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From Relief to Food Security? The challenges of programming for agricultural rehabilitation

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Abstract

This paper provides a broad overview of current programming approaches and ongoing debates relating to agricultural rehabilitation, focusing particularly on seeds and tools interventions, institutional capacity-building, and recent shifts towards market-, livelihoods- and rights-based approaches. Existing research and evaluations illustrate the discrepancies between academic rhetoric and programming reality, and problems in conceptualising transitions or linkages between relief and development programming modes. The lack of evaluations that measure the impact of interventions does little to help in developing more effective programming options.

The controversial notion of sustainability within agricultural rehabilitation is highlighted; although sustainability is a key programming objective of development interventions, it is incompatible with relief interventions. A major, unresolved question in situating rehabilitation in relief and/or development paradigms is what to do about humanitarian principles. The need for a framework to ensure that agricultural rehabilitation interventions are principled in relation to conflict and post-conflict dynamics is vital. Although the paper raises more questions than answers, it is perhaps through a closer examination of the interface between social protection and the humanitarian agenda that unproductive debates on linking relief and development can be moved forward. The material presented in the paper is drawn from the inception report of an ongoing ODI-FAO-ICRISAT research project, ‘The changing roles of agricultural rehabilitation: linking relief, development and support to rural livelihoods’, which aims to explore the issues raised here.

Introduction

Rehabilitation is often regarded as the process that links relief and development, but persistent challenges (both practical and conceptual) in the so-called ‘transition’ from relief to food security and ultimately to development indicate the need to develop greater clarity as to what rehabilitation ought to be about.

The problem with all ‘re’ words (e.g. rehabilitation, reconstruction, recovery, revitalization) is an implicit assumption of a re-turn to a former, supposedly stable and desirable state of affairs.⁴ Critiques of the relief-to-development continuum have questioned this assumption, but the lack of alternative vocabulary makes it semantically difficult to describe rehabilitation

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⁴ Rehabilitation cannot merely replicate the pre-armed conflict situation because certain elements of it are likely to have contributed to that conflict. In addition, war and other events frequently change basic structural realities e.g. female-headed households, prevalence of HIV/AIDS, etc.

programmes without unintentional yet somewhat inevitable connotations related to the continuum. Although we use 'rehabilitation' and other 're' words in this paper, we fully acknowledge the inadequacy of such terms.

Rehabilitation is less about restoration of previous levels of development and more about the creation of capacities and enabling conditions in which individuals and institutions can engage in constructive activity (Korf, 2002). Although rehabilitation is often seen as an opportunity to implement policy changes and institutional reforms that may be necessary to sustain recovery and development processes, it does not imply starting from a *tabula rasa*. The challenge is to "strike a judicious balance between taking advantage of new 'clean slate' opportunities ... ensuring continuity with existing farming and livelihood systems, and to achieve a high degree of participation based on existing community and civil society structures and systems of authority where these are conducive to overall programme objectives." (White, 1999:231) Rehabilitation activities may be short-term or medium to long-term depending on the context.

This paper provides a broad overview of current programming approaches and on-going debates relating to agricultural rehabilitation, highlighting a number of challenges, including the controversial notion of sustainability and the need for a framework to ensure that agricultural rehabilitation interventions are principled in relation to conflict and post-conflict dynamics. It is based on the inception report for a collaborative ODI-FAO-ICRISAT research project on 'The changing roles of agricultural rehabilitation: linking relief, development and support to rural livelihoods', focusing on chronic conflict and post-conflict situations (Annex 1).⁵ Given that this research is ongoing, the paper inevitably raises more questions than answers; the issues raised here are those which will be explored more fully as part of the research project.

Programming approaches and current debates

Seed aid as an alternative to food aid

The 'phasing out' of food aid through its replacement with seed aid tends to be regarded by relief agencies as a necessary step in the transition towards more developmental programming for food security. Seed aid is generally regarded as being more cost effective than food aid due to the smaller quantities of inputs required. Not only is seed aid cheaper than food aid, it is also thought to reduce dependency, thus providing the basis for longer-term rehabilitation and sustainability. Based on these justifications, what are commonly referred to as 'seeds and tools' interventions have become so preponderant over the last decade that they have recently been referred to as a 'treadmill' (Remington et al, 2002).

Conventional approaches to seeds and tools interventions tended to involve the distribution of seed of improved varieties of staple food crops procured from outside the country. Various changes in recent years have been such that conventional seed aid is no longer the norm for seed interventions (Daniele Donati, personal communication). Joint WFP-FAO programming, for example, has coordinated the distribution of seed aid with food aid (known as seed protection) in order to try to prevent beneficiary farmers from eating the seed supplied. Rather than staple grain crops, seed distributions often involve vegetable and other crops (e.g. legumes) that tend not to be so easily multiplied and stored by farmers. Large scale procurement of seed from commercial seed companies in neighbouring countries is giving way to procurement within country (for those crops that are available in-country), often involving the establishment of farmer seed multiplication schemes and training in seed production. Rather than just the straightforward distribution of seed, seed projects implemented in more stable situations often involve the construction of drying floors and seed stores, and/or the establishment of community seed banks (though the positive impacts of such approaches have yet to be clearly demonstrated). Finally, rather than providing seed

⁵ A revised version of the inception report will soon be published as an ODI Working Paper.

itself, vouchers (or in some cases cash) are increasingly being used to allow farmers to access seed and other locally available agricultural inputs.⁶

As with other relief interventions, the monitoring and evaluation of relief seed projects has tended to look only at the type and quantity of inputs distributed and the number of beneficiaries or area planted, together with estimates of the expected grain output. Although the logistical aspects of relief seed distribution have improved considerably over the years, with more timely distributions of better quality seed of more appropriate varieties and in more appropriate quantities, it is only relatively recently that researchers have examined the actual impacts of emergency seed distribution projects. In general, the impacts of conventional seed relief programmes have been rather less than might be assumed, particularly in chronic emergency contexts where seed aid is distributed on a repeated basis (see Longley and Sperling, 2002).

Researchers, practitioners and policy-makers are currently questioning whether emergency seed aid provides the best form of support: particular attention is focusing on the development of methodologies to assess the needs of farmers in disaster situations, on the implementation and impact assessment of alternative programming options. Increased understanding about how farmers manage their seed resources suggests that areas which are food insecure are not necessarily also seed insecure. Farmers tend to prioritize seed over food, and when food stocks become depleted they seek food from alternative sources in preference to consuming their seed stocks. The widely held assumption that farmers eat their seed and have nothing to plant in disaster contexts has thus been challenged, placing greater emphasis on the importance of detailed needs assessment prior to intervention. Seed (or grain suitable for planting) is often locally available in emergency contexts, and seed insecurity tends to relate more to problems of access. It is therefore necessary to address problems of poverty and vulnerability within farming communities.

Market-based and demand-driven modalities

Market-based approaches stem from neo-liberal ideals promoting free-market solutions to crisis. These methods put resources (cash or vouchers) in the hands of *beneficiaries*, in the hope that they will then become *clients* or even *customers* of emerging service providers. The market is expected to ensure that enterprises selling food, seeds or agricultural advice become accountable to their customers. These private service providers are expected to be inherently more accountable to those they serve than aid agencies, which are by nature primarily accountable to donors.

Market-based interventions are said to provide incentives for populations to invest in peaceful, durable solutions to their problems. Their growing popularity mirrors concerns that aid handouts can in some cases weaken economic networks and undermine local producers, and in some cases even fuel conflicts. The new emphasis on livelihood strategies in conflict settings tries to address this issue by generating virtuous cycles of economic growth within conflict. However, the use of markets and their potential for improving the response to complex emergencies remain under-researched and inadequately understood.

Rhetorical hopes that the power of the market can be harnessed to solve humanitarian crises and support livelihoods amidst chronic conflict have sometimes superseded empirical analyses of what works and what does not. At worst, the promotion of market-based modalities may give legitimacy to a hasty withdrawal of the state from rural service provision (or a failure to ensure that the state returns in post-conflict contexts), without due attention to whether or not other actors are appearing to fill the gap (Rocha and Christoplos, 2001;

⁶ The British Red Cross, for example, distributed cash following Hurricane Mitch in Honduras, and Catholic Relief Services have, over the past three years, developed voucher systems together with seed fairs to allow farmers a greater choice in acquiring seed and other inputs more efficiently than the conventional seeds and tools approach (Remington et al, 2002). Seed fairs and seed vouchers are now growing in popularity among various different agencies. Results of detailed impact assessments, however, have yet to be made available.

Pearce, 1999). There are, however, a number of pilot efforts that may show some direction for the future. Strategies include income-generating programmes such as micro-finance; livestock loan schemes that help local populations protect and build on their assets; the use of cash grants or vouchers; barter shops; and insurance.

Numerous issues surround the impact of micro-finance in post-conflict situations (see Wilson, 2002) and its relative merits versus food and cash transfers (Peppiat et al, 2001). Evidence suggests that judicious combination of several different approaches is the best way to achieve multiple objectives at the micro-level. Pure market-based solutions are unlikely to be appropriate in many chronic conflict and post-conflict cases due to the massive dysfunctional or 'obnoxious' nature of markets in conflict situations (Kanbur, 2001), and the lack of regulation that would otherwise be provided by the state. Assumptions that cash assistance gives producers a chance to choose their service provider may be exaggerated where local power structures exert a monopoly over the private sector. Economic analysis centres upon 'effective demand' but this does not reflect needs and is thus arguably inadequate. Instead of simply seeking to respond to demand there is a need to think also about stimulating the 'voice' of those making demands. Livelihoods analyses often over-emphasize the 'provider perspective' and fail to pay sufficient attention to the potential for empowering users to draw-down services.

Rights-based approaches and accountability

The incorporation of a human rights agenda into relief work represents a very concrete attempt to address the manipulation of aid by explicitly acknowledging that agencies need to do more than simply supply basic needs. Using a rights-based approach, humanitarian agencies can live up to an ethical obligation to ensure that people can survive with dignity. On the other hand, it is also seen as a way to regain legitimacy when the humanitarian sector is increasingly seen as becoming little more than a group of service provision contactors, chasing donor money. Whilst an increasing number of agencies have formally proclaimed their adherence to 'rights-based approaches', there is as yet little indication that this has resulted in significant change in operational methods, priorities or goals, and no shared understanding of what a rights-based approach means in practice. There is a gap between mission statements and programming realities.

In the field of humanitarian assistance, rights-based approaches can be regarded as one of three aspects of accountability, the other two aspects being humanitarian principles, and technical standards (Mitchell, 2003). The on-going debate on humanitarian principles – particularly neutrality and impartiality – elicits strong views from those who believe that it is absolutely fundamental that humanitarian agencies and interventions must always strive towards these principles, and those who believe that such principles, though laudable, are largely unworkable in practice. Questions remain as to whether or not rights-based approaches are synonymous with the fulfilment of humanitarian principles, and whether or not livelihoods approaches are compatible with principles.

Standards are seen as a way that humanitarian agencies can be 'held to account', in much the same way that other sectors have been drawn into an 'auditing culture' where ethical and quantitative measures are merged (Strathern, 2000). The underlying assumption is that beneficiaries can best defend their rights if they and the humanitarian agencies have a 'benchmark' standard regarding what level of service provision is expected. The Sphere standards are the most broadly recognized set of such standards. In some sectors⁷ this has resulted in clear, quantitative recommendations, yet some agencies have rejected the Sphere approach as promoting an undue focus on outputs, at the expense of encouraging agencies to look at the outcomes of their work. It is feared that, rather than being a rights-

⁷ Sphere has recently developed standards for food security, of which primary food production (i.e. crops, fish and livestock) is a significant component. However the Sphere standards for food security are primarily methodologically focused and qualitative and will therefore be more difficult to use as a basis for strict accountability.

based approach, Sphere easily turns into a 'rites-based approach', as ritualistic delivery of set service packages distracts from consideration of livelihood impacts.

Research from development contexts has shown that even in 'normal' situations there are difficult political choices to be made regarding how to prioritize among an array of unmet 'rights' when resources are scarce (Conway and Norton, 2002). Unpleasant trade-offs between short-term access to resources and long-term resource use mean that the relationship between rights and sustainability has been found to be highly ambiguous.⁸ In addition, rights-based approaches have been found to favour those who have the capacity to claim their rights (Moser and Norton, 2001).

A rights perspective is certainly useful for drawing attention to such disparities, but given limited resources it remains necessary to prioritize and sequence different rights-based interventions according to the nature and combination of prevailing risks. This arguably requires moving beyond the current focus of relief on the right to food and towards a new broader focus on the 'right to a sustainable livelihood'. Oxfam, for example, is attempting to reconcile rights- and livelihood-based approaches by promoting the 'right to a sustainable livelihood' but seeks to do this by delivering against specific objectives/outcomes on food, income, employment security etc (Hussein, 2002).

Livelihoods-based programming

There are many overlaps between livelihood approaches and rights-based approaches; rather than an end in itself, livelihoods programming is primarily promoted as a means by which to achieve the ultimate objective of protecting human, social and economic rights. Despite increasing interest in the relevance of livelihoods analysis to conflict situations, there has been limited practical programming experience to date in applying livelihoods approaches to relief and rehabilitation in chronic conflict situations. Given the highly context-specific nature of livelihoods and chronic conflict, there is no blueprint approach to providing livelihood support, but detailed assessment, flexibility, participation and capacity-building are all essential elements.

A recent review draws particular attention to three issues: (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 in situations of chronic conflict; and (iii) what is meant by 'capacity-building' within a livelihoods approach (Longley and Maxwell, 2003). In shifting from supply-driven modalities of relief interventions to longer-term rehabilitation interventions, it is essential that these are designed according to actual needs and that programming decisions support a well-defined goal (Aubee and Hussein, 2002). Beneficiary participation has been shown to be crucial for the success of any socio-economic development interventions, yet does not necessarily feature as part of relief programming. In moving from relief to development, one would expect to see increasing levels of participation, provided that this is possible in the local context. The European Commission considers participation to be a challenging key element for linking relief rehabilitation and development that requires a strong institutional commitment (Viciani, 2003).

Capacity building 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 (Montani and Majid, 2002), not the least local service providers (Christoplos, 1998). What emerged from a review of a small number of livelihoods approaches to programming was a wide array of different aspects to capacity-building: building productive capacity through enhancing specific assets; building

⁸ For example, environmental sustainability may be threatened if access to land is provided without an institutional structure in place to prevent, for example, ploughing of fragile hillsides. Similarly, programmes may be established that are designed to live up to a commitment to a right that disregard viable levels of public expenditure.

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. Institutional capacity-building is considered below.

Institutional capacity-building

Decisions regarding investment in institutional capacity in complex emergencies generally involve a basic underlying choice between investing in expatriate or local capacity. Expatriate-led teams can be trained and equipped in advance, which facilitates rapid deployment. They are also generally presumed to have an advantage in having an inherently neutral and impartial stance in the conflict. However it has been argued that this is not in fact a neutral stance but one that actively undermines any remaining local capacity in public service provision. There are advantages in working with the local and national institutions that can be expected to eventually assume responsibility for the tasks at hand (Juma and Surkhe, 2002). If these institutions are ignored or bypassed, they may become alienated and disempowered. On the other hand, many critics (e.g., Keen and Wilson, 1994; Addison, 2001) claim that channelling aid through government 'intermediaries' rarely empowers those public servants interested in acting in an accountable manner toward their clients, but instead usually contributes to authoritarian and military power structures. Proponents of rights-based approaches stress that a solution must be found for re-establishing the 'social contract' (Addison and Murshed, 2001) between governments and their constituency, as this is the only sustainable guarantee of a right to subsistence.

Despite the gap between rhetoric and reality, there remains a need and ample opportunities to support imperfect local institutions operating in turbulent environments (Christoplos, 1998). Improved services can form the basis of the legitimization of state structures, but unrealistic expectations and disillusionment may be created if short-term aid inputs are used to establish structures that cannot be maintained over time. The capacity building and institutional support issue is not just a yes or no question (as it is often portrayed). There is a dearth of models for how it should be done. In many post-conflict contexts large levels of resources are channelled through local NGOs for agricultural support. Rapid expansion of operations without an institutional infrastructure to ensure quality governance may not add up to genuine 'capacity building'.

Some of the most important questions surround the financing strategies for rehabilitation. How realistic are expectations that rehabilitated services can become self-financing in a short period of time? Evidence is growing that relatively symbolic user fees for extension may in many cases create greater accountability among service providers but that public (or aid) resources will be required to cover the bulk of costs for a long period (Neuchâtel Initiative, 2002). Some multilateral actors, most notably the World Bank, are vigorously promoting a greater role for the private sector in rehabilitation programming. Private input suppliers and extension services may be publicly financed in early stages, but usually such financing is withdrawn relatively rapidly. As agricultural rehabilitation programming is usually primarily focused on input supply, it is particularly important to situate plans within past experience and future visions regarding the role of the state in financing input supply.

In the debate on rebuilding institutional capacities in the midst of complex political emergencies, the role of agricultural services has generally focused on the relevance of specific project interventions. There are, however, very few analyses of how rural people use such inevitably piecemeal interventions within their wider livelihood strategies. Rarely have the challenges been analysed in terms of the broader service packages that farmers need, and how producers strive to draw down the services that they need in the midst of conflict. Some evaluations of specific service support have found that impact is related to the availability of other services. The ultimate measure of the quality of service provision cannot be found in individual credit, input or extension interventions. It is in how farmers can access the mix of services that they need to produce and access markets. It is perhaps here where a

livelihoods perspective has the greatest potential to widen perspectives on how a given service intervention may be expected to have genuine impact on agricultural systems.

Challenges for agricultural rehabilitation

Research on agricultural rehabilitation in particular and on livelihood support in chronic conflict more generally have pointed to the dangers of a hurried and poorly informed shift to what some have referred to as the 'new humanitarianism' i.e. policies that go beyond conventional attention to basic needs to engage in the politically charged territory of rights and advocacy. Evaluations have shown that the encroachment of the 'new humanitarianism' has, as yet, made little headway in terms of livelihood support (ALNAP, 2003). Despite an ever increasing proportion of funding going to 'rehabilitation', field-level programming is out of sync with headquarters rhetoric, with limited and patchy attention given to how given interventions may impact on either conflict or longer-term survival (ALNAP, 2003). The supply-side dynamics of the humanitarian system appear to be stronger than either the traditional humanitarian focus on needs or the new humanitarian foci on conflict, rights and livelihoods. A renewed interest in linking relief, rehabilitation and development is emerging, but there remains a severe capacity gap in reforming these links, particularly among humanitarian agencies.

Perhaps the clearest finding in evaluations of current agricultural rehabilitation programming is the tendency for national programmes to be collections of projects without clear exit strategies or links to longer-term visions for agricultural reconstruction, a problem that is exacerbated by unclear relations with institutional counterparts. 'Projectized' approaches are severely limited by their small scale, and the difficulties that they present for achieving effective coordination and sectoral balance. Ultimately, 'micro-approaches have serious limitations, not least because rehabilitation is inherently linked to sustaining reconciliation and rebuilding state legitimacy on the political front, and resilience of household livelihoods, markets, overall growth (regionally and nationally), export levels, fiscal balance (local government revenues) and food security on the macro- and regional as well as the micro-economic fronts' (Green, 2000:360). The goal of holistic planning towards more coherent and coordinated interventions, however, remains largely elusive.

Assessments of impact and need

A key hurdle in enhancing agricultural rehabilitation programming is that the analysis of the actual impact of rehabilitation interventions on disaster-affected people is still rare. Evaluations tend to measure outputs rather than impacts (ALNAP 2003). One can compare amounts of food distributed to food produced, but this is a poor proxy for understanding the ultimate impact on livelihoods and nutritional status (Sauvinet-Bedouin and Erikson, 2001). Until there is better understanding on the way in which rehabilitation programmes impact on rural people's well-being, it will remain difficult to know how programming can be improved. Research into the impact of seeds and tools programming has helped to promote a lively debate on the appropriateness of such programming in different contexts, and has also highlighted the inadequacy of need assessments relating to seed distributions (Longley et al, 2002). A number of agencies, including FAO (Coutts, 2003), are currently engaged in trying to formulate more practical methodologies for needs assessment and monitoring relating to food security, livelihoods and agricultural rehabilitation. Many needs assessment tools exist, but the step from analysis to the identification of appropriate interventions remains a major methodological challenge, particularly in livelihoods and rights-based approaches (Longley and Maxwell, 2003).

Agency capacity

Effective agricultural rehabilitation programming requires considerably more analytical strength than conventional relief interventions in order to develop the necessary understanding of political economy, livelihoods and markets. A key question is where that analytical strength may be found. 'Developmental relief' efforts usually imply that

humanitarian actors can muster these capacities, but evaluations are showing this to be an over-optimistic assumption. A recent project to help agencies integrate political economy analysis into programming concludes that: 'The most significant challenge is an institutional one – how to integrate political economy analysis into the mainstream of agencies' activities at all levels, and how to ensure that this analysis is linked effectively to – and informed by – operations at field level' (Collinson et al, 2002: 30). In addition to weak analytical abilities, some humanitarian actors also have limited technical knowledge relating to agriculture and little experience of participatory approaches. On the other hand, the increasing engagement of multilateral and other large development actors in rehabilitation will require different forms of adaptability. These agencies, with (presumably) more experience in analysis will need to adapt their conceptual models to understanding livelihoods amid extreme vulnerability and a variety of 'obnoxious markets'. They must also implement their programmes with the flexibility and risk-awareness needed to work in conflict and post-conflict situations. Risk-aware development planning implies the establishment of rural livelihoods and institutions that are better at dealing with risk. Evidence indicates that in large-scale rehabilitation initiatives this purported opportunity is rarely capitalised upon (Frühling, 2000; Rocha and Christoplos, 2001). A primary obstacle in taking advantage of such opportunities is the short-lived political will and donor interest in the emergency per se.

Sustainability

Sustainability essentially refers to the capacity of a project or programme to function effectively over time with minimum external input, and for the outputs or impacts of the project to have long-lasting beneficial effects. This is a key programming objective of development interventions but is by definition largely incompatible with relief interventions. If the stated objective of rehabilitation aid is to bridge the gap between the two and establish the foundations for sustainable development, then agencies are faced with a dilemma over how sustainability objectives should be introduced and addressed. Important questions surround timing, scale and compatibility with different aid modalities. Sustainability is multi-faceted and should not be regarded as an end in itself. The search for financial sustainability frequently leads to 'tarmac biases' and further marginalization of those areas considered non-viable or weakly integrated, together with a preference for working with partner organizations with strong organizational capacity. Yet the less accessible, weakly integrated areas and institutional capacity-building are precisely the areas which relief and rehabilitation interventions supposedly are usually most needed. There is a real danger, therefore, that sustainability concerns can undermine the effectiveness of rehabilitation aid.

Humanitarian principles and accountability

A major unresolved question in situating rehabilitation in relief and/or development paradigms is what to do about humanitarian principles. Slim has criticised the orthodoxies of the 'humanitarian priesthood' who maintain "something of a monopoly on the [humanitarian] principle by equating the humanitarian ideal with a relatively small range of relief activities administered to affected populations by its own cadres of humanitarian organizations" (Slim, 1998:1). The intertwined acute and chronic vulnerabilities faced by people affected by chronic conflict have meant that in agricultural rehabilitation the priesthood has lost its grip. Developmental approaches are increasingly influencing agricultural rehabilitation programming. The key question is whether this will limit efforts to target groups and institutions that are easily rehabilitated. Will the humanitarian imperative continue to permeate rehabilitation efforts, or will a large proportion of the rural population be written off as not capable of being rehabilitated? Careful political judgement, based on a more nuanced understanding of the roles and motivations of different institutions involved in agricultural rehabilitation is essential, particularly regarding decisions on institutional capacity-building in relation to the legitimacy of government authorities. The lack of consensus on principles and ethical frameworks for use in rehabilitation programming must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Closing thoughts

Many of the issues raised in this paper relate to the recent re-emergence of the debate on linking relief, rehabilitation and development. As noted in the introduction, however, the use of language relating to the now discredited 'continuum', the so-called 'transition' and even 'linking' relief and development is not necessarily helpful in moving this debate forward. Livelihoods and rights-based language is increasingly being adopted, but there remain huge gaps between academic rhetoric and programming reality. The questions that need to be asked in order to establish more appropriate frameworks for linking agricultural rehabilitation policies and programmes to effectively support the real livelihoods of people living in complex emergency contexts are now beginning to emerge. But there remains much work to be done in generating answers to these questions.

Re-conceptualizations of what is meant by both 'humanitarianism' and 'development' inevitably have implications for rehabilitation programming; a greater willingness to incorporate livelihoods thinking into humanitarian concerns on the one hand, together with increased attention to social protection and safety nets within development on the other suggests some degree of convergence between these two concepts. On a practical level, there is increasing use of the Millennium Development Goals as target-based frameworks for both humanitarian and development assistance (Richard China, personal communication). A greater focus on vulnerability, risks and chronic poverty can be seen as evidence that the humanitarian imperative is creeping into development thinking, even if few development planners would refer to their values in such terms. Research into chronic poverty has shown that there is no 'sustainable' solution on the horizon for chronically vulnerable people (Wood, 2003). 'Sustainable' programmes may do much for those with land and labour, but may exclude a large and growing proportion of the rural poor who can be expected to remain at least partially dependent on what are conventionally assumed to be 'unsustainable' social protection programmes.

Humanitarianism and social protection aspects of development differ in their legal frameworks but overlap with respect to ethical commitments. The interface between social protection and humanitarian action is currently relatively uncharted territory. It suggests uncomfortable questions regarding the efficacy of maintaining a strict division between politics and saving lives, and implicitly acknowledges the ethical imperative for development programmes to sometimes support 'unsustainable' investments. The lack of clarity in terminology related to rehabilitation, recovery, reconstruction, etc. mentioned in the introduction stems partially from a failure to define how humanitarianism, social protection and growth relate to one another with respect to values and operational priorities. Two intersecting axes can be used to begin charting this grey zone; a contextual axis which examines chronic vulnerability as opposed to temporary crises, and a programmatic axis with safety nets at one end (to prevent human suffering and destitution) and safety ladders (or cargo nets) at the other (to provide opportunities to accumulate assets and build more resilient livelihoods for those affected by a livelihood shock) (Kabeer, 2002; Barrett, et al, 2002).

Long-lasting impacts can be achieved where intervention strategies enhance resilience through strengthening local livelihoods and preserving or enhancing the assets on which these are based. In this context the importance of an ethical framework to ensure principled support whereby positive outcomes are maximized and negative outcomes minimized assumes an even greater importance than ever before.

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Annex 1. Summary profile of the research project

Project title

The changing roles of agricultural rehabilitation: linking relief, development and support to rural livelihoods

Collaborating organizations/personnel

- Overseas Development Institute, UK - Kate Longley, Ian Christoplos, Tom Slaymaker
- FAO Rehabilitation and Humanitarian Policies Unit - Richard China
- International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics – Kate Longley

Overall research aim

To develop a greater level of conceptual clarity and identify practical strategies on how changing agricultural rehabilitation policies can contribute to linking humanitarian assistance and longer-term development through the provision of effective, principled support to rural livelihoods in chronic conflict and post-conflict (CCandPC) situations.

Specific objectives

1. To develop a detailed empirical and conceptual understanding of the complex nature of how agricultural rehabilitation efforts impact on and relate to poverty, vulnerability and institutional configurations in CCandPC situations, based on an understanding of the ways in which rural people access resources and the role that local institutions and political factors play in the adaptation of local livelihood strategies.
2. To analyse critically the relationship between food security strategies, agricultural rehabilitation and poverty reduction in contexts where the roles of relief and development programming are shifting. Particular attention will be placed on reviewing how aid to agricultural services can be adapted in post-conflict and politically unstable environments to ensure that investments support effective, accountable and legitimate institutions, so protecting humanitarian principles and promoting sustainability.
3. To develop greater conceptual clarity and policy/institutional/programming options for donors and operational agencies to support rural livelihoods of poor and vulnerable groups through agricultural rehabilitation in CCandPC situations.

Project outputs

- relevant programming information for targeted agricultural rehabilitation interventions;
- better informed policy recommendations for agricultural rehabilitation in chronic conflict and post-conflict situations that do not simply focus on polarised notions of relief or development;
- unique understanding of the potentials and pitfalls in efforts to find synergy between relief and development programming.

Start date: 1 April 2003

End date: 30 June 2004

Programme of activities

Phase 1: April - September 2003

- 1.1 Discussions with stakeholders in London, Brussels, Rome, Stockholm, Kabul, and Freetown
- 1.2 Review of relevant documents, reports and literature
- 1.3 Detailed planning of country case studies

- 1.4 Drafting, review and finalisation of 'key issues' review

Phase 2: September 2003 - February 2004

- 2.1 Collection of empirical data in Afghanistan and Sierra Leone
- 2.2 Analysis, drafting, review and finalisation of country case study reports

Phase 3: March – June 2004

- 3.1 Analysis, drafting, review and finalisation of final report
- 3.2 Presentations and meetings with stakeholders
- 3.3 In-country workshops
- 3.4 Preparation and dissemination of publications and other outputs