the side, Dieudonné sells milk. He collects empty mineral-water bottles from friends who work at the houses of aid staff; people also sell empty bottles in the street for about FC10. Dieudonné then crosses the border to Rwanda with a 20-litre jerrycan, and buys from farmers from the hills (buying in a shop would eliminate his margin). He crosses back, paying FC20 to the border officials, pours the milk into individual bottles, and sells them ('I gain a small nothing', he says). Filling the jerrycan costs \$10: over a day or two he can sell the repackaged milk for \$14–15 (FC135 a litre) to people from his neighbourhood. Would it not be better just to do the milk and give up the taxi business? 'No, because you can't sell a very large quantity in one day. People don't have the money. It can take four days to sell 20 litres. You have to find someone with a fridge and they want FC100 for the use'.

Asked how he can survive on so little, Dieudonné laughs, saying he is comparatively 'middle-class ... I ration myself to FC100 [less than a dollar in 2001]. I eat only at midday and the evening, at home or sometimes in a *nganda* [street restaurant]: FC70 buys you some beans and rice, or beans and bananas, meat and *foufou* is about FC100. I don't eat in *La Pelouse* [a well-known *nganda*]! I find cheaper places, but still clean'. A secretary in a local NGO described conditions in her *quartier* as 'catastrophic': 'There are people there who don't even have the means to eat even one meal a day. They don't even have a blanket to sleep under in the night. The mother of the family will have just two *pagnes* [thin cloths] to wrap herself in ... When they sleep at night, she will give them to her children, and she and her husband sleep like that, with nothing'.

²⁰ Interview with local coltan researcher, Goma, 30 July 2001.

²¹ Interview with RCD mining official, Bukavu, 9 April 2002.

²² This is how people in the Kivus term the period when aid was plentiful. This was the artificially buoyant period for urbanites when the major international agencies were still responding to the enormous refugee crisis precipitated in the Kivus as a result of the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

Some war-displaced people remain in informal camps on the outskirts of Goma; others are hosted by families in the town. Many families are trying to feed three to four times the normal number of mouths. Consumption has been drastically reduced, many families cutting intake to one meal a day. For the very poorest, this consists only of 'buyi', a very thin gruel of sorghum, manioc or maize flour and sugar taken as a drink.

2.5 Conclusions

This discussion of coltan and livelihoods may leave some humanitarians agreeing with this aid worker in the Kivus: 'We don't have the time or the need for all that. For our sector, all that is relevant is to know whether people have water or not. We are in an emergency phase still – we can't really look at long-term things. These things you are talking about require a long-term perspective'. However, the evidence in this case study in fact underlines the need for humanitarian agencies to base their work on an understanding of the political economy of war in the Kivus.

2.5.1 Understanding the context

First, all agencies operating in contexts of crisis need to understand the nature of the conflict and/or political instability in question. Coltan extraction is an important point at which local, national and regional conflicts in the Great Lakes region come together and influence each other.

Second, coltan has profoundly altered local power relations. Traditional authority has given way to military might; elders have ceded power to young people emboldened and enriched by coltan; community discourse has become profoundly ethnicised. For all these reasons, basing aid actions on assumptions of 'community' has become risky.

Third, coltan dangerously fuses economic, political and socio-cultural interests: for example, Rwanda's domination of the trade has adversely influenced the position of Congolese *rwandophones*, increasing prejudice against them. In an increasingly popular (but problematic) shorthand, coltan is a case where 'greed' has reinforced 'grievance' (Berdal and Malone, 2000).

Aid may easily transmit unintentional signals on both the material/economic and the symbolic planes (Anderson, 1999). In the mid-1990s, the Kivus experienced a paradigm case of aid exacerbating conflict. Aid helped sustain refugee camps in which former *genocidaires* from Rwanda trained and from which they mounted cross-border killings (McCall, 1998). Aid agencies' reputations are still 'coloured' in the eyes of ordinary Congolese by what happened then. Less well known, but equally important, is development aid's long-term role in exacerbating grievances around the explosive issue of land in the Kivus. Between 1971 and 1993, international aid built up the cattle industry in the

Masisi, which was controlled by elites who developed huge ranches through means varying from purchase to forced displacement. By 1991, 512 families, of whom 502 were reportedly *rwandophone* (most, but by no means all, Tutsi) controlled about 58% of the available land in the Masisi (Vlassenroot, 2000). Resentment against this economic domination was one of the causative factors for the 'inter-ethnic war' in the Masisi in 1993 which claimed between 10,000 and 20,000 lives and displaced several hundred thousand people (Zex Kongo, 1999).

A final dimension of aid's part in destabilising the Kivus is the freeze/thaw cycle of engagement and suspension. International aid began in the 1960s, was suspended in the mid-1970s, resumed in the 1980s and was suspended again in 1991. At the moment when aid was being suspended in Zaire, it arrived in massive quantities over the border in Rwanda. That humanitarian aid at this point targeted Rwandans in Zaire without benefiting Zaireans themselves has left a lingering resentment.

2.5.2 Promoting livelihoods

Given abject humanitarian conditions in DRC, supporting livelihoods cannot wait until some future 'peace' – even if the good faith of those currently negotiating Congo's future could be relied upon. Humanitarian agencies must go beyond the short-term 'band aid' to promote survival livelihoods for ordinary people. Unfortunately, this entails some form of accommodation with the war economy because many of the war economy's changes are irreversible. As a local coltan researcher put it: 'The bulk of those interviewed were aware of the drop in price, they said even at the lower price [coltan] is better than waiting for four months to get one sack of beans. They can't go back to what they did before because it really didn't pay'.²³ According to a local chief, 'We can't go back to the way things were before coltan, because before, we had cows and goats, but since the war there have been none'.

As a first principle, agencies have to better understand the different but intertwined economic interests, some concerned with great profit, others with simple survival, which collectively make up the war economy. Rather than damning it out of hand in their advocacy, agencies may be forced to engage with and even support those parts of the war economy that offer the few available grassroots survival strategies in the short to medium term. Since mining has become critical to many ordinary people's livelihoods, pressure on all warring parties in the Congo to improve the governance structure around it is likely to lead to better results than calls for a boycott.

Most international and local aid agencies in the Kivus see themselves as engaged in relief, and thus directly concerned by structural issues of war economics. But coltan teaches

²³ Interview with local coltan researcher, 15 April 2002.

us that global economic shocks can be just as much ‘disasters’ in humanitarian terms as a failure of the rains or a new military offensive. While the London Metal Market might seem like the other side of the moon to humanitarians on the ground in the Kivus, its mood swings feel all too near to Kivutiens who rely on coltan. Humanitarians require ‘early warning systems’ and early response for these less-studied forms of ‘disaster’ too.

In fact, many agencies in the Kivus are already realising the need to attune their actions to the dynamics of crisis economies. These include the aforementioned AAA (working in road repair and agricultural restart), Save the Children UK (health and agriculture rehabilitation), Oxfam (water and sanitation) and WFP/FAO (agricultural restart). SCF conducted two studies in 1999 and 2000 employing the household food economy approach to assess the state of livelihoods and vulnerability. Both of these identified how war economy processes caused livelihoods to mutate. Oxfam UK’s staff have worked with local NGOs to understand the war economy. Primarily, this provided grist for the global advocacy mill, but it has also started to feed back into programming decisions on the ground. At the time of the research, the WFP had not yet introduced its vulnerability mapping (VAM) approach in DRC, but intended to do so in the near future; this methodology indirectly factors in some political economy concerns. AAA’s socio-economic evaluation specifically analyses how its road repair work reverses some of the adverse economic effects of the war through the severance of economic linkages and impeded access. All of these different techniques can usefully capitalise on insights gained from systematic political economy analysis.

2.5.3 Targeting

Two specific lessons about humanitarian targeting emerge from the study of the war economy in DRC. The first concerns the troubling issue of forced displacement connected with the evacuation of areas rich in mineral deposits. All agencies reported their disquiet at this practice, but some also questioned their own role: to what extent does providing aid to such displaced people condone and perpetuate their displacement, thus playing into the hands of the profiteers?

No analysis would, or should, suggest *not* providing necessary aid to displaced people. But it is pertinent to ask what *else* must be done, in addition to providing such aid, so as not to reward the deliberate engineering of displacement for political or economic purposes. This is certainly the case where the twin duties of humanitarianism – assistance and protection – come into tension. To remain silent about forced displacement is tantamount to condoning it. Where it is feared that speaking out may compromise either an agency’s security or its continued access to suffering populations, then pressure on those responsible can still be brought to bear via other channels

– such as the UN or human rights agencies. But this still leaves a reporting duty on the humanitarian agency. Additionally, programming attention needs to be given to making assistance as time-limited and portable as possible so as to encourage return when conditions allow.

A second lesson concerns programming in an environment where economic interests compound inter-communal jealousies – where ‘greed’ and ‘grievance’ are mutually reinforcing. Here, prudent programming must take into account the possible knock-on effects of targeting decisions. If a particular ethnic group already has a reputation as being economically dominant, addressing that group’s humanitarian needs may affect its longer-term interests by increasing resentment towards it. Again, this is not an argument for not providing aid – but it does suggest the need to address humanitarian need within an understanding of the broader context in which aid is delivered. Options include the need for transparency and local accountability in targeting decisions, finding ways to balance benefits across communities.

2.5.4 War economics: new or old?

It might seem that all this analysis argues that there is something radically new to be observed in the Congolese war economy, something which alters forever the reality in which humanitarians must operate. Recent writing has tended to argue that there has been a profound change in the nature of war itself, from ‘old’ to ‘new’, or ‘modern’ to ‘postmodern’ (see Kaldor, 1999; Duffield, 1998). The history of the DRC, however, suggests otherwise. Political economy analysis reveals dynamic, longstanding contours and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, created and reinforced through violence. Predatory economic behaviour was characteristic of Mobutu’s Zaire and King Leopold’s Congo Free State. Individual and collective beneficiaries come and go; if anything has changed, it is merely the technologies and techniques of predation. The manner in which violence is now deployed for economic ends in the DRC is as technically impressive as it is morally repugnant. Humanitarian actors must make similar advances in their own analyses in order to keep up with the entrepreneurs of economic violence.

Acknowledgements

Of the many local and international agencies researching in this area, the POLE Institute in Goma was of very particular influence. The Institute’s research has been critical to this study, and the Institute’s support and collegiality is warmly acknowledged. For the macro level of the war economy, work by the UN Panel of Inquiry was enormously helpful, as was work by Oxfam, Global Witness and others. For global market information concerning tantalum and other commodities, staff of the US Geological Survey (USGS) were immensely helpful.

Chapter 3

Ni paix ni guerre: the political economy of low-level conflict in the Casamance

Martin Evans

3.1 Introduction

The Casamance is the southern limb of Senegal, an area largely separated from the rest of the country by The Gambia. For 20 years, it has witnessed a separatist rebellion. This makes it West Africa's longest-running civil conflict, albeit one that is little known in the wider world (Evans, 2002a). Some argue that this durability has partly arisen, at least over the past decade or so, from the establishment of a 'war economy', based mainly on high-volume, low-value natural resources (including timber, tree crops and cannabis). Certain economic vested interests may therefore have more to lose from peace than from maintaining the status quo (Keen, 1998). The Casamance conflict has also been appropriated by various political interests, locally, nationally and internationally. In sum, it has come to fit Rubin's (2000: 1,789) model of 'transnational war involving a variety of official and unofficial actors, often from several states. Such wars create conditions for economic activity, though often of a predatory nature ... A few actors profit, while most have no say in the development of their own society'.

With a peace process, however troubled, now in place, it is an apposite moment to describe the political economy of the Casamance conflict and discuss the implications for aid. For this purpose, the predominantly economic framework of Le Billon (2000) and the political framework of Cliffe and Luckham (2000) are used in this case study.¹ The thematic focus is on how local and external resources have been exploited in the conflict situation, and what this has meant for aid agencies operating in the Casamance. The geographical focus is Ziguinchor region, the western part of the Casamance and heartland of the rebellion, although reference is also made to neighbouring Kolda region, which forms the rest of the Casamance. First, the background is explained: the geographical and historical context of the conflict, its principal military actors, and the aid agenda. Second, the research rationale and methods are described. Third, the case study findings are recounted, in three parts: the nature of the war economy; how force is used to maintain it; and how aid has functioned in this situation. Finally, recommendations for agency practice are made.

¹ In particular, Le Billon's (2000: 1) definition of the war economy is maintained here: 'the production, mobilisation and allocation of economic resources to sustain a conflict', which forms part of the wider political economy of conflict, 'the production and distribution of power, wealth and destitution'.

3.2 Background: the Casamance conflict

3.2.1 Geographical and historical context

The sense of separation of the Casamance from northern Senegal is enhanced by marked differences in physical and human geography. The Casamance is the wettest part of an otherwise mostly semi-arid country, with seasonally high rainfall promoting the growth of forests containing commercially important timber species, and orchards of cashews, mangoes, citrus fruits and oil palms. Agricultural richness also includes a strong rice-growing tradition, the cultivation of other cereals and groundnuts and kitchen gardening. Ethnic differences are evident, principally the Diola majority in Ziguinchor region, together with the presence of other groups with little affinity for northern Senegal and its Wolof and other Sahelian peoples. The Casamance also had a different experience of colonialism: the French gained it later than the rest of Senegal by trading territory with the Portuguese, and its subsequent administration was different in character. However, at independence in 1960 the Casamance remained part of Senegal.

The social and political origins and course of the rebellion have been charted by a number of researchers (Foucher, 2002a; Gasser, 2002; de Jong, 1998; Lambert, 1998; Marut, 1999a). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, protests began against the Senegalese state's administration of the Casamance, leading to the formation of the Mouvement des forces démocratiques de la Casamance (MFDC, named after a late-colonial political party). Since 1982, the MFDC has actively sought independence for the Casamance, on the grounds of colonial history, discontent with government from Dakar and cultural differences from 'nordistes', or northern Senegalese. Increasing repression by the Senegalese authorities during the 1980s prompted the MFDC to form an armed *maquis* (guerrilla group), which became fully mobilised in 1990. A spiral of violence ensued, with human rights abuses perpetrated by both sides (Amnesty International, 1998; RADDHO, 1997). Efforts by former governments of Senegal, under President Abdou Diouf, to resolve the conflict through ceasefires and accords with the MFDC during the 1990s were largely unsuccessful. President Abdoulaye Wade, elected in March 2000, has tried new political, diplomatic and military approaches (Evans, 2000), but despite generally improved security conditions 'an intolerable situation of neither peace nor war prevails there' still (Le Matin, 15–16 April 2000: 3).

3.2.2 Military actors

Several armed groups are involved in the conflict. While the MFDC has for most of its history been nominally united under its secretary-general, the Catholic priest Father Diamacoune Senghor, in practice this unity is a 'fiction' (Marut, 1999a: 158).² Like other insurgencies, the MFDC suffers from an ill-defined organisational structure, confusion over demarcation of powers, factionalism and infighting, all of which have hindered attempts at peace.

The principal division in the *maquis* is between the Front Nord (Northern Front) and the Front Sud (Southern Front), named for their original areas of operation within the Casamance. Following negotiations with the Senegalese government in 1992, the Front Nord largely retired from active combat, but remains in *de facto* control of large areas north of the Casamance River, mainly in Bignona department.³ Since 1992, the Front Nord has engaged mostly in economic development, including bakeries and fishing, with some projects initiated with EU finance and state backing. While regarded by some as a positive political force for peace, the Front Nord has not laid down its arms, and occasionally mobilises either against the Front Sud or against the Senegalese army; in one notable incident in June 2001, the Front Nord attacked new army positions that it saw as infringing on its territory.

The Front Sud remains the active military force for separatism, with its bases mainly situated along both sides of the Casamance's porous, forested southern border with Guinea-Bissau. However, it too suffers from internal divisions, which from late 2000 onwards took a violent form, crucially involving the Guinea-Bissauan army on the side of more moderate *maquisards*, against hardliners. The conflict zone was thus progressively squeezed during the 1990s, first south of the Casamance River (with 'pacification' of the Front Nord), then into the Guinea-Bissau border area, along which it spread eastwards into the southern margin of Kolda region (Marut, 1999a). More recently, this situation has fragmented with Front Sud infighting, and some hardliners are now apparently operating across the Casamance.

The ethnic and social composition of the MFDC is not fully known. The MFDC has consistently asserted that it

² In August 2001, Diamacoune was replaced as Secretary-General by Jean-Marie François Biagui, taking up (with bad grace) the new, vague post of 'President of Honour'. Subsequent disputes over leadership have only brought to the fore deep-seated factionalism within the MFDC.

³ Partly following the French model, a *région* is divided into *départements*, which are subdivided into *communes* (urban municipalities) and *arrondissements* (rural districts). Electorally, the latter are divided into *communautés rurales*: 'rural community' is therefore used throughout this case study in this strict sense of a defined administrative unit governed by an elected *conseil rural* (rural council). Ziguinchor region comprises three departments, each named for its chief town: Ziguinchor and Oussouye south of the Casamance River, and Bignona north of it.

is a nationalist movement, representing all ethnic groups present in the Casamance and denying any Diola bias (Lambert, 1998). The (*nordiste*-dominated) Senegalese government, however, initially denounced the rebellion as a 'Diola affair' (a claim that persists more widely), and Senegalese forces in the Casamance have in the past arrested and attacked individuals and communities on the basis of Diola ethnicity alone. Certainly, the MFDC leadership and *maquis* today are very largely Diola, and more radical elements have occasionally attacked non-Diola, such as immigrant fishermen and Wolof traders. However, the picture has been complicated by the selective deployment of ethnic arguments by both sides, and some circularity between the state's presumption of Diola agency in the rebellion, state repression and the strengthening of Diola identity (Diaw and Diouf, 1998; de Jong, 1998; Lambert, 1998). While ethnic dimensions are inescapable, applying the label of 'ethnic conflict' would therefore be facile. The importance of religious dimensions, while they are occasionally manifested in the conflict, has been overstated (Foucher, 2002b). Demographically, the *maquis* seems to comprise a first generation from various urban and rural milieus; and a second generation (some as young as 13 years) that has grown up mostly in forest bases and associated villages. Estimates of the size of the *maquis* gravitate around a few thousand, though not all are mobilised at any one time.

The Senegalese government has some 4,500 troops stationed in the Casamance, in large bases in the main towns and numerous smaller rural cantonments. Government paramilitary police forces are also present, namely the Groupe mobile d'intervention (GMI) and the Gendarmerie. Responsibility for the security of larger Casamance towns seems to be divided arbitrarily between the army, GMI and Gendarmerie, to maximise use of limited human resources and materiel. The army lacks adequate equipment for its role in the Casamance and soldiers' living conditions are poor, particularly in rural cantonments, where they live mostly in bunkers. While there have always been Casamançais in the Senegalese army, the belief is widespread (and supported by observations) that there is now a deliberate policy of placing them in 'frontline' positions in the Casamance. This may be regarded either as sensitive community policing or, as one member of the MFDC Political Wing maintains, a cynical attempt to promote fratricidal self-destruction. Unlike in some other conflicts, local self-defence militias have not figured highly in the Casamance, the Senegalese government having refused to arm such groups (RADDHO, 1997). 'Self-defence committees' therefore mainly undertake surveillance, although even without firearms, villagers have occasionally resisted and killed *maquisards* threatening their communities.

Combatant groups in the Casamance cannot be understood in isolation from the conflict's transnational dimensions. From an early stage, Guinea-Bissau has been home to Front Sud rear bases, and active or retired Guinea-Bissauan

soldiers have supported and sometimes taken part in *maquis* operations in the Casamance. These elements form part of a chronic, destabilising problem in Guinea-Bissau (Evans, 2000), where efforts to demobilise a large proportion of the over-manned and financially unsustainable armed forces since the civil war of 1998–99 have so far met with very limited success. However, recent political and military dislocations in Guinea-Bissau support have considerably weakened Front Sud supply lines. Meanwhile, along the northern border of the Casamance, The Gambia is believed to have long harboured and supplied elements of the MFDC, especially since President Yahya Jammeh (a Diola) seized power in 1994, although he also maintains key roles both as a broker between the Senegalese government and the MFDC, and as a host to meetings of the latter. The situation is further complicated by criminal elements from the Casamance and neighbouring countries – some former *maquisards*, others opportunistic bandits – who undertake armed robbery under the cover of the rebellion, probably also taking advantage of the increased availability of small arms. President Wade has accused more distant countries of supporting the MFDC, including Libya, China, Russia and Ukraine. On the Senegalese government side, general military support and training (though not specifically for the Casamance) come from France and the US, both of whom wish to maintain Senegal as a stable bastion in West Africa.

3.2.3 The aid agenda

The humanitarian and developmental impact of the Casamance conflict, while not large relative to some other conflicts in the sub-region (Evans, 2002a), has been locally serious nonetheless. The total death toll to date is probably around 1,000 (Humphreys, pers. comm.), victims of attacks or landmines (since 1997 especially, anti-personnel mines have been seeded in some areas by *maquis* elements and, it is claimed, by the Senegalese army).⁴ Many more people have been displaced: reliable estimates are difficult, but a 1998 Caritas census gave a figure of 62,638 (AJAC–APRAN, 2000) out of a total Casamance population of around 1.1 million. Ziguinchor has received some 14,000 of these, with a further 6,000 in other Casamance towns. More secure villages have also become swollen with IDPs from surrounding areas; UNHCR figures indicate that a further 10,000 are refugees in Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia.

Apart from occasional spates of violence and displacement, there is chronic, low-grade insecurity – principally the risks of armed robbery and, in certain areas, landmines. This is particularly damaging to the Casamance economy,

⁴ This estimate is based on reported deaths. Enumeration of the death toll is made difficult by the *maquis* habit of never leaving its dead on the battlefield. Indirect civilian casualties, such as those sick or elderly who have died while being displaced from their villages, are not included in this figure, and would be more difficult to estimate.

acting as a major disincentive to traders travelling by road between the large markets of northern Senegal and the Casamance, and to tourists. Most Casamançais feel the negative impact on their livelihoods and in broader sociological terms, with women generally suffering more than men (AJAC–APRAN, 2000; ANAFA, 1996; Gasser, 2001). Insecurity also significantly reduces social service provision, as qualified staff leave or cannot be attracted to work in schools and dispensaries in rural areas.

This is the environment in which agencies supplying external aid to the Casamance have tried to function for the past decade or so of serious armed conflict. These include multilateral donors such as the European Union (EU), bilateral donors (notably the US Agency for International Development (USAID), plus various European and Asian state agencies) and international NGOs. Reflecting the Casamance's religious mix, faith-based INGOs such as the Agence des musulmans d'Afrique (AMA) and Caritas are prominent. Following a trend across Africa, indigenous NGOs have increasingly become the medium of choice through which Western agencies deliver aid (Hibou and Banégas, 2000).

At times of significant displacement, relief aid has included the provision of food and healthcare to IDPs by the Senegalese Red Cross, Caritas, AMA and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). With most of the displaced accommodated by their families, housing IDPs in camps has not featured beyond the Red Cross reception centre just outside of Ziguinchor, although UNHCR partners in The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau run camps for some Casamance refugees. Longer-term provision for IDPs seems limited to schooling and work creation programmes run by the above agencies. The psychological impact of conflict is being addressed by UNICEF (2001) in areas touched by violence. Handicap International and local NGOs implement landmine awareness programmes and the rehabilitation of mine victims, and these form relatively small but significant aspects of relief in the Casamance (Handicap International, 1998, 2000; ASVM, 2000). Human rights abuses have long been the subject of advocacy by Amnesty International and the Senegalese NGO RADDHO. Development aid, meanwhile, has targeted various sectors in the Casamance, but with an inevitable emphasis on agriculture: diversifying, increasing, processing and marketing the production of annual and tree crops. Through these and other, artisanal, activities improving the livelihoods of various groups is a key aim of some agencies, as is better provision of healthcare, education and drinking water. INGOs currently involved in development aid include some of those also concerned with relief (such as Caritas and AMA), plus smaller agencies such as World Education and the Methodist Relief and Development Fund.

Various local NGOs actively support peace and reconstruction. The Ziguinchor-based Association des jeunes agriculteurs de la Casamance – Association pour la

promotion rurale de l'arrondissement de Nyassia (AJAC-APRAN), supported by USAID funding, is one of the sole intermediaries between the government and the MFDC. This NGO has recently facilitated visits by Front Sud chiefs to Ziguinchor to discuss what would be needed for them to disarm and reintegrate into society; on at least one occasion, there have been face-to-face discussions with the Senegalese armed forces minister. AJAC-APRAN and RADDHO also support the return of IDPs to various sites in Ziguinchor department, again with USAID funding through Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Assistance mainly comprises tools and materials for the reconstruction of houses, whose mud walls have not survived years of Casamance rain (any iron roofing is often removed from abandoned houses by rebel or army elements for their own use). The 168 houses, plus village wells, completed in 2001 formed the vanguard of further reconstruction in 2002. Other projects attempt to reintegrate former *maquisards* by giving them legitimate livelihoods. Following questionable efforts to rehabilitate the Front Nord, more recent projects engage true *repentis*: some 30% of those who worked on one local NGO's projects were former *maquisards*. USAID's Casamance Recovery Program also gives 'Training and Social Reinsertion of Former Rebels' (USAID, 1999, annex 1: 4) as an objective, and AJAC-APRAN has such projects in the pipeline. Some former *maquisards* even run rural development projects: one heads his own NGO, another is an organiser at village level. Social dimensions of the peace process are also being addressed by some local NGOs, with AJAC-APRAN's village activities recognising the need for '*le pardon*'.

3.3 Research rationale and methodology

3.3.1 Aims and parameters

These aid activities take place within a political economy of conflict that is poorly researched. While geopolitical dimensions have been analysed in depth (Marut, 1999a), meso- and micro-scale dynamics have, as elsewhere, been neglected (Le Billon, 2000). This case study therefore aims to describe the war economy in terms of the actors and commodities involved; to characterise the role of force in its operation; to identify the problems that this environment poses for aid; and to make recommendations for agency practice.

Three research visits were made between 2000 and 2002, totalling a year spent in the field. Fieldwork was based in Ziguinchor and conducted mainly in Ziguinchor region, with several trips to Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia. A local assistant was employed; there was no formal collaboration with any agency, although two – AJAC-APRAN and ENDA-ACAS – provided occasional practical assistance. Such local NGOs have a good overview of the war economy, but generally lack a political economy

perspective. Given the constraints on aid activity described below, needs assessments for local populations in recent years have been limited largely to speculative local and regional development plans (for example AJAC-APRAN, 2001; République du Sénégal, 1998, 1999a, 1999b) – essentially 'wish lists' for use if and when funding becomes available – and reactive measures such as Red Cross inventories of IDPs and their losses. However, with the current resurgence in development aid in the region, assessments in relation to particular projects may now be increasing.

3.3.2 The research environment

Security and local sensitivities present problems for research in any conflict, but the Casamance is probably less difficult to investigate than most. This is partly a reflection on Senegal as a whole: generally stable since independence, suffering neither coup nor military rule, with no particular tradition of state suppression of undesirable information, the country now has a vigorous and largely free press and some independent radio stations. President Wade has at times been peculiarly litigious about reporting on the Casamance conflict, but there is no imposed censorship as such. Senegal also has a strong academic culture with many links to the West, and is accustomed to foreign visitors, welcoming over half a million tourists every year, mostly from Europe. Despite the damage caused to its tourist industry by the conflict, many still visit, though they mostly stay at the coastal resort of Cap Skirring, an enclave served by direct charter flights. Still, the wider Casamance is largely accessible, despite insecurity along some main roads. There are frequent checkpoints in some areas, but these present few problems other than delays. Only certain zones, mainly along the Guinea-Bissau border, are effectively closed off (by the Senegalese army and/or rebel activity and landmines), although local news and advice have to be followed concerning temporary trouble-spots elsewhere. Politically, however, the Casamance is mired in intrigues at all levels, and extracting a coherent political economy analysis required a variety of techniques.

3.3.3 Key informant interviews

Most of the findings presented below come from semi-structured interviews with key local informants (Le Billon, 2000), including agency staff, MFDC members, local elected representatives, civil servants, journalists and traders. In the research environment described, some interviews had to be conducted with particular care, including those with MFDC members (although only Father Diamacoune is under permanent guard by Senegalese *gendarmes*). With sensitive actors, academic credentials had to be demonstrated (particularly to the Diola, with their strong interest in schooling), then trust built up steadily, with sensitive questions posed only on the basis of the degree of openness that an interviewee had already demonstrated.

Going beyond this, while it might elicit useful responses, risked embarrassment or offence and could thus close off subsequent possibilities for better information. Some aspects of the conflict could therefore not be tackled at the opening of an interview, or indeed during a first interview; it was only later in fieldwork that more useful testimonies were forthcoming. Dialogue was also achieved in certain MFDC interviews by referring to problems in Northern Ireland with parallels in the Casamance, which implicitly showed that the researcher did not regard civil conflict as an alien phenomenon. Alternatively, with civil servants and some agency officers, asking them simply to describe their work and identify problems encountered gave them an opening to discuss, non-defensively, the situation in the Casamance. Other key sources in Ziguinchor's NGO and media communities were, however, very willing to discuss the conflict and keen that it should be more widely publicised. They perceived a European researcher as having more opportunities and risking less comeback in this latter respect, while they themselves were more constrained, by means and by concerns about local sensitivities and possible reprisals.

3.3.4 *Menuisier* survey

Illicit timber exploitation by combatants is well known among Casamançais, but investigating it directly is problematic: both the Senegalese armed forces and rebel elements involved are very sensitive about the subject, and the government's Eaux et Forêts (forestry) service is understandably guarded in what it says. For research, the easiest access point in the commodity chain proved to be the local *menuisiers* (carpenters) through whose hands much Casamance timber passes. Rather than present them with a European researcher, the local assistant carried out a survey of 40 *menuiseries* (carpenters' workshops) in Ziguinchor and Bignona: in each town, the sample was evenly divided between *menuiseries* near to a Senegalese armed forces base, and those far from one.⁵ The assistant arrived in each *menuiserie* with only a few, open questions: not about the conflict or combatants, but about the respondent's trade in general, to see how highly certain actors and activities figured. He sometimes did this under the guise of doing market research for his own planned sawmill, and only noted the results after leaving the *menuiserie*. While this survey therefore involved some deception, the testimonies presented here are anonymous or aggregated in a frequency table.

3.3.5 Livelihood surveys

Livelihood surveys were undertaken at four sites reflecting different security environments, and of IDPs from a rural community on the Guinea-Bissau border. A simple

structured random sampling regime was used, although certain village notables had to be interviewed for reasons of courtesy. Similarly, while questionnaires were kept anonymous, respondents were sometimes offended if their names were not noted. The conflict was not tackled directly in the questionnaires used (apart from asking about displacement history), to avoid upsetting respondents. Overnight or longer stays in survey villages proved particularly valuable, providing opportunities for social visits, when local affairs could be discussed more informally. While largely outside the scope of this case study (see instead Evans (2002b)), some livelihood survey results are presented here insofar as they illustrate the flipside of the war economy: what it means to ordinary people in terms of exclusion from their resources. By thus widening the socio-economic base under investigation outside of the main actors in the war economy, the surveys were a more dilute source of information on the local political economy than the previous two techniques, but still gave important insights into economic strategies employed by combatants – without asking for such information directly. Undertaking livelihood surveys was, however, very time-consuming.

3.3.6 Secondary sources

The sources above were augmented and triangulated with published academic research, and Senegalese and Western media reports. Also useful was documentation produced by agencies and local government – 'grey literature' – abundant in a country known for its 'reports in drawers'.

3.3.7 Analytical issues

The main problem in the approach described was the analytical asymmetry arising from the methodologies used primarily to investigate the war economy (key informant interviews and the *menuisier* survey) on the one hand, and the livelihood surveys on the other. One striking example was that, despite strong evidence from the former sources for involvement of members of the wider civilian population in the war economy (see below), no such admission was forthcoming in any of the 259 livelihood interviews (although interviewees were prepared to admit to other illicit activities, such as smuggling). The results obtained from the different sources, while largely complementary, therefore do not quite mesh. However, the reasons for this are themselves informative, namely a historically founded fear of army persecution of anyone suspected of helping the MFDC economically; and acute sensitivities around the issue of illicit timber exploitation.

Another analytical problem was that the very few current and former *maquisards* interviewed in this study were first-generation only – older, literate (in French) and now town-based – and so do not reflect the full composition of the *maquis*. There is also a near-absence of quantitative data on the war economy: armed groups engaged in natural

⁵ 'Near' was defined as the immediate area – within roughly 500m – of a base.

resource exploitation do not publish annual reports and accounts, and volumes or values of product traded are difficult to estimate. Quantitative and qualitative changes in Senegalese military expenditure resulting from the conflict were not investigated, and it is not known how accessible the relevant budgetary data are in Dakar (Humphreys, pers. comm.). A further gap arising from the research focus on the Casamance itself was that insufficient time was available to examine the ultimate markets for certain 'conflict goods' elsewhere. While this is less important for an understanding of local processes, it leaves unanswered certain questions about the transfer of wealth out of the Casamance.

3.4 The Casamance war economy

3.4.1 Timber

Timber, a common conflict good across the humid tropics, is the largest (by volume and probably by value) and most visible commodity in the Casamance war economy. It is heavily exploited by combatants on both sides, probably involving the greatest use of force but also the greatest participation of civilian actors. Most of Senegal's hardwood resources are located in the Casamance, and are made mainly into furniture and fittings for domestic, office and trade use. This manufacture takes place either in the abundant *menuiseries* of Ziguinchor and Bignona, or timber is transported to Dakar and The Gambia. The ultimate markets are local, national (Casamance furniture is popular in northern Senegal's cities) and international (with some furniture exported to France through diaspora networks). The most commercially important tree species used are:

- *ven* (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*), the timber of choice for furniture;
- *cail-cédrat* (*Khaya senegalensis*) or 'bois rouge', known in The Gambia as 'jallo' or simply 'mahogany'; and
- teak (*Tectona grandis*), an Asian species grown only in *forêts classées* (state forests).

Timber exploitation is in theory regulated by Eaux et

Forêts, which forbids any extraction from *forêts classées* and issues permits for trees to be taken from the *domaine national* (national estate). This means that *ven* (actually classified as an 'artisanal wood' rather than 'timber') may be extracted under licence within a quota; teak cannot be exploited; while extraction of *cail-cédrat* and all other timbers has been formally closed in Ziguinchor region since 1991 (in response to the conflict). Any timber processed in the region's four licensed sawmills should therefore come from Kolda region. In practice, such restrictions are meaningless, as the *menuisier* survey results show.

The first striking point is that illicit exploitation is the norm: nearly all the *menuisiers* questioned obtained timber at least partly from illicit sources, such as the local black market, or direct from villages (without permits). This is reflected in the main species used: *ven* and *cail-cédrat*, as noted, are highly unlikely to be legal, while teak by definition cannot be. Legal but more expensive timber from licensed sawmills is regarded as uneconomic except for large orders, with supplies sometimes unreliable. The second point is the extent of Senegalese forces' involvement, on both supply and demand sides (*menuisiers* may also use timber from rebel elements, but again no such admission would be expected).

In Ziguinchor, half the *menuisiers* surveyed receive timber from servicemen (soldiers, GMI policemen and *gendarmes*) based there. Timber is sometimes sold to *menuisiers* for cash: one spoke of 'timber fairs' held at Ziguinchor's main army base and its Gendarmerie in the small hours of the morning. Timber is also shipped to Dakar by the army. Alternatively, a serviceman may bring timber to a *menuiserie* to make furniture to order, paying in cash or in kind (with some timber kept by the *menuiserie* for other orders). Information on timber provenance was less forthcoming, but suggests that timber is readily available to servicemen at villages along the main roads of Ziguinchor department, hence easily accessible and relatively secure. One *menuisier* said that soldiers and GMI policemen employ young men in town and take them to forest villages where they fell and plank timber using hand tools. By contrast, in Bignona supply by servicemen is rare, with the local black market partly sourced, particularly with teak, from a *forêt classée*

Table 3.1: Summary of *menuisier* survey, Ziguinchor and Bignona, February–May 2001

Town	no. of <i>menuisiers</i> surveyed	<i>Menuisiers</i> using				Proximity to a base	No. of <i>menuisiers</i>	Servicemen			
		illicit timber	<i>ven</i>	<i>cail-cédrat</i>	teak			suppliers		client	
Ziguinchor	20	19	15	6	3	near	10	8	10	10	15
						far	10	2		5	
Bignona	20	18	19	3	15	near	9	1	1	5	12
						far	11	0		7	

adjoining the town.⁶ On the demand side, servicemen are more important still, buying furniture for themselves or on behalf of family and friends, sometimes in northern Senegal, or for resale, again in the north. This is transported mostly by sea, on the military ship (the *Edict*) or the ferry (a civilian service, but run by the Senegalese navy), which both ply the Ziguinchor–Dakar run.⁷ Returns to servicemen from resale may be considerable: one *menuisier* supplied figures suggesting profit margins of 100% or more. *Menuiseries* near bases do more business with servicemen on both supply and demand sides: servicemen sometimes encourage and assist *menuisier* relatives to set up shop close to their bases, thus creating tighter trading relationships.

On the MFDC side, probably the most lucrative and certainly the most contentious economic activity of the Front Nord is its exploitation of the rich forests of Bignona department. The Front Nord has a sawmill at its main base at Diakaye, just off the main road between Bignona and The Gambia's urban centres. Timber extraction is thus concentrated in surrounding Diouloulou district and neighbouring Sindian district, which both border The Gambia, to where sawn timber and logs, particularly of *cail-cédrat*, are transported overland. The logs go to sawmills along the Casamance border and in Serrekunda (The Gambia's largest urban area and centre of informal trade), enterprises that some claim are run by associates of President Jammeh. The imported timber probably mostly supplies the Gambian domestic market. The *Front Nord* also exports dead wood and charcoal to The Gambia (charcoal exploitation too should in theory be licensed under quota by *Eaux et Forêts*): such trafficking predates the conflict, but has increased because of it. Timber exploitation in the insecure forests along the Guinea-Bissau border is harder to investigate. The Front Sud lacks the same means to cut, process and transport timber that are available to the Front Nord, and vehicle movement in the border area is difficult, with some roads mined or overgrown. However, border *forêts classées* such as Bayot and Bissine are known to be exploited, and one source claims that Front Sud *maquisards* cut some timber for sale on the Ziguinchor black market.

A large proportion of the Casamance's timber resource is thus divided between the Senegalese armed forces, the Front Nord and to a much lesser extent the Front Sud, exploiting forests in their respective domains. The Gambia, with its commercial advantages of more sawmills and larger

markets than exist in the Casamance, seems likely to account for a considerable volume of timber, although much also ends up in northern Senegal.

3.4.2 Cashews and other tree crops

Cashews are the Casamance's principal export crop, although a small proportion goes for artisanal processing and consumption locally and nationally. The cashew business is purely private: grown largely by smallholders (sometimes organised into local '*groupements d'intérêt économique*'), raw nuts are bought by local dealers, who are few but relatively wealthy, each with a network of seasonally employed agents.⁸ These dealers resell to buyers from India, with no industrial processing facilities in Senegal and few anywhere in Africa.⁹ Among producers and dealers alike, this monopsony generates resentment against the Indian buyers for imposing a price that varies from year to year, although the latter are only operating within the vagaries of the world market. For example, world cashew prices fell sharply in 2001, with Casamance producers paid only 100–215 CFA (\$0.15–0.32) per kilo, compared with 300–500 CFA (\$0.45–0.75)/kg the previous year.¹⁰ Such a fall hit many smallholders hard, given their general shift in recent decades from lowland cultivation (adversely affected by declining rainfall) to plateau arboriculture (Cormier-Salem, 1989).

The cashew season (April–June) sees combatants on both sides, along with many Casamançais, occupied in harvesting, trade or local processing.¹¹ This may produce a short, *de facto* ceasefire, although it is suggested that, before the season, fighting may intensify in some areas for control of richer cashew orchards. Army involvement is again fairly visible: in one platoon, from the regional army base in Ziguinchor, encountered during the lucrative 2000 season, the soldiers may each (according to the author's calculations) have earned the equivalent of three months' basic salary from cashew harvesting. Senior officers are also involved; indeed the military dominate the trade in some areas abandoned by or inaccessible to civilian populations because of insecurity or landmines placed around orchard perimeters.

⁶ The *forêt classée* of Tanghory, whose extensive teak plantations are visible from central Bignona, shows signs of considerable illegal cutting; neighbouring Tanghory quarter is the heart of the local black market, with teak logs taken in full view to houses there for planking with hand tools.

⁷ During the research period, and since 1990, the *Joola* was the ferry in operation. However, in Africa's worst-ever maritime disaster, the *Joola* capsized off the Gambian coast on 26 September 2002, with the loss of over 1,000 lives. At the time of writing, the Senegalese government has committed itself to the purchase of two replacement vessels.

⁸ This is in contrast with Senegal's larger groundnut trade, where until recently seeds were supplied and the crop bought mostly by parastatals, although these are now being privatised. *Eaux et Forêts* does, however, help in the provision of cashew saplings to local populations.

⁹ The Mozambican industry having collapsed due to trade liberalisation, there are now only a handful of small-scale processing plants there and in Tanzania (Cramer, pers. comm.).

¹⁰ The franc CFA (*Communauté Financière Africaine*) is the single currency of Senegal, most francophone countries of West Africa, and (since 1997) Guinea-Bissau; formerly tied to the French franc, the CFA is now tied to the Euro at a fixed rate, making 1,000 CFA worth approximately \$1.50.

¹¹ This includes roasting cashew nuts for sale on the street, and pressing cashew 'apples' for their juice, which is then fermented to give cashew wine.

Such areas are found in the immediate environs of Ziguinchor (Mandina Mancagne is one example), and the Guinea-Bissau border zone with its abundant cashew orchards.¹²

The rebels similarly benefit from abandoned orchards, especially the Front Sud, whose *maquisards* sell cashews, via intermediaries, to dealers in Ziguinchor and the Guinea-Bissau border towns of São Domingos and Ingoré, or trade them for rice or arms (see below). ‘Conflict cashews’ thus enter the commodity chain in the same way as the civilian harvest, benefit the same dealers and leave Dakar or Bissau in the same Indian ships. Unlike timber, there is no parallel, illicit market. It is believed that cashews are one of the main revenue-earners of the Front Sud, whose total harvest is estimated at 200–300 tonnes a year; the army’s is probably of similar magnitude. However, such harvests must be set in the context of overall production: probably of the order of 10,000 tonnes per year for the Casamance, and up to 78,000 tonnes/year for Guinea-Bissau (where cashews account for 20% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 90% of export earnings). Other, opportunistic armed elements may also be involved (Marut, 1999a).

Mangoes and citrus fruits are also common tree crops in the Casamance, and again both the army and *maquis* harvest from abandoned orchards under their control. Like cashews, the fruits are sold through existing marketing channels. For example, the Front Sud markets mangoes and oranges via retailers in São Domingos or Ziguinchor, while the army harvests lemons from orchards in an abandoned peripheral suburb of Ziguinchor and transports them on the *Edict* to Dakar, presumably for wholesale there. Other forest products form smaller parts of the war economy, reflecting combatants’ opportunism (as Richards (1996) notes in Sierra Leone). Army pickup trucks carrying palm oil, cashew wine and sacks of mangoes and charcoal may be seen on the roads of Ziguinchor department, but in such cases soldiers are probably purchasing forest products in villages for their wives and friends in towns, where such commodities cost appreciably more. Villagers undoubtedly welcome such trade, especially in areas where few civilian traders venture because of insecurity. Similarly on the rebel side, plunder probably shades into the legitimate trade of products from forests around bases: for example, the (now fallen) Front Sud base of Diouhounk was a centre for the sale of palm wine. However, other parts of the civilian population have comprehensively lost out: of 50 IDPs surveyed in Ziguinchor, 44 had lost access to orchards in their home area, while only two could still return to harvest their orchard crops.

3.4.3 Cannabis

Cannabis, or ‘*yamba*’, is another significant conflict good in the Casamance, but its illicit nature makes it difficult to investigate. This is further complicated by the fact that cannabis is, like cashews, one of the Casamance’s main export crops, its cultivation there predating the rebellion, although trafficking has increased in response to economic depression caused by the conflict. The main cannabis-growing areas have long been in the north and west of Ziguinchor region, particularly around Kafountine and the Karone Isles. Cultivation and trade there is well established and organised, and despite government and NGO attempts to stop it (through prosecution, anti-drugs publicity and incentives for licit crops), cannabis production is too lucrative for farmers to give up.¹³ The ultimate destination of the product is a matter of debate. The Casamance market must be relatively small, beyond Ziguinchor’s demimonde of cannabis use and prostitution, and users among European holidaymakers and local young people at Cap Skirring and Kafountine. Some Casamance cannabis also supplies northern Senegal’s cities. The largest market is probably in The Gambia, where *yamba* arrives via various overland and sea routes, for processing and sale in the many tourist bars and hotels and to local youth. It is again claimed that Gambian government and army interests are involved in this trade. Such trafficking may form part of extensive networks (for hard drugs also) along the West African coast, involving fishing boats from Ghana and other countries in the sub-region (Marut, 1999a). Small volumes of Casamance cannabis may reach Europe in tourist yachts from Kafountine, Cap Skirring or nearby Varela in Guinea-Bissau.

Since early in the rebellion, *maquisards* have earned revenue from cannabis either by direct involvement in production and trade, or by ‘taxing’ other producers (Hall, 1999). This has led Senegalese forces in the past to carry out cannabis eradication in some areas, with a large-scale campaign following the disappearance of four French tourists near Cap Skirring in 1995. Production of ‘conflict cannabis’ thus now seems largely confined to areas under *maquis* control, with little or no presence of Senegalese forces, though there are also suggestions that some servicemen cultivate or traffic cannabis (Marut, 1999a; Oxfam GB, 1998). Marut (1999a) posits that ‘pacification’ in the Front Nord area has facilitated cannabis production and trafficking by the *maquis* there, which has reportedly annexed production sites in the Kafountine area and started up new ones in Sindian district, all close to The Gambia. The Front Sud, meanwhile, cultivates cannabis along the Guinea-Bissau border, again marketing the product through existing channels.

¹² Mandina Mancagne, just south-east of Ziguinchor, saw the Senegalese army’s biggest single loss in the whole Casamance conflict, with 25 soldiers killed there by the MFDC on 25 August 1997. Access is now largely restricted to the army.

¹³ One Ziguinchor NGO officer stated that a farming family growing cannabis under contract to buyers may earn twice the sum that it would from cultivating groundnuts, with the latter hampered by unreliable or expensive parastatal supplies of inputs, followed by delays in payment for the harvest.

The significance of cannabis in the Casamance war economy is debatable. Like most African-grown cannabis, Casamance *yamba* is of relatively low value (Anderson, pers. comm.): large volumes are required to make substantial profits, while transaction costs tend to be high, with a long commodity chain. It becomes lucrative only if one can control production and processing and regulate the market, which is not the case among Casamance combatants, who have done little more than graft themselves onto parts of the existing chain. The revenues earned from cannabis by the *maquis* have therefore probably been overstated. Such exaggeration is partly instrumental: labelling the Casamance conflict as a 'narco-rebellion' has justified intervention and increased territorial control by Senegalese forces, and has helped demonise the Front Sud while the Front Nord are actually bigger *yamba* culprits (Marut, 1999a). It has also framed the conflict in criminal rather than political terms, to which Senegal's friends in the West are more receptive (Foucher, pers. comm.). But whatever the financial benefits, the cannabis trade may be important in connecting the *maquis* to wider illicit markets in the sub-region. The *maquis* has exchanged cannabis for weapons in the past (see below), and fishing boats carrying drugs and arms have been seized by Senegalese authorities near The Gambia (Marut, 1999a). However, other than these instances there is little more than speculation about such links, and the whole story may again be overblown (Anderson, pers. comm.). A more concrete concern is cannabis use by some *maquisards*, with the associated loss of inhibition that is clearly dangerous in an armed man (Richards, 1996).

3.4.4 Livestock and bushmeat

Theft of livestock, mainly cattle, is a long-standing problem along the Casamance's borders, particularly Kolda region's with Guinea-Bissau, for three reasons. First, among the Balanta – the largest ethnic group in Guinea-Bissau, and common in the southern Casamance – stealing cattle is an important part of the male initiation process (van der Drift, 1992). Second, extensive cross-border family ties and economic migration give potential rustlers in Guinea-Bissau good 'intelligence' about livestock resources in the Casamance. Third, the poor economic situation in Guinea-Bissau has exacerbated such cross-border theft. (It should be added, though, that cattle-rustling is endemic in all of Senegal's border areas, and in insecure border zones in Africa generally.) With the conflict, rebels have acquired livestock left behind by fleeing villagers, while deliberate cattle-raiding of Casamance border villages has sometimes reached high levels (Evans, 2000). But the degree to which the latter is attributable to the Front Sud is hard to judge, given the context described, plus the opportunism of other elements, including bandits and Guinea-Bissauan soldiers. Marut (1999a) links the trafficking of stolen Casamance cattle more widely with that of drugs and arms, involving elements in Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia and Guinea-Conakry. There are no accounts of organised cattle-rustling by Senegalese servicemen, although one IDP, recounting

pre-displacement harassment, said that soldiers would shoot and eat livestock in his village if salary payments were delayed.

Bushmeat also figures in the war economy, with armed groups in forest areas again exercising an established culture of hunting and consuming or selling game such as antelope, porcupine and monkey; doe meat is a particular delicacy. Wildlife populations may have benefited from human displacement, with hunting by civilians thus reduced. It is believed that the Front Sud exploits bushmeat from abandoned areas as a source of revenue; on forest bases, at least during past ceasefire periods, *maquisards* made doeskin bags, purses and shoes for sale, via intermediaries, at Ziguinchor's tourist market. Rebels of both camps fish: indeed, the Front Nord was once robbed of donated fishing equipment by a Front Sud element. The army is also involved in hunting, directly or indirectly. An interviewee at one border village recounted how the local cantonment allows him to hunt without the necessary permit; soldiers are among the main buyers of his bushmeat (in this village, supplies of fish and meat are limited), so the arrangement is mutually beneficial. The rich fauna of the Lower Casamance National Park (near the Guinea-Bissau border, and closed since 1993 because of *maquis* activity) is believed to have been thus exploited by both *maquisards* and soldiers.

3.4.5 Subscriptions and donations at home and abroad

The early days of the rebellion saw more widespread and organised (though still covert) support for the MFDC from local populations than today, in the form of 'subscriptions' in cash or in kind, usually rice (Marut, 1999a). These were channelled through local support committees, which also organised fundraising events such as dances. Many Casamançais bought MFDC membership cards, costing 1,000 CFA, the proceeds supporting political activities or feeding activists in hiding. However, sustained government repression, particularly the numerous arrests of MFDC activists and suspected supporters in the mid-to-late 1980s, put paid to such funding; those with membership cards destroyed them for fear of summary execution by Senegalese forces. The MFDC was thus driven further underground and towards guerrilla warfare (de Jong, 1998), and with full mobilisation of the *maquis*, subscriptions became exactions (see below).

However, rumours persist of support within Senegal, again in cash or in kind (food and medicines). The precise sources are unknown, although elements of the Diola community are cited. In The Gambia, the numerous Casamance and indigenous Diola (linked by family and cultural ties) raise funds at meetings held in urban areas every Sunday, though for whom (the *maquis* or refugees) and through what channels are unclear. Both there and in Dakar, it seems unlikely that Diola, employed mostly in service occupations (particularly as domestics), could raise large sums. The many

Diola maids working in the cities seem a particularly improbable constituency for the MFDC. The better-paid 'cadres casamançais', senior bureaucrats and executives of Casamance origin based largely in northern Senegal, have generally acted as advocates for a peaceful solution to the conflict (de Jong, 1998), though intriguingly there are reports of collections among Casamançais soldiers stationed in Dakar (Humphreys, pers. comm.). The motives for any such support are unknown: direct family assistance or vengeance for past acts by Senegalese forces seem likely, separatist ideology less so.

The Diola diaspora in the West is also believed to provide funding. France has a notable Diola community, and prominent members of the MFDC 'Exterior Wing' are based there and in other western European countries, producing pro-rebellion newsletters and a website.¹⁴ But again, it is unclear how external funding for the MFDC is generated: large Diola fêtes held in Paris have been cited, but it seems unlikely that immigrants, at least first-generation ones, could contribute significant amounts. Allegations also exist of financial support from French businesses, perhaps paying 'protection money' for their hotels at Cap Skirring (de Jong, 1998).

3.4.6 Exactions and robbery

Like other insurgencies, the MFDC *maquis* gain revenue through exactions and armed robberies, inflicted mostly on the very population whose interests it claims to represent. The harshest exactions began once sustained violence set in, with villagers given the choice between 'subscription' (or, for young men, joining the rebellion), or being beaten or killed. Unsurprisingly, many fled, or indeed were given short notice to quit by the *maquis*, which could then claim their possessions and agricultural resources (Amnesty International, 1998; RADDHO, 1997). Armed robberies by the *maquis* of shops and sometimes houses usually accompany attacks on military or political targets, or are undertaken as actions in their own right: the shops of Lyndiane, a peripheral suburb of Ziguinchor, are a favourite destination. Most common is highway robbery along main roads. Typically, public transport or trade vehicles are stopped (there are few private cars in the Casamance) and the occupants relieved of their cash, luggage and wares. Attempts to escape or resist are usually met with beating or shooting. In early 2001, a rogue Front Sud element briefly coupled highway robbery with ethnic violence, separating Wolof from other passengers, then executing them.¹⁵ *Maquisards* have developed channels for disposing

¹⁴ Newsletters in France have included *Le Palmier*, *La Voix de la Casamance* and *Casamance Kunda*; the Swiss-based online *Journal du Pays* is at <http://members.tripod.com/journaldupays>. There is also a US-based website (Humphreys, pers. comm.).

¹⁵ The massacre of 13 civilian travellers at Niahoump on 16 February 2001 shocked many Casamançais even after two decades of violence; it was closely followed, on 2 March, by the killing of seven more under similar circumstances at Bélaye.

of booty from robberies: if surplus to their requirements, stolen goods are sold through shops owned by their families or sympathisers in Guinea-Bissau and Ziguinchor.

The MFDC view of such actions is mixed. Father Diamacoune has consistently condemned and (unsuccessfully) sought to forbid robberies by *maquisards*. Elements of the Front Sud, however, claim that robbery has been forced upon them: first by Senegalese repression depriving the movement of a popular support base; and more recently, by cessation of food aid from the Wade government (see below) and cutting of their supply lines by the new Guinea-Bissauan regime. Other *maquis* elements seek to distance themselves from armed robberies, though this may be disingenuous, another manifestation of Front Sud factionalism; or just indicative of the absence of firm command. Again, opportunistic criminals are also involved. In Kolda region in 2001, a number of Senegalese soldiers were found to be undertaking armed robberies of wealthier homes, posing as *maquisards* – activities reminiscent of Sierra Leone's 'sobels' ('soldier by day, rebel by night' (Richards, 1996: 7)). Their arrest raises the question of how many other robberies have been carried out by Senegalese servicemen.

3.4.7 Humanitarian aid

As with other conflicts, the question of humanitarian aid finding its way to combatants has arisen in the Casamance, with certain agencies, notably Caritas, being accused of thus fuelling the rebellion. However, this must be qualified with the fact that under President Diouf, some agencies supplied food to the *maquis* with official support during ceasefires. This was to ensure that *maquisards* would not be forced into banditry by hunger (thus protecting the civilian population) and as an act of goodwill, all to facilitate dialogue. The MFDC and intermediaries see the ending of this practice by President Wade as now hindering the peace process. Medicines have similarly been supplied to the *maquis* with government permission. Lists of requirements, sent by one Front Sud element to agencies in Ziguinchor at the start of the wet season in recent years, include antibiotics, antimalarials, vermifuges and rehydration salts (MFDC, 2000a), suggesting poor living conditions in the bush. Besides approved distributions to *maquisards*, food aid given to rural populations has sometimes made an attractive target for armed robbery by *maquis* or criminal elements. A Red Cross officer interviewed counters that, normally, soldiers are dispatched to protect civilian populations still in place after an attack and hence secure aid distribution.

Another contentious area has been aid for the peace process itself. Early in his presidency, Wade dissolved the 'mediation committees' established under his predecessor, opting instead for direct contact between the government and the MFDC. It was argued that such committees had become a gravy train and, worse, that the large sums of

money involved over the years (claimed to be millions of dollars' worth) had created a form of clientelism. Individual committee members were cultivating *maquis* factions, with benefits from timber and charcoal trafficking going to the former, while humanitarian aid was channelled to the latter.

3.4.8 Arms

The MFDC was at first armed only with hand weapons such as bows and arrows, and hunting rifles. Guerrilla warfare against Senegalese forces, armed largely by France, clearly required modern weaponry, and the *maquis* now commonly uses AK-47 assault rifles, RPG-7 rocket-propelled grenade launchers and landmines. Various sources of such equipment have been alleged. The Casamance rebellion began within a decade of the end of Guinea-Bissau's 'War of Liberation', during which guerrillas maintained rear bases in the Casamance: some of the arms and bases that they left behind were subsequently used by the MFDC *maquis*. Arms from Libya and Iraq have come to the *maquis* via Mauritania and The Gambia, as have weapons (probably in smaller volumes) trafficked by insurgents in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Ellis, 1999; de Jong, 1998). Arms are also sometimes seized from Senegalese forces in attacks.

The most important arms supplier to the *maquis* has been the Guinea-Bissauan military, elements of which are sympathetic to the MFDC, and which more generally suffers from unreliable salary payments. Historically this has been a sore point between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, and within Guinea-Bissau itself. It was the attempted scapegoating of Ansumane Mané, Guinea-Bissau's then-chief of staff, by President 'Nino' Vieira, for arms supply to the MFDC, that pushed Mané to launch a military coup against Vieira in June 1998. During the ensuing 11-month civil war, a Front Sud contingent went to Bissau to support Mané's forces, fighting partly against Senegalese troops shipped in from the Casamance to help prop up Vieira. The main benefit to the *maquis* was the acquisition of heavier weaponry (mostly of Soviet manufacture), including mortars, given to them by Mané's forces or captured from the opposition. In a second, failed coup attempt in November 2000, Mané was executed by forces loyal to the new government of President Kumba Yala, which has tried to stop arms supply to the MFDC. From December 2000, the Guinea-Bissauan army drove hardliners from their bases on that side of the border, retrieving some of the heavy arsenal obtained in the days of Mané. However, given the chronic structural problem of an overlarge, underpaid army containing elements closely tied, culturally or financially, to the Casamance rebellion, it seems unlikely that the flow of arms to the *maquis* from Guinea-Bissau has completely dried up. President Jammeh in The Gambia has also been accused of supplying weapons to the *maquis*, formerly as a close friend of Mané (a Gambian Mandingo by birth), and suspected of wider economic ties to the rebellion.

The ways in which the *maquis* pays for weapons are similarly diverse. The Front Sud has limited cash, so barter plays a significant role, with cashews or cattle used to buy or rent arms from the Guinea-Bissauan army. One source cited a rate of three sacks of cashews for a landmine or the hire of a small arm for one 'mission'.¹⁶ During the civil war in Liberia, rebels there supplied weapons to the MFDC *maquis* in return for Casamance cannabis (Ellis, 1999).

The MFDC itself claims that direct arms supplies from foreign states are unnecessary given a buoyant free market in weapons (Evans, 2000). This is credible, given that West Africa is awash with illegal small arms – an estimated eight million of them, mostly from the former Eastern bloc – with trafficking facilitated by states' inability to police their borders or pay their armed forces. It seems that rogue elements in neighbouring and more distant countries have more commonly supplied arms to the *maquis* than official state sponsors, with short-term economic gain as the main motivation (Hall, 1999; de Jong, 1998).

3.4.9 Funding flows within combatant groups

An examination of the different MFDC elements does not suggest a significant concentration of wealth at any point, at least in Senegal. None of the Political Wing in Ziguinchor lives in opulence, their standard of living ranging from average to comfortable (for Ziguinchor). The *maquis* is less fortunate: the Front Sud seems to live in particularly harsh conditions, although the Front Nord, absorbed in economic 'development' and with greater freedom of movement, may be relatively more comfortable. The only MFDC members who live in any real style are certain political activists based in The Gambia or Europe, with undisclosed sources of funding there. Any 'trickle up' of revenues from the *maquis* to the political leadership seems highly improbable, and recent peace-process funding has not been channelled in the opposite direction. The question therefore arises: to what extent is money gained from the above activities pooled for the rebellion (and if so at what level), or kept by individual MFDC members to maintain their and their families' livelihoods (as Marut (1999a) claims for cannabis trafficking)? The distribution of finances has become a divisive issue, with accusations of misappropriation of external funds exchanged between factions of the Political Wing, and reported friction within the Front Sud over the sharing of cashew revenues. Such conflict between private and group interests may be common in the MFDC.

Similarly, the extent to which the army's economic activities are institutionalised is probably limited. Senegalese government sources maintain (in interview) that military expenditure has not increased significantly as a result of

¹⁶ At this price, the landmine is presumably anti-vehicular rather than anti-personnel: cf. Hall (1999), who cites a price of just \$2.75 for the latter type.

the conflict (Humphreys and ag Mohamed, 2002), although in the Casamance itself it is claimed that soldiers operating there are paid 'risk indemnities' on top of their salaries. The army's stake in the war economy as such is purely one of supplementing livelihoods; it is not using revenues to purchase weapons to further any political end. Testimonies suggest that economic activities operate at the level of individuals or small groups, with some restraining influence by senior officers on lower ranks, although the former are sometimes involved. A term such as 'army' therefore needs disaggregation, as its members are by no means all winners in every sense (Nest, 2001). Soldiers stationed in rural cantonments in the Casamance endure poor living conditions and may find themselves far from their families, fighting a war that cannot be won by military means alone. Soldiers complain of late salary payments, and they and their wives have demonstrated on the streets of Dakar to demand better conditions (Marut, 1999b; Humphreys, pers. comm.). Such circumstances make it unsurprising that soldiers in the Casamance supplement their income by deploying their advantages in resource exploitation: manpower, logistical means (especially vehicles) and capital (as a large salaried group in an otherwise economically depressed region), coupled with a monopoly of authority in some areas. For both sides in the Casamance, as in other conflict areas with rich natural resources, 'the political goals of wars often interact with the multiple logics of resource appropriation, the drugs trade, the looting of private property, and vandalism' (Bangura, 1997: 117).

3.5 The political economy of force in the Casamance

The Casamance war economy could not function without the use of force. At the macro (national and transnational) level, the geographical context is crucial in defining these dynamics. The Casamance is a well-watered land in an otherwise Sahelian country, giving it a comparative advantage in forest products. It is also sandwiched between two countries with politico-economic characters that are different but which both serve as driving forces in the war economy. Guinea-Bissau, very poor and burdened with increasing austerity in recent years because of entry into the CFA zone and civil war, has problematic armed forces that have sought external revenues through arms supply and predation. The Gambia, an 'entrepôt state', has provided buying power, access to national and international markets and (for timber and cannabis) processing facilities, all of which are limited in the Casamance itself. Strong sociocultural ties have long promoted commercial relations between these two countries and Senegal, but with the conflict these relations have, through violence and predation, become pathological for the Casamance.

Senegalese forces in the Casamance have maintained access to particular resources in various ways, evolving with the conflict. With the entrenchment of armed violence in the early 1990s, the army's human rights abuses were at times

accompanied by the plunder of resources from villagers. Following displacement, the army destroyed houses in some villages to prevent *maquisards* from occupying them. Servicemen have also used force against the civil authorities that police resource extraction. In a well-known incident in 1995, the Eaux et Forêts Regional Inspector seized a consignment of *ven* that the army was attempting to ship out of Ziguinchor; soldiers countered by threatening him and assaulting his wife, forcing him to release the shipment. Another, subsequent dispute between Eaux et Forêts and the Ziguinchor's Gendarmerie has limited the number of late-night timber fairs held by the latter, according to one *menuisier*. This suggests that Eaux et Forêts still wields some power over servicemen, despite being unarmed and generally hamstrung by lack of means.

However, with the conflict now at a relatively low level and the behaviour of the armed forces having greatly improved, servicemen maintain access to resources mainly by forbidding or restricting the entry of civilians to certain areas of insecurity, 'for their own safety' or to prevent them from sheltering or supplying *maquisards*. A counter-argument used in one project supporting the return of IDPs was that 'if a zone ... remains abandoned, that allows [*maquisards*] to infiltrate; so we want to reoccupy our lands to prevent that' (interview with project coordinator, Ziguinchor, 13 May 2001). Return in this case was overseen (and assisted logistically) by the army, though a continued military presence in a return setting may still restrict access to resources. In one border village with an army cantonment, interviewees complained that a dusk-to-dawn curfew in the village environs limited their ability to cultivate their fields. Attempts to return to another border village by individual IDPs have been blocked by the authorities, civil and military, even during ceasefire periods; refugees wishing to return from Guinea-Bissau are afraid of the Senegalese army. The presence of landmines also allows the army to control civilian access. To exploit one cashew orchard in Kolda region, civilians must be escorted by soldiers along a safe corridor through a mined perimeter.

The most powerful force restricting access is fear among civilians, many having suffered at rebel hands, though in Ziguinchor this at times seems disproportionate in relation to the real security situation. Soldiers may deliberately reinforce this sense of insecurity to justify their continued presence, thus maintaining their 'risk indemnities' and access to sources of revenue unavailable elsewhere in Senegal. It is even suggested that soldiers have fired their weapons at nothing while on patrol in the bush to create the illusion of combat, or have prevented access to areas that they claim to be mined when in fact no landmines are present.

The *maquis* maintains access to resources through similarly diverse means. The Front Sud holds areas, particularly in the border zone, from which it has displaced civilian populations through exaction, robbery, terror or sowing landmines, and again has destroyed their houses. Some IDPs in Ziguinchor said that they or family members had been

attacked by *maquisards* when they had tried to return to their home villages. However, Front Sud economic activity in that zone implies a degree of access by civilians (possibly including the families of *maquisards*), and involves contact with normal trading networks. More generally, many civilians still go to 'abandoned' areas, on a day- or short-term basis, for economic reasons; IDPs in Ziguinchor maintained that, besides *maquisards*, civilians remaining in their home rural community, or traders who travelled there specially, were benefiting from their lost resources. The border zone, though insecure, is thus not quite the no-man's-land, punctuated only by enclaves protected by one side or the other, that is sometimes presented. But its construction as such may serve certain rebel or army interests, and their civilian associates, who wish to keep the area as their *chasse gardée*.

The situation in the Front Nord area is rather different. 'Pacification' has been bought through a Faustian bargain, allowing *maquisards* to benefit at the expense of most local people in a 'governance void' (Cliffe and Luckham, 2000: 302) – no longer by direct predation, but by exercising their near-monopoly of force to their economic advantage (Marut, 1995). For example, in parts of the Buluf *maquisards* forbid local civilians from cutting down timber trees, particularly *cail-cédrot*, thus conserving this resource for Front Nord exploitation. More widely, the Front Nord has associates in the villages of its zone who help it exercise control, and also uses quasi-legal methods, in one instance obtaining use of communal land through a request to the rural council. However, a councillor present at that meeting complained in interview that proper procedures were bypassed, and that having a *maquisard* in attendance was effectively intimidation.

Eaux et Forêts cannot gain access to the forests of the Front Nord zone, let alone control timber extraction; much evidence points towards impoverishment of *ven* and *cail-cédrot* there (and elsewhere in the region). The ease with which timber is exported by the Front Nord also suggests complicity on the part of Senegalese forces, still posted in larger towns and at official border crossings; while the involvement of elements of the Gambian government and authorities allows duty-free importation of Casamance timber. Overall, civil authorities are unable or unwilling to police resource exploitation because of a combination of insecurity, corruption and 'structural adjustment' cuts in government expenditure. This opens the door to unrestricted use by armed groups effectively acting as the main authority in areas of insecurity (although as noted *maquisards* and the Senegalese armed forces are not the sole forestry actors in their respective zones, with some civilians also engaged in illegal timber extraction). Recognising the problems of over-exploitation, the *maquisards* themselves have 'admitted with regret that they are the first and foremost enemies of the forest heritage of the zone' (MFDC, 2000b: 1), and declared a moratorium on timber-cutting by themselves and others. This attempt at self-regulation failed partly because of non-cooperation

by the population, who saw it as further repression. Accusations by the MFDC that the government has let 'Senegalese newcomers ... pillage ... forest resources to the point of dangerously threatening the ecosystem of the Casamance' (MFDC, 2000c: 9), while not totally unfounded, are therefore hypocritical and identify only part of a wider problem. But, as the quotes illustrate, the forest has long been a political as well as an economic stake in the conflict.

Thus while notions of 'economic violence' (Keen, 1998: 12) and 'societies of fear' (Cliffe and Luckham, 2000: 303) are applicable in the Casamance, a focus on armed groups and their sometimes deplorable actions risks masking a more complex political economy of conflict. Violence is not necessarily used or even threatened to exploit the Casamance's natural richness: as in other conflict situations, the co-option over time of certain sectors of the civilian population into the war economy is evident, particularly amid deepening poverty. The exploitation and trade of Casamance products by combatants augment the limited flow of resources through the civilian trading networks of an area economically depressed by conflict; even if the bigger winners, in military, governmental and commercial (licit or illicit) spheres, probably reside mostly outside of the Casamance or even Senegal. Timber exploitation by servicemen, particularly, creates local economic benefits, providing jobs for young men cutting timber, and trade for *menuiseries*. By harvesting or buying other forest products, particularly fruit, the army facilitates marketing of produce that would otherwise rot (as it commonly does during the orange and mango seasons, for want of transport and buyers). On the MFDC side, timber trading by the Front Nord can at least be credited with overcoming a general lack of business sense among the Casamance Diola. One otherwise struggling refugee village visited in Guinea-Bissau was supplied with oranges and doe meat by villagers' sons and brothers in the Front Sud *maquis*, who obtained such products in abandoned border areas of the Casamance. While neither the socio-economic benefits nor perverse humanitarianism described here justify the continuation of the war economy, they do help to explain it.

3.6 Aid problems and pitfalls in the Casamance

While humanitarian aid does not figure highly in the Casamance war economy, past external funding may have been allocated to *maquis* elements, either through mediation committees or support for the Front Nord. Past direct agency involvement in the peace process has also been problematic: one French Caritas officer in Ziguinchor developed a rapport with the *maquis* that enabled him to instigate development projects, but his resulting appointment as France's 'representative for peace' in the Casamance created diplomatic problems for the French ambassador to Senegal. Current agency activities in support of peace may be more prudent, but access to funding from

Western donors for the peace process has still been the subject of bitter disputes between the Senegalese government (through which such funding is channelled) and MFDC political leaders, and between different factions of the Political Wing. USAID-funded activities in the peace process (by AJAC–APRAN and CRS) seem largely open and enjoy the general approval of both sides (though there are opponents in local government and the *maquis*).

Development aid has similarly had to operate in the complex and fluid political economy of the conflict. Those trying to run projects in rural Casamance have been confronted with problems of insecurity restricting activity. For example, one Ziguinchor NGO had its truck commandeered by *maquisards* for an armed robbery, with its driver held hostage for 12 hours. But in other cases, local agreements have been reached with *maquisards*, who have then allowed freedom of movement or a project to continue. Such *ad hoc* negotiations have essentially involved agency or local NGO officers explaining to *maquisards* what the project entailed and gaining their trust. The MFDC is generally amenable to development workers in the Casamance, but elements may have other agendas. In one case, a few years after a successfully negotiated project, the *maquis* assassinated an important organiser for the NGO in that village for reasons unknown.

The biggest problems have arisen from the articulation of development projects with local politics. Local disputes over access to external resources may be no more than non-violent feuds, but in extreme cases conflict has been used to settle scores. The worst example heard concerned a local NGO project with a local women's group in a particular village. Another group, jealous of this project, denounced the former to the army as harbouring rebels. The army, still practising arbitrary repression at that time (1992), responded by killing the husband of the president of the successful group and the brother of one of its organisers. Other organisers suffered sexual harassment from soldiers and fled.¹⁷

This incident illustrates that Senegalese forces have also obstructed agency activity in the Casamance. The turnover of army personnel may be a problem: an understanding may be reached with one officer, but his replacement may be less amenable, or a new agreement has to be negotiated from scratch. Some officers' reactions to the mere possibility of insurgency have verged on the psychotic.¹⁸ Human rights groups and the testimonies of Casamançais all point

to much better relations between the army and civilians, although mistrust and bitterness over past atrocities remain. The involvement and continued presence of soldiers in return projects may be particularly contentious for those who previously suffered army persecution. Two accounts were heard of European agency workers being arrested, a result of Senegalese sensitivities about foreign interference in the conflict and support for the *maquis*.

At a national level, it may be asked to what extent the developmental neglect of the Casamance, particularly its transport infrastructure, is instrumental on the part of the Senegalese government. This question has important implications for the aid macro-agenda, which in the generally improving security climate is shifting from relief to rehabilitation (Cliffe and Luckham, 2000). The MFDC Political Wing claims that neglect is a form of economic warfare 'against' the Casamance, of a kind that would fit Le Billon's (2000: 1) 'economic strategies of war'. Reconstruction has thus become a significant issue in peace negotiations, with the MFDC somewhat bizarrely demanding that the Senegalese government (with donor funding) adopt a massive rehabilitation programme for the Casamance. In fairness to the government, long-overdue remaking of the crucial Bignona–Diouloulou tarmac road was undertaken in 2002. The Gambian government, meanwhile, is blocking donor-supported plans for a road bridge over the Gambia River for the other main Casamance artery, the '*transgambienne*' to Dakar, on the specious grounds that it stands to lose the revenue from the existing ferry. This objection may have more to do with the benefits certain Gambian economic interests gain from the continued isolation of the Casamance.

Meanwhile, the MFDC's own violence has deterred infrastructure investment and maintenance. Indeed, the most significant event for development aid in the Casamance over the course of the conflict was the widespread seeding of landmines by the *maquis* from 1997. This provoked a precipitous flight of Western donors from the Casamance, most importantly USAID, whose departure abruptly terminated projects and whole development quangos (CONGAD, 1998). Resentment over this 'abandonment' is still evident in Ziguinchor's NGO community, which was faced with accusations of deception from its constituencies, and ever since has found it difficult to obtain funding. However, USAID returned to the Casamance in 2000 with a three-year, \$10 million programme (USAID, 1999), and other donors are also coming back: prospects for most local NGOs, while still not good, are therefore improving.

The return of IDPs, refugees and rebels also has political dimensions. The reconstruction projects described, while warmly welcomed by beneficiaries and rooted in a human rights-based approach to development, have unfortunately not escaped the mire of local politics. Criticisms of these and other projects heard from some local state-appointed officials and elected representatives probably arise at least

¹⁷ The local NGO officer who oversaw the project in question and tried (unsuccessfully) to prevent harassment of the GPF organisers is still, ten years on, too traumatised by these events to return to the village.

¹⁸ In one border village, a previous *nordiste* captain of the cantonment there had traders travelling up from Guinea-Bissau harassed and beaten as suspected rebels or rebel supporters; he also banned village dances, which he believed were being held in support of the rebellion.

partly from jealousy of privileged NGO access to external funds entering their domains, funds which they themselves feel that they should control. Obstacles to the demobilisation of *maquisards*, meanwhile, may include the threat of reprisals from their comrades, their home communities or the Senegalese authorities; or occult commitments that are difficult to revoke (Humphreys, pers. comm.). The potential problems of reconciliation are evident: as one woman returning home under a reconstruction project said, 'those with clean skin should come back, and are welcome, while those involved in the conflict should stay away' (meeting of project beneficiaries, 1 July 2001). It may also be asked to what extent an unknown proportion of the *maquis*, involved in the economic activities described above, either need or want alternative livelihoods (Cliffe and Luckham, 2000). However, the consensus is that most of the Front Sud, given the opportunity, would return from the bush and into normal life. The Front Nord, in fact, could ultimately prove the more recalcitrant faction, and may be difficult to wean off its more lucrative timber and cannabis trading; its nominal 'pacification' means little if its territorial control is threatened.

3.7 Conclusions

The Casamance rebellion, whatever its original legitimacy, has over time been appropriated by various local, national and transnational actors for their own political and economic ends. At the same time, the isolation of the Casamance from the rest of Senegal (as geographical fact) has been aggravated by insecurity and the (partly related) breakdown of infrastructure. The result has been to create a war economy far from the eyes and concerns of most of the Dakar elite, though benefiting some of them. Still poorly understood compared with some wars involving higher-value resources, the political economy of the Casamance conflict is starting to be seen as an obstacle to peace. To enhance their livelihoods or purchase weapons, combatants have generally taken up pre-existing forms of production and trade, mostly using established marketing channels rather than developing a parallel economy (cf. Cliffe and Luckham, 2000). This war economy is sustained by predatory interests and sociocultural connections in Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia. Certain sectors of the Casamance population have benefited, or at least maintained their livelihoods, but the majority have suffered, economically, socially, physically or psychologically. While social capital is still strong among Casamançais and keeps many afloat, denial of access to resources by real or perceived insecurity and difficulties in accessing markets create genuine hardship, particularly in rural areas. This environment presents numerous problems for aid agencies and their local partners. Defining best practice is difficult because the political economy is constantly evolving, but as Cliffe and Luckham (2000) note, it is precisely this understanding of processes that should inform aid.

First, the provision of any aid must be more closely tied with security. Support for the peace process in particular needs to be allocated with care, and in the light of past experience. Feeding *maquisards* previously did not create lasting peace; development assistance to the Front Nord without a concomitant deposition of arms has allowed it to instigate its own form of 'development', to the detriment of much of the local population, and though supposedly 'pacified' it has on one occasion attacked Senegalese forces. Support for livelihoods should therefore be restricted to those who have definitively renounced armed violence. Such linkage could be achieved through a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme similar to that in Sierra Leone, which removed large numbers of rebels from the bush and arms from circulation, even if its results in terms of longer-term peace remain to be seen (see Chapter 4). The Front Nord fiasco also demonstrates why the provision of security should be the responsibility of the state. Unfortunately, despite considerable improvements in Senegalese forces' behaviour, there remain army elements with substantial economic interests in controlling access to territory. However, handing over control to a totally unaccountable rebel band is undoubtedly worse.

Second, agencies have to tread a fine line between not getting embroiled in local politics, while also dealing with political structures that have a legitimate role in achieving peace, reconstruction and development. This applies to any project in peacetime, but in a war situation relatively minor local disputes may take more dangerous forms. More generally, aid initiatives risk falling foul of political actors wanting to control resources entering their domains. This desire is normatively legitimate, given the state's (theoretical) primacy in delivering public services; the claim of one NGO officer that 'We work with the grassroots, and bypass the administration if they're being difficult' (interview, Ziguinchor department, 26 July 2001) is understandable but naive. The question for agencies in the Casamance is which political actors to work with or bypass: the degree of cooperation or conflict between state-appointed, elected and traditional authorities varies widely between areas, as do the relations of each authority with individual aid providers. The rural council can probably claim to be the most democratic, locally accountable body, but one encountered was riven by party-political factionalism. The return of Western donors after a few years' absence may create its own problems as NGOs jostle for new funding, and the implication of local political interests creates further scope for a divisive scramble for resources (supporting Jackson's view (see Chapter 2) that large fluctuations in aid over time are potentially destabilising). With the economic development of the Casamance itself now an important stake in the peace process, these factors are already becoming problematic for local NGOs engaged in the erratic steps towards peace and reconstruction. Where they have a political role (as intermediaries or advocates) in the peace process, this should therefore be clearly defined in relation to governmental activities. Again, while state legitimacy

may be challenged in a conflict situation, the state still has a central role in achieving peace (Cliffe and Luckham, 2000); the problem is getting everyone to agree on what that role is.

Finally, a more fundamental issue arises from the political economy of conflict approach, which has consequences for the aid agenda. In this case study, the specific effects of conflict on the Casamance economy were difficult to isolate from wider problems, common to many provincial areas in developing countries. This was particularly true in the livelihood surveys, which approached interviewees on the grounds of their economic problems in general, to see how highly the conflict figured. The surveys thus proved to be an informative source on the political economy of the Casamance, including (but by no means limited to) the political of the conflict. The economic impact of conflict on local populations may be serious, but applying this approach too strictly risks associating certain phenomena with conflict when they are, in fact, endemic to a region or country, at war or at peace. Poor infrastructure, inadequate public services, unregulated resource extraction for the benefit of a few, and capricious global markets all form a wider, “silent violence” of underdevelopment, poverty and inequality’ (Cliffe and Luckham, 2000: 295). Above all, aid agencies should be clear about whether they are really looking at a political economy of conflict, or at business as usual.

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Chapter 4

Humanitarian aid in post-war Sierra Leone: the politics of moral economy

Richard Fanthorpe

4.1 Introduction

On 18 January 2002, at a ceremony accompanying the destruction of a large arms cache near Lungi airport, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah announced to the nation that Sierra Leone's decade-long conflict had come to an end. The previous week, the disarmament and demobilisation of ex-combatants in all districts was reported complete. These developments were the first fruits of a massive international aid effort to achieve peace and stability in Sierra Leone following the successful conclusion of the 'Abuja II' ceasefire negotiations in May 2001. Almost 75,000 people registered as ex-combatants at disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) camps from 1998 onwards, 60% of whom were processed between May 2001 and January 2002. This eight-month period also saw the tentative re-establishment of civilian authorities in former rebel-controlled areas, the commencement of infrastructure rebuilding programmes in these same areas, and renewed efforts to resettle an estimated (2001) 1.5 million internally displaced people (IDPs), and 450,000 refugees in Guinea and Liberia. In May 2002, presidential and parliamentary elections saw the return of Kabbah's Sierra Leone Peoples' Party (SLPP) with a greatly increased mandate.

Immense problems remain, with widespread destruction of private housing and infrastructure and the almost complete disappearance of state services and local government structures from rural areas. The war devastated a country already impoverished and in deep social crisis. According to recent estimates, per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in Sierra Leone stands at \$510, and average life expectancy at birth is 37 years. Nearly 70% of the national labour force is engaged in primary food production, and the adult literacy rate is 31% (45.4% for men, 18.2% for women). The country has substantial natural resources, especially diamonds, but greed and political calculation have robbed the nation of much of this wealth. Successive governing cliques in post-colonial Sierra Leone converted the most productive sectors of the economy (diamonds and foreign exchange) into patrimonial resources. Mining licences were distributed as political favours and foreign exchange generated from diamond mining funded imports of cheap rice to feed mining gangs and other political clients. These strategies robbed the domestic agricultural sector of much-needed commercial stimuli, and in turn helped to entrench patronage as a prerequisite for entry into state education and employment (Luke and Riley, 1989; Reno, 1995; Zack-Williams, 1995; Richards, 1996).

This system began to unravel in the late 1980s as revenues dried up, services contracted and the infrastructure collapsed. Matters came to a head in March 1991, with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) insurgency. This Libyan-backed movement, which had recruited a fighting force among Sierra Leonean exiles and dissidents caught up in the Liberian civil war, entered Sierra Leone from Liberian territory. The insurgents pledged to overthrow the discredited All Peoples' Congress (APC) government, restore multiparty democracy and redistribute wealth to ordinary citizens. However, repeated attacks on civilians appear to have alienated the public from the very beginning. Unable to sustain a conventional war, the movement retreated to forest camps. New personnel were acquired by means of abduction. Children and young people, preferably with some schooling, were taken for political indoctrination and combat training. Other captives – mainly illiterate adults – were used as slave labour. The RUF acquired a reputation for human rights abuse, including summary execution, rape and mutilation. Some of these acts were preceded by psychological torture.

Despite the manifest failure of its original political project, the RUF benefited from disarray among pro-government forces. The moribund APC regime soon lost control over the army. Neither the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), which seized power in a coup in April 1992, nor the democratically elected SLPP coalition, which replaced it in 1996, managed to win this control back. The old Sierra Leone army was officially disbanded in 1998 after seven years of looting, coup plotting (twice successful) and collusion with the RUF. Some units lived on as private militias. In the meantime, several proxy security solutions were tried. These included Executive Outcomes (a South African-based security firm with mining interests), the *kamajoisia* (an ethnically-aligned counter-insurgency militia identifying with traditional hunters), and the Nigerian army (operating under the banner of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)). None succeeded decisively against the RUF, and in some instances only added to the looting and terror suffered by civilians.

Several factors combined to bring the conflict to a close – for the time being at least. Many belligerents were combat-weary, the Sierra Leone military began to make effective use of Ukrainian-manned helicopter gunships, and the RUF's operational capability was diminished by aggressive Guinean counter-insurgency operations in the north and west and by the recurrence of conflict in Liberia. But

perhaps the clinching factor was increasingly overt international intervention. This change was signalled by the replacement of ECOMOG by UN Mission to Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) peacekeeping forces in May 2000 and the arrival shortly afterwards of a small but high-profile British military task force, which helped to secure the capital and international airport.

Even as President Kabbah spoke in January 2002, the government of Sierra Leone remained very much a multilateral affair. UNAMSIL was the chief intelligence and security agency, while the British force provided additional security and training for the new Sierra Leone army. UNAMSIL's civilian wing provided a public information service, monitored political affairs and human rights issues, advised the Sierra Leone government and other international agencies on policing and electoral matters and assisted in the restoration of the civil authorities. In some areas, especially the former RUF strongholds of the north, UNAMSIL served as a proxy administration.¹ Sierra Leone's police force acquired a British Inspector-General, and was placed under the managerial control of a Commonwealth task force largely comprising retired British police officers. The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) employed local and international experts to review Sierra Leone's law and justice system, provide technical assistance for the rehabilitation of the civil service and local government system, support civil society groups, train broadcasters and journalists and design infrastructure projects to provide employment for ex-combatants. Other UN agencies, a European Union (EU) delegation and a plethora of international and local NGOs provided further coordination and support in the areas of macroeconomics, governance, food security, refugee resettlement and the training and education of ex-combatants.

Sierra Leone does not feature prominently in the geopolitical strategies of rich and powerful nations, yet there is no doubt that aspects of the recent conflict have alarmed Western governments. An allegation surfacing repeatedly in both local and international news media was that forces opposing the RUF – be they the Sierra Leone army, civil defence militias or international peacekeepers – have brokered private deals with the insurgents, allowing one or both parties freedom to loot civilians and mine diamonds. At one point, Western governments openly accused Charles Taylor and Blaise Compaoré, presidents of Liberia and Burkina Faso respectively, of resupplying the RUF and brokering sales of looted diamonds. But any number of shadowy organisations have been implicated in the international trade for looted Sierra Leonean diamonds, including al-Qa'eda. Restoring state authorities and curtailing the looting of diamonds have therefore offered a tangible geopolitical dividend for Western governments.

¹ The civilian administration of Sierra Leone's Northern Province did not deploy from Freetown until August 2002.

A further source of international anxiety in relation to Sierra Leone is that neither ideology in general, nor ethnic and religious factionalism in particular, has featured strongly in the conflict. Some commentators have suggested that the conflict represents a breakdown in law and order rather than a civil war – that the social fabric of West Africa as a whole is coming apart as a result of a fatal encounter between globalisation and consumerism on the one hand, and overpopulation, scarcity and environmental degradation on the other (Kaplan, 1994). The more considered view is that years of government neglect of education and other state services have helped to create a large cohort of unemployed and barely literate young people, easily conscripted by both political and criminal organisations (Richards, 1995, 1996; Abdullah, 1997; Kandeh, 1999; OCHA, 2002). Ongoing hostilities in Liberia, and the recent outbreak of a similar pattern of conflict in Ivory Coast, suggests that these problems are regional. Again, restoring stability to Sierra Leone serves the interests of the international community in that it may help to stem any further rupture to the familiar patterns of commerce and diplomacy in West Africa.

Humanitarian concerns have also galvanised the recent international intervention in Sierra Leone. The suffering of children has been particularly extreme, and Sierra Leone has become symbolic of Western governments' desire to score a success in the peace-building arena after the debacles of the former Yugoslavia and Somalia and the ongoing chaos in Congo and Angola. For the UK in particular, Sierra Leone remains a test case for the once-vaunted 'ethical foreign policy' of the New Labour government. In this environment, macro-level political interests and humanitarian concerns have converged. The fundamental challenge of post-war reconstruction in Sierra Leone goes beyond reconciling warring factions and reconstructing war-damaged infrastructure to encompass the rebuilding of state and society in such a manner that future conflict is averted. This not only generates considerable demand for the services of aid agencies, but also places them in an unusually powerful position. Many among the old political elite have opted for exile overseas, and local government functions have yet to return to full operational status. Working under the aegis of UNAMSIL, aid agencies have direct access to a mass of vulnerable people and, so far, freedom to design and implement programmes with little risk of high-level political interference. They are also well placed to influence the macro-level security strategies they are helping to implement.

Yet these opportunities also contain potential dangers. Any distribution of benefits in a war-ravaged country like Sierra Leone must contain elements of both material and moral economy. There are never enough resources to benefit everyone on any single occasion, so an order of priority in access to benefits must be established. But who does this, and who has the final say if there are differences of opinion among stakeholders and beneficiaries? What happens when

local government functionaries, long renowned for corruption and nepotism, return and demand that aid agencies cede decision-making authority to them? So far in the post-war reconstruction process, aid agencies have acknowledged the desirability of consulting with all stakeholders and beneficiaries, but tend in practice to retain control over all decision-making in respect of aid distributions. They justify this practice on the grounds of contractual obligation towards donors and a moral obligation to prioritise the needs and defend the rights of the most vulnerable (Humanitarian Accountability Project, 2002). Yet the situation in Sierra Leone is changing rapidly. The Sierra Leone government has welcomed the international peace-building intervention and aid effort, but UNAMSIL is currently undergoing a phased withdrawal (scheduled for completion in 2004) and the government was pressing for greater control over aid programming even before its recent landslide election victory. Furthermore, even after the social upheavals and displacements caused by the war, aid agencies are not working in a political and cultural vacuum. In order to maintain full control over aid programmes, NGOs tend to insist that local employees and implementing partners conform to the same standards of accountability and practice that they themselves espouse. Yet who decides whether such standards are appropriate and/or workable in Sierra Leone?

Aid agencies cannot avoid becoming political actors in a post-conflict situation like Sierra Leone, however morally defensible that political agency might be. Political economy analysis draws attention not only to the moral and ethical dilemmas such political agency raises, but also to the ways in which it may impinge upon local political interests. The following discussion examines in further detail how these issues of power, and the moral questions and dilemmas they raise, are emerging in the implementation of current aid projects in Sierra Leone. It also examines the strategies aid agencies are developing to address these issues, and offers suggestions as to how these strategies might be developed further. The discussion begins with a closer look at the organisation and strategies of current aid programmes, followed by an outline of the local political environment.

4.2 Post-war reconstruction

With the cessation of hostilities, Sierra Leone began to tap into the \$640 million of aid pledged by multilateral and bilateral donors just before the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) coup of May 1997. Sierra Leone's chief donors are the EU, the African Development Bank (ADB), DFID, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and UN agencies. The World Bank is also a prominent player. Its Sierra Leone portfolio totalled \$190.5m in March 2002, much of this taken up by energy, infrastructure and economic reform projects (World Bank, 2002). The World Bank also chairs an in-country Donors' Group that sits on the National Recovery Committee

(NRC), set up by the Sierra Leone government in July 2001 to coordinate reconstruction assistance and the re-establishment of state authority in the provinces. On 19 March 2002, the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced their support for debt relief of \$600m for Sierra Leone under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. Later the same month, proposals for significant new lending to Sierra Leone under the World Bank's Transitional Support Strategy were announced. These plans reflect the Bank's pleasure at the 'remarkable progress' Sierra Leone has made on the peace front. But their implementation is also conditional upon the 'continued commitment by Sierra Leone to the financial and economic programs supported by IDA' and the 'completion of a fully participatory poverty reduction strategy paper' (IMF, 2002).

Substantive assistance to Sierra Leone is currently concentrated in five sectors: the rehabilitation and social reintegration of ex-combatants, IDPs and other war victims; food security; water and sanitation; shelter; and the reconstruction of basic government, health, educational and transport infrastructure. Delivery is organised through a labyrinthine network of Sierra Leone government ministries, commissions and committees, multilateral and bilateral funding, coordination and monitoring agencies, international NGOs, local NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs) and private businesses. A large project may tap into several funding streams and bring together many NGOs and private businesses as implementing partners. Some of these agencies may sub-contract to an even wider range of NGOs, CBOs and local contractors.

UN agencies feature prominently in the coordination of this assistance. At present, the leading agencies are the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which provides relief for refugees and IDPs and manages resettlement projects, and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OCHA personnel interviewed in March 2002 reported that all but the remoter districts of northern and eastern Sierra Leone had now passed from 'emergency' to 'recovery' status – a change marked by the return of refugees and IDPs and the resumption of health and education services. OCHA coordinates needs assessments, monitors NGO activity and produces district-level recovery plans. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) collates socio-economic data and monitors agricultural inputs at the national level, while the World Food Programme (WFP) serves as one of Sierra Leone's four main food pipeline agencies (the others are CARE, Catholic Relief Services and World Vision International) and coordinates an Emergency School Feeding (ESF) programme for the whole of the country. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) commissions and coordinates primary health care, HIV awareness and school rehabilitation programmes, while the UN Development Programme (UNDP) is waiting in the wings for the start of the 'development' phase (marked by the re-establishment

of civil authorities, the police and other state agencies) armed with governance reform and poverty-reduction policy strategies.

All of these UN agencies are represented on the NRC and operate under memoranda of understanding with the relevant government ministries. However, the Sierra Leone parliament has transferred primary responsibility for monitoring and coordinating the post-war reconstruction effort to two frontline agencies answering directly to the president: the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR), and the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA), formerly the National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NCRRR). Substantial donor funds are channelled through both agencies.

4.2.1 The National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

The NCDDR was established in 1998 to facilitate the disarmament and demobilisation of all belligerent groups (including the disbanded government army). The first DDR phase was initiated in June 1998 in the wake of the ECOMOG intervention against the AFRC junta. A second phase began after the signing of the Lomé Accord in July 1999. In these initial phases, disarmament (assembly, interviews, weapons collection, verification and registration) and demobilisation (reception and orientation, demobilisation screening interviews, reintegration interviews, pre-discharge orientation and discharge and transportation) were followed by payment of the first instalment (\$150) of a Transitional Safety Net Allowance (TSA). Upon discharge, ex-combatants were to be driven to areas of their own choosing, and were expected to register at a local Reintegration Office to benefit from 'targeted counselling, training and employment creation efforts' (World Bank, 1999). After three months they were to receive the second instalment (also \$150) of their TSA. Former child soldiers were handed over to UNICEF for transfer to Interim Care Centres run by international NGOs.

Both of these early DDR phases were disrupted by the resumption of hostilities and re-mobilisation. But it was always apparent that many (especially RUF) ex-combatants were either unable or unwilling to rejoin rural communities practising smallholder agriculture and that there was little chance of providing them with meaningful jobs until the post-war recovery process was well under way. Many donors were reluctant to commit funds for vocational training while there was still a chance that ex-combatants would simply take the money and return to the fray (International Crisis Group, 2001). When DDR 'phase three' was initiated in May 2001, concerted efforts were made to link the post-war reconstruction programme with jobs and vocational training for ex-combatants.

According to a British employee of Crown Agents interviewed in February 2002, NCDDR had received \$11m from three funding streams since April 1999: \$1.5m from the Sierra Leone government; \$7m from the World Bank, out of the \$33m Community Reintegration and Rehabilitation Project (CRRP) loan approved in December 1999; and varying amounts from a Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), as and when donors honoured pledges amounting in total to just over \$30m. The MDTF has been a source of contention among donors. Managed on behalf of the World Bank by a Financial Management and Procurement Unit (FMPU) – a joint venture by PricewaterhouseCoopers and the International Procurement Agency – the MDTF has been run on a 'development' model with a standard tender period of 12 weeks. It was apparent to all observers at the start of the third phase of demobilisation that the NCDDR would not cope with the flood of ex-combatants unless it could access funds more quickly. The British government was due to contribute £2.5m to the MDTF, but withheld payment in an attempt to prompt other donors into reviewing MDTF tender procedures. Nothing came of this effort except the exhaustion of MDTF funds at the end of July 2001. As a result of this impasse, the UK government brought in Crown Agents to act as an Emergency Response Team (ERT) to oversee instant disbursement of its £2.5m contribution. This unilateral initiative, so the interviewee claimed, had finally enabled NCDDR to 'fast track' the DDR process and achieve all of its targets.

The apparent success of disarmament and demobilisation has enabled the NCDDR to turn its attention fully to the problems of reintegration. At first sight, DDR 'phase three' has assimilated lessons from earlier phases. Ex-combatants are treated as individuals who are, as the Crown Agents interviewee put it, 'being given an opportunity to compete in the job market on level terms with everyday folk'. Under DDR 'phase three', ex-combatants only receive a single payment (now known as Reinsertion Benefit) of \$150. The aim is to give them greater incentive to take up the educational and training opportunities on offer at Reintegration Offices. Many of these opportunities are offered by NGOs engaged in post-war reconstruction, and range from agriculture and construction to vocational training. The NCDDR frequently lends financial assistance to NGOs employing ex-combatants, and also has contracts with more than 120 local schools. Opportunity schemes last from three to nine months depending on the type of training offered, during which time the trainees receive a salary of \$30 (60,000 Leones) per month.

The process is controlled by plastic identity cards and a computerised tracking system. An ex-combatant's card is punched on receipt of Reinsertion Benefit and again on registration for an opportunity scheme. NCDDR fieldworkers check that ex-combatants are attending the courses for which they registered. The closing date for

registration for reintegration opportunities was 30 June 2002. According to the Crown Agents interviewee, only 60% of verified ex-combatants actually registered for reintegration opportunities. However, the ERT assumes that many ex-combatants will simply 'self-reintegrate'.

4.2.2 The National Commission for Social Action

The original mandate of the NCRRR (now known as NaCSA) was to 'be responsible, on behalf of Government, for the overall planning, programming, co-ordination, supervision and monitoring of all humanitarian, reintegration, resettlement and reconstruction work in consequence of the rebel war', and 'to co-ordinate the activities of all Non-Government Organizations engaged in relief, rehabilitation, resettlement and reconstruction work in consequence of the rebel war' (NCRRR, 2001a). The commission's early phases of operation focused on the coordination of emergency relief for IDP and refugee camps and the implementation of a national resettlement strategy. The central element of the latter was the provision of 'start-up' support for registered IDPs and refugees. This included transportation to designated drop-off areas, food rations for two months and the provision of plastic sheeting, kitchen utensils and other essential domestic equipment. IDPs and refugees lacking a registration card were deemed ineligible for such support, but it was expected that, like non-displaced populations still suffering hardship as a result of the war, they would:

benefit from community-based support being provided in the area of resettlement. This could include, for example, entry onto seeds and tools programmes and/or other employment based safety net/income generating schemes, as well as gaining benefits from community-based initiatives supporting the rehabilitation and reconstruction of basic services and the resuscitation of the local economy (NCRRR, 2001b).

NCRRR documentation states that returnees and other vulnerable rural groups might be employed in public works projects – especially those qualifying for WFP Food for Work and Food for Agriculture assistance – but no specific reference is made to vocational training and education except in relation to resettlement in urban areas.

In respect of community-based support, the plethora of regional and national committees coordinating the various sectors of humanitarian assistance in the provinces are all expected to report to a consultative forum chaired by the NaCSA commissioner. Furthermore, all NGOs engaged in post-war reconstruction are required by law to register with the commission. With the assistance of OCHA, FAO and the food pipeline agencies, the commission seeks to ensure that NGOs working in the same sector do not overlap in the same area. The chiefdom remains the fundamental unit of day-to-day administration in Sierra

Leone's provinces, and the chiefdom section is taken as the minimum unit for allocation of NGO responsibility.² NaCSA has an office in each of the 12 provincial districts, and in theory all agencies working in the same sector in a particular district meet fortnightly at these offices to coordinate their activities. The chairman of each sector committee then reports to an inter-agency meeting chaired by the NaCSA regional supervisor.

NaCSA has also been trying to establish liaison committees at the chiefdom level. Their purpose, as the NaCSA District Supervisor for Kambia put it when interviewed in March 2002, is 'to empower the people to take part in development activities'. The aim is that, as chiefdom administrations become operational again, they will provide a voice for local communities in post-war reconstruction and provide humanitarian agencies with valuable feedback – especially in respect of gaps in programme coverage. Each chiefdom section is expected to send four representatives (including the section chief and at least one woman) to the liaison committee. The paramount chief chairs the committee and the treasury clerk provides secretarial support. As of 1 April 2002, Bramaia and Thonko in Kambia district were the only chiefdoms in the country to have established NaCSA committees.³ The inaugural reports of these committees to the Kambia district inter-agency meeting of 20 March 2002 are discussed later in this study.

The change of name from the NCRRR to NaCSA was effected in November 2001 to herald the re-incorporation of the commission as a social fund designed 'to facilitate a transition from relief to sustainable development and ... to cater for communities which do not adequately benefit from NGO presence in their localities' (Sesay, 2002). In its original form, the commission had four donor-supported Project Implementation Units (PIUs), each with its own rules of tender. Under NaCSA, these have been unified under one management umbrella to create three 'funding windows': community-based programmes, public works and micro-finance. To quote a senior NaCSA official interviewed in March 2002, NaCSA is now a 'government NGO'. Here, the eagerness of the Sierra Leone government to raise its profile as a service provider seems to have coincided with pressure among the major NCRRR donors (the World Bank, ADB, UNDP and the Islamic

² Sections are administrative sub-divisions of chiefdoms, commonly organised territorially (but sometimes along ethnic lines) and ranging in population from a few hundred to several thousand. Large chiefdoms may have ten or more sections, each the responsibility of a section chief reporting to the paramount chief. Village headmen comprise the bottom tier of the chiefdom administrative hierarchy.

³ At first, these NaCSA committees were distinct from pre-war Chiefdom Development Committees and chiefdom-level committees set up by the NRC and other agencies. However, it was soon realised that the same people tend to serve on all chiefdom-level committees. The Sierra Leone government is now encouraging chiefdoms authorities to nominate a single Chiefdom Development Committee to liaise with all development agencies.

Development Bank) to shift the focus of humanitarian intervention from 'relief' to 'development'.

4.3 Chiefdom politics

Implicit in the post-war reconstruction strategies outlined above is the assumption that ex-combatants are modern, individuated agents who require education and training in order to develop into responsible citizens, while refugees and IDPs are members of traditional rural communities (and thus governed by chiefs) and require assistance to re-establish primary food production. While there are indeed grounds for such an assumption, it tends to recapitulate rather than resolve a source of rupture that lies at the heart of the recent conflict. Political economy analysis helps to bring this issue to the fore.

Sierra Leone's three provinces are currently administered through 149 chiefdoms coordinated by 12 district offices. Chiefdom land is inalienable except for mining rights controlled by the government, and chiefdoms are also the primary jurisdictions of rural courts dealing exclusively in matters of customary law. The chiefdoms also employ their own force of security guards and bailiffs (the chiefdom police) separate from the state police. Paramount chiefs hold office for life. Local councils, mainly comprising village headmen and elders, elect paramount chiefs from candidates put forward by recognised ruling families. Here, in essence, is an old colonial system of 'indirect rule' preserved by post-colonial governments because it suited their political interests. Under colonial rule, the Sierra Leone Protectorate was a sphere of British-supervised 'native authority'; it was not united with the former Sierra Leone Colony under a single constitution until 1951. It was only then that politicians representing the majority of voters in the former Protectorate had an opportunity to overturn the long dominance of the Freetown Krios in national political affairs. But this ambition could not be realised without the support and cooperation of paramount chiefs. Chiefs' intimate contact with the local populace – many of the chiefdoms inherited by the Sierra Leone Republic in 1961 had populations of less than 20,000 – put them in a powerful position as political brokers. In the first decade after independence, national politicians often found it necessary to involve themselves in factional rivalries at the chiefdom level in order to win electoral support. Such involvement provided opportunities for local politicians to harness national issues and party affiliation to their struggles for chiefship. This *quid pro quo* has continued ever since (Kilson, 1966; Barrows, 1976; Tangri, 1978).

The vast majority of rural Sierra Leoneans still obtain primary rights of residence, land use and political/legal representation as 'natives' of chiefdoms, rather than as citizens of the state. It is the prerogative of chiefs (village, section and paramount) to recognise and guarantee 'native' status; 'non-natives' (since 1972 this category may include anyone a chief deems to be a 'stranger') are required by

law to take out a government lease to build, farm or otherwise conduct business on chiefdom land. Dependency on chiefs has long rendered rural Sierra Leoneans vulnerable to exploitation. Popular protest against the levels of tribute and labour service demanded by chiefs began to raise concerns among British colonial officials in the 1920s. It became apparent even then that modernisation, particularly the expansion of wage employment and urban migration, might undermine the power and authority of chiefs. Structural reforms introduced in legislation in the 1930s were not enough to prevent a spate of violent protests against perceived abuses of power by chiefs in northern Sierra Leone in 1955–56. The subsequent commission of inquiry reported (prophetically) that these riots were tantamount to 'a civil war rather than a disturbance'. However, the report on the testimony of witnesses also highlights the dilemma facing these protesters:

The chiefdom was a 'natural' unit which commands the loyalty of its inhabitants; most witnesses made it clear that they still had great respect for the office of chief, if not for its holder, and that what they objected to was the illegal extra taxes, license fees, and fines which the money economy had made it possible for the chiefs to extort from them (Cox, 1956).

While chiefdom administration may indeed appear to be 'natural' and rooted in indigenous culture, it has in fact been shaped by regimes of colonial governance. Foremost among these is the registration of villages for the annual poll tax. In practice, 'native' status is a privilege conferred by membership of land- and title-holding groups and attached to the registered villages in which chiefs reside. Chiefs are habitually selected from among those who best embody the historical precedents that serve as the local yardsticks of 'native' status (Fanthorpe, 1998). But the long-term effect of village registration has been to fix the points on the landscape at which rural people obtain that status. In recent times, the population that is obliged to attach itself to a village in order to obtain land, a vote, a tax receipt, and other privileges of *de facto* citizenship, has far exceeded that which is actually resident (and economically supportable) at any given time. Older men of higher inherited status tend to reserve these privileges for themselves, leaving young people and women clinging to attenuating orders of precedence. This is a source of social exclusion that may have greatly exacerbated the rupture generated by state recession and the contraction of patrimonial networks. Modernised, educated and individuated youth, once jettisoned by contracting patrimonial networks, may have had little opportunity, let alone desire, to return to rural communities governed by chiefs. Readily recruited by belligerent groups on both sides, they were already primed to sow chaos by their double alienation (Fanthorpe, 2001).

Chiefs were repeatedly targeted by the RUF during the war, but the conflict also exposed deep grievances among rural populations who continue to support, and depend upon, the chiefdom system. For example, in late 1999 a

post-war local government restoration project supported by DFID began a series of consultations in chiefdom headquarters to gauge local opinion on the prospective return of exiled chiefs.⁴ People spoke up with disarming frankness about alleged abuses of power at all levels in the political hierarchy. Many felt that they had no voice in government. Party interference in the affairs of paramount chiefs was also seen as a perennial problem. Furthermore, section chiefs, town chiefs and chiefdom councillors had often been appointed from above, rather than elected from below, and rarely paid any heed to the local taxpayers whose interests they were supposed to represent. The formal tax system had long ceased to function effectively, and salaries of chiefdom staff had not been paid for years. As a result, chiefs were in the habit of imposing fines and levies on a resentful populace. The local courts had been reduced to revenue-generating instruments in which 'justice' went to the highest bidder. Chiefs, moreover, were accused of reserving aid agency benefits for themselves or their favourites. One consultation report records the following observations of local youth in respect of the heavy fines levied by chiefs:

This is an age-old problem in the community and is one of the main factors underlying the war. These heavy fines cause deep-seated grudges as well [as] force young people to flee as they are unable to pay. The chiefs in the community are not paid... Therefore, they find their living from conflict and the fines that it produces. Combining this practice with other malpractices that chiefs enjoy has made chiefs a target for victimisation by armed youth, as they themselves feel victimised by the authorities.

Steve Archibald and Paul Richards have reported similar local grievances following their assessment of CARE International's food security projects in southern Sierra Leone (Richards, 2001; Archibald and Richards, 2002).

Even so, an earlier national consultative process, initiated by the Sierra Leone government in partnership with the UNDP, reported that:

It was evident that throughout the country, the relationship between traditional rulers and their subjects had become strained over the years. Contributing factors as expressed include the open partisan affiliation and the manifestly unprogressive character of some chiefs. The cry for reform in aspects of the institution of chieftaincy was overwhelming. This was, however, tempered by the desire to see that the institution regained its former glory and respect and that chiefs are empowered to play their roles as vehicles of development and progress in their chiefdoms (Government of Sierra Leone and UNDP, 1999).

It would seem that the dilemma highlighted in the above-

noted report on the 1956 disturbances is still very much alive. There is also a dilemma here for aid agencies. Fear of the consequences of a post-war governance vacuum in rural areas prompted DFID to design a programme for restoring paramount chiefs. This was enthusiastically supported by the SLPP government, which was keen to re-establish political control over the countryside. These concerns and interests have so far overridden efforts to reform chiefdom governance in the light of the grievances voiced in the above-mentioned chiefdom consultations. Another problem facing aid agencies is that the war has left a legacy of fear and distrust across all social sectors. Agencies are often inundated with grievances relating to the conduct of their staff, intended beneficiaries and other members of local communities with apparent power and influence. Sifting through these grievances and deciding which are genuine and which are disingenuous is not easy, and always leaves agencies vulnerable to the accusation that they are dabbling in politics. Nevertheless, some agencies working in Sierra Leone have attempted to promote good governance at the local level through discussion, role-play and other forms of demonstration. But such lessons are always likely to have a limited impact due to the complex interdependencies between chiefs and populace. Aid agencies may be tempted to adhere rigorously to their own standards of accountability and practice in order to insulate themselves from these political pressures. The costs and benefits of this strategy are considered in the examples that follow.

4.4 Research findings

Fieldwork began with a round of interviews with NGO staff and Sierra Leone government officials in Freetown. This was followed by fieldwork in Kambia district in north-western Sierra Leone. The objective here was to observe how the policy and programming strategies of NGOs worked in practice. Kambia district was chosen for two reasons. First, the area suffered considerable displacement of population and destruction of infrastructure quite late in the war, and has since become a hive of NGO activity. Second, extended research on rural livelihoods had already been undertaken in the area (Longley, 2000; Longley and Kamara, forthcoming), and an opportunity was seen to build upon that work. Community Action for Progress (CAP), a Sierra Leonean-staffed NGO based in Rokupr, provided accommodation and transport during the fieldwork. Most of the data presented below was acquired using ethnographic techniques. It is basic procedure for an ethnographic researcher to accompany people about their daily routines, and then take cues from those routines in order to initiate conversation.

The following account is largely based on interview data. In a few cases, it was possible to verify informants' accounts with reference to written reports, correspondence and conversations with third parties. However, opportunities for verifying accounts were limited by the time available.

⁴ This was the Paramount Chiefs Restoration Project (later, the Chiefdom Governance Reform Programme), located in the Governance Reform Secretariat of the Sierra Leone Ministry of Presidential Affairs.

For this reason, the names of individuals and agencies are omitted unless they are needed to clarify a particular aspect of the account.

4.4.1 Distant bureaucracies

A striking feature of current aid agency interventions in Sierra Leone is their intense and self-conscious effort to achieve efficiency, accountability and equity. Agencies go to considerable lengths to ensure that local needs and vulnerabilities are properly assessed, that inputs are properly procured and distributed, that these inputs actually reach the targeted beneficiaries, and that there are no accidental overlaps in the distributions managed by different agencies. However, planning, tendering and decision-making functions are heavily concentrated in the capital. Even now that Sierra Leone has been declared safe, many agencies are reluctant to deploy senior (often expatriate) staff in the field, despite having budgets to do so. For assessment and monitoring purposes they are heavily reliant on local field staff and implementing partners. Yet very little information is accepted from these sources without independent verification.

For example, a local NGO serving as an implementing agency on a seeds and tools project will be given strict assessment guidelines: whether the household head is male or female; the number of their internal and external dependants; whether they are ex-combatants, IDPs, unregistered returnees, or members of the host population; the level of destruction of their homes (assessed with reference to a sequence of numbered diagrams illustrating greater degrees of destruction) and looting of their property (assessed with reference to a checklist of domestic items); whether the person made a farm in the previous year (and if so, how many bushels of seed did they sow), and what type and variety of seed they require. Vulnerability scores are then allocated with reference to a donor-approved Poverty Assessment Tool.

Once the data has been processed, the local NGO will be subjected to a number of monitoring and assessment visits. These will vary depending on the number of agencies involved in the project, but tend to include representatives of the regional food pipeline agency, NaCSA, the FAO and perhaps a foreign consultant hired by the FMPU acting on behalf of multilateral actors. These monitors will not only attempt to verify the data by meeting a sample of prospective beneficiaries, but also assess the logistical capacity of the local NGO in respect of storage facilities and transport and distribution capability. Often, the volume of inputs released by the pipeline agency will be tailored to the latter assessment, rather than the original household vulnerability assessment. Since no two agencies supplying the same kind of assistance are allowed to work in the same chiefdom section in any given year, vulnerable households' access to aid often becomes something of a lottery.

One means of bypassing this problem is for the implementing NGO to subcontract, although this tends to happen only with infrastructure projects whose output is easily monitored. Even here, however, the worries of commissioning NGOs about the capacity (and honesty) of their sub-contractors has sometimes seen two entirely independent operators digging adjacent latrine pits in the same village, each with their own engineers, community liaison officers, labourers, vehicles and tools. In one instance, a bilateral donor cut the budget of a small project on the grounds that donating one rather than three rice mills to a large population of poor farmers was more likely to ensure that the machine would be used by its intended beneficiaries.

Another problem with this management and distribution system is its glacier-like responsiveness to new information, including that pertaining to errors and omissions in previous assessments. Kambia district, for example, has seen a considerable turnover in population and administrative and security apparatuses since the RUF relinquished control over the area in May 2001. The majority of public buildings and much private housing were destroyed by a combination of RUF terrorism and cross-border bombardment by Guinean forces. The RUF had also rendered many minor roads and bridges impassable to motor traffic. In June 2001, three multi-sectoral teams, led respectively by the NCRRR, OCHA and UNHCR, undertook a two-day assessment of needs in the district. Thirty-one settlements were assessed, and the results extrapolated to create an overview of priorities for humanitarian intervention, due for update every three to four months (Inter-Agency Assessment Committee, OCHA and NCRRR, 2001). The working draft of the first update (circulated in October 2001) begins with a plea for 'more detailed disaggregated information to support planning and coordination'.

However, the problem is not whether agencies receive updated information, but how they interpret it and act upon it. For example, in his report to the inter-agency meeting at Kambia on 20 March 2002, the Chief Education Officer (CEO) for Kambia district noted that the extreme patchiness of the WFP's ESF programme in the district was creating considerable difficulties. Children were leaving the schools omitted from the programme and attempting to enrol at schools that were benefiting from ESF. The WFP representative admitted that the original assessments had been done many months before, and had not covered areas still considered unstable and/or physically inaccessible to motor vehicles. Yet he insisted that no school could be included in the programme until it was established that it satisfied WFP's criteria of inclusion, and that new assessments were in progress. The representative was nevertheless faced with a barrage of complaints about the continuing omission of one of Kambia town's five primary schools from the ESF scheme. This issue appears to have generated copious correspondence, but the WFP representative was at a loss to explain why no rectifying action had been taken.

In a subsequent interview, the Kambia CEO explained how he believed the error had occurred. The education services in Freetown had supplied the WFP with a list of schools in Kambia town soon after the RUF withdrawal. But the school in question was one of two government-assisted primary schools in the town, was not centrally located and took its name from a town ward, rather than the town itself. A hurried assessment might easily miss the school. The CEO went on to detail another case where, in an isolated part of the district, two separate schools (Christian and Islamic) shared the same set of buildings; one school assembled in the morning and the other in the afternoon. The assessment team overlooked that fact, and only put the morning school on the ESF programme. This error had also been awaiting rectification for a considerable length of time.

4.4.2 Politics of grievance and issues of governance

Gaps in the coverage of NGO assistance, whether due to actual or presumed shortages in the logistical capacity of frontline agencies or errors and omissions in assessments, generate considerable local resentment. These resentments tend to mesh with political interests and grievances within the community at large. For example, one rural trader interviewed complained that his chiefdom had seen very little NGO benefits because it had not yet succeeded in placing a local person – a ‘son of the soil’ – in parliament. All the NGO benefits that should have come to his chiefdom were, he claimed, regularly diverted to chiefdoms and towns with better political connections. A woman present at the same meeting endorsed this view, adding that young men on motorcycles would often visit her village to register people for benefits and to collect fees for such registration. Chiefdom authorities would likewise collect money and food for the entertainment of ‘VIPs’ (i.e. politicians, district administrators and NGO representatives). Yet, she claimed, her village had never received any outside assistance since resettlement more than a year previously.

Complaining of exclusion from aid disbursements is a political weapon of the weak, and carries greatest force when implicating aid agency staff in corruption or other immoral practices. For example, there were allegations that the first schools to benefit from school feeding programmes would be those attended by girlfriends of members of needs assessment teams, and that any school left off the list would most likely have as a pupil a girl who had once spurned the sexual advances of one of these fieldworkers. Another case is that of a well-known Sierra Leonean civil rights activist who visited an IDP camp near Freetown. Shocked to hear the inmates complain that they had received no food or clothing for weeks, the activist broadcast these allegations in the Freetown press and on local radio, taking every opportunity to chastise both the international aid agencies and the government. These allegations provoked

considerable anger among aid agencies that had in fact been supplying the camp on a regular basis, but the damage to their reputations had already been done.

Chiefs have also been known to use allegations of corruption as a political lever against NGOs. In one reported case, a local NGO, working in partnership with a food pipeline agency, did a round of needs assessments while the local paramount chief was still domiciled, for security reasons, in Freetown. The bags of rice were first delivered by truck to the chiefdom headquarters, checked off by representatives of the chiefdom committee and stored temporarily in the local courthouse (*barrí*). The paramount chief arrived on a visit just in time to see the bags being loaded onto pickups for transport to the villages of the registered beneficiaries. The chief complained that he had to support several households of starving IDPs, and brought a list of names that he demanded should be added to the register. He was politely informed that it was too late to change the register on this round. The matter appeared to be closed, but articles soon appeared in the Freetown press alleging that NGO field staff in this particular chiefdom regularly forced beneficiaries to pay for seed rice supplied by relief agencies. These allegations generated a lengthy investigation, which failed to substantiate any part of them. However, none of those involved were left in any doubt about the message the chief was trying to convey.

Current needs assessment regimes, which tend to place chiefs and other local government functionaries at the bottom of vulnerability tables, have done little to improve relations between aid agencies and chiefs. The inaugural reports of the two above-noted NaCSA chiefdom liaison committees to an inter-agency meeting at Kambia are noteworthy in this regard. These reports contained a litany of complaints against NGOs: that they were signing off contracts with people who were not the legitimate representatives of local communities; that they were initiating aid distributions and building projects without even bothering to inform chiefdom authorities; that they were bringing in outside labour and building contractors rather than hiring local people, and that these outsiders were stealing from local stocks of building materials. The representative of the NGOs named in these reports adamantly refuted these charges, and the general view from the floor was that chiefdom authorities always want to control aid inputs as they see them as an opportunity both for personal enrichment and for rewarding political supporters. However, the NaCSA District Supervisor intervened in the discussion to remind the meeting that, unlike the wartime local administrations set up by both the RUF and the Civil Defence Force (CDF) militia, chiefs were legitimate local authorities whom NGOs providing aid inputs had a duty to consult. A number of NGO representatives then acknowledged that some of their projects had started before the chiefdom authorities had returned after the war, and went on to request instruction from NaCSA on matters of protocol regarding the signing of contracts. Yet even then, the general view was that a

'local authority' with whom a contract has been signed, not the NGO, should be responsible for informing the paramount chief.

Chiefs have a deservedly poor reputation among aid agencies working in Sierra Leone. One NGO fieldworker who had previously been employed as a liaison between international relief agencies and NARICOM (the National Relief Committee of Sierra Leone, a forerunner of the NRC) stated that, when rural IDPs began to arrive in Freetown in large numbers in the mid-1990s, it had been widely assumed that exiled chiefs would take responsibility for the welfare of their displaced subjects. Many were contracted to conduct censuses of IDP populations in the capital and to organise the distribution of relief. The results, apparently, were extremely disappointing. Investigations by the relief agencies revealed that the census figures had been grossly exaggerated, and that food distributions had often been diverted from the most vulnerable people to other beneficiaries the informant described as 'certain interest groups close to the chiefs'.

While chiefs may have earned the distrust of aid agencies, nothing at present alters the fact that they are legitimate authority holders with a right to be consulted by these agencies, if not actively involved in the management of rural aid distributions. Matters are further complicated by the Sierra Leonean government's strong support for the chieftaincy system. The government's entirely legitimate rationale has been to re-establish proper institutions for civil administration and the maintenance of law and order in rural areas. Even so, longer-term political calculations may also be at work. The latter are apparent in the management of Social Action and Poverty Alleviation (SAPA), a major NaCSA programme supported by the African Development Bank. In principle, SAPA is a micro-credit scheme targeted at non-combatant civilians. Each beneficiary receives 100,000 Leones (\$50) to be repaid over nine months at 15% interest. The repayments are supposed to service other beneficiaries. Chieftain administration was the government's mechanism of choice for disbursing these funds when the scheme started in October 2001. It was left to NaCSA regional offices to oversee the appointment of a Micro-Credit Chieftain Committee (MCCC) and loan collector for each chieftain. The MCCC comprises the paramount chief (as chair), all section chiefs and one female representative from each chieftain section, and is responsible for assessing and registering the chieftain's 'vulnerable poor'. According to a NaCSA loans officer interviewed in March 2002, the government insists that the beneficiaries should be 'law-abiding chieftain citizens who respect chieftain authorities'. A high proportion of each disbursement is supposed to go to women and young people.

According to the NaCSA interviewee, the scheme is widely abused. People permanently domiciled in Freetown often return to their forefathers' villages to register, collect the advance and return home. Section chiefs often try to service their supporters ahead of the truly vulnerable, or sometimes

try to register all their young children as beneficiaries. Furthermore, defaulting on repayments is common because, as the informant observed, people tend to see the money as compensation for their sufferings in the war – a civilian counterpart to the DDR scheme – rather than as a loan. Some members of the government seem to have encouraged this view. SAPA funds are apparently disbursed as a lump sum to chieftain treasuries, and at least one cabinet minister has been known to arrive with the cash and announce to a grateful populace that the government has arranged a benefit expressly for them. A growing chorus of complaints from rural people claiming to have been overlooked by the scheme, and recurrent reports that paramount chiefs have siphoned off as much as 25% of initial SAPA disbursements for their own use, prompted action from the minister chairing the cabinet sub-committee for micro-credit. In January 2002, the minister circulated a letter that reminded chieftain authorities that SAPA is a credit scheme and warned them not to embezzle the funds. The effectiveness of this particular message is unknown. However, NaCSA's recent announcement of a 'demand driven' funding policy, which involves by-passing NGOs in search of direct tenders from 'communities', seems to indicate where the Sierra Leone government's priorities currently lie.

Recurrent evidence that chieftain authorities cannot be relied upon to manage aid distributions transparently and fairly may encourage agencies to take a more interventionist approach to ensure that aid benefits the most needy. For example, the food pipeline agency for Moyamba district has experimented with a rights-based humanitarian approach. The pilot study took place in ten villages in the district, and the project has now entered a second phase. Part of the rationale is to tackle recurrent inequities in aid delivery created by corruption among chieftain authorities. It operates on the principle that anyone who wants to farm has a right to do so. Instead of giving out 40kg bags of seed to household heads, individuals are invited to register for a small package (5kg) of high-quality seed. But the major aim of the project is to encourage debate about the moral example established by this method of distributing aid. As the project designers put it, 'the debate about equitable access to NGO inputs is the catalyst for a discussion of broader issues related to community-level development, rights and governance' (Archibald and Richards, 2002). Debate is facilitated through six-monthly village meetings called Peace Days. As the project designers state:

The aim of the Peace Days is to get functioning, democratic community representation in place and ready to engage with the agencies of governance reform, the human rights community and government or non-governmental development agencies. To this end, the Peace Day communities are electing committees of women, young people and elders which they hope, eventually, will act as mechanisms for representation, regulation and enforcement at local level, and also to represent their respective issues at 'higher' levels within the chieftain and district structures (Archibald and Richards, 2002).

While this project is both innovative and highly principled, it raises a number of questions. First, if the above-noted reports of chiefdom-level consultations are anything to go by, popular experiences during the APC era and the subsequent civil war have generated acute rights awareness already, and in that regard the project may be preaching to the converted. Second, the in-country project manager reported in January 2002 that household heads tend to welcome the project because it relieves them of some of their responsibility for feeding dependants. There is a danger that the agency will be nudged into taking increasing responsibility for the social welfare of its registered beneficiaries, and that the Peace Days will become, in some eyes, instrumental to that purpose. Third, a project of this kind is limited in scale by its labour-intensiveness, and its overall effectiveness will depend upon the level of uptake of its methods and findings by other agencies – the Sierra Leone government included.

A second example – a house-building scheme in Kambia district – illustrates again the labour-intensiveness of community-focused projects. Kambia is estimated to have suffered 80–90% housing destruction during the war. In 2001, money was sourced from the Swedish International Development Association (via UNDP) for housing provision for war-affected communities in the district. Two international NGOs won contracts to build houses, one allocated 250 units and the other 150. A strong community focus was designed into the smaller of the two projects. It was planned at first that communities would provide local building materials (i.e. sand and timber) and unskilled labour; provision was also made for training ex-combatants in building skills. But the fundamental problem facing the project was that it was only going to build 150 houses in an area of acute housing need, and that the beneficiaries would be individuals and not ‘communities’.

After narrowing the focus to pockets of greatest housing destruction (Kambia town and parts of Gbinle Dixing chiefdom), the project was still left with the problem of selecting beneficiaries. The original idea was to hold a ballot. But consultations with the inhabitants of the selected areas showed that, while chiefdom authorities approved of the idea, others did not want wealthy individuals, with the means to rebuild their homes, enjoying the same chance of benefiting as those in greater need. The NGO asked local people to form their own action committees, which would liaise with chiefdom authorities and report back with a better plan. At first it was suggested that houses should be built wherever there was a substantial gap between intact buildings, but eventually it was decided that building should be concentrated in one or two streets, leaving others untouched. The rationale for this was to minimise the risk that future assessments would underestimate the level of housing need in the town. It was also decided by these committees that female-headed households should be given priority as beneficiaries. With these arrangements in place, the NGO found itself having to undertake a further round of consultations in order to secure local agreement for its

plans regarding the division of responsibility for various inputs. The chiefdom authorities insisted on dropping the idea of training ex-combatants, and instead supplied a list of young unemployed locals for building training. In the end, the NGO found itself having to draw up a separate memorandum of understanding for each labour gang, as well as each beneficiary. These consultations delayed the start of the building phase by several months. However, the agency considered the effort worthwhile; it had engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, which had helped win the agency a good name in an area where a great deal of work awaits for many years to come.

While requiring considerable expenditure in human resources, community-focused projects facilitate more rapid responses to the errors and omissions that often arise in needs assessments. Here, the onus is on local field staff and implementing partners. They not only have to comply with the professional and ethical standards demanded by international agencies, but also deal on a daily basis with a highly politicised populace with its own set of moral arguments and understandings.

4.4.3 Whose standards?

As some of the cases considered above reveal, international agencies will sometimes claim credit for rule-bending and corner-cutting if these are seen to bring desirable results. But attitudes can be very different if a local NGO tries to emulate such practices. In one case, from mid-2001, a local NGO discovered a large group of IDPs sheltering on an island in the upper reaches of the Little Scarcies river. This discovery was reported immediately to the district food pipeline agency, and a project proposal to supply these people with seed rice and fertilizer was rushed through to the NCRRR (NaCSA). The NGO obtained verbal approval from the NCRRR Regional Coordinator to procure seeds for these desperate people while the proposal was being processed. The NGO went ahead and procured rice wherever it could; it purchased some from Freetown wholesalers, borrowed some from local farmers and took the remainder from its own stores. It was now seriously out of pocket, but had to wait until three separate monitoring visits (made by representatives of the NCRRR, the World Bank and the FMPU overseeing NCRRR disbursements) verified that the seeds and fertilizer had indeed reached the intended beneficiaries. Finally, a letter arrived from an accountant at the FMPU informing the NGO that its contract had been aborted on the grounds of its ‘mis-procurement’ of rice. By neglecting to advertise its requirements for seed and fertilizer in the local media, the NGO had, apparently, contravened the World Bank’s rules of competitive tender.

The same NGO was contracted on another occasion by an international NGO to dig water wells on several sites. The contract was signed during the rainy season, and the local NGO advised its commissioning partner that it would

be impossible to complete the wells until the water table subsided in the following dry season. The delay in sinking the wells was accepted verbally by the commissioning NGO. However, when the time came for payment the international NGO deducted 30% of its implementing partner's fee as a penalty for delaying completion of the work according to the terms of the original contract.

Such heavy-handedness can also suppress much-needed feedback on the sociological assumptions written into aid projects. Such feedback is urgently needed. In one case, a project managed by an international agency attempted to deliver \$300 grants as start-up capital for small (especially female-managed) businesses. The beneficiaries the NGO had in mind were market traders and artisans in one- or two-person operations. But the Sierra Leonean implementing partner distributed some of the grants to an isolated village where it had previously set up farmers' associations to manage disbursements of seeds and tools. The members of these associations had pooled their grants to set up a rotating credit arrangement. Two expatriates who visited this village to monitor the performance of the project were at first extremely suspicious of this pooling arrangement, not least because both of the women's associations receiving grants had male treasurers. However, all the financial accounts proved to be in order and the local women, who were interviewed by this author in the company of the expatriate monitors, appeared happy with the arrangement. Indeed, they stated that they had to employ men as treasurers because no literate women lived in the village, and that they were proud of their new-found ability to contribute to the construction costs of the (unregistered) village school that their daughters would now attend. They also stated that local credit associations had helped to alleviate their dependence on local produce traders, some of whom were now shunning the village in a fit of pique.

The DDR programme is another case in point. The programme works on the assumption that ex-combatants will become individuated competitors on a 'job market'. In this respect it contrasts with the approach of many frontline agencies, which tend to assume that their beneficiaries are 'communities'. Indeed, as the aid effort in Sierra Leone begins to switch from 'relief' to 'development', it is becoming standard practice for NGOs to organise beneficiaries into self-governing CBOs in the interest of improved oversight and sustainability. The assumptions of the DDR programme carry weight because the RUF tended to abduct rural youths and subject them to political indoctrination and combat training in isolated forest camps, thereby taking them away from their communities. Yet the picture is complicated by the fact that the CDF tended to recruit among men who were vetted by chiefdom authorities and deployed in defence of their home areas.

Interviews conducted among 91 ex-combatants on DDR schemes at Rokupr Bush College and the Magbema Cashew Farmers Association plantation in Kambia revealed

many differences between these two groups. Most of the ex-RUF group were young men and women, mainly unmarried, who said that they were desperate to learn a trade and were willing to go anywhere to find work. The ex-CDF group mostly comprised older men, already married with families and farms. All respondents among this group expected to return to their villages as soon as the scheme ended. Indeed, it was said elsewhere that ex-CDF people often opt for school enrolment because they are already relatively secure, both socially and economically, and the school schemes provide an extra three months of Reinsertion Benefit. A few ex-CDF women, mostly wives of men registered on the same schemes, were captured by the survey. Only one of these (an intelligence gatherer who had worked behind enemy lines) admitted to having had weapons' training.⁵

Further investigation revealed even greater complexities. On the one hand, it was found that local youths in Rokupr resent the opportunities DDR provides for ex-combatants; some stated openly that they intended to join the fight next time around. One local NGO, which runs the Rokupr Bush College, has won donor approval for a project to provide places for local young people, but these are few and the funding only covers equipment; the NGO is forced to charge attendees fees of \$7.50 per month. On the other hand, many ex-RUF combatants on the scheme are former abductees and now simply want to find a community – any community – to call their own. By March 2002, some had drifted away from the DDR scheme in Kambia to sift local river gravel for diamonds. Although it is easy to be critical, there is no doubt that the donor-driven rush to 'process' ex-combatants through the DDR scheme has taken little account of the differing training needs and *de facto* reintegration opportunities of a socially complex population of former fighters. The social reintegration of ex-combatants, post-DDR, remains a concern for international donors, but the NGO, like many similar small agencies attempting to provide vocational training for ex-combatants and local young people, is still awaiting an opportunity to brief international project designers.

4.5 Conclusion

Attempting to repair social fabric by providing training and education for ex-combatants and seeds and tools for everyone else, targeting the most vulnerable for aid inputs on the basis of one's own assessment criteria, resisting demands from widely distrusted local authorities for greater control over aid projects, and punishing implementing partners for not conforming to one's own standards of accountability and practice – all are political acts. However morally defensible some may be (although there is no

⁵ The rituals of initiation into the CDF specifically exclude women, yet some women appear to have been accepted on to the DDR scheme on the grounds that they had provided logistical support to frontline units.

justification for holding implementing partners to the letter rather than the spirit of contracts during a complex emergency), they are based on value judgements and implemented from positions of power. Indeed, when aid agencies rigorously adhere to the highest standards of professional practice, they are tacitly acknowledging political engagement. But such rigour may prove counter-productive if it isolates aid agencies from the communities they are attempting to help. As the examples discussed in this study show, such isolation can easily lead to a breakdown in communication and trust, undermining the efficiency and effectiveness of aid delivery. While donors and commissioning INGOs fret about the veracity of needs assessments supplied by field staff and implementing partners, vulnerable people may go hungry or lose educational and employment opportunities.

Political economy analysis helps to bring home this message, but its greatest value lies in helping aid agencies to understand the political environment in which they have become engaged. Patrimonialism is entrenched in Sierra Leone's politics, and tends to generate intense grievances. There is every indication that grievances against chiefs were in circulation long before the recent conflict, and that they are likely to persist even though peace is returning. For reasons already noted, this does not necessarily herald the imminent demise of the chieftaincy system: people continue to rely upon chiefs to guarantee local citizenship and property rights. Furthermore, when viewed from below a patrimonial political system is not just about getting one's own people into high places, but also about doing whatever seems necessary to attract the interest and patronage of the rich and powerful – including airing grievances about one's current patrons. These political tactics may be misunderstood by well-meaning aid agencies sensing an opportunity for social engineering. The danger with such exercises is that they may create a kind of 'virtual governance reality' that, while attractive to metropolitan-based donors, diverts attention from the deep political interdependencies established by local regimes of citizenship and property rights.

The benefits to aid agencies that derive from a better understanding of local political dynamics are legion: better targeting of beneficiaries, better organisation of delivery, better understanding of risks, better prediction of a project's likely impact, and refined sociological assumptions written into project design. Information is the key, and there is no substitute for consultation and dialogue. Some of this information may be had from beneficiaries, but there is no group better placed to supply it than locally domiciled professionals, including NGO fieldworkers and implementing partners. Given Sierra Leone's current predicament, Sierra Leonean professionals with good connections in the aid community are likely to be sought out by the rural poor as political patrons. Herein lies a

dilemma for aid agencies. On the one hand, political economy analysis prompts greater understanding of the social and cultural pressures local professionals face; on the other, fraud and embezzlement remain crimes wherever they are committed. But there is no reason why senior NGO staff cannot discuss these issues with their Sierra Leonean staff and partners, build up trust, and arrive at strategies for overcoming these problems. The potential dividends for aid programming are huge, and do not necessarily require formal training schemes for either expatriate or local staff. After all, the problem to be overcome lies in institutional culture rather than skill deficiencies on the part of individuals.

A related point refers to the value of analytical frameworks and models. These lend intellectual coherence and vision to aid programmes in the competitive world of funding applications. But they may be counter-productive if they are based upon unrealistic foundations. The very first interviewee in the fieldwork for this case study, a country director for an international NGO, began by voicing his suspicion of models. His preference was for a reactive approach, assessing needs as they arose and giving the voice of all potential beneficiaries equal weight. For him, the critical issue was training field staff to make sure that they are both sensitive and responsive to the voices of different stakeholders. Nonetheless, analytical frameworks and models can have value in preparing agencies and their staff to operate effectively in complex social and political environments. A political economy approach may help agencies to understand why endemic uncertainty and vulnerability generate extreme political sensitivities within post-conflict populations – sensitivities that may sustain a politics of grievance that is difficult for foreigners to unravel, and that may see aid agencies played off against weakened local authority structures such as the chiefdoms. Dialogue with the widest possible range of local stakeholders seems fundamental to the success of post-war reconstruction in Sierra Leone. To that end, aid agencies have no choice but to treat their local staff and implementing partners with more trust and respect than they currently display.

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Chapter 5

Profits and poverty: aid, livelihoods and conflict in Afghanistan

Michael Bhatia and Jonathan Goodhand, with Haneef Atmar, Adam Pain and Mohammed Suleman

5.1 Introduction

Afghanistan is one of the least researched countries in the world. A dearth of pre-war data, the inherent difficulties of conducting research in a war zone and the low priority accorded to Afghanistan before 11 September have all contributed to this problem. Consequently, international interventions have rarely been based upon sound analytical foundations. While this applies to both diplomatic and humanitarian actors, this chapter focuses on the latter. It examines both the context of humanitarian action – in particular the political economy of the conflict and its effects on livelihoods – and the humanitarian actors themselves – specifically how they conceptualise and interact with these conflict dynamics and support (or undermine) livelihood strategies. The ultimate purpose is to enable aid agencies to better analyse situations of chronic political instability, and thus develop practical strategies and programmes.

After describing the rationale and methodology, the chapter begins with an overview of the historical and contemporary dimensions of Afghanistan's political economy. It then discusses the key findings of community-level research, in particular on livelihoods, and analyses selected commodities to highlight the inter-linkages between the various levels of the political economy. The chapter ends with an assessment of how aid agencies analyse political economy and livelihoods, and the implications of this research for their programmes.

5.2 Rationale and methodology

Afghanistan has wider relevance to the policy community for several reasons. First, it combines many of the challenges faced by aid agencies working in situations of chronic political instability. Second, there has been a significant degree of agency experimentation and innovation. Third, improved practice in the assistance sphere has consistently been held back by knowledge gaps. There is limited understanding of how macro-level political and economic processes interact with micro-level coping and survival strategies. Linking political economy and livelihoods analysis may be one way around this problem. While the gap between theory and practice is common to all aid contexts, it is particularly wide in Afghanistan. The literature on Afghanistan's political economy offers little about how

it might be converted into practicable policies and programmes. Similarly, the livelihoods literature has very little to say about violent conflict and how aid agencies might use such approaches.

The research was designed to develop a multi-level analysis, which explicitly links political economy and livelihoods approaches. First, a macro survey was conducted to: collect information on the Afghan political economy's international, regional and national dimensions; understand the interaction between aid and conflict; and map out how different aid agencies conducted political economy and livelihoods analysis. Data was gathered through a review of secondary literature and through interviews in Islamabad, Peshawar, Kabul, London and Washington. A cross-section of the international community was interviewed, from diplomats and security experts to NGO headquarters and field staff. This was complemented with key informant interviews with Afghan and Pakistani aid workers, journalists, refugee groups and businessmen. A focus group was held with a number of aid agencies in Peshawar to check and validate the key questions and research design.

Second, community-level surveys were conducted in five areas to generate insights into processes at the micro-level. The research questions were clustered around the following themes: livelihoods (assets, strategies and outcomes), aid, conflict and security, social relations and social capital, governance and local institutions. Qualitative participatory rural appraisal (PRA)-type methods were used, including observation, semi-structured interviews, mapping (geographical, resource flows and institutions), historical timelines and focus-group interviews. A team of up to four researchers spent approximately one week in each location. While questions of access and security influenced the selection of research sites, efforts were made to ensure diversity in location, environmental/physical endowments, security regimes, ethnicity and livelihood strategies.

Third, commodity chain analysis was used to reveal inter-linkages between the different levels and the related incentive systems, institutional relationships and degree of Taliban involvement.

A number of methodological lessons and shortcomings can be highlighted. First, given the limited duration of the research, the findings do not adequately capture the temporal dimension of the war economy and its interaction

with people's livelihoods. Commodity chains, for instance, constantly adapt to changing political and economic circumstances. Longitudinal surveys would be better able to capture the mutating and adaptive nature of war economies and livelihoods. Second, the geographical scope of the research was limited. Community surveys were not conducted in the west of the country, and this analysis solely examines the links between Afghanistan and Pakistan, not with Iran. Third, the research focuses on the micro and meso levels and less on the regional and international dimensions of the Afghan political economy. More research is required on the channels through which commodities are transported to Western markets. It was beyond the scope of the research to examine the role of external resource flows, including the financial and military support of neighbouring countries. While excellent work has been done on this subject (Human Rights Watch, 2001), this remains an under-researched area. Fourth, the team was unable to interview military groups, and therefore did not generate new knowledge on the structures, incentive systems and strategies of armed groups.

Other constraints and challenges encountered were both practical and methodological.¹ Both research and policy in Afghanistan are hindered by a lack of reliable quantitative data on the macro level. Even before the war, statistics on Afghanistan were 'wild guesses based on inadequate data' (Dupree, 1980). The rural economy remains statistically unknown (Pain and Goodhand, 2002: 2). Partly because of the lack of quantitative data, the research team applied a 'bottom up' approach utilising qualitative, case study-based methods. While this may yield rich data about particular contexts, comparisons and generalisations are difficult, given Afghanistan's varied geography and political economy.² These and other constraints (including access to women, security and the sensitivity of information) highlight the problems aid agencies face in collecting and analysing information.

This research was conducted before the events of 11 September, the fall of the Taliban and the investiture of a new Western-backed political regime. Despite the changed context, the rationale for this research and its key findings remain valid. Whether Afghanistan navigates a difficult transition towards peace, or descends back to the warlordism of the early 1990s, depends greatly on the extent to which international policies are cognisant of the country's political economy. This is particularly important in light of the significant development resources being pledged and the arrival of new international actors with limited experience or knowledge of the country.

¹ At the time of the research, relations between the Taliban and the international community had deteriorated. It was extremely difficult to obtain visas for international staff. Two of the international researchers were thus unable to conduct community-level research as originally planned.

² It should also be noted that, where this research has drawn on secondary sources for statistical information, these figures should be treated as illustrative rather than authoritative.

5.3 The macro dimensions of the Afghan political economy

5.3.1 Historical development

The history of the Afghan conflict has been examined elsewhere (see Rubin, 2000; Hyman, 1992; Maley, 1998). Table 5.1 provides a brief summary, highlighting the historical interplay between the crisis and collapse of the state, violent conflict and changing economic regimes – at the international, national and local levels.

Pre-war Afghanistan

Modern Afghanistan emerged in the nineteenth century as a buffer state, its borders determined by Russia and Britain and dependent for its support and legitimacy on external largesse. Rentier incomes allowed the domestic elite to rule without being domestically accountable. There was limited interaction between the state and citizens, and the administration was too weak to alter traditional patterns in rural areas. In parts of the east, for example, taxation and conscription were resisted – the price for tribal support in the civil war of 1929 had been the favourable treatment of landed interests by the state.³ One of the reasons for the paucity of statistics in Afghanistan has been what Dupree (1980) terms the 'mud curtain', which was erected by villagers to keep an interfering state at bay. State officials visiting the countryside were met with evasion on questions related to land (because of taxation) and family members (because of conscription).

By the 1960s, Afghanistan depended for nearly half of its budget on foreign aid, primarily from the Soviet Union.⁴ The benefits of rentier income were unevenly distributed; the eastern Pashtuns, for example, were the primary beneficiaries of irrigation projects, while the central highlands, populated by Hazaras, received limited state support. During the 1970s, the Afghan–Pakistan trucking sector became a growing economic force. A smuggling economy developed, encouraged by the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA) with Pakistan. This enabled landlocked Afghanistan to import selected commodities duty free. Goods were then smuggled back across the border and sold in Pakistan. The trade was controlled by the Pashtun tribes that straddle the Pakistan–Afghan border. Road construction in the 1970s and investment in heavy trucks with the help of West German credit further facilitated this trade. Political liberalisation led to growing instability and competition

³ In 1972, the two greatest single sources of national wealth – agriculture and livestock – yielded just 1% of state revenues (Hyman, 1990: 32). State-generated finances during the 1960s depended almost entirely on heavy duties on imported goods, which the merchant class were too politically weak to resist.

⁴ From 1956 to 1978, the Soviet Union provided Afghanistan with \$1,265 million in economic aid and roughly \$1,250m in military aid (Rubin, 1995: 22).

Table 5.1: The evolution of the Afghan war economy

Period	The state	The economy
Pre-war	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buffer state • Rentier state • Centralised but weak, limited power and legitimacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural subsistence economy • Bifurcation of urban and rural economies • Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA) – early foundation for cross-border smuggling economy
Proxy civil war (1979–1992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of state institutions with Soviet support, but remit limited to urban areas • Refugee warrior communities in Pakistan and Iran • Growth of political parties • Alternative rural power structures (commanders) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberate targeting of infrastructure in the countryside by Soviets • CIA/ISI arms pipeline • Monetisation of the economy • Growth of smuggling networks with Pakistan
Fragmentation (1991–95)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State collapse • Expanded role of regional powers • Growth of regionalised conflict • Aid community as surrogate government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decline of superpower largesse • Increased importance of internally generated resources • Expansion of opium and smuggling economies • Fragmentation/‘peripheralisation’ of the economy
Taliban (1995–2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taliban attempts to establish monopoly over means of violence (and predation) • Growing strength of transnational religious networks • International isolation (e.g. sanctions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidation and expansion of war economy (e.g. in 1999, 75% of global opium production) • Transport and marketing corridor • Growing political and economic importance of transport and trading sector

between communist and Islamist parties. A communist coup in 1978 (the Saur Revolution) sparked rural resistance and, ultimately, the Soviet invasion in 1979.

Proxy civil war

While the state did not collapse during this period, its primary functions were eroded, including its monopoly over the means of violence as the *mujahideen* opposition increasingly took control in the countryside. External resources transformed Afghan governance and economic structures. The government depended on Soviet financial and military support and revenue from gas sales. The American–Pakistani Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)/Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) pipeline delivered massive support to the opposition, with political parties in Pakistan and Iran serving as logistical conduits between external Afghan resistance commanders and internal ‘fronts’. This system of brokerage around the arms pipeline laid the foundations for the regionalised war economy of the 1990s. Soviet campaign strategy deliberately terrorised rural

populations and destroyed infrastructure, and food production fell by almost two-thirds during this period. Widespread internal and external displacement caused rapid urbanisation and the development of ‘warrior refugee’ communities in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Financial and humanitarian assistance contributed to the economy’s rapid monetisation (Rubin, 2000). Profits accumulated by commanders and traders were reinvested in illicit activities, including the drug and cross-border smuggling economies.

Fragmentation

The Soviets withdrew in 1989, and after *mujihadeen* forces took control of Kabul in 1991 the Afghan conflict became a regionalised civil war. The decline of superpower support meant that neighbouring powers became more important, and warlords were forced to develop internal revenue sources. Politically, there was a fragmenting of central power, with the emergence of regionalised politico-military groups, backed by neighbouring states. Economically, the internal war economy, based largely on cross-border

smuggling and narcotics, expanded rapidly. From being a buffer state, Afghanistan became a transmission zone or marketing corridor for a growing illicit economy. There was increased integration of the economies of provincial cities with neighbouring countries, and Kabul became an economic backwater. Warlords arguably had few incentives to put the state back together, and violence became a means of controlling markets and establishing a monopoly of predation.

Talibanisation

The emergence in 1994 of an assertive Islamic traditionalism in the form of the Taliban marked the next phase in the Afghan war. The movement rapidly became the pre-eminent politico-military force, and from 1996 controlled approximately 90% of the country. This development was closely linked to state and non-state interests in Pakistan. Pakistan saw the movement as a means of furthering its pursuit of 'strategic depth' in relation to its confrontation with India. The stability brought by a pliant regime would also enable Pakistan to establish an economic bridgehead – through transport, communications and pipelines – with Central Asia. The Taliban also had the backing of businessmen from the Afghan-Pakistani transport sector, whose economic interests had been damaged by the warlordism of the early 1990s. The Taliban brought security, which enabled cross-border trade to flourish once more. At its peak in 1996–97, the cross-border transit trade produced approximately \$2.5 billion (Naqvi, 1999), and the Taliban generated \$75 million through taxing this trade (Rashid, 2000). Afghanistan became the world's largest producer of opium; in 1999, production amounted to 4,500 tons. Related to the illicit trade were a range of connected service industries including fuel stations, shops and tea houses. The licit economy also benefited from stability, and agricultural production increased substantially during this period (although adversely affected by drought after 1997).

A third constituency supporting the Taliban were radical Islamic groups in the region, particularly in Pakistan.⁵ This period saw the consolidation of transnational political and religious networks with groups such as al-Qa'eda, the Islamic Movement for Uzbekistan (IMU) and Kashmiri separatists and outlawed Pakistani groups establishing bases in the country. Although evidence is limited, during the late 1990s Islamic groups, the drug and trading mafia and the Taliban appeared to become increasingly entwined. Finally, the Taliban received significant financial aid from the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Human Rights Watch, 2000).

⁵ Virtually all the Taliban leaders studied in *madrassas* in Pakistan with strong links to the Deobandi political party, Jamiat ul-Ulema-I Islam (JUI).

5.3.2 Contemporary dimensions

Violent conflict has transformed the political economy of Afghanistan. However, it is difficult to disentangle the effects of the conflict from wider processes, and there are important continuities with the past. The current political economy builds upon much older patterns of organisation and interaction. For instance, the drugs, smuggling and religious networks draw upon pre-war social networks based on *qawm*⁶ and tribal loyalties. The Taliban was a product of this distinctive political economy, not simply a medieval theocracy as often portrayed in the media. It developed extremely sophisticated ways of operating in and exploiting regional and global economies – Duffield's description of warlords who 'act locally, but think globally' is apt (Duffield, 2001). Although Afghanistan is in some respects on the periphery of the world economy, it is also intimately connected to it. The inability of the state to act as a mediating layer accentuates this 'connectivity' – profiteers may benefit from these linkages, while communities engaged in subsistence and survival become increasingly vulnerable as they are exposed to the turbulence of regional and international markets. Afghan communities have been subjected to a whole range of external shocks, from international sanctions to drought and the Taliban's opium edict, which have placed successive downward pressures on household livelihood strategies.⁷ As discussed below, the areas on the periphery – particularly in the east and west – are best positioned to exploit the opportunities presented by the regionalised 'bazaar economy', while the previously wealthy centre has become more vulnerable. Afghanistan is simultaneously experiencing processes of globalisation and localisation.⁸ On the one hand, globalisation occurs through economic integration, refugee flows, militant Islamic networks and engagement with the international community. On the other, localisation is taking place with the emergence of new forms of governance at the local level, the reversal of relations between the bazaar and the countryside and the growing importance of ethnic identity.

Were the Taliban warlords or proto-statebuilders? They used many of the same state-building strategies as previous rulers, including their attempt to establish a monopoly of violence, fragmenting the political opposition, rotating provincial administrators, taxing the population and enforcing conscription. Their desire for international recognition tends to support this view. Control of the state and possession of sovereignty are key to gaining access to major

⁶ A group united by a norm of solidarity and by competition with parallel groups (Rubin, 1996: 346).

⁷ On 27 July 2000, the Taliban leader Mullah Omar declared the cultivation of opium poppy to be 'unIslamic' or *haram*. This ban was rigidly enforced, bringing opium production down from its peak in 1999 of 4,500 metric tons to 79 metric tons in 2000.

⁸ This point draws upon the analysis of the UNDP Human Development Report for Somalia (2001), which outlines similar processes in the 'stateless' society of Somalia.

external resources. Conversely, foreign companies ultimately require states or state-like entities to act as guarantors and to protect their interests. The protracted and ultimately aborted negotiations between the Taliban and US oil company UNOCAL highlighted the need for a strong, internationally recognised state to attract serious international funding.⁹ The state-building strategies of neighbouring powers also hampered Afghan state formation. Pakistan's search for strategic depth, Uzbekistan's promotion of titular nationalism and repression of Islamic groups and Iran's support for *Shia* groups have all had destabilising effects within Afghanistan.

Although one can identify broad shifts in the Afghan political economy at a regional and national level, as Table 5.2 (Pain and Goodhand, 2002) illustrates, different kinds of economy involve different actors and have varying motivations. Broadly, three types of economy have emerged: the war economy, the black economy and the coping economy.

5.3.3 The war economy

Understanding Afghanistan's war economy has been hampered by the lack of empirically-based analysis of the internal structures, incentive systems, strategies and resource flows of warring groups, partly because of problems of access and security.¹⁰ This has often constrained diplomatic and humanitarian actors and actions (Fielden and Goodhand, 2001). For instance, the international community was divided in its analysis of, and response to, the Taliban's poppy edict. Similarly, in an evaluation of the Strategic Framework (Duffield et al, 2001), it was noted that the diplomatic and humanitarian communities had contrasting understandings of the Afghan context in general, and more specifically of the nature of the Taliban.

Clearly, the Taliban was not a monolithic or uniform movement. While power appeared to be concentrated in the hands of Mullah Omar and the Kandahari *shura* (council), the external influence of Pakistani state and non-state actors and of transnational religious groups has already been noted. Objectives and incentive systems appear to have changed over time, with a shift from a strongly nationalist agenda to one influenced by the religious transnationalists. Internal divisions were also apparent between hardliners and moderates, with the former rejecting policy reform because of potential opposition, particularly from the hardline mullahs and *madrassa* students at the frontline.¹¹ To understand the incentives of different actors in the war economy, one may need to look at different levels of the system. The 'top down'

violence instigated by those at the apex of military structures is likely to involve very different kinds of incentives from the 'foot soldiers' engaged in 'bottom-up' violence. This is where the war economy and coping or survival economy start to merge.

5.3.4 The 'black' economy

'Black' and 'illicit' are deeply problematic and value-laden terms. In fact, much of the language used by classical economists – licit/illicit, employed/unemployed, formal/informal – has limited descriptive or analytical value in situations of chronic political instability. Nordstrom's 'shadow' and 'extra-state' economies may be more appropriate (Nordstrom, 2000). Whichever term is used, the key point is to distinguish between those whose objective is to wage war and those who aim to profit – while in practice these categories may overlap, this need not be the case. In most cases, there are actors who profiteer on the edges of a conflict. However, unlike conflict entrepreneurs, economic entrepreneurs may have an interest in peace, if peace enables them to maintain or increase their profits. While transport merchants may have had close links to the Taliban, their interests may not always have coincided with those of frontline commanders.

Clearly, markets and profits are regulated by access to political power and the means of violence. While in the 1950s the Afghan merchant class was politically weak and heavily taxed, by the 1980s and 1990s the transport businessmen in Peshawar and Quetta were an important political force, due largely to their close ties with military groups. Markets in the east have become increasingly articulated towards Pakistan. In the mid-1990s, Pakistani dealers took advantage of the turmoil to augment their collection of antiquities. The grain markets in Kabul are controlled by Pashtuns who have direct credit relations with businessmen in Peshawar. As outlined below, the carpet business is increasingly controlled by Pakistani Pashtun entrepreneurs. In primary goods and resource movements for processing, the majority of profit and add-on manufacturing costs are incurred and accrued by Pakistan.

Violence has underpinned a primitive accumulation that is intensely exploitative, and which has led to a growing differentiation of the population. For example, farmers with land and capital lease out their land for poppy cultivation, while landless farmers who have no other sources of credit are pushed further into debt (Mansfield, 2000). Violent conflict has destroyed some markets while creating others – in Badakshan, for example, the livestock trade with Kabul was decimated due to insecurity, but the opium trade with Tajikistan has flourished (Goodhand, 2000). The informal economy also plays an important role in shaping formal economies and trans-border trade. Moreover, while the trading economy has mitigated some of the impacts of the drought, it is not productive in the sense that there is no long-term investment in infrastructure or industry.

⁹ See Rashid (2000) for a more extensive analysis of the negotiations between UNOCAL and the Taliban.

¹⁰ The lack of political interest in the region has also been significant.

¹¹ Interview, Peshawar, Pakistan, August 2001.

Table 5.2: Types of economy in Afghanistan

Key actors	The war economy	The black economy	The coping economy
Motivations and incentives	<p>Commanders, 'conflict entrepreneurs', fighters</p> <p>To fund the war effort or achieve military objectives</p> <p>Peace may not be in their interest as it may lead to decreased power, status and wealth</p> <p>Fighters may have an interest in peace if there are alternative sources of livelihood</p>	<p>Profiteers, transport mafia, businessmen; 'downstream' actors (truck drivers, poppy farmers)</p> <p>To make a profit on the margins of the conflict</p> <p>Entrepreneurs profit from the lack of a strong state and a highly liberal economy</p> <p>Peace could be in their interest if it encourages long-term investment and licit entrepreneurial activity</p>	<p>Poor families and communities (the majority of the population)</p> <p>To cope and maintain asset bases through low-risk activities, or to survive through asset erosion</p> <p>Peace could enable families to move beyond subsistence</p>
Key activities and commodities	<p>Taxation of licit and illicit economic activities (opium, smuggled consumer goods, lapis and emeralds, wheat, land tax)</p> <p>Money, arms, equipment and fuel from external state and non-state actors</p> <p>Economic blockades of dissenting areas</p> <p>Destruction of means of economic support</p> <p>Asset-stripping and looting</p>	<p>Opium economy</p> <p>Cross-border smuggling</p> <p>Mass extraction of natural resources (timber, marble)</p> <p>Smuggling of high-value commodities (emeralds, lapis, antiquities, rare fauna)</p> <p>Hawala (currency order and exchange system)</p> <p>Aid manipulation</p>	<p>Diverse livelihood strategies to spread risk</p> <p>Subsistence agriculture</p> <p>Petty trade and small businesses</p> <p>Agricultural wage labour</p> <p>Labour migration and remittances</p> <p>Redistribution through family networks</p> <p>Humanitarian assistance</p>
Impacts	<p>Disruption to markets and destruction of asset bases</p> <p>Violent redistribution of resources and entitlements</p> <p>Impoverishment of politically-vulnerable groups</p> <p>Out-migration of educated people</p>	<p>Concentrates power and wealth</p> <p>Undermines patron-client relationships, increasing vulnerability</p> <p>Smuggling circumvents Pakistan's customs duty and sales tax, affecting revenue collection and undercutting local producers.</p> <p>Increased drug use</p>	<p>Coping may reinforce social networks, but survival may lead to negative or regressive coping strategies</p> <p>Lack of long-term investment</p> <p>Long-term effects on human capital – lowering levels of health, education, etc.</p>

Table 5.3: Representation of trade and goods flows through, to and from Afghanistan

From Afghanistan	To Afghanistan	Through Afghanistan
Timber to Dubai Agricultural, horticulture products and livestock to Pakistan Minerals to Pakistan and through Tajikistan (through Polish firm) (valued at \$60m) Antiquities ¹² and exotic animals Narcotics to Iran, Pakistan and Central Asia	Tyres through Karachi Carpet material and household products and appliances from Pakistan, Iran, Dubai Wheat from Pakistan and Kazakstan Oil from Turkmenistan	Oil to Pakistan from Tajikistan Used cars to Pakistan from Dubai and Hong Kong (avoiding 250% tax) Scrap metal from former Soviet Union (and within Afghanistan) to Pakistan (for melting and reproduction) ATTA re-exports to northern Pakistan

Entrepreneurs gravitate towards low-risk, quick-return activities, and profits are accumulated outside the country. Without a strong state and a legal framework, there are few incentives to make the shift towards longer-term productive activities.

According to a World Bank study, of the \$2.5bn in trade across the border in 1996–97 (which constituted 48% of Afghanistan’s gross domestic product (GDP) and 12–13% of Pakistan’s trade), official trade in local goods accounted for 2%, unofficial trade in local goods 14% and unofficial ATTA re-exports to Pakistan approximately 84% (Naqvi, 1999). While the ATTA is vital for supplying Afghanistan with essential products, the list of non-essential items (from electronics to air-conditioners) ‘suggest that a large portion of the ATTA [is used as] a channel of evading tariff and non-tariff barriers and of smuggling goods in Pakistan’. In general, the price of these smuggled goods was 30–40% lower than those either locally produced or officially imported. Some of these goods previously moved beyond Pakistan to India, Bangladesh, Iran and the Central Asian republics (Naqvi, 1999: 11–13). The trade route through Iran is also important, as evidenced by the preponderance of Iranian goods in Kabul’s markets.

5.3.5 The coping economy

Overall, vulnerability has grown, with a gradual erosion of asset bases. Families have either retreated into subsistence or are adversely incorporated into the market, through for instance labouring in poppy fields or children working in the carpet industry.

Labour has become one of Afghanistan’s primary exports. Remittances are central to the Afghan economy, and to Afghans living in neighbouring countries.¹³ Social

obligations fuel the remittance economy. It also increases social differentiation – in general families with relatives in the Gulf or Europe are able to accumulate, while the remittance economy in Pakistan and Iran is more commonly associated with survival.

Families have sought to spread economic and political risks through diversification, migration, switching to low-risk crops and spreading political affiliation. This was described by one interviewee as the ‘octopus’ model, whereby ‘families deploy members on the basis of the attribute most suited to gaining employment at any given time (gender, qualification, and occupation, etc)’, with it being ‘equally important for families to establish and exploit as large a network of useful contacts as they can (Taliban, UN, NGO, commercial)’ (Fielden and Azerbaijani-Moghadam, 2001). As a crisis progresses, families will resort to selling livestock, land and other household assets.

Women and children are involved in negative coping strategies, including begging and prostitution. As stated by one informant, ‘everything is an asset in an Afghan family ... the drought has meant that people have had to squeeze the economic potential of their children even more’. The Taliban’s policies on gender also had an important impact on livelihood strategies, particularly in urban areas. In the past, the degree of obedience to Islam and women’s household roles have varied depending on the male head of the household, and also to changing concepts of prestige, as reflected in the linkage between the *burqa* and the community’s perceptions of a woman’s economic role. Previously, ‘the men controlled women in Pashtun society, now the Taliban control women, and men have lost authority’.¹⁴

Evidently, this schema of the war, black and coping economy simplifies reality. In practice, there are no clear boundaries between these three economies, and networks

¹² The trade in artefacts had died down by mid-2001, as key Pakistani traders priced themselves out of the market. Media stories create additional demand. Interview, Peshawar, Pakistan, August 2001.

¹³ For instance, most of the relatively expensive houses in Hyattabad outside Peshawar are rented to Afghans.

¹⁴ Interview, Peshawar, Pakistan, August 2001.

have developed with complex overlapping connections. Incentive systems vary at different levels of the commodity chain. For a resource-poor farmer, poppy cultivation is part of the coping or survival economy; for the landowner leasing land, or for the opium trader, it is part of the black economy; and for the commanders that tax cultivation it is part of the war economy. Different commodities – such as weapons, money, drugs, consumer goods or food – may travel along the same routes. The *sarafi* (money-changer) is an important node in this network: these services are used by warlords, profiteers, communities and aid agencies. Aid has played a varying role in relation to all three economies, according to the phase of the conflict and the type of assistance. Poorly monitored food for work programmes during the 1980s, for example, fed directly into the war economy. During the 1990s, rural rehabilitation projects supported the coping economy by boosting agricultural production. Similarly, humanitarian relief in Kabul has been an important element of the coping economy.

Illicit activities may promote development – they link remote rural areas to major commercial centres, both regionally and globally, though the benefits of this development are unevenly distributed. These economies also involve complex socio-cultural and political as well as economic organisation, in networks of exchange and association. These networks are governed by rules of exchange, codes of conduct and hierarchies of deference and power (Nordstrom, 200: 37), reinforced through such strategies as inter-family marriage (wife-givers and wife-takers), gifts and partnerships (with family members presenting claims for profit, involvement and opportunity).¹⁵ These are not anarchic processes, and they do not depend purely on coercion. Trust and social cohesion are critical. Counter-intuitively, the very *absence* of a state and predictable social relations may engender greater trust and solidarity at the local level; people depend upon it for their survival. Many Pakistanis use the *sarafi* system even though there is a functioning formal banking sector; evidently, the informal system provides the reliability and predictability lacking in the official economy.

5.4 Case studies: the view from the village

Five areas were selected for field research (see Table 5.4). Cases were selected to provide a cross-section of differing locations, physical resources, security regimes, ethnic backgrounds and livelihoods opportunities.

5.4.1 Livelihoods, vulnerability and response strategies

Key themes from the community-level studies include the destruction of assets and capital, the diversification of livelihoods, an increased reliance on market entitlements

reflecting the growth of the bazaar economy; shifts to low-risk activities and the lack of long-term investment, with accumulated assets either invested in the war and black economies or in external activities and accounts. The overall context is characterised by high levels of vulnerability, with the generalised effects of conflict and state collapse, compounded by a range of external shocks, including drought, international sanctions, the Taliban's opium edict and restrictive gender policies and the changing policies of Pakistan towards Afghan refugees. However, generalisations should be treated with caution. There is a great deal of variety from area to area, and livelihood strategies depend upon a complex range of factors, including location (core/periphery); security regimes (level of stability and instability, and resulting political vulnerability); the proximity of borders; and access to roads, markets and water. This variability applies from village to village, even within the same locale. In Afghanistan, 'place' matters. For example, in Faryab villages relatively close together had markedly different economies, with considerable household differences in sources of income and access to food (production, market, exchange). One Qaramaqol village settled by one-time Turkmen nomads had no arable land and had been dependent on livestock and labouring opportunities in other villages. Poorer households tended to have more diverse income sources than richer ones. In certain villages in the Almar area of Faryab, the economy was entirely agrarian-based, with a high degree of mutual livelihood interdependence, while for others the degree of involvement with agriculture was extremely variable.

Broadly, households can be divided into those who profit (add to their asset base), those who cope (non-erosion of asset base) and those who survive (erosion of assets). These categories are not static and have changed over time, according to the influence of changing political regimes and various external shocks. Coping strategies have included reducing food consumption, seasonal migration, selling non-essential assets, carpet-weaving, reducing expenditure and seeking food relief. In Hutqul, Jaghori, the following livelihood strategies were identified: agriculture/horticulture, trading, out-migration for labour work to Iran, Pakistan, Europe and Australia, cutting and selling of timber, carpet-weaving, embroidery, gileem (non-pile carpet) production and car mechanics. Survival strategies which have depleted not only physical but also social and human assets include the disposal of core assets (oxen, land, house beams), taking children from school so that they can collect fuel and act as servants, or marrying off daughters early for bride price. In Kabul, both chronically poor and wealthier households sought to sell assets, to either survive or to minimise the risk of looting, to send people overseas or to set up new businesses.

The drought has had a major impact on livelihood choices and coping strategies, although trade and remittances have mitigated its impacts in some areas. Households are affected by overlapping vulnerabilities. For instance, respondents

¹⁵ Interview, Washington DC, September 2001.

in Jaghori and Kandahar's Dand district noted that, during the drought in 1971, the government provided subsidised rice, whereas in the latest drought there were few forms of public action, beyond aid agency assistance. There was a 'political economy of neglect' (Le Billion, 2000), with the Taliban providing virtually no public entitlements apart from a measure of security. In some areas, it was estimated that there had been a decrease of 75–95% in both agricultural production and livestock holdings, affecting both exports and subsistence. In both Jaghori and Kandahar, while the price of food had decreased compared to 2000, overall purchasing power had fallen more drastically. In Kabul, for instance, where many of the most vulnerable are dependent on daily labouring, wages have gone down and people can only get work for one or two days a week. In Dand, there has been an increase in the number of casual labourers, who travel from the village to Kandahar every day.

As a result of the drought, households previously able to accumulate or cope move into survival. The almond trade in Anghori, for example, has been badly affected. While each of the 15 traders previously purchased 300 77kg sacks of almonds annually for export to Ghazni province, by August 2001 each bought only 60 sacks (a reduction of almost 80%).¹⁷ As 80% of almond trees have died, it will take approximately five to six years for new ones to bear fruit. Resources may be exploited to meet short-term survival needs (or in some cases to profit), but ultimately this undermines long-term coping strategies. Anghori villagers have engaged in woodcutting, which has led to a fall in prices and will ultimately deplete stocks. Respondents stated that three to four trucks full of timber are exported daily to Ghazni province, with each able to take about 200 pieces. In Kandahar, it was reported that some poor farmers were selling the topsoil of their agricultural land, while more desperate ones have been forced to sell land. This has also occurred in Anghori, despite the social stigma associated with this practice.

Vulnerability is partly a function of natural and financial assets, notably access to land, water and credit. In Kandahar, for example, drought-affected IDPs (about 20 families) and families with little land were viewed as being the most vulnerable in the village. More typically, in Hutqul village, the following groups were viewed as most vulnerable: war-affected IDPs from Yakowlang, Bamiyan and Mazar; female-headed households; disabled-headed households; and families without an able-bodied person. Those involved in survival are confronted with high degrees of indebtedness, forcing many to become involved in carpet-weaving and hashish and poppy production, activities that tend to further lock families into cycles of indebtedness to traders.

¹⁷ Before the drought, total production and export was 346,500kg; now, total production and export is 69,300kg, a reduction of 277,200kg.

At the same time, however, classic forms of vulnerability may no longer apply. One Laghman family headed by a civil servant in Kabul, for instance, is now vulnerable because of its lack of land, resources, relevant skills and tribal connections. In Kabul, the WFP considered a family with a male wage earner working as a government servant as being as vulnerable to food insecurity as a family with a male casual labourer or with no male wage earner (WFP, 1999: 3). Ultimately, vulnerability is a function of political powerlessness. This has changed with different political and security regimes. Communities in Hazarajat are vulnerable because of a range of interlocking factors, including political vulnerability (manifest in an economic blockage and restrictions on mobility); geographic marginality (distance from markets); limited natural resources; and generalised poverty (which places limits on redistribution through social networks). In Peshawar, for example, one *sarafi's* vulnerability was as much a result of his Tajik ethnicity as his lack of wealth. With changing policies towards Afghan refugees, non-Pashtun groups have become increasingly vulnerable. Wealth may also become a source of vulnerability. For instance, in 1978 in Faryab after the Saur Revolution sections of the rural elite were threatened, and many left for Iran, Pakistan or the West. Thus, in such a complex political environment, the categorisation of vulnerability, based upon region, class or profession, will be highly fluid. Indeed, with the collapse of the Taliban movement, a new definition of vulnerability is likely to emerge, and new groups will become affected due to shifts in the political/economic environment.

Remittances and trade have played a central role in coping and in some cases accumulating wealth. Remittances in Angori were a key source of income; about 80% of young men have gone either to Iran/Pakistan or Europe/Australia. In Jaji, remittances funded not just individual families, but also communal institutions such as schools and mosques. Monetisation, marketisation and socio-economic differentiation have perhaps been greatest in Jaji and Dand. This is due to a range of factors, including proximity to markets; a history of aid provision (and military support); and primitive accumulation due to warlord predation, the opium economy and smuggling. The unregulated extraction of timber from Jaji forest during the mid-1990s, for example, enabled conflict entrepreneurs and local businessmen to accumulate wealth.

Trade has been central to livelihood coping strategies. The conflict has altered trading networks – who is involved and who controls them. For example, before the war Angori traders exported almonds to India, while now almonds are only exported to Pakistan. Traders from Kandahar city used to buy grapes and raisins from local farmers for export to India in exchange for tea and sugar. In both Kandahar and Aghori, while local and national traders are involved, Pakistani middlemen and buyers have increasingly asserted control.

Table 5.4: Case study areas¹⁶

Village (V) District (D) Province (P)	Sher-e-Sorkh Dand Kandahar	Sargal, Kooz Belawot, Sharif Kala Jaji Paktia	Hutqul/Angori Jaghori Ghazni	Qaramqol/Almar Faryab	District 5, Ysef Bangi, Rahmanabad Kabul City Kabul
Population (V) Population (D)	2,751 595,426	3,390 52,000	8,400 (8,100 households) 56,700	n/a	3,840 households
Out-migration	107 families	High; 195 families abroad	20%	n/a	80% displaced
IDPs in residence	n/a	n/a	1,400 IDPs from Yakowlang, Bamyan, Mazar	n/a	Significant
Characteristics: Rural/urban Ethnicity Tribal groups Religion	Peri-urban Durrani Pashtun Alikozai Sunni	Rural (integrated) Southern Pashtun Jaji Sunni	Rural (isolated) Hazara Aowlad-e-Ata clan <i>Shi'a</i>	Semi-rural (integrated) Uzbek, eastern nomadic Pashtun (post- 1890s), Turkmen (post-1920s)	Urban Ethnically mixed (Hazaras, etc)
Land ownership: Percentage Average amount	Majority From 1–50 <i>jeribs</i>	n/a	50% 7 <i>jeribs</i>	n/a	75% 2–3 <i>jeribs</i> (average); 50 max
Imports	Iran/Pakistan: Cars, motorcycles, flour, ghee, rice, sugar, tea, fuel, clothing, utensils, floor mats	n/a	Cars, motorcycles, flour, ghee, rice, sugar, tea, fuel (kerosene, diesel, petrol), clothing, utensils, floor mats	n/a	n/a
Exports	Grapes, raisins, fresh/ dried fruit, drugs (poppy)	Timber, firewood, beans, apples, nuts, vegetables, potatoes, cannabis, livestock	Almonds, timber (4 types), gileem, fruit, nuts; hides	Karakul skins, dried fruit, carpets, kilims, grain	n/a
Key markets	Sher-e-Sorkh, Quetta	Tera Mangal, Parachinar, Kabul, Peshawar	Ghazni centre, Kabul, Kandahar, Waish, Spin Boldak	Adkhoi market, Turkmenistan, Peshawar	Kabul market
Impact of drought	Decrease by 66% in agriculture, livestock	Reduced grazing land, failure of potato crop	Agriculture decreased by 99%, 80% decrease in almond, 75% in livestock	Substantial	In-migration due to drought-induced displacement

¹⁶ The data in this table is based upon interviews with villagers; figures should be treated as approximate.

Coping/survival strategies	Casual labour, land sale	Hashish production, culling forest	Culling of forests, NGO assistance, selling topsoil	Reduced consumption, seasonal migration, carpet-weaving, selling core assets (oxen, land, house beams), child labour	Carpet-weaving, child labour, selling assets (land)
Key livelihoods sources	Agriculture vineyards, trade	Agriculture, forestry, trans-border trade, merchants, civil servants, transporters/drivers (10%), migrant workers (Middle East, Pakistan)	Agriculture/horticulture, trading, migrant labour (Iran, Pakistan, Europe, Australia), forestry, carpet-weaving, embroidery, gileem production, car mechanics	Varies by village and assets, includes agriculture, livestock, carpet production, trading	Civil servants, agriculture, craftsmen (carpenters, masons, carpet-weavers, barbers, mechanics), casual labour, traders, retail, private transport. Women run home schools, children collect rubbish, beg
Vulnerable groups	Drought-affected IDPs, families with little land	Landless, widows, disabled, ex-civil servants, military officers	War-affected IDPs, female-headed households	n/a	Hazaras due to political persecution; civil servants
Impact of conflict	Heavy destruction, out-migration, fighting between <i>mujahideen</i> groups until Taliban assumed control in 1996	Extensive during Soviet period, out-migration, bombardment, mining, destruction of irrigation, forests; limited warlordism, tribal disputes afterwards, peace under the Taliban	Limited during Soviet period, aside from blockade of area in 1979, although increased under Taliban, with discrimination, etc	Substantial destruction, out-migration during Soviet period; predation in post-Soviet period until 1998. Conflict assumed ethnic dimension	Untouched until 1992, then 70% of houses destroyed, mass displacement, looting, development of local arms manufacturing and trade
Armed movements	110 <i>mujahideen</i> groups formed in 1979; Taliban conscription in area	Used as primary supply conduit for <i>mujahideen</i> , some joined Taliban initially	<i>Mujahideen</i> formation in 1979, groups form coordinating <i>shura</i> 1986-97, join Taliban after 1997	Post-1991: Dostum-Northern Alliance; 1998: Taliban control	1992-96: district divided between Sayeef, Wahdat, Jamiat groups until Massoud gained control; 1996: Taliban
Governance	Traditional <i>shura</i> weakened by conflict, current <i>shura</i> limited, subordinate to Taliban	Strong <i>shura</i> , high degree of autonomy; collective management of resources; Taliban district administration	Little involvement of Taliban district administrator, engaged, strong, largely autonomous local <i>shura</i>	Some autonomy, little extension of Taliban to below district level. Resettlement of Pashtun	Taliban administration, lack of local institutions, accusations of land confiscation

In Angori, traders import commodities from Pakistan and Iran, and then buy almonds, nuts, fresh fruit, gileem and wood from producers for sale to Ghazni-based traders and for export to Pakistani markets. Within the commodity chain, power is located with the buyers and dealers. Table 5.5 provides two examples of the price differences between the producing village and the final market, indicating the changing terms of trade as one goes up the commodity chain. Traders will operate in a process of delegation and sub-contracting; a mid-level trader will borrow money from a major exporter, then approach various producers for goods, while hiring other village members as sub-agents.

Table 5.5: Commodity price chains: timber and almonds (August 2001)

Timber (Jaji) (per foot)
Sargal: PRs200
Parachinar: PRs300
Karachi: PRs800–1,500
Almonds (Jaghori) (per 7kg)
Angori: Price varies by quality
Ghazni: +20,000 Afgs
Kabul: +10,000 Afgs

5.4.2 Conflict, security and governance

Changing security regimes have shaped local governance structures and, in turn, livelihoods. Different areas were affected at different times, following the changing geography of the conflict, as the centre of fighting shifted from the countryside during the Soviet period to the urban areas during the *mujahideen* government years. In Faryab, Paktia's Jaji and Kandahar's Dand district, fighting between the *mujahideen* and the Soviet army led to substantial destruction, forcing households to retreat into subsistence or illicit activities and producing extensive displacement. The entire population of Sher-e-Sorkh and its neighbouring villages, as well as a significant number of those interviewed in Jaji, migrated to Pakistan. Following the Soviet departure and the collapse of the government in 1991, Faryab was subject to considerable insecurity and substantial predation and asset-stripping at the hands of competing power centres. Instability disrupted trade routes, particularly with Pakistan.

In areas under Taliban control, effects varied from place to place. In the Pashtun areas, the positive benefits of security

have been most marked, whereas for Kabul and Jaghori the effects have been more mixed as non-Pashtun communities have been subject to violence and predation. Even so, respondents in Angori reported that the market had expanded by up to 70% as it has become one of the most important access routes to and from Hazarajat. The nature of local Taliban administration appeared to differ according to the movement's calculation of the locality's orientation, composition and power base. The Taliban employed the tactics of earlier state-builders, seeking to prevent district *shuras* from gaining power, and rotating their own administrators to remove competitors and prevent the establishment of local centres of power. Certain communities and regions with strong tribal ties proved capable of directly resisting or simply ignoring Taliban edicts, thus maintaining a degree of local autonomy. Urban areas were typically subject to more stringent Taliban control.

At the time of the research, negotiations between the centre and locality were particularly apparent in the areas of taxation, gender and religious policy (education and employment, for instance), and in the fulfilment of village combatant quotas. In Dand, each mosque was assessed and provided either a number of young men or paid 120,000 Afghani per two months per person. In some areas, these policies were resisted or subverted. In Jaji, for instance, Taliban penetration beyond the district level was limited. While the Taliban district administration in Jaji included a district administrator, his deputy, a police department and a district *shura*, Jaji and other districts of Paktia retained a privileged status in relation to the central government, enjoying a degree of internal autonomy, as has historically been the case. Thus, this inter-relationship was characterised by a significant degree of political accommodation and non-confrontation, with the Taliban levying a variety of taxes, but also failing to ban cannabis production and girls' schools, or to prevent women from seeking a degree of employment.

Transactions between the Taliban and local communities were mediated through the *shura*. Much depended on the strength of the local *shura*, and this varied by location. In Dand, while there is a functioning seven-member *shura* of elders, the institution was not viewed as being strong or active, as the strong pre-conflict council of elders had been replaced by young armed men, and as the Taliban controlled its functions and structure. In contrast, in Anghori the village *shura* appeared to be stronger and engaged in a wide variety of activities, from problem-solving to the representation of local populations in negotiations with NGOs, the Taliban authority and other groups. In Jaji, the importance of the *jirga* (council) and other tribal institutions is seen in many areas, from mobilisation to local conflict mediation, management of socio-economic spheres and acting as the gatekeeper between communities and the state. The re-emergence of 'traditional' forms of governance ended predatory behaviour and protected dwindling forests.

The Taliban also developed methods of fragmenting local cohesion and gaining greater access to local resources. For

example, in Ghazni, in order to determine the correct amount of *ushr* (a tax per household) required (10% of income), one community member estimated the size of each household's income. As an incentive, this individual received 2–5% of the amount collected. At the same time, an excessive estimate was deterred by the possibility of community recrimination against this individual. A Hazara source from Ghazni indicated that local Taliban authorities had sought to promote land disputes within the Hazara community through the application of different (*Shia* versus *Sunni*) legal codes. This was linked to support for *kuchis* in disputes over land and grazing rights, and was interpreted as a method of earning revenue and gaining control over local property.¹⁸

During the course of the war, ethnicity has become an important factor in determining political vulnerability. In Faryab, for example, the pattern of vulnerability has changed according to differing security regimes dominated by opposing ethnic groups. Having initially suffered oppression and resulting displacement during the *mujahideen* period, the Pashtuns returned with the Taliban, and Uzbek and Turkmen ethnic groups were subject to renewed discrimination. This affected the livelihoods and resources of opposing groups, as water was denied due to renewed Pashtun settlement upstream of the Andkhoi River (Pain, 2001). However, the case studies demonstrate that warring groups have frequently built alliances which bridge ethnic fault-lines, while illicit economies such as the opium trade often depend on inter-ethnic collaboration.¹⁹

5.4.3 Social relations

Drought inevitably increased pressures both within and between households and between the village and the outside world, with the ability of households and villages to maintain solidarity varying considerably. In some of the Qaramqol villages, poorer households have historically derived a significant proportion of household grain from non-market exchanges with richer households. In other villages with extended ties of economic interdependence or a strong sense of origin, reflected in shared histories, mutual support mechanisms have also been maintained. In others, where there have been periods of settlement by different ethnic groups and patterns of asset ownership have been highly differentiated, fault-lines between social groups have emerged. Of course, conflict and the governance strategies employed by armed groups also have direct ramifications for individual livelihood strategies. Survival and economic activity in situations of prolonged conflict is thus political. For an individual, political affiliation or connections are likely to determine access to capital,

community and national assets, and professional opportunity. Yet social capital, particularly in relationships around reciprocity and sharing, is a buffer between extreme vulnerability and the total collapse of livelihoods (Loveless, 2001). These solidarity networks are particularly important for the extremely poor, who lack other assets. However, in certain areas prolonged crisis has exhausted even kinship systems, which indicates a further collapse in coping strategies. As mentioned above, communities with pronounced and longstanding social relationships were better able to resist external pressure from the Taliban. Thus, 'tribal capital' was important in keeping the Taliban at arm's length (Jaji), or enlisting the Taliban's support (Faryab).

There is clearly a strong link between political and social capital; as already mentioned, modern political and economic structures have been grafted onto pre-existing social relations. For instance, the Taliban gave preferential access to trading networks and licensing based on tribal connections. Similarly, in Faryab *kuchis* benefited from Taliban connections for access to land and water.

To an extent, social capital has been a 'missing link' in research on Afghan livelihood strategies (Loveless, 2001). Clearly, social capital is important in coping and survival, and the black economy relies upon networks of solidarity and trust – the remittance economy, cross-border smuggling and the opium trade all depend upon relationships of trust based on tribal, ethnic, religious or political affiliations. Conflict entrepreneurs also draw upon endowments of social capital, though for 'anti-social' purposes – the Taliban for example mobilised through tribal solidarity networks or *Sunni–Shia* cleavages to attain military goals. This takes analysis away from positivist assumptions about the existence of *generalised* trust towards examining in which particular situations and at which particular times people build *selective* trust.

5.5 Commodity chain analysis

The following section draws out some of the themes from the community-level research by analysing particular commodities. A focus on commodity chains or 'objects in flow' allows us to view social relations in spatial terms, and make links between micro and macro analysis. This analysis is concerned less with the objects themselves than with identifying and locating different actors, power relations and governance structures at different points in the chain – and how such networks have been transformed by war.

5.5.1 Carpet production in Faryab province and Peshawar, Pakistan²⁰

The carpet industry has changed in a number of ways during the course of the war. There have, for instance, been

¹⁸ *Kuchis* are nomadic pastoralists who have traditionally followed migration routes between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

¹⁹ A further example of inter-ethnic collaboration might be the case of Pashtun traders who, during the Taliban blockade of Hazarajat, smuggled in essential commodities, profiting from the price difference.

²⁰ This section is based on Pain (2001), supplemented by additional interviews in Peshawar and Kabul.

changes in the social groups involved in production, a reorientation of markets and a shift in the terms of trade away from producers. Ethnic groups that did not traditionally produce carpets are now becoming involved, due to a lack of viable alternatives. As in the agricultural sector, the role of traders in supplying the inputs (such as looms and wool) and access to markets is a prime driver of household involvement. While carpet production was largely carried out by Turkmen and Uzbeks, other groups including the Pashtun and the Hazaras are now involved. As the groups involved have changed, so has the style and quality of the carpets produced. As the research team witnessed in Haji camp in Peshawar, patterns for carpets of Persian, Kazak and Chechen design were supplied to producers by traders acting in accordance with external demand. In addition, as the demand for material has increased due to the increased number of producers, the overall quality has decreased, with many producers now using a wool/plastic/cotton hybrid thread from Pakistan.

The change in the carpet trade in Andkhoy market is part of a longer-term process in which war and changing power relations have played a key role. Faryab was a key carpet- and gileem-producing and exporting area up to the 1970s, drawing on local materials and a substantial skills base in quality and design. However, the collapse of local wool supply due to the decimation of the local sheep herd in the winter of 1970 led to the import of both Pakistani and foreign wool, and later to the first use of chemical dyes. Previously, production and marketing systems were small-scale and local, working through a network of predominantly Uzbek and Turkmen producers and merchants, then linked through Kabul to external markets. With the Soviet invasion, agricultural markets were badly affected and households expanded carpet production to compensate. Also due to mass displacement, carpet production grew in Peshawar. Post-Soviet instability,

combined with price inflation, insecurity and the collapse of infrastructure, led to a progressive isolation of Faryab from the carpet markets, with Pushtun Pakistan-based traders exerting increasing control. The drought led to increased reliance on carpet production. Production expanded from about 500 square metres of carpet per month in the 1970s to over 5,000m² per month in 2001 (Pain, 2001). The 30 traders based in Andkhoy in the 1970s had increased to 200, many of them Pashtuns who had arrived since the Taliban. Thus, the Andkhoy producers' previous control has been lost to Pashtun traders and to international markets, which increasingly set the prices and designs. Survival and prosperity for those Andkhoy traders that remain required their control and vertical integration of all stages of production – from purchasing wool to dyeing, determining design, contracting weaving and setting the price, all typically in response to a direct order from a family member overseas. Carpet producers and gileem weavers are now out-workers rather than independent producers.

Although carpet-weaving has long been a method of augmenting household income, it has now become the primary source of income for many families. Women and children are still the primary producers. In certain cases, income from household production is the only factor preventing displacement or increased vulnerability. In general, average monthly production per individual is approximately 1–1.5m², with an individual earning approximately 900–1,250 rupees per square metre. Household profit will differ by approximately 330 rupees if a family owns its own loom, instead of using the loom and material provided by the trader. In the latter case, the household is engaged in the equivalent of piecework. A lesser businessman will own between 20 and 100 looms, and a larger between 1,000 and 1,500. One source revealed that, of the 30,000 families in District 6 of Kabul,

Table 5.6: Cost breakdown for NGO-sponsored carpet production per m² (rupees), August 2001

	NGO (Ghazni)	Kabul household	Haji camp, Peshawar
Materials	1,250	1,200	
Wages	1,000		1,000/child
Transport	180	130	
Other	20		
Administration	400		
Product cost	2,850		
Sell for:	3,400	2,000–3,000	
Export price	4,500		
Market price		\$80–180 (1999) \$50–100 (2001)	

Note: Cost breakdowns were provided by NGO staff.

approximately 90% were involved in carpet-weaving. Weaving households have become increasingly dependent on credit for raw materials and food supplies. While the margins of the local carpet traders might be under pressure, the returns to producers have clearly been reduced even more.

Table 5.7: Carpet exports from Pakistan by value and volume, 1996–2001

	Value (bn rupees; fob ^a)	Volume (million m ²)
1996–97	7.82	4
1997–98	8.71	4
1998–99	10.21	4
1999–2000	13.69	5
2000/01 (July–March)	11.45	4

Note: ^a 'fob' indicates a traded good's price excluding transport cost.
Source: Economist Intelligence Unit, *Pakistan-Afghanistan*, EIU Country Profile, 2001.

Interviews in Haji camp, in a village in southern Samangan, revealed that, out of 70 villagers, 40 had migrated to northern Pakistan, with the remaining sending between one and four of their children to these families in order to earn money weaving carpets. Families will go into debt initially in order to send their children abroad, or will rely on donations from relatives or family elders. The host will generally market the output from the looms, and subtract the children's living expenses from the payment provided by the businessmen for the carpets.²¹

According to one source, of the 'Afghan' carpets exported from Pakistan, 40% are produced in Afghanistan (for intermediate export to Pakistan) and 60% in Pakistan itself. This may, however, be changing yet again as many Afghan carpet-weavers begin to return to their homes. The traditional production and input chain involved the export of Afghan wool to Pakistan for processing and re-export to Afghanistan. Currently, approximately 30% of the wool used is from Afghanistan, with the remainder imported from Iraq, Turkmenistan and Australia. Upon completion, the carpet is then re-exported to Pakistan for cutting and washing. Although certain communities utilise local traders to send their carpets into Pakistan, most of the cross-border trade is controlled by border Pashtuns. There are an estimated 22 main carpet markets in Peshawar, all of which are under the control of five Pakistani companies.

Evidence from Faryab indicates that market (and monopoly) control is exerted from Peshawar, with the small volume of carpets and gileems from Faryab encountering difficulties with customs. Payments are often delayed for several months, crippling small traders. Kilims made in Maymana have been reportedly relabelled as products of Pakistan. The attempt by Pakistan to 'nationalise' or 'indigenise' the Afghan carpet industry is further seen in the status of Afghan refugees. The Afghan population and new migrants have experienced growing hostility from the government and certain elements of the press and public. Indeed, recent Afghan refugees are popularly viewed as economic rather than political migrants, and as a source of crime (theft) and fundamentalism. At the same time, while the government has pushed for the registration of Afghans in Jalozai camp, discrimination and harassment have increased, and there has even been forced deportation. However, Afghans involved in the carpet industry have been offered incentives to remain, including ID cards and the possibility of internal relocation in hamlets.²² Pakistan's Ministry of Industry has sponsored the creation of three villages for carpet-weaving, in order to attract carpet-weavers from Peshawar and to reduce dye-related pollution.

The carpet industry reveals some of the paradoxes and problematic dimensions of NGO involvement in micro-credit and income-generation projects. As one Afghan NGO official noted, in those cases where the NGO is simply providing the loom, materials and basic training to a household, the NGO is replicating the role of the traders, although it does provide greater long-term security through consistent work. In particularly egregious cases, NGOs are taking advantage of the difference between local and foreign prices in order to earn a substantial profit. The role of NGOs was criticised by a number of individuals; one woman described such projects as 'disempowering', while another stated that this kind of assistance was 'not appropriate' due to the negative effects on the health of women and children. Indeed, although women and children may assume a role as the sole bread-winner, 'men will still control the marketing of the carpets'. Yet, as argued by one respondent, 'Every father wants to have an improved life for his family, [we do this] because we have to do this. We need carpets for life, what else can we do when many people have nothing to eat at night?'

One example of the role of NGOs in providing micro-credit is the Guaranteed Group Lending Scheme (GGLS), established by Save the Children (US) in northern Afghanistan in 1995. The project, designed to focus exclusively on disadvantaged women with no access to micro-credit, was based on comparable experiences in

²¹ According to the host, the costs for the household per month were: 1,000 PRs for electricity, 2,500 PRs for rent for one room, 500 PRs for gas and 5,000–6,000 PRs for food for 16 people. Total production is approximately 28 square metres per month, which is sold for approximately 1,200–2,000 PRs per square metre.

²² One source noted the overall deterioration of the protection regime in north-west Pakistan, with UNHCR focusing on the formal camps, thus neglecting the urban and non-Pashtun minority, and failing to criticise the government for its policy of forced deportation (which affected as many as 400,000 Afghans).

Bangladesh. It was viewed as relatively successful: the programme disbursed some 14,803 loans worth a total of \$1,267,625 to 3,688 women from 1995–99, achieving a repayment rate averaging 99% during the first two years.

The operational achievements of the GGLS scheme in staying on the ground under extremely difficult conditions should be emphasised. This was achieved through constant flexibility, the re-invention of organisational methods and lending approaches, and careful and continuous negotiation with local authorities. However, in its effort to find ways of effectively distributing and recovering loans, the project focused solely on carpet production, although this was not originally intended. If the GGLS scheme had considered and examined the changes occurring in this market, as well as the place of producers in the market and methods of strengthening their position, supplementary activities might have been possible. By failing to address issues surrounding prices and the control of markets, the scheme's business models were too narrow. It is also clear that there was limited understanding – or little that was formally documented – of how the role of carpet production in the household economy varied by different socio-economic groups, villages or locations. The absence of household and livelihood analysis both at the project's outset and in the later impact evaluation limited the understanding of the GGLS scheme's contribution to household accumulation, risk spreading and coping or survival strategies. One should, however, be realistic about the capacity of an individual NGO to have an impact on the wider political and institutional environment shaping the carpet industry. This analysis may perhaps indicate the need for a collective approach from a group of NGOs to tackle the marketing issues highlighted. It also clearly points towards the need for long-term approaches.

5.5.2 Cannabis production in Jaji District

A range of factors related to vulnerability, risk and regulation have induced farmers in Sargal village, Jaji, to become increasingly involved in hashish production. Whereas in 1999 and 2000 only four or five families attempted to grow cannabis, by 2001 this had increased to over 20. In 1999–2000, the village *shura* reploughed the land of families growing cannabis since this contravened an agreement with the Danish NGO DACAAR. However, by 2001 neither the Taliban's edict nor DACAAR's proscriptions were enforced. The decision to switch to cannabis was spurred by a number of factors, including drought, a failure of the potato crop, conflict in Parichinar on the Pakistan border and the absence of seed credit. 'Pull' factors included the potential high return and low risk of cannabis compared to other crops, and the availability of credit from drug traders affected by the Taliban's opium ban, who were looking to invest in other sectors. Although productivity varies from area to area, according to respondents one *jerib* (half an acre) of land can produce 30–35kg of hashish (during both first and second collection

of the powdered hemp-leaves), with a total net income per *jerib* of around \$750 for an initial investment of \$13. In comparison, the total net income per *jerib* for wheat is \$230, and \$130 for potatoes.

Table 5.8: Commodity price chain: hashish (per kg), August 2001

Farm price	\$30
Barra (Pakistan)	\$46–61
Karachi (export)	\$180

Cannabis production requires less investment, less water, less work, less tractor use and less risk than other products. Attempts by aid agencies to provide profitable alternatives, such as cumin, saffron or fruit orchards, have so far proven unsuccessful. Conditionality is not only ineffective, but is also ethically questionable since many lives and livelihoods are tied up with this economy. Attempts to enforce a ban have increased tensions between growers and non-growers, between aid agencies and drug traders, and between those benefiting from hashish and the real poor. The case points to the importance of understanding the incentives of different actors involved at different levels of the commodity chain. Conditionalities or crop substitution by themselves leave unchanged the wider institutional environment which drives this economy.

5.5.3 The *sarafi* and *hawala* systems

Capital and currency movements are linked directly to the informal *sarafi* (money-changer) and *hawala* (money-transfer) systems. These systems are significant not only in Afghanistan, but throughout the region. The informal global movement of capital denies neighbouring countries revenue, and will affect an embryonic Afghan state's attempts to develop a sound tax base. *Sarafis* interviewed in Pakistan did not trust the Pakistani banking system (partially due to a fear of asset seizure), and thus do not invest money in Pakistan. Remittances to Pakistan in the first three quarters of 2000–2001 were calculated at \$855m (EIU, 2001: 29).

The *sarafi* and *hawala* systems demonstrate the importance of social capital and trust. Transactions depend upon shared norms and practices across global networks. The very standardisation of this practice, and the fact that it can occur without the need for enforcement or the continuous elucidation of rules, indicates shared concepts among Afghans despite geographic dislocation. Of course, this trust is selective in the sense that one's choice of *sarafi* is largely determined by family, community or extended relations.

In Peshawar, there are two main areas for currency exchange, the Chawki, which has approximately 20 *sarafi*,

and the *Andesher bazaar*, with approximately 300. Although the dollar was by far the most prevalent extra-regional currency, the currencies in trade in August 2001 included the Saudi riyal, the German mark and the British pound. The *Andesher bazaar* is divided by both level and group affiliation. According to the first *sarafi* interviewed, there is an ascending hierarchy of *sarafi* in the main market in central Peshawar, informally divided into three groups (low, middle and high). At each level, the exchange rate increases by .05 rupees. For example, based upon the exchange rates in mid-August, the Central Bank of Pakistan would trade the US dollar at 66.5 rupees, a low- to mid-level *sarafi* at 67 and a high-level *sarafi* at 67.05, who would then transfer his accumulated currency to the Karachi market, where the exchange rate is approximately 67.1. Typically, a low- or mid-level *sarafi* will exchange his accumulated currency at day's end with a higher-level *sarafi*, with each group making a marginal profit at each level of exchange. Of course, the higher exchange rate offered by the larger *sarafi* – of which there are approximately ten in Peshawar – is profitable due to the larger volume of money dealt in. The *sarafi* typically has two primary sources of income: that gained from differences in the rates of exchange and the small interest rate applied, and that obtained from involvement in the *hawala* system. Yet access to capital and the relative level of the *sarafi* not only determine the size of a *sarafi*'s business, and his ability to avoid extortion, but also whether the *sarafi* can become involved in the *hawala* system and engage in trade.

The *sarafi* interviewed were all from the educated professional class. The level of start-up capital and one's personal and professional contacts are key to success. For example, a mid-level *sarafi* was able to sell land and business assets in Afghanistan (primarily Kabul) in order to obtain the starting capital for his business, avoid indebtedness and obtain a formal shop within the bazaar, which reduced his vulnerability to extortion from the Pakistani police. In contrast, without access to starting capital (in the form of housing or land, for instance), another *sarafi* was forced to borrow money from his relatives, which was lent without interest. As a Panjshiri Tajik without the economic base necessary for the required market licence, he was forced to pay a monthly bribe to the police, with the threat of deportation in the event of non-payment.

If involved in the transfer of money from abroad, the *sarafi* will typically charge a 1–2% tax. Accumulated capital may be invested in related businesses. One *sarafi* had become involved in financing the transit trade in partnership with local businessmen, and had personally imported cars and tyres from Germany to Karachi, as well as tea. He charged a 25% interest rate on all loans for the import of goods, and 20% interest on loans used to finance small businesses, weddings and migration abroad.

NGOs use the *hawala* system as a way of transferring money to Afghanistan. The use of a money-changer typically involves a commission of about 3%. Does this mean that

NGOs inadvertently contribute to the war economy, since the *hawala* system is also used by conflict entrepreneurs and profiteers? According to Naqvi (1999: 16), these 'open currency markets ... are facilitating illegal trade activities'. However, a simplistic division between an illicit war economy and a licit peace economy is unhelpful. The *hawala* system is central to the coping/survival economy as well as the war and black economies. Remittances have been an important buffer for much of the population in Afghanistan. Attempting to ring-fence and criminalise such systems would in the current context deepen the vulnerability of many Afghans.²³ It is also based on a poor conceptualisation of the processes at work. This is not a separate, closed and bounded category – the networks involved in survival, profiteering and war-making overlap with, and to an extent reinforce, one another.

5.6 Aid, the political economy of conflict and livelihoods

This last section examines how aid has interacted with the political economy of conflict and livelihoods, and also how aid agencies conduct political economy and livelihoods analysis. This leads to recommendations on how this analysis could be used to improve policy and practice.

5.6.1 'Generations' of aid in Afghanistan: changing analysis, changing responses

Pre-war aid

International assistance to Afghanistan has always been tied to particular political agendas and has had particular effects (intended and unintended) on the constellations of power within the country. British subsidies to Afghan rulers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries aimed to shore up the country as a buffer state between the British and Russian empires. Russian and American aid in the twentieth century was similarly motivated by geostrategic concerns, this time within the context of the Cold War.

While foreign aid in the short term enabled a fractious dynasty to maintain its precarious rule, in the long term it contributed to growing fault-lines within, and tensions between, the state and society. Growing dependence on aid meant that Afghan rulers were never forced to develop domestic accountability through internally derived revenue. Foreign assistance projects favoured particular groups and regions, and was used to support clientelist networks. Khans in the countryside competed with one another for state patronage, and government corruption contributed to a growing sense of grievance. Aid also contributed to growing contradictions within Afghan society – between a rural

²³ After 11 September, there have been efforts by the US in Somalia and Afghanistan to criminalise such networks because of suspected links to terrorist groups.

subsistence-based society and an urban elite dependent on the foreign-funded state sector. Aid-funded schools contributed to the creation of new elites during the 1960s who were to join the Islamist and communist movements, which ultimately challenged and overthrew the state.

Aid during the war years

Three broad 'generations' of Western aid can be identified during the war years in Afghanistan: a 'first generation' of humanitarian relief (during the 1980s), a 'second generation' of developmental relief and rehabilitation (the late 1980s to the mid-1990s) and a 'third generation' of peacebuilding and human rights assistance (from the mid-1990s to 2001) (Goodhand, 2002).²⁴ These generations reflect shifting responses to changing conditions, and cycles of international engagement and neglect.

During the first generation, relief aid served as the non-lethal component of anti-Soviet support, occurring in concert with the arms and monetary payments sent through the CIA/ISI pipeline. The refugee camps in Pakistan became a rear base for the *mujahideen*, and cross-border relief programmes mirrored to a large extent the system of brokerage that developed around the arms pipeline to resistance groups. The majority of relief aid went to eastern Afghanistan because of proximity to Peshawar and links to local commanders. Secrecy surrounding the delivery of aid impeded the development of accountability standards and professionalisation.

Aid had a range of direct and indirect effects on the conflict. Systematic manipulation developed, particularly around food aid. Some donors were willing to accept 'wastage levels' of up to 40%. Gaining access depended on accepting and indirectly legitimising the control of commanders on the ground. Aid was allocated according to proximity and political ties rather than according to humanitarian needs. Leakage from the arms and aid pipelines provided the 'start-up' capital which commanders and entrepreneurs invested in the illicit economy.

Solidarity and an unconditional sympathy for freedom fighters eroded the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality and affected the ability of NGOs to make critical judgements, even more so as they became deeply infiltrated by resistance party agents. At the same time, aid agencies operating across the border needed to be politically astute since security depended on a network of contacts with field commanders and Peshawar-based political parties. Some kept extensive dossiers of field commanders – about their political, tribal and religious affiliations, resources and support base, for instance. However, there was limited analysis of how programmes

affected the conflict, or people's lives and livelihoods. Monitoring and evaluation were patchy, and understanding of local livelihood strategies was never developed in a systematic way. Few agencies had either a presence on the ground or the requisite skills.

Second-generation aid followed the Soviet withdrawal, when fighting increasingly shifted from the countryside to the cities and aid agencies were able to pursue longer-term developmental approaches in rural areas. With the collapse of the state and the consequent erosion of public entitlements, the aid community increasingly assumed a role as the surrogate government. Declining superpower interest in Afghanistan was mirrored by declining funding levels. Professionalisation led to an overall improvement in the management, monitoring and evaluation of aid programmes. Agencies sought to withdraw from their solidarity positions of the 1980s by disengaging from particular groups or commanders and employing a more representative cross-section of staff, in terms of ethnic backgrounds and political affiliations. More NGOs set up field offices inside Afghanistan, and played an important role in rehabilitating rural infrastructure. Partly due to the efforts of aid agencies, by 1997 food production had grown to about two-thirds of pre-war levels.

Arguably, the growing focus on aid management was at the expense of contextual and political economy analysis. The typical staff profile of aid agencies changed, as technical experts and aid managers replaced 'Afghan experts' and 'political fixers'. This may have led to 'better projects', but the limitations of the project-based approach were increasingly exposed. Small-scale rehabilitation tended to have localised and transitory impacts. Attempts to work at the level above the village, for instance with district development *shuras*, enjoyed only limited success. The UN Drug Control Programme (UNDCP)'s 'alternative development' strategy had almost no impact on opium production, as micro-projects by themselves failed to tackle the underlying incentive systems and the wider crisis of governance (Mansfield, 2000). A project-driven and fragmented aid strategy tended to mirror the growing fragmentation and regionalisation of the country. Aid was not the primary centrifugal force, but it is likely that it reinforced the trend towards regionalisation.

The Strategic Framework process marked the 'third generation' of aid strategies, in which human rights and peacebuilding were increasingly emphasised alongside humanitarian concerns and diplomacy. New conditionalities were placed on aid, and the late 1990s were therefore marked by a 'repoliticisation' of aid reflecting the emergence of new Western concerns and interests. The Strategic Framework was based on a number of assumptions about the role of aid in relation to the conflict, and to other forms of intervention. First, it was assumed that aid could modulate the behaviour of actors in the conflict, and could induce behavioural change

²⁴ In practice, the distinctions between these three generations are not as neat or as linear as the model implies. The model is meant to be illustrative of broad shifts in policy and thinking within the aid community.

within the Taliban on issues such as gender, human rights, peace and drugs. Second, it was assumed that the Strategic Framework would ensure coherence and inter-agency coordination. Third, it was assumed that the political and aid strategies could complement one another (Goodhand, 2002).

All three assumptions may be questioned. Firstly, aid actors had very limited understanding of the internal structures and incentive systems of the Taliban. Whereas agencies understood *mujahideen* groups and commanders in the 1980s, by the late 1990s few organisations invested in this kind of analysis. Although the Swedish Committee, an international solidarity NGO, prepared a profile of the main actors within the Taliban in 1998, this was the exception. Another problem with the first assumption was that it tended to over-estimate the impact of aid on the wider political economy of the conflict. If one compares, for example, the value of aid to Afghanistan (roughly \$300m per year) with the \$2.5bn generated in 1999 through cross-border trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan, it is clear why threatening to halt aid had a limited effect. Some agencies adopted 'do no harm' approaches, with the aim of promoting peacebuilding from below. The UNOPS PEACE programme and Habitat community fora aimed to promote peace through supporting local governance. However, such approaches were also based on questionable analysis. First, they tended to assume a clear division between pro-war and pro-peace constituencies, or between a criminalised war economy and a licit peace economy. Second, they assumed that micro-level interventions would have a cumulative impact at the meso and macro levels. But peacebuilding projects, like development projects in a context of chronic political instability, have found it difficult if not impossible to scale up impacts.

The second assumption, about system coherence and effective aid coordination, was exposed by an intrinsically competitive aid system. A top-down managerial framework was not the appropriate model for such a diverse group of organisations operating in a complex and changeable environment. The Strategic Framework was undermined from above by donors, from within by conflicts between UN agencies, and from below by resistance from NGOs. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), for example, distanced itself from the process, arguing that it threatened its independence of action.

The final assumption – of complementarity between aid and diplomatic strategies – can also be questioned (Macrae and Leader, 2000). As one evaluation of the Strategic Framework has highlighted, there were fundamental differences in the analyses and prescriptions of the diplomatic and humanitarian communities (Duffield et al., 2001). While the former understood Afghanistan as a rogue state which needed to be contained and isolated, the latter saw it as a failed state needing engagement and assistance.

5.6.2 Mapping contemporary analysis

Interviews with diplomatic and aid officials revealed a range of different types of analysis used by different actors for different purposes. Table 5.9 provides a summary – examples are given, but they are meant to be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

A number of tentative conclusions can be drawn from this. Fundamentally, as mentioned above there is a dearth of hard data and analysis. Although information centres have been established, they are only as good as the data fed into them, which is often recycled and unreliable.²⁵ Basic statistics about mortality rates and nutritional status are lacking at the national level. The last census was in 1979. There have been no serious long-term anthropological studies since the war started, and to an extent knowledge is stuck at pre-war levels. The Human Development Index has not included Afghanistan since 1996, and the data used then was highly questionable anyway (Suhrke and Harpiken, 2001: 25).

Information and analysis are also fragmented. Needs assessments have been limited to short-term objectives. There is virtually no standardised and aggregated data at the national level. This deficiency has been exposed by the drought, since Afghanistan lacks a nationwide model of food security assessment, surveillance and intervention. Early-warning systems in relation to the famine have been weak, as have wider mechanisms for learning and sharing.²⁶ For instance, the data generated by a UNDP-prepared reconstruction plan in 1993 appeared to have been forgotten five years later, when similar discussions were initiated through the Strategic Framework process.

It is also clear that analysis is not value-free. Different actors with different mandates draw different conclusions from the same data. For instance, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)'s security analysis – that there were well-founded fears that UK and US nationals would be targeted by terrorist groups – led the Department for International Development (DFID) to ban international aid personnel it funded from travelling to Afghanistan. This security assessment was questioned by aid personnel with long experience on the ground inside Afghanistan. Evidently, analysis tends to be mandate-driven – a health NGO will focus on mortality rates and immunisation data, for instance – but the project system encourages agencies to look exclusively at immediate project concerns, at the

²⁵ The Afghan Resource and Information Centre (ARIC) contains an excellent archive on Afghanistan, though like other databases and information centres, there is a lack of reliable contemporary data.

²⁶ Early-warning was, however, only part of the problem. A WFP official interviewed in 1998 by one of the authors of this paper predicted the current food security crisis, based on ongoing VAM assessments. The problem is evidently as much about an inability to act upon information as the absence of information.

Table 5.9: Types of analysis utilised by aid actors in Afghanistan

Type of analysis	Who's doing it?	Why?	Methodology, frameworks, examples
Political economy	Diplomatic and donor community; UNSMA; NGOs; UNOCHA; ICRC	Humanitarian negotiations/creating space; political negotiations; developing aid strategies	Dossiers of commanders and military groups; reports on the leadership of the Taliban; academic studies (Rubin, Rashid); informal meetings; diplomatic briefings; 'grey' reports
Humanitarian needs	UN/Promis; other UN agencies (UNHCR, WHO); NGOs (ACF); ACBAR database	Emergency response; humanitarian space; advocacy	Kabul Emergency Programme needs assessments; ethical frameworks/principles (CARE study)
Livelihoods	WFP; FAO; Habitat; UNOPS-PEACE; UN/Promis; NGOs	Rehabilitation/development programming	VAM, AREU livelihood studies; ICRC Kabul livelihoods study; SC (US) micro-credit study
Human rights	UNSMA civil affairs office; ICRC, NGOs (CCA); UN; Amnesty, HRW; UN gender advisor	Protection, advocacy	Amnesty/HRW reports; CCA reports; UNSG reports; UNICEF report on child rights
Peace and conflict resolution	CPAU, NCA, ADA	Minimising inadvertent negative effects of aid; support for local peacebuilding/conflict resolution	'Do no harm'/LCP analysis; conflict resolution workshops; conflict mapping
Project monitoring and evaluation	All agencies	Assessing project activities, outcomes, impacts	CARE evaluation of SoFAR programme
Aid effectiveness	Donor agencies; SMU	System-wide reviews to assess impacts, draw lessons, revise/develop new strategies	DANIDA evaluation; review of Strategic Framework

expense of the wider context. The lack of project contextualisation in Afghanistan has been noted elsewhere (see Pain, 2001). The focus of aid agencies has also shifted over time. With each generation of aid, different types of analysis were emphasised, and professionalisation has meant that some forms of knowledge are valued over others. Political economy analysis has been one of the main victims of this process, as analysis is increasingly geared to immediate project concerns. Partly as a result of this neglect, the 'third generation' strategy carries unrealistic expectations about the role and leverage of aid in relation to conflict.

There are a number of reasons why analysis has tended to be poor.

- The inherent difficulties of the operating environment, including the fluidity and insecurity of the situation

on the ground, the lack of strong central institutions and access problems, particularly to women.

- The politicisation of aid, particularly during the 1980s and the late 1990s, which meant that external political agendas rather than field-based learning shaped aid strategies. Policies were developed in New York or London, based on limited understanding of the local context.
- A foreign-dominated aid system. Although not unique to Afghanistan, it was accentuated there by the limited interaction with successive political regimes at the centre (elevated to the level of policy during the Taliban years), the lack of sustained engagement with civil society and the limited number of Afghans in senior policy-making positions. Admittedly, the Afghan 'brain

drain' has been a constraint, but attempts at 'Afghanisation' have never been pursued vigorously enough.

- Limited investment in building up the knowledge bank.²⁷ Ninety per cent of funding is short-term in nature (six months to one year) and pre- and post-project analysis may be seen as a costly luxury. Evaluations tend to be tied to funding decisions, so mistakes (and opportunities for learning) get pushed underground. The introduction of formal planning frameworks by donors since the early 1990s discourages aid agency staff to think outside the immediate project environment. Political issues are likely to get only a cursory mention in the 'assumptions' column of the project log frame. Meanwhile, it is rare to find a donor policymaker in Islamabad whose single portfolio is Afghanistan. Of the 16 members of the Afghan Support Group, only four to six visit the country regularly (Atmar and Goodhand, 2002: 47).

Poor empirical modelling means that current policies and programmes are based on questionable assumptions. These are not always made explicit, but are implicit in how problems are framed and responded to. Table 5.10 outlines some of these assumptions, contrasts them with the research findings and outlines programming implications. Many of these assumptions can also be found in agency reports and publicity materials.²⁸

It should be noted that there have been individual and collective attempts to improve the quality of agency analysis. The latest and perhaps most promising initiative has been the formation by the Afghanistan Programming Board in 2000 of the Strategic Monitoring Unit (SMU, now called the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU)). The SMU was conceived as an independent unit for facilitating action-oriented research to inform policy and improve practice.

5.6.3 Implications for aid agencies

Highlighting deficiencies in current analysis is relatively easy, and many aid workers are only too aware of, and frequently bemoan, these problems. The role of action research is not simply to argue for 'better analysis'. How in practical terms can improved political economy and

livelihoods analysis inform aid policy and practice in Afghanistan? Complete knowledge is not possible, so which *kinds* of knowledge are essential for more effective programming? Using Chamber's phrase, what is 'optimal ignorance'? (Chambers, 1998). This depends to an extent on an agency's mandate and capacities. As a general point, political economy/livelihoods analysis should encourage agencies to think beyond projects, by both looking 'upwards' (i.e., thinking more strategically about their interventions in the wider context), and looking 'downwards' (i.e., greater disaggregation of communities, groups and individual households). More specifically, it is possible to highlight a number of research findings that have practical implications at the policy and programming levels.

The policy level

While conflict has brought profound changes, there are important continuities with the past. This has a number of implications for aid agencies, including the skills of staff (valuing historical/political analysis), career structures (developing cadres of regional experts) and the duration of interventions (from one year to multi-year programmes).

Afghanistan's political economy and the livelihood strategies of Afghan households need to be located within a regional framework. As aid agencies have found, the opium economy cannot be addressed only through poppy-eradication programmes inside Afghanistan. Similarly, the research on hashish and carpets highlights the transnational linkages involved in these economic activities. Donors and aid agencies need to think beyond their country frameworks. An obvious example of this is refugee policy – the changing climate for refugees in Pakistan is having an impact not only on the livelihood strategies of the refugees themselves, but also on families in Afghanistan that rely on remittances. This would indicate a need for aid agencies to work collaboratively at a regional level to tackle specific issues.

Determining the relative importance of internally and externally generated resources to the war economy is difficult. However, it appears from this research – and this needs to be further tested – that external funding is much greater and far more important to warring groups than internally generated income through, for instance, the taxation of the opium and smuggling economies. Previous studies, by focusing on the latter, have tended to 'internalise' the war economy.²⁹ The implication for aid actors (and the wider international community) is that there is a need for a more rigorous and sustained policy to limit the external arming and financing of warring groups in Afghanistan. The one-sided sanctions regime imposed in 2000 had a limited impact, apart from compromising the

²⁷ Some of the best anthropological work was done in the last century by British colonial administrators. Incentives were paid for learning the language and developing an understanding of local issues. The contrast with today's aid workers, on six-month to one-year contracts, is striking (see Goodhand, 2000; Duffield, 1999).

²⁸ Not all aid agencies subscribe to all these assumptions; many operational organisations are, for instance, sceptical about the capacity of agencies to affect the incentive systems of warring groups. However, this is still a sufficiently common notion to merit inclusion here.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch (2000) is an important exception here, though more work is still required in terms of hard facts and figures and comparative analysis of internal and external resource flows.

Table 5.10: Assumptions, findings and programming implications

Assumptions and hypotheses	Research findings	Programming implications
Conflict has led to state collapse and the breakdown of social institutions.	Conflict has led to new forms of governance at the national and local levels.	Develop a more nuanced understanding of emerging forms of governance. Support forms of governance that help sustain lives and livelihoods.
Aid may have a significant impact on the incentive systems and decision-making structures of warring groups. Social relations/social capital have been depleted/eroded – there has been a breakdown of ‘trust’.	Aid in relation to other resource flows is relatively insignificant and its impact on decision-making is likely to be negligible. Social capital has been central to people’s survival – redistributive networks continue to function.	Stop conditionalities on aid. Be aware of the potential negative impacts. Strengthen advocacy for political and diplomatic initiatives. Develop a better understanding of social networks. Greater focus on the ‘software’ aspects of programming.
Coping strategies have been destroyed by conflict.	Coping strategies have been affected, but in general have been robust.	Develop a better understanding of coping strategies – more focused support to prevent groups from moving from coping into survival. Support risk-spreading activities.
Vulnerability is due to poverty.	Vulnerability is due to powerlessness and the denial of rights.	Develop a better understanding of the politics of vulnerability. Stronger focus on rights and protection.
Support for subsistence agriculture is central to livelihood support – Afghanistan is a nation of peasant farmers.	Livelihoods have become more diversified as a result of the war. Market entitlements have been central to coping and survival (and profiting).	In addition to supporting productive activities, think more about protecting market entitlements – terms of trade, access to markets, engaging with the private sector.
Aid has been central to people’s survival.	Aid has been important for certain groups at certain times, but in general has not been central.	Improve early-warning systems and targeting of humanitarian aid.

neutrality of the UN. This tentative finding would also direct aid agencies towards a more coordinated and forceful advocacy strategy on issues such as small arms and ‘smart’ sanctions.

The term ‘war economy’ has become a ‘catch-all’ phrase. It is automatically seen as something negative and predatory. This is not very helpful analytically or in terms of informing policy. This research has attempted to disaggregate and analyse the different types of economies that have emerged – the war, black and coping economies. This takes us closer to an understanding of the different types of actors, networks and motivation systems involved. It may also remind us that the economies that emerge in wartime can also have positive outcomes. In some respects, the ‘bazaar economy’ has brought development to previously peripheral areas (Goodhand, 2000). The eventual transition from war to peace is unlikely to happen by attempting to ‘ring fence’ and marginalise the war economy and conflict profiteers. Thought will need to be given to how to engage with entrepreneurs and create the right incentives for

accumulated profits to be invested in the licit economy. For aid agencies, there appears to be scope for thinking more innovatively about how to engage with the private sector.

The programmatic level

Political economy and livelihoods analysis should provide aid agencies with a better perspective about the role of aid in conflict. This research has highlighted that aid can and does have an impact on peace and conflict, but its magnitude is relatively small. Development policy before the conflict perhaps had a greater impact on underlying tensions than humanitarian aid during the war. Second, aid has played a limited role in providing sustained support for livelihoods. These two findings suggest that aid may not be as significant as aid actors often think it is. If political economy analysis helps aid agencies to move towards a more realistic assessment of their role, this is no small step. More specifically, it can inform programming in the following ways:

- It may encourage agencies to revisit the assumptions in their log frames, particularly between the output-to-purpose and purpose-to-goal levels. For instance, the assumption that cleaning irrigation systems will necessarily increase the food security of the poorest groups in a community can be questioned, as can projects based on an assumption of stable political structures and markets. Donors could perhaps be more insistent that there is evidence of political economy/livelihoods analysis underpinning project planning and design.
- The research highlights the importance of political vulnerability. Aid agencies tend to focus at the micro level on humanitarian and socio-economic needs. There is a danger of them being blind to the wider political processes that shape livelihood strategies. For instance, NGO support for carpet producers, while responding to immediate socio-economic needs, runs the risk of reinforcing an exploitative economy, which is controlled and shaped by dealers in Pakistan. An alternative strategy based on a more nuanced analysis might involve a range of complementary activities. These could include the empowerment of producer groups, developing alternative marketing outlets, lobbying on the rights of women, and children producers. As a general point, one would expect this form of analysis to lead agencies into a much stronger focus on targeted advocacy *as well as* implementing micro-level projects.
- Political economy analysis should encourage a more disaggregated analysis of communities – fine-grained analysis should lead to more fine-grained programming.

To an extent this may constitute no more than ‘good practice’, involving an analysis of who gains and who loses as a result of project interventions. Thinking carefully about who is profiting, coping and surviving should lead to better targeting of aid. The construction of tube wells in Dand, for example, probably benefited those with land and access to water, and may have adversely affected those who are coping and surviving. This type of analysis should also assist in the area of early warning – a general weakness within the aid community that has been exposed by the drought. Finally, political economy and livelihoods analysis can help agencies to ensure that they ‘do no harm’, but in a more sophisticated way than simplistic divisions between constituencies for peace or war.

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