

**Working Paper 182**

**Livelihoods, Chronic Conflict  
and Humanitarian Response:  
A Synthesis of Current Practice**

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## **The Livelihoods and Chronic Conflict Working Paper Series**

This Working Paper forms part of a series that reviews the range of ways in which livelihoods approaches are currently used by operational agencies and researchers working in situations of chronic conflict and political instability (SCCPI). The aim of the series is to document current practice so that useful lessons can be learned and applied to ensure for more effective policies, needs assessment, and aid programming to support livelihoods during protracted conflict. Many of these lessons from each of the individual papers are summarised in a synthesis paper. The series also includes an annotated bibliography and a paper outlining the conceptual issues relating to the applications of livelihoods approaches to SCCPI.

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## Acronyms

ACORD	Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FEA	Food Economy Approach
FSAU	Food Security Assessment Unit
HFEA	Household Food Economy Approach
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally displaced person
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority for Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PIPs	Policies, institutions and processes
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
R2D	Relief to development
RBA	Rights-based approach
SACB	Somali Aid Coordination Body
SC-UK	Save the Children–United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNPOS	United Nations Political Office for Somalia
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
WFP	World Food Programme

## Vernacular terms

<i>Sharia</i>	Islamic canonical law based on the teachings of the Koran, prescribing both religious and secular duties, and in some cases retributive penalties for law breaking
<i>Intifada</i>	Movement of Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip

## Summary

This paper offers a synthesis of findings from ten Working Papers commissioned by the Overseas Development Institute for the ‘Livelihoods and Chronic Conflict’ working paper series. The synthesis addresses three sets of questions relating to: (i) how livelihoods analysis has been applied to situations of chronic conflict; (ii) how livelihood assessment tools have been adapted for chronic conflict situations; and (iii) what approaches to livelihoods programming have been developed by agencies working in such situations. Whilst these questions concern very practical issues, they inevitably relate to more conceptual issues – in particular the link between short-term humanitarian objectives and longer-term objectives of improving livelihoods, and reducing poverty and vulnerability – as well as ethical concerns about the unintended impact of humanitarian action in conflict situations. The synthesis paper provides an overview of both the practical and conceptual issues arising from the Working Papers and other recent work.

Livelihoods analysis usefully gets beyond an overt focus on ‘the conflict’ to consider a longer historical trajectory of change and present a differentiated understanding of the impacts of and responses to conflict that incorporates political, economic and social factors. There are a number of features of chronic political instability that do not necessarily occur in politically stable contexts but are particularly relevant to livelihoods analysis in situations of chronic conflict. At the household level, these include displacement, forced migration or relocation in relation to social, legal and economic ties; changing household composition and the impact on income generation, labour and productivity; the loss, depletion, and maintenance of assets; and the changes that these factors have on livelihood strategies and outcomes. At a broader level, the following are significant: spatial patterns of political tension and physical insecurity; disruption to travel and transport, local markets and the wider economy; changing governance structures; changing power relations and the underlying causes of conflict. The conventional livelihoods framework (as used in politically stable contexts) needs to be expanded to incorporate the concept of vulnerability more centrally, to give greater attention to power relations, and to include a temporal dimension.

There is a wealth of methodological tools and analytical approaches that are used to describe livelihoods in situations of chronic conflict. Explanatory tools exist to address questions of power relations and war economies, yet difficulties persist in the integration of household livelihood strategies with the broader political and economic contexts. The ability to predict the impact of specific conflict-related shocks or interventions on livelihoods presents a challenge, particularly in moving from analysis to identifying appropriate interventions. This is partly because the predictive tools available have emerged from conflict and political analysis, not from livelihoods analysis. The use of participatory assessment approaches in situations of chronic conflict is increasing, providing important learning opportunities to staff and agencies alike. Independent monitoring and information systems have a crucial role to play in situations of chronic conflict, but these must be very well linked to analysis and decision-making within implementing agencies to influence programming.

Given the wide range of interventions that might be considered as providing some form of livelihoods support, it is crucially important that the rationale and intended aim of a livelihoods approach is clearly articulated and that this should be reflected in the way in which aid is programmed and delivered. Among the issues that emerge from the relatively small number of cases presented are: (i) the importance of prior assessment and a clear project rationale that help to define modes of programming and delivery; (ii) the degree to which participatory approaches are possible as part of a livelihoods approach in situations of chronic conflict; and (iii) what is meant by ‘capacity-building’ within a livelihoods approach. Examples of the ways in which these features vary within livelihoods-based projects are provided. The apparent disconnection between

livelihoods assessment approaches and the identification of livelihoods interventions can be partly explained by the lack of adequate analytical assessment tools, but also relates to the lack of clarity as to what constitutes a livelihoods intervention. Given the highly context-specific nature of livelihoods and chronic conflict, it is impossible to apply a blueprint approach to livelihoods projects in situations of chronic conflict. For this reason, it is perhaps more appropriate to examine what is meant by a livelihoods ‘approach’ rather than specific livelihood projects or interventions. Livelihoods approaches operate at various different levels and incorporate a number of different activities, from the provision of inputs at grassroots level to advocacy work at international level. Livelihoods approaches must be informed by a sound analytical understanding of livelihoods and the broader political economy context that attempts to predict the impacts of changing conflict and political dynamics and potential agency interventions. Different levels of participation are appropriate in different contexts and according to the objectives of a particular intervention and the capacity of project staff. Livelihoods approaches must have the capacity to incorporate both ‘relief’ and ‘developmental’ modes of operation. Impact assessment must form an integral part of livelihoods approaches. Although livelihood approaches may not be sustainable in themselves, they should aim to sustain livelihoods in both the short-term (to save lives) and the long-term (to build resilience and address vulnerability). It is largely through capacity-building and reducing vulnerability that livelihoods approaches have the potential to lead to long-lasting impacts.

The final section of the paper outlines the implications of livelihoods approaches for humanitarian practice in terms of agency capacity, the need for coordination and assessment, and flexible funding channels. Various topics that require further reflection and debate are also raised: the compatibility of livelihoods approaches and rights-based approaches; the application of humanitarian principles within livelihoods approaches; and the issue of ‘coherence’. These issues are critical to the principled adoption of livelihoods approaches in conflict situations, and constitute major questions for further investigation and practice.





# 1 Introduction

Sustainable livelihoods approaches were largely developed in stable and relatively peaceful contexts, in which overcoming poverty was the primary objective of outside interventions. Much of the link between livelihood approaches and emergency situations was found in the literature that developed around the so-called ‘Relief to Development Continuum’ in the mid 1990s. The ‘continuum’ literature tended to presume that relief or humanitarian assistance was being provided in the context of a natural disaster, and presumably one with a clear beginning and a clear end. In protracted emergencies – and specifically in situations of chronic conflict – short-term relief inputs may provide essential forms of assistance to affected people, but such humanitarian assistance has classically only been intended as immediate life-saving support. Other forms of aid – including various forms of livelihood support – also have a role to play in assisting people and communities to increase their ability to survive and/or cope with these situations in the longer-term. Increasingly, agencies are coming to question the value of only providing life-saving support over long periods of time in chronic emergencies. However, attempts to provide aid beyond the saving of human life in the context of chronic conflict or political instability are clearly fraught with problems well beyond the capacity of the standard ‘livelihoods’ toolbox. This paper attempts to provide a brief overview of what some of those problems are, review the kinds of tools being developed to address them, and to identify some of the gaps.

The rationale for the Working Paper series as a whole is to try to understand better how people manage in these situations (i.e. how their livelihoods are changed); what types of support might be appropriate and the approaches used by agencies in trying to determine appropriate forms of support; and the ways in which agencies are designing interventions in contexts of chronic conflict and political instability. Whilst these questions have been framed in very practical terms, they inevitably relate to more conceptual issues – in particular the link between short-term humanitarian objectives and longer-term developmental objectives – as well as ethical concerns relating to the necessity of providing livelihood support in principled ways that do not exacerbate existing tensions relating to the conflict or that may inadvertently promote political instability or have other unintended negative impacts. At the conceptual level, such concerns have been articulated in terms of the need to link right-based approaches with livelihoods approaches, or to develop a better understanding of the political economy of conflict as part of the process of determining appropriate forms of livelihood support. The purpose of the synthesis paper is to bring together the findings, experiences and lessons documented in the Working Paper series and the broader literature on development and conflict, and to draw some conclusions (or at least articulate some views) about the compatibility of approaches. If they are compatible, what is required to make it possible in terms of tools, policies and conceptual approaches? To what extent have these already been developed, and what is still required?

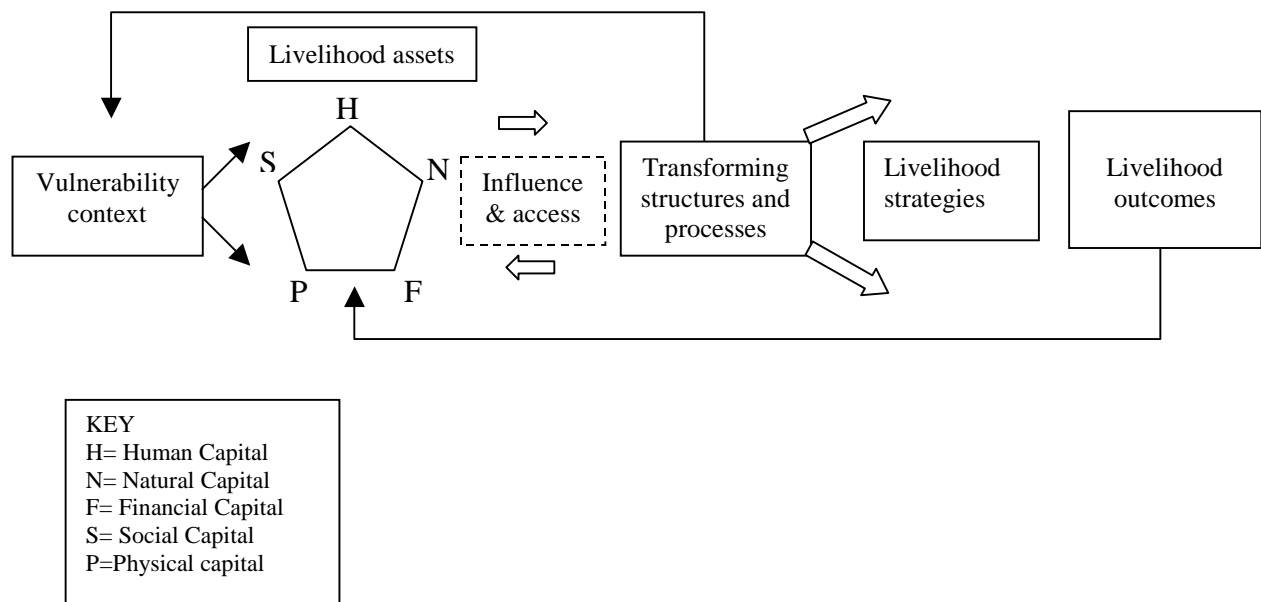
This synthesis paper summarises the main issues and findings of the working paper series. Section 2 briefly reviews the concept of livelihoods and what is meant by a ‘livelihoods approach,’ and then presents a very brief review of contemporary conflicts, and raises some potential issues of incorporating a livelihoods approach into situations of chronic conflict. Finally, it poses several questions to help sort out the array of empirical findings from the case studies in the series. Section 3 offers short summaries of each of the papers published by the working paper series. Section 4 reviews both the working papers and the livelihoods literature more generally to synthesise the evidence on these questions. The final section offers some tentative ‘working’ conclusions and raises some further questions for investigation and field application.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 What is a ‘livelihoods approach?’

A livelihood ‘comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims, and access) and activities required for a means of living; a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation’ (Chambers and Conway, 1992). Livelihoods have been depicted in various ways, but perhaps the most enduring is the sustainable livelihood framework of DFID as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 DFID’s sustainable livelihoods framework**



Source: Carney (1998)

The key elements of a livelihoods framework include livelihood *assets*, livelihood *strategies*, and livelihood *outcomes*. While these are mostly household or micro-level phenomena, all of these must be analysed in the broader environmental, social, political and economic context (certain aspects of which constitute the ‘vulnerability context’) as well as the institutions, and structures that influence the manner in which individual, households and communities utilise their assets and how they gain and maintain access to and control over them. These ‘transforming structures and processes’ have more recently been referred to as ‘policies, institutions and processes’ (PIPs) (Hobley, 2001).

A ‘livelihoods approach’ is one that takes as its starting point the actual livelihood assets and strategies that people use to achieve the outcomes they seek. Livelihoods approaches grow out of a food security perspective, but are based on the observation that food is only one important basic need among several, and adequate food consumption may be sacrificed for other important needs. Poor or vulnerable people have complex strategies for diversifying their sources of income, and of minimising risk – these strategies must be understood in order to intervene effectively. Vulnerability and ability of an individual or household to recover from shocks is linked to assets. Assets may be *natural* – such as land, water, forests, or *physical* – housing, infrastructure, livestock, or durable goods; they may be *human* – such as education, skills and capacities, or health and the

ability to work; they may be *financial* such as savings in money, or other stores of wealth; or, assets may be *social* – kinship, community participation, trust and reciprocity. (Some analyses include *political* assets or capital as well). Livelihoods approaches intervene in the relationships between assets, PIPs and livelihood strategies to reduce vulnerability, poverty, food insecurity, and other negative outcomes.

A livelihoods approach, as defined for politically stable, development contexts, is underpinned by a number of principles. According to these principles, livelihoods approaches are: people-centred; responsive and participatory; multi-level; conducted in partnership with both public and private sector; sustainable; dynamic; and holistic (Schafer, 2002). The degree to which livelihoods principles are compatible with humanitarian principles and rights-based approaches is further explored in section 5.2.

Operational characteristics of livelihoods approaches in practice include:

- ∄ Understanding and identifying critical interventions to support the way in which people pursue their livelihoods. These interventions classically lie in the ‘assets’ or ‘strategies’ part of the picture in a ‘development’ context, and may be more on the side of directly provisioning certain ‘outcomes’ in an emergency context (though this is not always the case). In recent years, increasing attention has focused on the ways in which policy changes or interventions within the ‘transforming structures and processes’ or PIPs might have positive impacts on livelihoods.
- ∄ An emphasis on the strategies people use when they cannot meet basic requirements and the trade-offs that have to be made among desired outcomes, or between current consumption and longer-term objectives. Sometimes coping strategies are the entry point in interventions. In other cases, offering alternatives to destructive coping strategies (such as natural resource destruction) may be the entry point.
- ∄ Livelihoods approaches attempt to link holistic analysis and a strategic focus on intervention. Across the broad spectrum depicted in Figure 1, the idea is to identify critical constraints in the livelihood system and identify leverage points for intervention that maximise impact (Carney, 1998; Goldman, 2000).

A more detailed discussion of livelihoods approaches is provided by Schafer (2002). The range of ways in which specific bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental organisations understand and apply livelihoods approaches in practice is described by Hussein (2002). Interestingly, the papers comprising the current Working Paper Series adopt much of the language and terms referred to above, but the livelihoods framework itself does not feature as centrally as might be assumed. Rather than using a livelihoods framework for analysis, the papers appear to adopt a livelihoods analysis that is much closer to the definition provided by Murray (2001): differentiated and multi-level research that examines changes over time; it is based on empirical investigations into the livelihood strategies of households and communities, in which micro-level findings are situated within a macro context to explain the social, economic and political factors relating to poverty and vulnerability. The inadequacies of the livelihood framework for situations of chronic conflict are explored in Section 4.1.

## 2.2 The nature of contemporary political conflict

Much has been written about the change in the nature of political conflict since the end of the cold war (Duffield, 2001; Kaldor, 1999; Le Billon, 2000; Macrae and Zwi, 1994). While it is not the intent of this paper to recount these changes in detail, for the purpose of investigating livelihoods in the context of conflict, it is worth quickly reviewing some of the salient features of the ‘new wars’. Duffield (2001) describes these new wars as non-territorial ‘network’ wars in which the objective is

not so much the control of territory or the direct subjugation of ‘enemy populations’, but rather the reconfiguration of systems to the benefit of the victors. These conflicts are often at least partially about gaining access to resources, control over markets, labour, access routes, etc. Contemporary development policy largely views such wars as the result of, rather than primarily a cause of, widespread underdevelopment and poverty, but the relationship between the two is to some extent circular. The redefinition of underdevelopment as the cause of the new wars, and the notion that development assistance has the potential to address the problem of conflict, has opened up new arenas of interventions by aid agencies in the 1990s, around the conflict/development nexus (Duffield, 2001).

The main characteristics of situations of chronic political instability have been identified as follows (Schafer, 2002):

- ∄ A state in which public institutions (executive, judicial, legislative) are seriously weakened or non-existent
- ∄ External legitimacy of the state is withheld or contested
- ∄ Strong parallel or extra-legal economy
- ∄ Existence of, or high susceptibility to violence
- ∄ Forced displacement: refugees and internally displaced people
- ∄ Sections of the population are deliberately excluded from enjoying basic rights
- ∄ Livelihoods are highly vulnerable to external shocks
- ∄ Existence of serious poverty

Since the end of the cold war, state actors in many conflict situations in the third world have weakened considerably in the face of globalisation and other changes, and non-state actors – rebel movements, militias, warlords – play increasingly important roles. This makes conflicts themselves more factionalised, fragmented and protracted, even a ‘semi-permanent’ part of the political landscape, in part because of the profitability of ‘war economies’ to some of these actors. The breakdown or collapse of state authority is often associated with the ‘new wars’, as both a cause and an effect. Control of territory is not necessarily the objective so much as the control of resources – not only natural resources but also markets, labour, access routes, etc. While it is often incorrect to characterise these conflicts purely in ethnic terms, politicised identities of various types (ethnic, religious, national, etc.) do often play a role in fuelling crises.

Unlike conventional wars in which regular armies are easily identified, there is increasingly less distinction in the ‘new wars’ between combatants and non-combatants. Civilian institutions, and indeed the livelihoods of non-combatant populations may become military targets, and access to livelihood resources may be deliberately blocked. While refugee populations have remained at the same or declining levels in the past decade, the numbers of internally displaced people resulting from conflict have increased substantially. Similarly, many non-state actors show a lack of respect for the traditional role of humanitarian agencies or the value of humanitarian principles. Humanitarian access is frequently a problem, and increasingly, humanitarian staff have been targeted by combatants.

Summarising the characteristics of the ‘new wars’ Duffield (2001: 14) notes, ‘Rather than expressions of breakdown and chaos, the new wars can be understood as a form of non-territorial network war that works through and around states... Far from being a peripheral aberration, network war reflects the contested integration of stratified markets and populations into the

global economy...’. This new kind of operating environment will not go away any time soon, raising significant implications for humanitarian response.

There has long been an overlap in the organisational mandates of agencies in terms of both responding to short-term crises and contributing to longer-term development, but these were classically thought of as separate kinds of activities, with crises linked to a distinctly short time frame. But as noted, crises – particularly political or conflict-related crises – have tended to become chronic or ‘permanent’. Continuing to apply relatively short-term solutions to what have become chronic problems raises a whole host of issues. Given the definition of livelihoods and livelihoods approaches, it is not difficult to see the connection between livelihoods and this new type of conflict. Lautze (1996) notes that going beyond life-saving measures to supporting livelihoods in conflict situations is a critical mission of humanitarian agencies. Several general approaches have been suggested, and these are briefly reviewed below, with some concerns or issues highlighted.

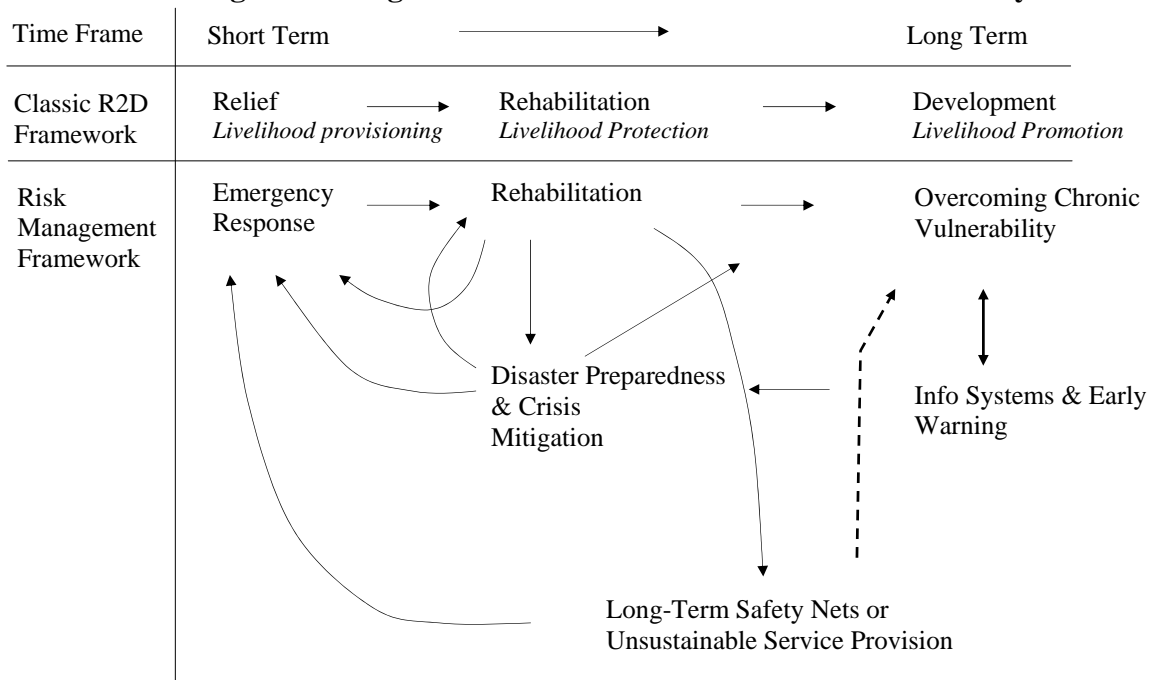
### **2.3 Conceptual frameworks beyond the ‘relief to development’ continuum**

In the 1980s and 1990s, a conceptual framework for linking relief to development – or the ‘relief to development continuum’ – became popular, and was widely adopted into the thinking and planning of operational agencies. The notion was that relief activities could be tied to developmental objectives; better-designed development programmes could protect people’s assets better and reduce the need for relief in response to shocks; post-emergency recovery time would be reduced; and long-term improvements would be more sustainable. ‘Protecting livelihoods saves lives’ was the theme (IDS, 1994). The ‘continuum’ framework also put greater emphasis on intermediate activities as a category of interventions in their own right.

However, there are now at least three related and widely perceived problems with the ‘continuum’ framework. First, the continuum idea was driven by a normative perception that over time, programmes *should* shift from left to right along the continuum (as shown by the ‘Classic R2D Framework’ in Figure 2), but the observation of practical experience was that the tendency is anything but linear, and often cycles back towards emergency response, or gets ‘stuck’ in permanent provisioning of relief or safety nets (which the classic continuum model did not recognise). The picture was much more complicated than the simple ‘continuum’ model suggested, with a variety of different activities along the ‘continuum’ taking place simultaneously.

Second, the normative perception was not only at odds with the empirical reality, it also lacked a clear conceptual basis about the nature of livelihood shocks – the concept was based largely on experience with natural disasters, particularly drought in Africa. It was applied – sometimes too hastily – in complex political emergencies and other forms of disasters, often with counter-productive results. For example, livelihoods themselves and the institutions that support them are often targeted by military combatants, with the perverse result (from a conventional livelihoods perspective) that people with more assets have often found themselves more vulnerable to attack.

And third, the presumption of a shock or emergency with a well-defined beginning and end (and therefore clearly delineated programmatic transition points) clearly did not apply in situations where low-grade conflict continued for years or even decades. And different places in the same country could be relatively stable while other parts of the country were deeply affected by conflict. Given the drastically different types of vulnerability, it was perhaps not surprising that ‘continuum’ approaches to programming in complex emergencies proved problematic.

**Figure 2 Risk Management Programme Framework for Chronic Vulnerability**

Source: CARE (2003)

Despite the problems with the continuum model, many of the issues posed by the continuum continue to demand attention – in particular the clear dissatisfaction with a continuous ‘relief mode’ of operation in situations of chronic vulnerability of emergency. In an attempt to adequately capture the ambiguities of complex environment and the modes of programming that often take place, some agencies developed alternatives to the ‘continuum’ concept. One agency developed a ‘risk management’ framework for situations of chronic vulnerability (CARE, 2003) by radically modifying the continuum framework (Figure 2), but the model was intended primarily as a programming framework, not as a normative framework.

The risk management framework acknowledges many of the shortcomings in the classic ‘continuum’ model, including the multiplicity of activities that may be going on simultaneously, the lack of a normative ‘directionality’ and the trap of getting programmatically ‘stuck’ in the provision of long-term safety nets. Overcoming chronic vulnerability is identified as the major challenge in this kind of programming model (the dotted line in Figure 2). Livelihoods approaches were initially linked to the ‘relief to development’ continuum because of the notion that protecting livelihoods would contribute directly to saving lives in an emergency. Supporting livelihoods – with appropriate caveats in conflict situations – is clearly a major part of this strategy. However, until recently only a few attempts were made to situate livelihoods approaches in the context of conflict or humanitarian response.

## 2.4 Implications for supporting livelihoods in situations of chronic conflict

Schafer (2002) notes a ‘profound mismatch’ between the structures and institutions of current humanitarian/development funding and intervention, and the characteristics of chronic political instability described as the ‘new wars’. Lautze (1996) offers a clear rationale for livelihoods interventions in the context of complex emergencies, but her argument very clearly goes beyond the household or the provision of basic needs, to an analysis of the political, economic context, market dynamics, and even the military aspects of a crisis; development of a clear policy regarding local

institutional capacity building; and greater programmatic sophistication regarding timing and sequencing than classic humanitarian interventions ever sought to do.

Incorporating a political economy analysis into livelihoods analysis and intervention suggests one means of dealing with this problem (Schafer, 2002). Political economy analysis focuses on power and wealth relations and on the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time; it is essentially concerned with understanding the interaction of political and economic processes and associated dynamics of power and powerlessness between different groups and institutions in society (Le Billon, 2000). In situations of chronic conflict, political economy is concerned both with political dynamics (such as group-based rebellion against the state) and with economic forces (such as war economies) – both ‘grievance’ and ‘greed’ – which are combined in changing patterns of power and vulnerability, creating both ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ (Collinson et al., 2002; Le Billon, 2000). Many of the issues addressed by political economy analysis can also be viewed through the lens of livelihoods analysis (Collinson et al., 2002: 25); indeed, a really complete livelihoods analysis might actually answer many of the same questions as a political economy analysis (Schafer, 2002: 24).

Collinson et al. (2002: 10–11) note: ‘The transformations that conflict brings about in the wider political economy are mirrored in the varied, profound and often irreversible changes that are brought about in people’s lives at the local level. [...] the adaptations and diversification in people’s livelihoods and coping strategies need to be matched by diversification and adaptations in the humanitarian response.’

While the programmatic rationale is clear, some of the methods, the interventions, and the principles that underpin a livelihoods approach in situations of chronic conflict or political instability remain contested – or uncharted – territory. Three major questions emerge from this review, forming the basis for the synthesis presented in section 4. These are:

- ∄ How has livelihoods analysis been applied to conflict situations in order to understand the impact of conflict on livelihoods and people’s responses? How should livelihoods frameworks be expanded to incorporate conflict situations?
- ∄ How have livelihood assessment tools been adapted and applied in conflict situations? How have questions of power relations, war economies, human rights and humanitarian principles been addressed? Are existing assessment tools sufficient to inform livelihoods programming in the context of chronic conflict and political instability?
- ∄ What innovative approaches to livelihoods programming have been developed by agencies in situations of situations of chronic conflict? What are the issues emerging from these experiences?

Beyond these three areas, there are a number of important questions that are not covered by the working papers but require further debate and reflection: Are livelihoods approaches compatible with rights-based approaches? To what extent is it possible to apply humanitarian principles within a livelihoods approach? Although we begin to explore such questions in section 5.2, considerably more investigations need to be undertaken on these issues if principled support to livelihoods in chronic conflict situations is to become a reality in practice.

### **3 Overview of Current Practice: The Working Paper Series**

This section provides a brief overview of the papers published in the current series. In compiling the series, the editors set out to include three types of papers: those based on empirical field research describing livelihoods in situations of chronic conflict; those focused on the methodologies used by agencies in undertaking assessments to try to understand livelihood needs in chronic conflict; and those providing examples of livelihoods interventions in situations of chronic conflict. The series also includes an overview of conceptual issues (Schafer, 2002) and an annotated bibliography (Young, 2002). All of the papers in the series draw important lessons for livelihoods interventions, but the fact that there is just one paper that examines livelihoods interventions in detail reflects the relative novelty of such interventions in humanitarian practice and that empirical studies into their success or failure have yet to emerge.

#### **3.1 Conceptual issues and the literature available**

The paper by Jessica Schafer (2002) briefly presents the underlying rationale for the series as a whole – that ‘available frameworks for analysis and intervention in both the humanitarian and development paradigms are inappropriate in the context of the “new wars”’ (Schafer, 2002: 1) – and describes various conceptual issues that must be considered in applying a livelihoods approach to situations of chronic conflict. These issues include: the institutions and structures that determine the context within which conflicts arise; the controversial notion of sustainability; the political economy of conflict; war economies; social capital transformations; the aims of humanitarian aid; international influences on local livelihoods; poverty and vulnerability; human rights; and practical, operational constraints. The paper highlights the need to incorporate political analysis into livelihoods approaches in situations of chronic conflict (see also Collinson et al., 2002 for a similar argument from a political economy perspective).

A review of agency practice (based on interviews carried out in early 2001 with head office staff of a range of NGO, government and UN agencies) revealed a considerable amount of reflection and change relating both to agency practice and conceptual debates (Schafer, 2002). This is also evident in the annotated bibliography (Young, 2002), which includes a large number of very recent publications and reports. Much of the literature currently available is based on the impacts of conflict and displacement on livelihoods, and there are still relatively few detailed reports documenting the lessons learned from programmatic strategies and interventions to support livelihoods in situations of chronic conflict.

#### **3.2 Understanding and supporting livelihoods in situations of chronic conflict**

The paper by Seddon and Hussein (2002) offers a historical analysis of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal and describes the ways in which livelihoods and development processes have been affected. The differential nature of impacts across geographical areas, on different actors and sections of the population, and at different levels are clearly illustrated. The main grassroots effects of the conflict have been: a rural exodus on the part of those most fearful of the Maoists; a significant reduction in travel and the transport of goods due to insecurity; a disruption of many economic activities; the destruction of local infrastructure; and the growth of a climate of fear and insecurity. Development agencies, whether foreign or national, have increasingly been forced to adapt their programmes in response to the security situation and through the growing recognition of the wider and longer-term implications of the conflict for rural development and livelihoods. The paper closes with practical guidance for agency responses in the current context of Nepal, including specific principles to



be observed, approaches to needs assessment and situational analysis, livelihood protection, and conflict resolution.

Longley, Kamara and Fanthorpe (2003, forthcoming) describe events associated with the war in Sierra Leone and the effects on the northwestern district of Kambia. The underlying lesson that is implicit in the analysis is the need to develop a dynamic understanding of livelihoods that focuses not only on change but also continuity: both factors offer opportunities and constraints to livelihood strategies in situations of chronic conflict. In describing rural livelihood strategies and the ways in which different groups and individuals coped over six years of instability (1995 to 2001), the authors emphasise the resilience of the local population and the social and historical factors that have contributed to this resilience. Rebel activities and the structures established to allow the Revolutionary United Front to control the district from late 1998 to mid 2000 are examined in relation to both pre- and post-war governance institutions. Efforts for 'reconstruction', 'rehabilitation', 'resettlement' and 'reconciliation' are explored, and the paper questions the appropriateness of these terms, given the historical and pre-war contexts relating to livelihood strategies, poverty and development.

Adam Pain (2002) argues that the dynamics of chronic conflict in Afghanistan and its effects on livelihoods have been poorly understood, and recommends that aid practice must pay more attention to learning. Three case studies – on opium production, an economic blockade in Hazarajat and carpet production in Northern Afghanistan – illustrate the complexity of livelihoods and the dynamics of power relations and the relevance of this understanding to programming. Key lessons drawn from these studies include: the recognition of embedded knowledge of NGOs that have worked long term in specific locations and the need to build explicitly learning into their programming; the poor understanding of the resilience of livelihoods; the need to recognise the legitimacy of 'illicit' activities; the dynamic nature of conflict and power relations and the poor conceptualisation of vulnerability within the livelihoods framework. Based on these lessons, the paper briefly outlines the challenges facing the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit in developing a livelihood monitoring system for Afghanistan.

### **3.3 Agency approaches to livelihoods assessments**

The food economy approach (FEA) is the focus of the paper by Boudreau and Coutts (2002), which illustrates how FEA links livelihood information to an analysis of the effects of political, economic and social change. The paper shows how food economy analysis is particularly helpful in determining appropriate responses and targeting of both relief and development interventions. In Zimbabwe, food economy analysis has been used to establish an urban baseline to monitor the effects of macro-economic shocks on households' access to food, cash income and basic services in relation to the current political crisis. Food economy assessments carried out in the northern pastoral areas of Kenya have built up livelihood pictures to understand the inter-related causes of particular drought outcomes. Because the food economy framework is able to logically organise and structure different types and levels of information, the authors claim that it provides a powerful impetus for coordinated information gathering and analysis, helping to build consensus around findings and conclusions, leading to faster and more accurate decision-making.

Westley and Mikhalev's (2002) working paper reviews the methodology used for an inter-agency qualitative poverty assessment of Kosovo carried out in July 2000. The application of CARE's livelihoods framework allowed for an integrated analysis of the nature of the conflict, its root causes and the different ways in which it was experienced over time by diverse households. Although the assessment did not explicitly use a rights-based approach, the use of participatory methodologies ensured that communities gained information, participated in the analysis of needs and priorities,

and gained access to decision-making. The two main contributions of the livelihood assessment approach to the existing knowledge base within Kosovo centred around: (i) the introduction of and training in participatory methods of livelihood analysis and community interaction upon which each agency could build both the processes and the content of their programmes; and (ii) a better understanding of vulnerability dynamics which complemented previous agency analysis and studies. The deeper analysis of long-term trends beyond the conflict itself, the scarcity of available data, and difficulties in linking community-level findings with the wider literature on macro-economic and political trends formed the major challenges felt by the assessment team. Despite limitations in turning analysis into action, evidence of the impact of the assessment can be traced in policy documents, project design, and the greater use of participatory approaches in Kosovo.

The paper by Hines and Balletto (2002) outlines the particular problems of assessments and interventions among internally displaced persons (IDPs), where needs change over time with the back and forth nature of displacement, return, and repeated displacements, and where data may be manipulated for political purposes. The needs assessment approach outlined in this paper illustrates how in Colombia the World Food Programme (WFP) is developing and improving its vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) methodology to better understand food, livelihood and security vulnerabilities during different stages of displacement. Initial findings indicate that the time when food and livelihoods assistance is most required is the crucial period after the first three months of displacement. Incorporating a livelihoods approach in the WFP Colombia assessment methodology provides a strong basis for developing more stringent targeting criteria that should remain valid through the phases of displacement. Given the nature of IDP operations, an impartial reference for developing and applying targeting criteria is key. The authors suggest that greater credibility and understanding will highlight the deprivation of the internally displaced and serve as a basis for impartial advocacy that will bring greater attention to the plight of IDPs in Colombia and elsewhere.

Jaspars and Shoham (2002) provide a critical review of a number of emergency livelihoods assessment approaches<sup>1</sup> in situations of chronic conflict. The approaches reviewed generally focus on the household or community level and determine the severity of food insecurity for different groups in order to assess the need for humanitarian relief, usually food aid. Few approaches include an analysis of political vulnerability or the processes at the macro-level which lead to this. In view of this, the review also considers elements of conflict and political analysis tools that can be incorporated into livelihoods assessments. The paper highlights the challenges in conducting livelihoods assessments in situations of chronic conflict; mainly due to problems with access and insecurity, difficulties of collecting information on violent or illegal activities, problems in identifying livelihood and wealth groups, and an increased potential for bias. The use of secondary information sources, cross-checking and triangulation is particularly important for assessment methods in situations of chronic conflict. The review recommends that the livelihoods framework should be adapted by: considering war strategies, political economy, and the impacts of war to identify livelihood options and risks; paying particular attention to the governance environment; placing a greater focus on an analysis of social and political vulnerability; and recognising the limited goals and options for livelihood strategies in situations of chronic conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> The assessment approaches reviewed are: CARE's household livelihood security approach; Oxfam-GB's livelihoods approach to food security assessments; SC-UK's household economy approach; ICRC's economic security analysis; MSF-H's food security analysis; WFP's Vulnerability Assessment Mapping; and USAID's Famine Early Warning System.

### **3.4 Livelihoods interventions**

The paper by Montani and Majid (2002) examines the livelihoods and political economy context of southern Somalia and describes two very different projects, implemented by SC-UK and ICRC respectively, that are both considered as livelihoods interventions. The paper highlights specific political, institutional and programming aspects of both the political and security context and the nature of humanitarian response in southern Somalia which offer the conditions conducive to effective livelihoods interventions. The importance of context-specific information, coordination, participation, and capacity-building emerge as key themes. Both of the projects described involved a tremendous degree of change in the approaches that had previously been implemented by both SC-UK and ICRC in Somalia; in the case of the SC-UK project, this change was gradual and location-specific, whereas in the case of ICRC the pressure for timely interventions across multiple sites presented considerable challenges, both in terms of implementation and programming. The need for baseline studies is emphasised in assessing the impacts of livelihoods interventions.

## 4 Questions and Issues Arising from the Papers

This section is organised around the three major questions highlighted in section 2 and shown below in Box 1. The papers offer new insights into livelihoods approaches in situations of chronic conflict, and also reinforce the findings of other researchers and operational agencies. The series does not claim to be comprehensive, and additional literature is referred to where appropriate. Some of the issues that are considered to be important to livelihoods approaches in politically unstable contexts but not covered by the series – e.g. how livelihoods approaches relate to rights-based approaches and to humanitarian principles – are mentioned in section 5.2.

### Box 1 Major questions examined in section 4

1. How has livelihoods analysis been applied to conflict situations in order to understand the impact of conflict on livelihoods and people's responses? How should livelihoods frameworks be expanded to incorporate conflict situations?
2. How have livelihood assessment tools been adapted and applied in conflict situations? How have questions of power relations, war economies, human rights and humanitarian principles been addressed? Are existing assessment tools sufficient to inform livelihoods programming in the context of chronic conflict and political instability?
3. What innovative approaches to livelihoods programming have been developed by agencies in situations of situations of chronic conflict? What are the issues emerging from these experiences?

### 4.1 Applying livelihoods analysis<sup>2</sup> to chronic conflict situations

*How has livelihoods analysis been applied to conflict situations in order to understand the impact of conflict on livelihoods and people's responses? How should livelihoods frameworks be expanded to incorporate conflict situations?*

The papers clearly illustrate the ability of livelihoods analysis to get beyond an overt focus on 'the conflict' to consider a longer historical trajectory of change and present a differentiated understanding of the impacts of and responses to conflict (e.g. for different groups of actors; according to spatial patterns; and at international, national, regional and local levels) that incorporates political, economic and social factors. But this type of analysis does not necessarily stem from a livelihoods framework, and the livelihoods framework presented in Figure 1 is considered to be inadequate for situations of chronic conflict for reasons that are described at the end of this section. Factors that are seen to be of particular relevance to understanding livelihoods in situations of chronic conflict are presented in Box 2. Each of these factors is briefly discussed in the text that follows. Although the ways in which these factors relate to one another is not made explicit, it must be recognised that they are often interconnected.

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<sup>2</sup> Livelihoods analysis is used here to refer to differentiated and multi-level research that examines changes over time; it is based on empirical investigations into the livelihood strategies of households and communities, in which micro-level findings are situated within a macro context to explain the social, economic and political factors relating to poverty and vulnerability (Murray, 2001).

### **Box 2 Some factors relevant to understanding livelihoods in chronic conflict situations**

(this is not considered to be definitive or exhaustive)

Household level	Broader livelihood and political economy context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>∉ Displacement, forced migration or relocation in relation to social, legal and economic ties</li> <li>∉ Changing household composition (due to death, abduction, displacement or migration) and impact on income generation, labour and productivity</li> <li>∉ Asset levels – loss, depletion and maintenance of all asset types: natural, financial, physical, human, and social</li> <li>∉ Ways in which the above points, in combination with the broader context, affect livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes for different groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>∉ Spatial patterns of political tension and physical insecurity</li> <li>∉ Disruption to travel and transport and local markets – for both consumption and production – and wider economy</li> <li>∉ Changing governance structures; control over markets, labour and resources through formal and informal institutions; service provision</li> <li>∉ Changing power relations within and between groups and communities; underlying causes of conflict; strategies used by insurgents</li> </ul>

Perhaps the most visible and direct negative impacts of conflict and political instability on households are their physical displacement, the loss of family members, and the loss of assets. In many contexts, households may be affected by all three of these factors, which are often intimately linked. Often associated with displacement is the loss of social, legal and economic ties that would normally help to support household livelihood strategies in their original place of residence (Hines and Balletto, 2002). With displacement, not only are households physically scattered, but community and family networks may also be affected, particularly when the households within a community move to different locations. The loss of family members may result from death, abduction, displacement or migration. In addition to the effects of the emotional loss, such deaths often have severe economic implications for the remaining members of the household, particularly where the person was one of the main income earners or provided a source of productive labour to the household (Seddon and Hussein, 2002; Westley and Mikhalev, 2002). The loss of productive or financial assets is referred to in almost every description of the impacts of situations of chronic conflict on livelihoods. Assets may be lost directly as a result of deliberate damage or theft by belligerents ('asset-stripping'); through the collateral impacts of conflict; they may be rendered useless through lack of maintenance; or looted/stolen (not necessarily belligerents); alternatively, asset depletion may occur indirectly through expenditures necessary to meet basic household needs. All of the impacts described above will inevitably affect livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes.

Stephen Devereux (1992; 1999) usefully categorises household livelihood strategies in relation to their impacts on household assets. He differentiates between strategies of accumulation, adaptation, coping and survival: accumulation strategies seek to increase income flows and build up assets; adaptation strategies seek to spread risk by adjusting livelihoods or diversifying income; coping strategies aim to minimise the impacts of shocks and may involve changes in the relative balance of assets; survival strategies are a last resort to prevent destitution and death and lead to the depletion or erosion of essential assets. CARE uses a similar categorisation that is more explicitly based on household assets and how they are used: strategies are defined as accumulating, maintaining, or depleting assets (Westley and Mikhalev, 2002). The exact boundaries between the different categories of livelihood strategies defined above may be difficult to ascertain, and at any one time a particular household may be pursuing a number of different strategies that encompass more than one category. Westley and Mikhalev (2002) suggest that an asset-based approach more easily allows for the incorporation of a rights-based approach through the examination of barriers of access to assets.

Whilst empirical evidence exists to suggest that people have a remarkable ability to draw on either new or existing livelihood sources in order to maintain or adapt their livelihood strategies in situations of chronic conflict (Schafer, 2002; Longley et al., 2003 forthcoming), livelihood strategies and the assets on which they depend often form the very target of warring factions. What has been referred to as social capital<sup>3</sup> can be seen to play a crucial role in allowing households to maintain their livelihoods in situations of chronic conflict, but can also be used and manipulated by insurgents for more sinister ends. For example, in Sierra Leone rebels deliberately damaged social networks through creating fear and suspicion within communities (Richards, 1996), and in the Rwandan genocide social relations were manipulated for fatal outcomes. In Afghanistan, however, Pain (2002) draws particular attention to the more positive role of social capital, correcting the assumption made by various commentators that this has somehow been 'depleted' or 'eroded'; social relationships continue to evolve in situations of chronic conflict, allowing for changes, transformations and adaptations in both livelihood strategies and in society at large. Social networks allow for families and individuals to access remittances, credit and other forms of support from relatives and others who are living overseas or in areas that might not be affected by conflict (Westley and Mikhalev, 2002; Lautze et al., 2002). In Afghanistan, credit was vital in allowing households to cope, but the duration of political instability, combined with drought, was such that levels of debt became alarmingly high and further possibilities for credit were exhausted (Lautze et al., 2002). Similarly, research by Oxfam among rural Palestinian communities in the West Bank highlights the role of informal networks and credit (see Box 3), but also suggests that the entire credit system is at risk because of the shortage of disposable income (Oxfam International, 2002). In the case of Kosovo, extended social networks were seen to be of considerable importance to local coping strategies, and those who were vulnerable were those without the support afforded by such networks (Westley and Mikhalev, 2002). There is thus considerable local variation in the role that mutual support mechanisms play in people's coping strategies (Collinson et al., 2002), emphasising the importance of empirical research.

Beyond the household level, the disruption to travel and transport that often occurs in situations of chronic conflict – whether due to general insecurity and the fear of attack whilst travelling, the presence of landmines, the physical destruction of bridges and vehicles, the imposition of taxes and other means of control of transport infrastructure by belligerents or local authorities (e.g. closure and curfews), or the rise in the cost of travel due to increased fuel prices (or a combination of factors) – has serious negative impacts on livelihoods, both directly (through restricting mobility) and indirectly (through associated impacts on markets and social services). The effects of disrupted transport systems in Nepal are described by Seddon and Hussein (2002). In the case of Kosovo, the mobility of ethnic Serbians was more restricted than that of ethnic Albanians, and this led to the loss of markets and market access (Westley and Mikhalev, 2002). Box 3 illustrates the ways in which closure restrictions on transport and the movement of Palestinians in Israeli-occupied West Bank have negative social, economic and health impacts on rural Palestinian communities.

Empirical evidence clearly indicates that local markets continue to function in situations of chronic conflict where there is physical mobility, but it is often the case that the institutions which govern such markets are subject to manipulation by powerful actors, and less powerful players may lose out (Keen, 1998). In some situations, price distortions may result from the supply of poorly targeted relief inputs. The questions that must be examined are whether different people's access to markets is sustained in situations of chronic conflict, and whether they are able to meet their production and consumption needs through existing markets (see Box 3). In the case of Somalia, despite a lack of detailed information on how markets function, they are recognised as an important means through which livelihoods are maintained (European Commission, 2002).

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<sup>3</sup> The logic of the term 'social capital' is questioned by a number of authors (e.g. Harriss and de Renzio, 1997; Fine, 2001) but has been defined as 'features of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-ordinated actions' (Putnam, 1993: 167).

### Box 3 Struggling to survive under closure: Oxfam research in the West Bank

Oxfam's work over a number of years with vulnerable groups in Palestinian villages in the West Bank and Gaza Strip led to a campaign launched in March 2002 calling on all parties in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to uphold international humanitarian and human rights law. Detailed research was subsequently undertaken by Oxfam and its partner organisations to document the social and economic impact of the Israeli government's policy of closure on rural Palestinian communities in the West Bank.

Approximately 60% of the West Bank population lives in villages or small towns. Village economies are highly dependent on their links to West Bank towns and Israel, particularly for jobs, markets and productive inputs, and services. Closure is an Israeli policy restricting the movement of Palestinian people, vehicles and goods in the Palestinian Territories. Such policies, combined with curfews, have undermined and even broken many of the links between villages and towns, leaving village communities facing impoverishment and unemployment, lack of access to services, a weakened agricultural sector, and increased vulnerability to Israeli settler violence. Closure has had a disproportionate impact on the so-called 'new poor' – lower and middle class families who relied heavily on cash incomes, i.e. farmers who have been squeezed by rising costs and loss of markets, businessmen cut off from markets, and the growing number of unemployed wage labourers without access to alternative forms of livelihoods. While closure policies are a response to serious security concerns on the part of the Israeli government, blanket movement restrictions are regarded by human rights groups as collective punishment, and therefore considered illegal under international law.

The report documents six main areas in which livelihoods and coping strategies have been affected by closure and curfews:

1. *Family coping mechanisms.* Cutting consumption, reallocating resources, and selling household assets allow families to make the most of their limited resources, but they also carry threats to the health and social well-being of family members. Techniques for cutting consumption range from the relatively harmless (e.g. cooking smaller meals and eliminating sweets) to more serious actions such as cutting down on more expensive foods (e.g. meat and fruit) and diluting milk powder for babies. Household members' entitlements to resources are altered to save money: children may forgo higher education to look for work; and younger, married family members who would prefer to live separately may be forced to save costs by remaining within the family household. A high proportion of rural households had sold assets to buy food: the first asset to be sold is the wife's gold, with livestock being sold later, and land last of all.
2. *Informal networks and social support.* Local credit – both in the form of purchasing goods 'on account' at local stores and non-payment of bills for water, electricity and other local services – is one of the most important factors in keeping households afloat. Needy families are increasingly using borrowed or gifted money to make partial payments to local creditors, simply to keep the credit line functioning. The prolongation of closure puts a strain on the resources of those supporting others. Social welfare and aid distributions are available to the chronically poor (many of whom were social hardship cases before the *intifada*), but the welfare system appears not to have adapted to meet the needs of the new poor who have been made destitute by closure-related income loss. Whilst the chronically poor are able to benefit from food aid, the new poor express the need for cash as opposed to food.
3. *Agriculture and markets.* With incomes no longer coming from jobs in West Bank towns and in Israel, families in rural areas now depend much more on agriculture. However, farmers are facing increased security threats from Israeli settlers and soldiers, preventing them from getting to their fields for basic agricultural tasks, particularly at harvest time. Restricted access to markets renders it increasingly difficult to sell agricultural produce, and prices in the local markets have dropped substantially for some crops due to the lowered local demand (related to lack of purchasing power) and glut in supply (due to difficulty of accessing more distant markets). The cost of inputs (e.g. fertiliser, pesticide, tanker water, animal fodder) has risen due to increased transport distances to avoid roadblocks. Although the agricultural sector is still productive, the indications are that its capacity will diminish significantly if closure policies are not eased.

**Box 3 continued**

4. *Health services:* Although village clinics continue to provide a basic service, they have neither the trained staff nor equipment needed to cope with emergency and chronic cases that are normally treated in larger towns such as Ramallah. The biggest impact of the reliance on village-based care has been on women's health and childbirth: women often go without health care; stillbirths and miscarriages have increased; and the rising incidence of births outside the hospitals jeopardises the health of both mother and child. The substitution of professional medical care and medicines that are in short supply with indigenous medical practices, herbal remedies, inappropriate alternatives, or simply no treatment at all can be harmful.
5. *Water and sanitation:* Water has long been a major problem for rural people, and there has been a dramatic decline in villagers' ability to access sufficient water due to tightening closure. The increased price of tankered water has forced families into debt, and many are selling their animals because they consume too much water. Alternative, cheaper water sources (e.g. from irrigation channels) are often unclean. Cutting down on water consumption means that cleaning and washing is reduced, making it difficult to maintain clean and safe homes, schools, etc.
6. *Community and household relations:* The emotional impact of closure has resulted in 'an epidemic of psychological trauma', particularly among older people, children, women and unemployed men. Men's violence towards women and children in the home shows signs of having increased as sanctions against men's violence weaken. Closure and the inability of men to provide for their families throws gender roles into a flux, with the mother-in-law becoming a more powerful figure in rural households. Relations between parents and children have also been negatively affected by parents' overcompensating for their inability to provide a secure home by restricting their children more.

Oxfam has used the results of the study to make specific recommendations to the international community, to the Government of Israel, to the Palestinian Authority, and to international donors, local and international aid agencies. These recommendations call for an immediate end to the Governments of Israel's policy of closure of Palestinian civilian areas, and highlight the remedial steps necessary to reverse the immediate and long-term damage to the livelihoods of the poorest and most marginalised people.

*Source:* Oxfam International (2002)

In Kambia District, Sierra Leone, despite travel restrictions and trade controls imposed throughout three years of rebel occupation, there was a spectacular rise in marketing opportunities (largely due to the purchasing power of the rebels) – but only for those traders willing to take the risks involved in operating under these conditions (Longley et al., 2003 forthcoming). Although local markets provide both an essential source of goods and an outlet for the sale of local products to households affected by situations of chronic conflict, there is no doubt that disruptions to trade through transport restrictions, control by insurgents, border closures and currency instability in situations of chronic conflict have widespread negative economic impacts at multiple levels.

A characteristic feature of the 'new wars' described in section 2.2 is the control over resources, markets (including labour markets), and governance structures. The growing body of literature on war economies documents very well the many negative aspects of certain types of trade, forced labour and abduction, and natural resource looting that flourish in situations of chronic conflict. However, as the case of Somalia illustrates, war economies change over time: wealthy Somali merchants and entrepreneurs that benefited from illegitimate commerce and relief procurement in the early 1990's have, since the late 1990's, become independent of factional affiliation and moved increasingly into legitimate commerce, and – together with elders, religious leaders and politicians – have helped to prompt the establishment of the judiciary through local *sharia* courts, (UNDP, 2001; Menkhaus, 2002, cited in Montani and Majid, 2002). In other cases, however (e.g. Afghanistan, Nepal, Sierra Leone), the control of governance structures by insurgents has been criticised as being excessively brutal and the 'taxes' or contributions demanded are better regarded as extortion (Seddon and Hussein, 2002; Longley et al., 2003 forthcoming). These cases clearly illustrate that there are significant differences between conflict contexts and in the potential for positive change, but the reasons for these differences require further research.



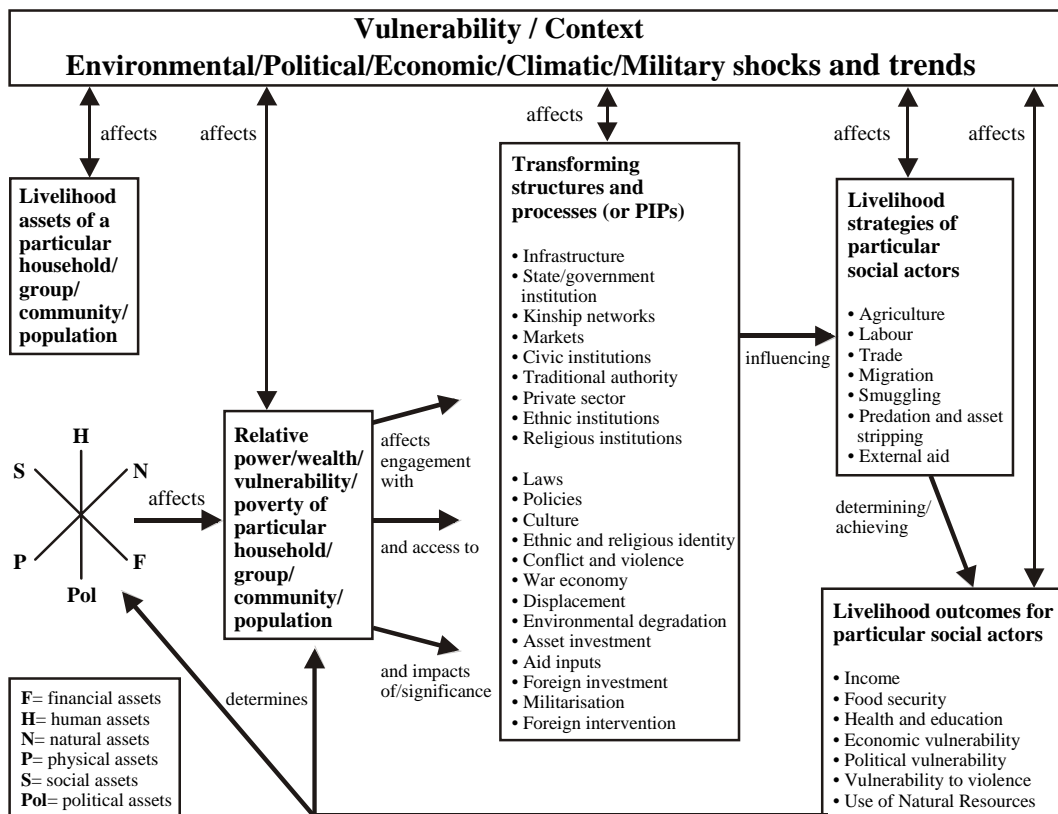
Institutional arrangements – particularly in relation to changing power dynamics – are a key factor in understanding the broader context of situations of chronic conflict. Whilst formal state institutions generally cease to function in situations of chronic conflict, informal structures often provide alternative systems, and traditional institutions based on informal structures of local leadership, parallel social services and forms of social support may also become more prominent (Westley and Mikhalev, 2002). Nevertheless, while there are many positive informal institutional transformations that may take place when formal structures and the rule of law break down in situations of chronic conflict, overall the negative impacts of the breakdown usually outweigh the positive in terms of the management of public affairs, resources, markets and social norms.

It is important to note that in many situations of chronic conflict, the effectiveness of formal institutions and the level of government services tend to have been extremely weak even before the onset of conflict or political instability (see, for example, Westley and Mikhalev, 2002). In the case of Nepal, Seddon and Hussein (2002) describe the Maoist insurgency as a failure of development: the livelihoods of the rural poor were highly vulnerable even before the war, particularly in the hill areas where the difficulties of physical access meant that these populations were effectively marginalised by the state and excluded from development. Similarly, in Sierra Leone, the relationship between formal governance institutions – the chiefs – and the populace is cited as one of the causes of conflict and a key feature that will need to be addressed within post-conflict rehabilitation efforts if peace and stability is to be maintained (Archibald and Richards, 2002).

The above paragraphs have examined aspects of livelihoods specifically as they relate to situations of chronic conflict (as opposed to stable contexts), but an understanding of livelihoods and the broader context *prior to conflict* is clearly essential. The causes of poverty and vulnerability not only relate to conflict and/or displacement but require a longer-term understanding. In many cases, such empirical information can be especially important in helping to understand some of the factors that contributed to conflict in the first place, particularly where violence is an expression of the failure of development (i.e. the failure to alleviate poverty through addressing the causes of vulnerability). It is often difficult to distinguish the causes and effects of violent conflict from the wider processes at work in poor societies (Collinson et al., 2002).

It is essential that aid agencies working in situations of chronic conflict should understand the dynamics of vulnerability and power using a long-term trajectory that includes the pre-war period. In other words, they must endeavour to avoid working in the eternal present, as described by David Keen (1994). But the conventional livelihoods framework (as illustrated by Figure 1) is grossly inadequate for such analysis in three aspects. Firstly, the livelihoods framework has been criticised for treating vulnerability solely as an external factor relating more to climatic, economic or political shocks rather than linking people's own livelihoods (particularly their identity and asset levels) to their own vulnerability (Pain and Lautze, 2002); the adapted livelihoods framework presented in Figure 3 therefore presents vulnerability much more centrally (Collinson et al., 2002). Secondly, power relations have tended to be under-emphasised by conventional livelihoods approaches (Ashley and Carney, 1999), necessitating greater attention to power relations and political economy concerns (Schafer, 2002). Thirdly, the livelihoods framework (as shown in Figure 1) fails to incorporate adequately a temporal dimension (Pain and Lautze, 2002). These three inadequacies must be addressed if the livelihoods framework is to be used in understanding and analysing livelihoods and the underlying causes of conflict in situations of chronic conflict.

**Figure 3 Adapted Livelihoods Framework to support analysis in situations of chronic conflict and political instability**



Source: Collinson et al. (2002: 26)

#### **Box 4 Summary: Applying livelihoods analysis to situations of chronic conflict**

Livelihoods analysis usefully gets beyond an overt focus on ‘the conflict’ to consider a longer historical trajectory of change and present a differentiated understanding of the impacts of and responses to conflict that incorporates political, economic and social factors.

There are a number of features of chronic political instability that do not necessarily occur in politically stable contexts but are particularly relevant to livelihoods analysis in situations of chronic conflict:

- ∄ At the household level, these include displacement, forced migration or relocation in relation to social, legal and economic ties; changing household composition and the impact on income generation, labour and productivity; the loss, depletion, and maintenance of assets; and the changes that these factors have on livelihood strategies and outcomes.
- ∄ At a broader level, the following are significant: spatial patterns of political tension and physical insecurity; disruption to travel and transport, local markets and the wider economy; changing governance structures; changing power relations and the underlying causes of conflict.

The dynamics of poverty, vulnerability and power in situations of chronic conflict must be understood using a long-term trajectory that includes the pre-war period.

The conventional livelihoods framework (as used in politically stable contexts) needs to be expanded to incorporate the concept of vulnerability more centrally, to give greater attention to power relations, and to include a temporal dimension.

## 4.2 Livelihood assessment tools

*How have livelihood assessment tools been adapted and applied in conflict situations? How have questions of power relations, war economies, human rights and humanitarian principles been addressed? Are existing assessment tools sufficient to inform livelihoods programming in the context of chronic conflict and political instability?*

Livelihoods programming requires a deeper level of understanding of both needs and the broader social, political and economic context, as compared to more conventional relief interventions. Acquiring such understanding requires time and the use of appropriate methods, and also the application of appropriate conceptual and analytical tools. Such tools must not only be capable of describing livelihood strategies and the broader context in which they exist (as elaborated in the preceding section) but they must also be able to explain how different aspects of a particular situation relate to one another and to the past, and also attempt to predict what might happen in future for various different scenarios. Assessment tools for livelihoods programming must thus be descriptive, explanatory and predictive. Based on these categories, Table 1 defines the information that a livelihoods assessment might be expected to provide (see Jaspars and Shoham, 2002: 1) and the specific assessment tools that are currently available.

**Table 1 Assessment tools relevant to livelihoods programming in situations of chronic conflict**

Type	Information required	Tools and approaches available
Descriptive	What livelihood strategies people are pursuing, and what their priorities are  Severity of risks to livelihoods	Profiling; Personal testimonies <sup>4</sup> ; Baseline studies; Core indicators; Asset-based analysis; CARE livelihood security approach; Food Economy Approach; Oxfam-GB livelihoods approach; Structure and social impact of the war economy; Vulnerability assessment and risk mapping
Explanatory	Who is vulnerable and why  How does the present livelihoods context relate to past processes of change  How are household livelihood strategies influenced by macro-economic and political trends (i.e. war economies and power relations)	'Why' questioning and persistent probing; ICRC economic security analysis; CARE livelihood security approach; Food Economy Approach; Market structure analysis; DFID good governance assessment framework; Participatory poverty assessments;
Predictive	Appropriate types of livelihood support  Feasibility of livelihood support  Which institutions to work with  Potentially harmful effects of livelihood support	Scenario or contingency analysis; Conflict analysis; Local capacities for peace framework; Oxfam-GB net-benefit analysis; CARE benefits-harms tools

*Source:* Adapted from Jaspars and Shoham (2002); Collinson et al. (2002); Le Billon (2000)

Each of the methodological approaches included in the series includes descriptive tools, notably the use of profiling or core indicators to describe livelihood strategies and asset levels. The need for contextual or explanatory analysis is recognised, in particular the dynamic ways in which livelihood

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, ACORD (2000).

strategies themselves have changed over time and how these relate to the changing political economy more broadly. This requires reference to existing literature or other secondary information sources, but access to highly specific, good quality, analytical secondary information sources is rare in situations of chronic conflict (Boudreau and Coutts, 2002; Seddon and Hussein, 2002; Westley and Mikhalev, 2002). There are particular challenges in linking findings at household or community levels with macro-economic and political trends (Westley and Mikhalev, 2002) and in linking economic changes to political forces (Boudreau and Coutts, 2002).

One way of developing an understanding of linkages between household or micro-level findings with the broader political economy context is to continuously ask ‘why?’ questions, focused on the root causes of institutional constraints and power relations. In the context of a civil war, such questions are obviously quite sensitive, and not the sort of thing that can simply be raised in a quick focus group discussion or household survey. The integration of such questions about rights and intra-communal relations has more to do with attitude, persistent probing, and a different level of analysis than it has to do with tools. Researchers undertaking case studies for ODI’s political economy of conflict project adopted a bottom-up approach in which livelihoods and changing social relations at local and meso levels were linked upwards to political and economic dynamics at national, region and international levels (Collinson et al., 2002). Box 5 cites another example, from a CARE assessment in 2002 in Burundi, which took standard livelihood profiling and problem tree analyses, and extended them to look at both underlying causes and an analysis of the rights and responsibilities of various stakeholders.

#### **Box 5 Incorporating a rights-based analysis into livelihoods assessment: CARE assessment in Burundi**

In an attempt to understand and address underlying causes of poverty in the context of the civil war in Burundi, CARE International developed an approach to incorporating a rights-based analysis into existing livelihood assessment tools. Whereas a classic livelihoods analysis often focused at the household level, considering the assets that households have, their strategies, and the outcomes they achieve, the Burundi analysis tried to dig deeper in terms of why certain groups of vulnerable households were constrained not only by these factors but why and how they had come to have such limited access to resources or were severely constrained in terms of the strategies they could adopt. Such investigations inevitably raise institutional issues and questions about rights and the administration of rural justice – issues that were traditionally beyond the scope of livelihoods analysis, but which need to be considered in order to put household-level analysis in context.

Persistently asking ‘why?’ was the key to analysing the underlying causes of poverty and conflict. In the general context of both high population pressure and extremely weak central administration, local dynamics governing access to resources took on an increasingly predatory nature. Both climatic shocks and political or economic factors – for example, imprisonment of a wage earner over accusations of participating in massacres in 1993, whether accurate or not – put some households in immediate need of cash, and resulted in land sales, land pledges, or in many cases, pledging the production of limited land for a number of years to wealthier households who had some resources to lend. Over the space of a very limited period of time (five to six years), this process had resulted in consolidation of resources into the hands of a relatively small local elite, and the emergence of a substantial rural labour force with no other means of survival. Livelihood interventions for this group, along with the perpetually marginalised Batwa, were extremely limited.

*Source:* CARE–Burundi (2002); Rand (2002)

The use of ‘why?’ questions and a bottom-up approach allows for processes and relations that exist at micro- or meso-levels to be explained in terms of the broader meso- and macro-level contexts. In the Kosovo assessment, for example, the analysis included an examination of key household assets and then explained how these were used to build livelihoods within the opportunities and

constraints formed by economic, social and political context; specific barriers to building livelihoods were considered as sources of vulnerability (Westley and Mikhalev, 2002). But this kind of bottom-up analysis can raise as many questions as answers. The assessment undertaken in Burundi (Box 5) underlined the importance of being patient. In the context of conflict, the identification of appropriate interventions is not always immediately obvious from descriptive or explanatory assessment alone; understanding the whole picture is necessary before devising longer-term interventions (CARE–Burundi, 2002). Inevitably, this kind of underlying-cause analysis – whether undertaken from an explicitly rights-based perspective or from a political economy perspective – goes far beyond typical emergency needs assessment, and raises issues about who will analyze the information and for what purposes, and even issues about security.

The use of scenario or contingency analysis has been suggested to be able to predict what impact certain events might have on livelihoods and thus forecast future needs and possible interventions; such analysis is becoming increasingly standard within WFP’s Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping and is based on a detailed re-analysis of baseline secondary data and vulnerable group profile information to highlight regions and population groups at risk to specific hazards, indigenous coping/recovery capacities and available institutional and logistics resources (Hines and Balletto, 2002). A similar predictive assessment approach has been developed within Food Economy Analysis, but the level of secondary data required and the need for detailed fieldwork for such analysis is not always possible in situations of chronic conflict. Food Economy Analysis draws on data describing particular hazards (e.g. reduced agricultural output, rise in prices of basic food commodities or production inputs, loss of household assets, etc.) and combines these with detailed baseline information describing livelihood or food economy profiles to determine outcome analyses. In this way, food economy assessments are able to build up an understanding of how a particular shock might potentially affect different groups of people living in specific areas in different ways and thus identify those most in need of assistance. In the case of Zimbabwe, such an analysis was able to identify links between political actions, the macro-level context, micro-economic shocks, and household livelihoods (Boudreau and Coutts, 2002). In terms of the identification of appropriate livelihood interventions, however, both WFP-VAM and Food Economy Analysis can be criticised for their rather narrow focus on food aid. The current applications and use of existing assessment approaches in designing interventions is further considered in the next section.

The Benefits/Harms Analysis tools were developed by CARE for the purpose of analysing the potential impacts of interventions – both intended and unintended (positive and negative). The tools help practitioners to make a principled judgment about interventions, to guide monitoring and evaluation of intended but also unintended impacts, and to devise methods of mitigating potential negative consequences of interventions – particularly negative consequences in terms of human rights.

Other predictive tools, such as conflict analysis and those that have developed out of the local capacities for peace framework stem largely from political and conflict analysis rather than livelihoods analysis and therefore tend to focus on the potential harmful effects of interventions rather than on the identification of appropriate livelihood support (Jaspars and Shoham, 2002).

Descriptive, explanatory and predictive assessment approaches all necessitate detailed fieldwork, raising a number of practical considerations relating to who will be involved in gathering and analysing the data, where and across how many sites the data will be collected, how long will be spent in the field, and what type of field methods will be used. Many of these practical considerations have been elaborated by Jaspars and Shoham (2002), who also highlight problems of access in relation to the highly sporadic nature of insecurity; quality of access; and the risks posed not only to agency staff but also to participants or informants.

Livelihoods assessments are, by definition, participatory, yet the type and level of participation will obviously vary according local contexts and the aims of the assessment. Ideally, communities will be involved not only in the collection of data but also analysing their own vulnerabilities, assets, livelihood and coping strategies and priorities in an iterative fashion (Westley and Mikhalev, 2002). Yet in particularly unstable situations, participation may be limited to consultation and the extraction of necessary data (Hines and Balletto, 2002). Hines and Balletto (2002) raise the issue as to whether the objectives and use of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques in assessments in situations of chronic conflict might risk compromising an agency's independence, impartiality and/or neutrality. This concern, however, raises the issue about the extent to which traditional humanitarian principles are compatible with a livelihoods approach, as well as the different interpretations of these principles. To many organizations, the right of conflict-affected people to participate in analysis and decision-making is not at odds with humanitarian principles, particularly neutrality – neutrality is rather compromised when agencies align their objectives with the objectives of one of the parties to the conflict, or 'take sides'. The compatibility of livelihoods approaches with humanitarian principles and also with rights-based approaches is further explored in section 5.2. The growing frequency with which participatory assessment approaches appear to be used in situations of chronic conflict suggests that they offer a number of advantages, both in terms of the quality of the assessment itself and in terms of the learning experiences afforded both to the assessment monitors and the agencies involved.

#### **Box 6 Summary: Livelihood assessment tools**

There exists a wealth of methodological tools and analytical approaches that are used to describe livelihoods and vulnerability in situations of chronic conflict.

Explanatory tools exist to address questions of power relations and war economies, yet difficulties persist in the integration of household livelihoods strategies with the broader political and economic contexts.

The ability to predict the impact of specific conflict-related shocks or interventions on livelihoods presents a challenge, particularly in moving from analysis to identifying appropriate interventions. This is partly because the predictive tools available have emerged from conflict and political analysis, not from livelihoods analysis.

The use of participatory assessment approaches in situations of chronic conflict is increasing, providing important learning opportunities to staff and agencies alike. Agencies have yet to find a balance between the need to develop and support the capacity for learning and analysis within their organisation with the use of external consultants.

Independent monitoring and information systems have a crucial role to play in situations of chronic conflict, but these must be very well linked to implementing agencies to influence programming decisions.

The use of specific assessment tools alone may be insufficient in generating the level of information and analysis required for successful livelihoods programming. In the rapidly changing dynamics that tend to characterise situations of chronic conflict, it is necessary for agencies to be particularly well informed about the situations in which they work, both for security reasons and also to ensure effective and appropriate programming. Adam Pain (2002) suggests that agencies must develop a 'culture of enquiry' such that lessons can be learnt, information can be drawn together and analysed as part of an on-going learning process. An assessment undertaken by SC-UK in Belet Weyne, Somalia, for example, offered an opportunity for the agency to learn about local communities and provided an important turning point in developing a strategic approach (Montani and Majid, 2002). However, such learning opportunities tend to be contracted out to consultants, who often take away with them the lessons they have learnt once their consultancy contract has ended (Westley and Mikhalev, 2002). Although exceptions do exist, it would appear that agencies have yet to find a balance between the need to develop and support the capacity for learning and analysis within their organisation (and particularly by national staff) with the use of external (often international)

consultants, although this issue is not exclusively associated with working in chronic conflict situations. Independent monitoring and information systems have a crucial role to play, but – as illustrated by the case of the Somalia Food Security Assessment Unit (Montani and Majid, 2002) – these must be very well linked to implementing agencies to influence programming decisions (Maxwell and Watkins, 2003).

### 4.3 Livelihoods programming in situations of chronic conflict

*What innovative approaches to livelihoods programming have been developed by agencies in situations of chronic conflict? What are the issues emerging from these experiences?*

In terms of coverage, the series gives most attention to assessment methods, and relatively few documented examples of livelihoods support/interventions were found to include in the series. The following paragraphs begin to explore the more practical questions of: ‘What is livelihoods support?’; and ‘What does a livelihoods intervention look like?’. It is suggested that perhaps livelihoods programming is less defined in terms of specific types of ‘support’ or ‘interventions’ but more in terms of an ‘approach’. Given the wide range of interventions that might be considered as providing some form of livelihoods support, it is crucially important that the rationale and intended aim of a livelihoods approach is clearly articulated and that this should be reflected in the way in which aid is programmed and delivered. Among the issues that emerge from the relatively small number of cases presented here are: (i) the importance of prior needs assessment and a clear project rationale that help to define modes of programming and delivery; (ii) the degree to which participatory approaches are possible as part of a livelihoods approach in situations of chronic conflict; and (iii) what is meant by ‘capacity-building’ within a livelihoods approach. Each of these issues is considered below. The final part of the paper goes on to consider strategies for and institutional implications of livelihoods approaches, and highlights a number of other issues for which further research is required.

Livelihoods approaches necessitate greater emphasis on the analysis of underlying causes of conflict and vulnerability. In relation to situations of chronic conflict, section 4.2 has shown that assessment tools are increasingly being developed to provide the information required to inform these types of responses, e.g. benefits-harms analysis; conflict assessments; food economy analysis (FEA), but in general, the livelihood assessment approaches described in the Working Paper series still tend to be used for the assessment of relief needs and the targeting of conventional relief inputs (Jaspars and Shoham, 2002). Proponents of FEA argue that this has the potential for use beyond food aid planning, e.g. for peace building and advocacy (Boudreau and Coutts, 2002), but moving from assessment and analysis to the identification and implementation of interventions other than relief appears to be problematic. Even where institutionalised monitoring systems exist and function very well (in terms of the process of monitoring and early warning), there is often a disjuncture between synthesising and analysing such information for it to be used to inform programming options, as illustrated by the case of the Food Security Assessment Unit (FSAU) for Somalia (Montani and Majid, 2002). It has been suggested that vulnerability information from Food Security Information Systems (e.g. who is vulnerable, where, when and why?) needs to be combined with information about livelihood systems, e.g. from Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems<sup>5</sup> (what to do, where, when and how?), if it is to contribute to effective decision-making (Hemrich, 2002).

A greater understanding of the underlying causes of vulnerability allows agencies to attempt to address proactively those sources of vulnerability identified – including although not limited to

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<sup>5</sup> For further information on Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems, see Röling (1986) and Berdegue and Escobar (2001).

conflict – rather than waiting until human lives or livelihoods have already been put in peril. This adds to the programming process both risk analysis and potential actions to monitor and mitigate these factors. In effect, this means posing a series of questions about the sources of vulnerability, the likely effects of these factors, and what can be done about them. Although some of the impetus for this kind of proactive preparedness comes from experience related more to natural disasters such as drought, the approach is equally applicable in conflict, although the information systems required to monitor conflict, as well as some of the potential mitigation interventions, are more complicated and perhaps less well developed. Nevertheless, conflict early warning systems have been developed. For example the Conflict Early Warning and Response (CEWARN) project in East Africa developed by a number of agencies working with IGAD, will concentrate on gathering early warning information related to conflict in pastoral areas (livestock rustling, conflicts over grazing and water resources, smuggling, illegal trade and banditry). But the system is intended to facilitate action as much as it is to gather information. Such approaches obviously have to go hand in hand with preparedness for dealing with the humanitarian consequences of outright conflict, but proactively attempt to predict and mitigate conflict, particularly at the local level.

Box 7 provides another example of such an approach in Liberia, based on an understanding of rural livelihoods and the identification of sources of vulnerability, and leading to community-based responses for addressing the sources of vulnerability, and advocacy work at national and international levels. The specific cases presented in Box 7 to illustrate this approach show that the measures necessary to address identified sources vulnerability can often be relatively straightforward.

The apparent disconnection between livelihoods assessment approaches and the identification of livelihoods interventions can be partly explained by the lack of adequate analytical assessment tools, but also relates to the lack of clarity as to what constitutes a livelihoods intervention. There is a tendency to regard livelihoods support as distinct from relief aid, in that the former is considered to be ‘developmental’ and is implemented over a longer time frame. Yet what is clear from the papers is that this either/or distinction between ‘development’ and ‘relief’ assistance is particularly misleading in reference to livelihoods. In situations of chronic conflict there are generally multiple problems to be addressed at multiple levels, and both forms of aid are often necessary to support the livelihoods of different sectors of the population (Boudreau and Coutts, 2002; Westley and Mikhalev, 2002; Lautze et al., 2002). It is important, however, to balance these different types of aid according to differentiated needs and the changing nature of the local situation. In the case of northern Kenya, for example, the food economy assessment found that targeted food aid in response to drought was needed, as well as the establishment of an appropriate land policy to ensure that pastoralists have access to grazing and water, cash injections to help build small businesses, and support for education among marginalised households (Boudreau and Coutts, 2002). In the case of SC-UK’s agricultural intervention in Somalia, the flexibility of the approach allowed for emergency seed needs to be met within the context of a longer-term programme (Montani and Majid, 2002).

A comparison of the ICRC and SC-UK projects in Somalia described by Montani and Majid (2002) presents two very different approaches to livelihoods support. The ICRC intervention – based on cash for work projects – was designed as a short-term response to assist households in building up their productive asset base with the longer-term objective of avoiding the need for food aid in the following season. As such, this approach can be characterised as ‘saving lives *through* livelihoods’: it was anticipated that lives would be saved through enhancing the livelihood assets necessary for food production. In contrast, the SC-UK project – largely based on an integrated agricultural development approach (a long-term, multi-sector programme to improve food security, characterised by strong community involvement) but with an awareness of changing livelihood conditions and the flexibility to respond to short-term needs – can be characterised as ‘saving lives *and* livelihoods’: the livelihoods intervention itself was essentially aimed to provide long-term,



developmental support, and relief-oriented, life-saving assistance was also possible when the need arose. Both types of approach can be effective, but are appropriate in different contexts and require very different types of institutional capacity on the part of the implementing agency. Whilst the ability of an agency to implement these different types of approaches depends very much on its particular mandate, it would not be impossible for the same agency to implement both types of approach.

### **Box 7 Monitoring livelihoods in Liberia: capacity-building, information, and advocacy**

Save the Children (UK) is working in Liberia to develop innovative approaches to empower communities and to reduce the ‘dependency syndrome’ that became a feature of the mid-nineties following regular food, seeds and tools distributions. By building people’s analytical skills, SC-UK hopes to have a long-term impact on household and community decision making and hence livelihoods. This work is strongly based on principles of household economy and livelihoods analysis and includes advocacy at national, regional and international levels.

Analytical reports detailing rural livelihoods and vulnerabilities are produced for specific population groups and distributed to partner agencies to stimulate discussion on appropriate interventions and to strengthen understanding on the wide scope of food security and livelihoods. The results are presented to representatives of the communities that participated in the assessment to stimulate discussion on the constraints identified and who is affected, why they are affected and what can be done about it. During facilitated group discussion, the communities arrive at a plan of activities that they can undertake towards making some changes to improve their lives. In the months that follow SC-UK returns to the communities to monitor their progress towards meeting their planned objectives. This approach is intended to contribute to strengthening people’s ability to analyse their livelihoods and to reduce their dependency on humanitarian assistance, empowering communities to become self-reliant. The following paragraphs provide two examples of community discussions and the activities arising out of these discussions.

1. In Bong County, central Liberia, SC-UK held a series of community meetings in which children mentioned the annual problem of diarrhoea outbreaks. Further discussion with both adults and children highlighted the negative impact of this on household economy in days of labour lost either through illness or through caring for other family members, as well as increased expenditure on medication. Villagers showed the SC-UK team the river where they collected drinking water, downstream from where they defecated. SC-UK facilitated discussions around possible solutions, the decision was made to dig village latrines, and this was carried out as planned.
2. Discussions with fishing communities in Cape Mount County in the west of Liberia revealed that the fishermen’s nets were often damaged by larger fishing vessels that came too close to the shore. The time and expenses involved in repairing or replacing nets are such that the household has to rely on small-scale farming or working for others until fishing activities can continue, or fishermen take out loans at high interest rates, thus severely impacting the household economy. Following a two-day meeting facilitated by SC-UK with representatives from several villages, the fishermen decided that they would work together as do the Fanti fishermen living nearby. This way, they would share the burden of costs of repairs and would be able to return to work more quickly following any problems with the bigger boats.

*Source:* Sonya LeJeune, personal communications (18 July, 2002 and 14 April, 2003)

Although the distinction between ‘saving lives *through* livelihoods’ and ‘saving lives *and* livelihoods’ may appear to be a subtle one, it helps to define the broader objective of the intervention itself and, as such, has important implications for programming and project design. Whilst the same distinctions may not necessarily apply to all forms of livelihoods support, it is crucial that there is a very clear articulation of the problems to be addressed and the specific objectives of the suggested responses to ensure that interventions are designed to address actual needs effectively. In this way, it becomes quite possible for what might normally be regarded as a

conventional form of life-saving humanitarian assistance to be programmed to provide livelihoods support; for example, the use of food aid in food-for-work programmes that aim to build up productive assets. What is important is the *rationale* on which the assistance is provided and the *way* in which it is programmed and delivered.

The case of the community-based animal health programme in southern Sudan (Box 8) provides an example of an intervention designed to address a clearly defined problem (rinderpest and other locally-prioritised animal health problems) for a livelihood system in which livestock form an important asset and play a vital role in food security, social networks and cultural traditions. An innovative aspect of the programme was commitment to participation despite the impacts of chronic conflict. This was a novel approach for provision of veterinary inputs in a chronic conflict situation, or even a more stable setting (where community-based approaches to vet services is still a relatively new idea). Whilst participation is one of the defining features of a livelihoods approach, levels of participation that are practically possible in chronic conflict situations may be limited by difficulties in accessing communities and the pressure to produce quick results, which conflicts with the time-consuming nature of a participatory approach. In the case of the projects described by Montani and Majid (2002) in Somalia, participation was also limited by the capacity of the project staff who faced a major challenge in reorienting their approach and building new kinds of relationships with communities.

#### **Box 8 Community-based animal health services (CAHS) in southern Sudan**

Community-based approaches to the provision of animal health services have been implemented through the Operation Lifeline Sudan livestock programme since 1994. Agropastoralism and pastoralism involving varying degrees of transhumance are the key livelihood strategies in southern Sudan, and livestock make substantial contributions to both food production and social systems. The programme focuses on rinderpest control and the prevention or treatment of a limited range of locally-prioritised animal health problems. CAHS activities have included participatory baseline surveys, community dialogue to identify priorities and develop social contracts, training of community-based animal health workers, animal health auxiliaries and stockpersons, development of veterinary coordination committees, and participatory monitoring and impact assessment. Impressive results have been achieved in terms of numbers of livestock vaccinated and treated, community-based animal health worker training programmes and geographical coverage of basic animal health services (CAHS have been initiated in approximately 80% of rebel-held agro-pastoralist areas). The programme has made important contributions to the livelihoods of people in project areas: the control of rinderpest brings security of livelihood assets; improved food security related to milk supply; and socio-cultural benefits from indigenous social support systems and marriage (since livestock resources play a prominent role within these systems).

The CAHS is based on the principles of participation of all sectors of the community, fostered through ongoing community dialogue. The need for regular contact with all parts of the community is essential for this approach, but this is not always possible in conflict situations and inevitably progress in some areas has been slow. On the other hand, CAHS is being implemented as part of a multi-sectoral emergency humanitarian relief operation, and there is pressure from all stakeholders to achieve quick results, especially from communities in need and donors with short funding cycles. The initial focus on rinderpest vaccination provided rapid results, but continued pressure for quick results conflicts with the time-consuming nature of the participatory approach. A recent review observed that 'participation' and 'dialogue' have yet to be actualised at the community level, and recommended that the programme needs to shift its emphasis from 'activity' to 'process' for CAHS to form the basis of a more sustainable animal health care delivery system. The issue of sustainability also depends on effective cost recovery and the eventual privatisation of veterinary practices; although this is accepted in principle by communities, agencies and donors, putting it into practice has been problematic in southern Sudan due to the collapsed economy and the lack of policies or regulation on technical standards. Ultimately, peace will be necessary for the system to be fully sustainable.

*Source:* Catley (1999); Fox et al. (2001); Jones et al. (1998)

Capacity building is recognised as an essential component of a livelihoods approach in complex emergencies (Lautze, 1997) and has been defined as ‘any intervention designed to reinforce or create strengths upon which communities can draw to offset disaster-related vulnerability’ (Lautze; 1997: 14). Whilst capacity-building within communities is certainly important, there is also a very real need to build capacity within operational agencies if they are to adopt a livelihoods approach (Montani and Majid, 2002). Table 2 summarises the various different forms of livelihoods projects documented above in terms of their aim or rationale, their needs assessment method, and the way in which they are being implemented, focusing particularly on participation and capacity-building. In terms of capacity-building, what emerges is a wide array of different approaches: building productive capacity through enhancing specific assets; building capacity among individuals and local communities through skills training and the development of committees; building capacity within implementing agencies through information-sharing and staff training; and awareness-raising at national and international levels.

Various different projects have been presented – cash for work, agricultural rehabilitation; community-based animal health services; capacity-building for enhanced local analytical skills and information, and an advocacy campaign – all of which are considered to provide livelihoods support. What, therefore, constitutes a ‘livelihood intervention’? Given the highly context-specific nature of livelihoods and chronic conflict, it is impossible to apply a blueprint approach to livelihoods projects in situations of chronic conflict. For this reason, it is perhaps more appropriate to examine what is meant by a livelihoods ‘approach’ rather than specific livelihood projects or interventions. A number of elements can be seen to characterise the projects that have been presented, as follows. Livelihoods approaches operate at various different levels and incorporate a number of different activities, from the provision of inputs at grassroots level to advocacy work at international level. Livelihoods approaches must be informed by a sound analytical understanding of livelihoods and the broader political economy context that attempts to predict the impacts of changing conflict and political dynamics and potential agency interventions. Different levels of participation are appropriate in different contexts and according to the objectives of a particular intervention and the capacity of project staff. Livelihoods approaches must have the capacity to incorporate both ‘relief’ and ‘developmental’ modes of operation; in some cases a particular intervention must be able to shift from one mode to the other. Impact assessment must form an integral part of livelihoods approaches. Although livelihood approaches may not be sustainable in themselves, they should aim to sustain livelihoods in both the short-term (to save lives) and the long-term (to build resilience and address vulnerability). It is largely through capacity-building and reducing vulnerability that livelihoods approaches have the potential to lead to long-lasting impacts.

### **Box 9 Summary: Implementing a livelihoods approach**

Livelihoods programming is less defined in terms of specific types of ‘support’ or ‘interventions’ but more in terms of an ‘approach’. Livelihoods approaches in situations of chronic conflict and political instability:

- € Operate at different and often multiple levels
- € Involve a range of activities, requiring different types of capacity within implementing agencies
- € Must be based on sound analytical understanding and predictive assessment of livelihoods and the broader political economy
- € Adopt a participatory approach and empower programme participants
- € Are flexible and responsive, with the capacity to incorporate both ‘developmental’ and ‘relief’ modes of operation
- € Promote capacity-building at local, agency and/or broader levels
- € Lead to long-lasting impacts
- € Should undertake long-term impact assessments and act on assessment findings

**Table 2 Features of sample livelihoods-based projects<sup>6</sup>**

<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Aim / Rationale / Approach</b>	<b>Needs assessment</b>	<b>Level of participation</b>	<b>Type of capacity building</b>
ICRC Cash for Work, Somalia	Mitigate future need for food aid by enhancing productive assets over a limited time period. Contribute to longer-term solution to problem of recurrent water availability and food production problems.	Mainly secondary source information focused at household level, combined with feasibility assessment.	Participation in planning and implementation: communities identify structures in need of rehabilitation and decide between food or cash payment; communities identify labourers who provide labour for payment.	Builds productive capacity through enhancing productive assets
SC-UK Agricultural Support Programme, Somalia	Improve food security through agricultural extension, canal rehabilitation, provision of water pumps and seed multiplication. Long-term approach with flexible programming allows for emergency seed distribution when necessary.	Survey based on Household Economy Approach. Ad hoc learning by project staff through engaging with local communities.	Community-driven approach in which project staff have, over time, established good links with most villages in the project area and good understanding of the population. Special emphasis on women's participation.	Community training and agricultural demonstrations. Community organisation through local cooperation and village management committees. Enhanced capacity of women to contribute to community development. Particular attention also given to staff development and internal capacity-building.
Community-based animal health services, S. Sudan	Rinderpest eradication and control / prevention / treatment of a limited range of locally-prioritised animal health problems.	Participatory baseline surveys; community dialogue to identify local priorities.	Based on principles of participation and on-going community dialogue. Activities include regular contact with all sections of the community; participatory baseline surveys; community dialogue to identify local priorities; participatory monitoring and evaluation.	Training of community-based animal health workers, animal health auxiliaries and stockpersons, development of veterinary coordination committees.
Monitoring livelihoods in Liberia (SC-UK)	Empower communities to become self-reliant and reduce 'dependency syndrome' through building people's analytical skills.	Participatory assessment based on Household Economy Approach.	Participatory assessments and facilitated group discussions for planning at community level.	Strengthening local people's ability to analyse their livelihoods and identify activities to promote self-reliance. Information-sharing among partner agencies for improved livelihoods understanding, and awareness-raising at national, regional and international levels.
Oxfam International advocacy campaign against Israeli policy of closure in the West Bank	Recommendations to the international community, to the Government of Israel, to the Palestinian Authority, and to international donors, local and international aid agencies.	Research to document the social and economic impact of closure on rural Palestinian communities	Experiences of particular households and individuals are documented as part of the campaign's publicity materials.	Awareness-raising at international levels.

<sup>6</sup> The descriptions given in Table 2 are based on the accounts provided in the source documents: Montani and Majid (2002); Oxfam International (2002); Catley (1999); Fox et al. (2001); Sonya LeJeune (personal communication).

## 5 Issues for Further Consideration

There has perhaps been a tendency to assume that the impacts of a livelihoods approach can only influence the micro-level, and that livelihoods support is only possible in the latter part of the so-called ‘relief-to-development’ continuum. The preceding section has shown that neither of these assumptions are necessarily true. Depending on the particular context, a livelihoods approach can influence multiple levels and encompasses both short-term life-saving and longer-term vulnerability reducing interventions. In this final section, we briefly outline the implications of livelihoods approaches for humanitarian practice in terms of agency capacity, the need for coordination and assessment, and flexible funding channels. Several topics that require further reflection and debate are also raised: whether livelihoods approaches are compatible with rights-based approaches and with humanitarian principles, and how livelihoods thinking relates to the on-going debates on ‘new humanitarianism’ and the ‘coherence’ agenda.

### 5.1 Implications for humanitarian practice

The ability of an agency to implement specific interventions at different levels and requiring varying degrees of ‘relief’ or ‘developmental’ expertise largely depends on the mandate of the agency and the capacity and experience of its staff. Whilst humanitarian responses should ideally be driven by the specific needs identified within a given context, agency mandates and experience (and also the analytical frameworks that inform their approaches) can both restrict and provide opportunities. Similarly, a long-term presence in a particular location can be both a help and hindrance; while long-term experience may bring with it a deeper knowledge of the local context, the conceptual and practical shift required to enter into a new work mode can be considerable. Particular attention may need to be given to staff training and staff development; management structures and coordination between sectors and with other agencies.

Multi-purpose interventions are perhaps best achieved through partnerships in which different agencies or organisations draw on their respective expertise to best advantage. Such partnerships require that adequate attention is given to coordination among the different actors (Mark Bradbury, personal communication). In some cases, such coordination might best be achieved through a common strategic approach rather than merely collaboration on specific projects, though such levels of coordination are often fraught with problems (see, for example, Stockton, 2002). Strategic approaches are particularly important in post-conflict situations, given the opportunities for policy and institutional change that these situations present.

Whether in chronic conflict or post-conflict situations, the role of information and assessment is crucial, but more work is needed to adapt and develop the tools available to make effective use of such information and analysis in the design and implementation of programmes to support livelihoods.

The provision of effective livelihoods support – together with the associated need for capacity building within implementing agencies, detailed assessments, coordination, and monitoring and information systems – ultimately requires a change in current aid delivery mechanisms and funding structures to allow greater flexibility of operations.

## **5.2 Livelihood approaches in relation to human rights and humanitarian concerns**

In recent years there has been a major shift in the way that aid agencies are addressing both humanitarian and development concerns through the adoption of rights-based approaches into programming. Many agencies working in situations of chronic conflict (including, in one way or another, Oxfam, Save the Children, Action Aid, CARE, UNICEF, WFP, as well as inter-agency initiatives such as the SPHERE Project) have adopted rights-based approaches. Box 10 includes a very brief description of the characteristics of a rights-based approach as defined by one agency. While various agencies' approaches may differ on certain points, several key issues underpin a rights-based approach, as described in the paragraphs that follow.

First, a rights-based approach is inherently relational – for everyone who has a right, someone else has the responsibility to respect that right, and in the case of authorities, not only to respect but also to protect and create an enabling environment in which to fulfil rights. The more traditional needs-based approach did not explicitly recognise such corresponding responsibilities. As a result, rights-based approaches tend to emphasise not only direct programming that attempts to enable people to fulfil their rights, they also emphasise advocacy as the means of holding other responsible actors (often referred to in rights-based language as 'duty bearers') to fulfil their responsibilities – particularly states and donors, although the circle of responsible actors is often much broader. Livelihoods approaches were initially considered as a form of needs-based rather than rights-based approaches, though the livelihoods framework goes well beyond simple needs even though 'needs' are roughly equivalent to 'livelihood outcomes' at one level of analysis. Livelihoods approaches are well adapted to bridge the gap between needs and rights.

Second, one of the critical experiences underpinning the move towards rights-based approaches was the observation that in many instances, interventions (whether oriented towards livelihood support or more traditional relief efforts) had the potential to compound problems or 'do harm' (Anderson, 1996). Thus, a second component of rights-based approaches is an emphasis on self-analysis and minimising or mitigating potentially negative impacts of interventions (CARE, 2001).

Third, while some of the emphasis on rights in the context of conflict has mostly to do with ensuring that minimum standards are met through direct provision of the necessary inputs (SPHERE Project, 2000), there is a corresponding commitment to understanding and addressing the underlying causes of poverty, conflict and rights-denial. While entirely compatible with a livelihoods approach, this commitment often requires a deeper analysis of the social and political context than traditional livelihoods analysis undertook (see Burundi example of Box 5). In recent years, the need for livelihoods analysis to incorporate a greater understanding of power relations and political economy has been increasingly widely recognised, particularly in situations of conflict and political instability.

This discussion raises a further concern that parallels a broader debate going on in other circles about the overall direction of humanitarianism. Adopting a livelihoods approach in situations of chronic conflict doesn't necessarily raise problems for humanitarian action, but it does potentially raise problems regarding the application of the classic humanitarian principles, particularly independence, neutrality and impartiality. There has perhaps been an operating assumption that adopting a rights-based approach to livelihoods and livelihood support in conflict situations is synonymous with fulfilling humanitarian principles. Yet questions linger about that assumption. In other contexts, this debate has arisen in the form of both the expression and criticism of 'new humanitarianism.' These issues are hinted at, but not squarely addressed, by the working papers – and as such, remains a major question for future investigation and field application.

### **Box 10 Defining characteristics of a rights-based approach**

(Working Draft from 2001)

To CARE, a rights-based approach means:

1. We stand in solidarity with poor and marginalised people whose rights are denied, adding our voice to theirs and holding ourselves accountable to them.
2. We support poor and marginalised people's efforts to take control of their own lives and fulfil their rights, responsibilities and aspirations.
3. We hold others accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities toward poor and marginalised people.
4. We oppose any discrimination based on sex/gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, class, religion, age, physical ability, caste or sexual orientation.
5. We examine and address the root causes of poverty and rights denial.
6. We promote non-violence in the democratic and just resolution of conflicts contributing to poverty and rights denial.
7. We work in concert with others to promote the human rights of poor and marginalised people.

In adopting a rights-based approach, we hold ourselves accountable to these principles in all our programming throughout the world.

New humanitarianism is variously described as encompassing several approaches or underlying assumptions (Macrae and Leader, 2000; Fox, 2001):

- ∄ Recognising the risk that aid can do more harm than good;
- ∄ Proposing a shift away from needs-based approaches to rights-based approaches;
- ∄ Suggesting an increased role for advocacy in public policy;
- ∄ Analysing the underlying causes of poverty and conflict;
- ∄ Actively addressing both the immediate alleviation of the effects of conflict – and the promotion of self reliance or goal-oriented 'developmental relief'.

Livelihoods approaches are not necessarily a component of 'new humanitarianism,' but they do raise some of the same set of issues. They can be both a means of addressing short-term, humanitarian response objectives, and of addressing longer-term objectives of reducing vulnerability. Addressing underlying causes need not come at the expense of also addressing acute symptoms of a problem, but in either case, embedded in a livelihoods approach are assumptions about working in solidarity with communities, building their capacity, strengthening their access to resources etc. that clearly go beyond either just the alleviation of short term suffering, or a strict application of classic humanitarian principles – particularly that of neutrality. Unfortunately, these issues were not directly raised in most of the working papers, but the 'neutrality/solidarity' issue is clearly a major unresolved question in the contemporary debate over future directions of humanitarianism (Rieff, 2002; Duffield, 2001; de Waal, 1997).

Similarly, the linkage between humanitarian assistance and the broader political/security agenda is another unresolved issue. Macrae and Leader (2000) outline the issue of 'coherence' between political and security objectives and humanitarian action – particularly on the part of donor governments. Under a 'coherence' agenda, humanitarian action becomes one part of a comprehensive political strategy involving many other actors (governments, the military, private sector actors, etc. in addition to humanitarian agencies). Closer integration between aid and political objectives is often seen as necessary to address the causes of conflict. But it has led to a heightened

politicization of humanitarian work. Humanitarian (or development) aid sometimes plays into the hands of parties to a conflict or those who benefit from war economies (Uvin, 1999), but, by being ignorant of local dynamics, for example, humanitarian aid can reinforce or reproduce social relations that underpinned conflict in the first place (Archibald and Richards, 2002). With their emphasis on participation and capacity-building, livelihoods approaches must take particular care to avoid recreating such relations. Over the past few years, several tools have been developed to try to understand and mitigate the negative or unintended consequences of providing humanitarian assistance in situations of chronic conflict (Anderson, 1996; CARE, 2001). These tools have been criticized for their 'consequentialist' approach, rather than firm adherence to a few basic principles (Duffield, 2001; Fox, 2001), but these tools have won widespread application in programmatic work, in part because they acknowledge the pragmatic choices that operational agencies are forced to make, and because they offer a principled approach to making these choices.

All of these issues – rights-based approaches, humanitarian principles, the 'new humanitarianism', and the mitigation of negative unintended consequences – are critical to the principled adoption of livelihoods approaches in a conflict situation, and constitute major questions for further investigation and practice. Considerably more research is clearly essential, but this paper has shown that livelihoods analysis can be usefully applied to understanding the dynamics of poverty, vulnerability and power in situations of chronic conflict and political instability. A number of modifications to the standard livelihoods framework (as developed for political stable conditions) have been suggested to make it more applicable to chronic conflict situations. There exists a wealth of methodological and analytical tools that can contribute to the detailed assessments that are necessary to inform livelihoods approaches, yet difficulties persist in adapting and applying these tools satisfactorily in order to integrate an understanding of household livelihood strategies and outcomes within broader political and economic contexts. A major challenge is the ability to predict the impact of specific conflict-related shocks or potential interventions on livelihoods, making it particularly difficult to move from analysis to the identification of appropriate interventions in anything other than a reactive mode. There is no blueprint approach to providing livelihood support, but detailed assessment, flexibility, participation and capacity-building are all essential elements.



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