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## Livelihoods in protracted crises

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## Why paradigms matter

In the Western context<sup>1</sup>, two broad paradigms of aid continue to dominate, despite long standing theoretical objections. The paradigm of normality is for constant steady progress, graphically illustrated by an upward line on a graph, representing increasing well-being, increasing economic prosperity and (often taken as its equivalent) an end to chronic poverty and chronic food insecurity. Development support works within the institutions which drive this progress. The paradigm of emergency relief is that there are short term disturbances to this normality, during which people face life-threatening problems. Emergency or humanitarian aid is given to meet those needs which are regarded as being unacceptable. It is given regardless of the institutions or **processes which drive or constrain 'progress', with the sole intention of preventing unacceptable levels of human suffering.**

**The critique of this 'paradigm dichotomy' need not be repeated here: neither paradigm fits reality very well.** A constantly changing aid discourse has tried to reposition thinking over the past decades, during which relief has been linked to recovery and development along a continuum; overlapped with it in a contiguuum; disaster risk reduction has been placed at the centre of development concerns, (though often only addressed from humanitarian funds); and for many years, analysts have recognised the existence of a whole category of crises which defy either of the two boxes, variously addressed as failing, weak or fragile states and complex political emergencies. Nevertheless, the two paradigms still matter, because they continue to exert a powerful influence on the way in which aid is organised. They set the bureaucratic and administrative framework which influences, and at times determines, how aid interventions are conceptualised, designed, implemented – and funded. Indeed, given the constant flux in the aid discourse, it seems it is the institutional and administrative forces which are maintaining the dichotomy.

The dichotomy exists at sectoral level, too, as discussions on food security illustrate. Almost all definitions of **'food security'** today are based on that affirmed at the World Food Summit of 1996<sup>2</sup>:

*"when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life"*

The very concept of **'security'** and the inclusion of **'at all times'** in the definition should ensure that the concept covers both sides of any purported dichotomy between acute crises and long term well-being. **However, the term 'food security'** is in practice used almost entirely about response to crisis, whereas those addressing a chronic difficulty in meeting basic living needs talk of poverty or **'livelihoods'**. **Food security has come to be assessed too often only be reference to their percentage of people's food needs that they can meet**, resulting in self-contradictory terminology – **people 'at risk of food insecurity', or in 'transitory food insecurity'<sup>3</sup> or 'cyclical food insecurity'**. (If people cannot be confident of having secure access to food at all times, then they are always food insecure.) Again, these paradigms or definitions of food security have had enormous practical consequences. Food security, a predominantly emergency term, has too often looked only at whether or not households can meet their immediate food needs, or, even narrower, their

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<sup>1</sup> The UN-centred international aid system is largely based on western normative conceptions of aid. There remains a lack of mutual understanding between this system and non-western aid and humanitarian action that is only now being recognised and which will hopefully be addressed in the coming years.

<sup>2</sup> SOFI 2010 retained the same definition, but added 'social access'.

<sup>3</sup> 'Transitory food insecurity' should refer to a short period of food insecurity due to an acute crisis for people who were normally food secure (World Bank 1996). It has come to be used for people regularly suffering seasonal food shortages (e.g. WFP 2009).

immediate food energy needs. Since households are constantly having to make trade-offs to survive in crises, **'food insecurity' can easily be underestimated when insufficient attention is given** to how households find their food, how confident they can be of meeting their needs for the foreseeable future, or the risks which they are forced to run and the sacrifices which they make in order to meet their food needs<sup>4</sup>. Deep chronic poverty and acute food insecurity are rarely easily distinguished, but policy makers and programme developers have struggled to find ways to approach the problem coherently in the face of administrative and conceptual categories that treat them separately.

The result has too often been that emergency relief has addressed the symptoms of food **insecurity (i.e. the 'food gaps')**, **leaving the causes to be addressed by developmental aid** – which tends to be inadequate in protracted crises. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a similar picture may be true in the nutrition sector, where interventions to address acute malnutrition are usually triggered by anthropometric data, i.e. indications of the prevalence of children suffering from wasting but are rarely based on further research and analysis of the actual causes of malnutrition (Chastre and Levine 2011). This is compounded because emergency aid has tended to focus solely on acute malnutrition (measured by how thin children are for their height, broadly a measure of food energy intake) and has tended to ignore chronic malnutrition (or stunting, broadly a measure **of the quality of a child's diet over time**), **reinforcing a tendency to see acute malnutrition in terms** of symptoms and only chronic malnutrition needing attention to causes. Investment in addressing the symptoms of acute malnutrition have enabled the humanitarian world to make significant progress in response (e.g. community based therapeutic feeding), enabling the treatment of severe acute malnutrition to be incorporated in local health services and helping to prevent mass mortality, e.g. in the food security crisis in Ethiopia in 2011 (Sida et al, 2012). However, this leaves the underlying causes of a continued high prevalence of undernutrition unaddressed. Many in this sector too have been struggling for a more coherent response to undernutrition as a whole.

There may be grounds for a guarded optimism that some of these struggles are bearing fruit, and that challenges to the old paradigms are gaining ground. The increased hope for success may be partly due to the fact that the attack is now coming from many different directions, and so the paradigms and their dichotomy are being dissolved rather than replaced.

- It has long been argued that many live below minimum acceptable standards in chronic, not acute, poverty and that emergency relief has been an inappropriate tool for meeting these needs. *'Social protection'* is a broad umbrella of approaches to chronic poverty that has gained significant momentum in recent years. It is increasingly being promoted in countries where chronic poverty often spills over into acute crisis, e.g. in Ethiopia, NE Kenya, and has sometimes had the explicit aim of targeting households who have periodically relied on emergency relief, offering them instead longer term, predictable support.
- *Climate change* is expected to threaten development pathways, increase vulnerability to crises and make crisis events more frequent – both natural disasters and, some argue, conflicts, because of increasing resource scarcity. A completely distinct climate change aid architecture is being created, whether to promote low-carbon growth or to support

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<sup>4</sup> See for example Jaspars and O'Callaghan 2010 or South and Harrigan 2012 on the neglected links between food insecurity and protection.

adaptation, yet the problems being addressed – and the measures being used to address them – are inseparable from the concerns and interventions of conventional **'development' and 'emergency relief'**. Some of this overlap has been evident recently in the shared interest of different communities of practice **in the idea of 'resilience'**, and in the demands for new ways of **thinking about 'sustainability' that incorporate change and risk, such as 'adaptive capacity'**.

- The need for a radical overhaul of the modalities of emergency relief when applied to chronic, rather than acute, crises gained mainstream recognition with the publication by FAO of the State of Food Insecurity 2010, addressing the problem of *protracted crises*. This was significantly different from a call simply for linking or overlapping relief and development (see below). Significantly, it stressed the problems of both acute and chronic undernutrition.
- The recognition that normal development processes are not adequately tackling chronic suffering (including food insecurity) has also finally gained mainstream acceptance, due in part to the measurable failure to meet the Millennium Development Goals. This has led to the recognition by the World Bank (2011), **an institute long devoted to 'normal' development and which has not regarded crises as within its mandate, of the need for a new approach to development in countries affected by *conflict, insecurity and instability***.
- International agreements on aid also explicitly recognised the specific needs of fragile and conflict affected states in an initiative pioneered by the G7+ group of countries, **culminating in the agreement for a 'New Deal' in Busan in 2011, recognising the links between peace building, state building and poverty**.
- Donors have become increasingly frustrated with constant needs for emergency relief **in the same countries and are looking to a 'new' paradigm of resilience to guide response** (e.g. DFID 2011, the increasing cooperation between the emergency and development offices at the European Commission (ECHO and DEVCO), the AGIR Sahel declaration (EC 2012)

## Protracted Crises (PCs) and Fragile and Conflict Affected States (FCAS)

This diverse array of initiatives and thinking have obviously informed each other. Three of them propose dealing with a group of crisis as a distinct problem that fits neither the conventional approaches to underdevelopment or to emergencies. These are SOFI 2010, looking at protracted crises, and the World Development Report 2011 (World Bank 2011) and the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (agreed in Busan, 2011), both looking at fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS). There appears to be a natural desire from these actors and others to avoid any developments deriving from these initiatives from the United Nations, the World Bank and the broader donor-aid recipient dialogue on aid effectiveness working in separate silos.

One important question therefore facing any world conference on food security is: to what extent should the international food security agenda be set by these initiatives and how can they be combined? This paper does not dwell either on the importance of the problem of food insecurity in protracted crises, or on the importance of the problem of protracted crises among the totality of

situations needed international aid. Both those issues are surely unarguable. (SOFI 2010 provides the simple facts for them both. In protracted crises, typically from a third to a half of all children are stunted – i.e. suffer chronic undernutrition – at national level even though not all are affected directly by any crisis. Such crises have consistently taken up the vast majority of international humanitarian funds: there are few crises such as the 2004 tsunami which represent a short term disruption to an otherwise stable development pattern.) The problem is well known: the difficulty is knowing where and how to look for solutions.

### *Defining 'protracted crises' and 'fragile and conflict affected states'*

In order to gather and present evidence on the specific challenges presented by protracted crises, **a working definition of a 'protracted crisis'** was adopted. SOFI 2010 used the parameters of food insecurity, longevity (continuous or repeated) of the need for external assistance and the relative importance of humanitarian aid within total aid flows. It is clear that any way of operationalizing a **'protracted crisis' can be contested**: the definition used in SOFI 2010 is open to the same accusations that any other definition would be, that the boundaries it puts on the parameters are somewhat arbitrary (e.g. the number of years of crisis, the use of 1996 as the start date for measuring, etc.); it could also be argued that aid flows do not describe crises so well, since they are not based solely on measurement of need<sup>5</sup>. Such arguments should not be allowed to distract from the recognition that some definition had to be used in order to organise data, and that the definition was used to make a simple but important case: some crises are simply different, and these **'different' ones represent** the major part of humanitarian needs. Once this is case is established, the focus must be kept firmly on the purpose of making the list, and not about which **particular countries ought to be included on it. The list is useful when it is used to derive an 'ideal type' of protracted crisis and to examine the common features, accepting that as with all ideal types, actual crises will resemble it to a greater or lesser degree.** SOFI 2010 focused on the duration of crisis, frequent presence of conflict (not always military), weak governance, the link between chronically unstable livelihood systems and crises; and the weakness of formal and informal institutions. It is clear that in the overlapping of chronic and acute needs and in the destructive synergy of natural hazards and conflict/political incapacity, there is much in common between a country facing repeated occurrence of food security crisis (as in much of the Horn of Africa or Haiti) and countries in continuous crisis because of conflict (e.g. Afghanistan, Sudan/S. Sudan). However, the categorisation is not intended to be used simplistically. There is much which distinguishes crises in countries on the same list, such as Ethiopia and DR Congo; and there are strong similarities between crises defined as protracted, such as in much of the Horn of Africa, and the chronic vulnerability and 'occasional' crisis in the Sahel (not categorised as a protracted crisis). The inevitable political arguments over which countries or territories ought or ought not to be on **a 'list' is to fundamentally misuse the classification and to detract from its heuristic purpose.** The lesson of FAO 2010 is not that a certain list of 22 countries needs stigmatising. It is that more attention needs to be put into working in the more difficult crises; that ways of working have to be found which fit these specific contexts, rather than simply adopting or multiplying the use of traditional forms of aid. That lesson can be applied as widely as needed, and should not be allowed to depend upon arguments over the labels used for any specific crisis.

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<sup>5</sup> Both the volume of aid and the choice of aid mechanism (e.g. the use of humanitarian rather than development funds) can be political.

Equally, there are no **simple 'objective' criteria for determining which states are 'fragile and conflict affected'**. The fact that there are no **uncontested lists** is because, even more than the definition of **'protracted crisis'**, any classification of a FCAS inherently includes political judgement. (This also makes it harder to put aside political interests in ensuring that a country/territory is either included or not.) The strength of a political system is not a bipolar measurement like the prevalence of stunting. Some countries classed as weak have difficulty in controlling much of their territory; in others, the political leaders deliberately choose not to impose formal structures, e.g. in order to use access to corruption as a form of patronage or to enrich themselves; and others may have very autocratic and highly repressive regimes which are not actively contested because of fear, and **which may best be described as 'brittle' rather than weak.**

Although arguments of definitions and labelling are not helpful, two lessons must be drawn from this discussion.

1. There is a political element to any classification, because the political element exists (and should exist) in all analysis of crisis. (This is much stronger in the case of FCASs where what is being judged is the strength of the political system.) The inclusion of political judgement must remain explicit and recognised.

2. The PC and the FCAS boxes are both heterogeneous and they both lack clear boundaries. It is necessary to resist an almost inevitable tendency to turn such boxes or lists **into 'recipient country categories', which will administratively determine the way aid is given and international engagement determined.**

The unfortunate tendency for aid to be determined by how a crisis is characterised (or categorised) is clearly recognised by Alinovi et al (2008) in the quotation included in the Overview : **"characterizing a situation as a complex emergency brings to the forefront humanitarian issues and often leads to a response led by the international community with an emphasis on emergency food assistance. In contrast, intervention in a fragile state focuses more on developing the state's capacity to deliver services to its citizens"**.

The overlap between protracted crises and FCASs is less pronounced than might be thought: 12 out of 22 countries on the list of protracted crises in SOFI 201 (excluding the Occupied Palestinian Territories) **are included on DFID's list of FCAS**; 12 out of 20 countries on that FCAS list are on the SOFI 201 list of protracted crises. Given the argument (above) that the exact composition of the lists should not dominate the discussion, that should not be taken too far, but the distinction between the two groups is important, and the example of a conflict-affected country such as DR Congo illustrates why. Most humanitarian aid has been directed at the areas suffering conflict (the east, in particular N and S Kivu), even though many more peaceful parts of the country score worse on basic humanitarian indicators (e.g. acute malnutrition) (Bailey 2011). Using the FCAS lens, this makes sense, because apart from purely humanitarian objectives, international assistance has also had an explicit objective of contributing to peace and state building (early recovery, stabilisation). On the old paradigm of silo-ed development and humanitarian aid, this targeting also makes sense, if it is argued that humanitarian aid is for dealing with acute crises such as conflict, and chronic problems should be addressed using **other streams of "development aid"**. The fact that the peaceful areas have remained neglected, because there has been no country-wide strategy for using the totality of aid, suggests that the protracted crisis in the whole of DR Congo needs to be

seen through lenses which do not fit the old paradigm, but are also not only about the international community reacts to DR Congo as a fragile and conflict affected state.

The question is not about the categorisation either of DR Congo as whole or of its various regions, but about what paradigms are available to guide the sensible use of aid in order to help alleviate suffering for the long term. To examine this, It is necessary to turn back to SOFI 2010 on the one hand and to WDR 2011 and the New Deal (2012) on the other to see how they help us to analyse DR Congo and what way forward emanate from their prescriptions. It then quickly becomes clear that there are two very different models on offer, with far less overlap than might be apparent from the rhetoric surrounding them.

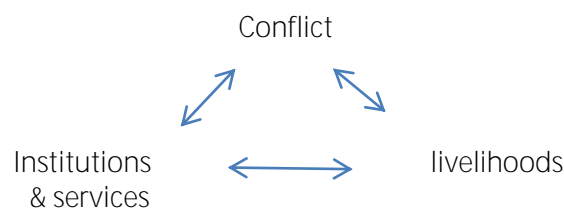
## How livelihoods and conflict interact – the models

That there is an **interaction between livelihoods or food security and conflict or ‘fragility’** is well recognised. For many decades<sup>6</sup> there has been an implicit model underpinning much external intervention in conflicts:



According to this model, conflicts cause food insecurity and poverty because they bring displacement, disturb markets, cause loss of assets and restrict livelihood opportunities. The resulting food insecurity increases grievances against the state, fuelling conflict. The vicious circle can be turned into a virtuous circle. Opportunities to make peace may need to be supported by **investment in economic development with ‘quick wins’, a peace dividend that brings food security and jobs**, which in turn increase trust in the state, and take away the grievances that fuel conflict.

A slightly more sophisticated version of this model adds the dimension of state institutions, whose essential services (including personal security and justice) are undermined by conflict, which in turn fuels grievances. So political opportunities for peace need to be capitalised on through **massive investment in ‘quick wins’ for both livelihoods and state-building**, i.e. making sure the basic services, especially security and justice, are delivered.



Similar implicit models have often underpinned much intervention in weak (‘fragile’ or ‘failing’) states, where state ‘fragility’ is the parallel of conflict. Weak states cannot deliver the health and education services or infrastructure necessary for eradicating poverty, which in turn prevents sufficient revenues for investment in services and retards the development of human capital, which results in the low capacity of the state. Again, a problem diagnosis based on a

<sup>6</sup> Or possibly centuries. Establishing peace through winning hearts and minds has a long history, going back at least as far as ‘bread and circuses’ two millennia ago.

straightforward vicious cycle gives rise to solutions that propose turning them around into virtuous cycles.)

This essentially, if in a simplified form, is the model of WDR 2011 and New Deal 2012. Though the logic of the model is plausible, and even seductive, there are a few reasons to hesitate. First, there is no good evidence that it is generally applicable. Attempts to find an impact of investment in livelihoods and basic services on conflict in several countries have tended to find that development efforts have not affected the real drivers of conflict<sup>7</sup>. This is hardly surprising for many reasons. There is no reason to believe that most conflicts are based on economic grievances, even if these provide the sparks that finally ignite protest or conflict. Conflicts produce their own economic logic which cannot simply be removed by a job creation programme. **Young et al.'s** studies of Darfur (2005 and 2009) are required reading for understanding how political marginalisation, identity, competition for power, conflict and economics can intertwine to make **people's involvement in a conflict a rational economic choice that in turn self-perpetuates and self-reinforces** through complex feedback. Engagement in a conflict, e.g. sending a child to join an armed group, can be a form of protection insurance, as well as a way of fighting grievances, a social obligation or an economic strategy. Breaking these loops may require far more improved services and food security.

Secondly, **the model's solutions, that a vicious circle can be turned around into a virtuous one** of mutually reinforcing prosperity and peace, must be approached with caution, as they may rest on assumptions that are contradicted by the very conditions which necessitated the conflict analysis in the first place. Where conflict is about the contested legitimacy of a Government, it is often (though not necessarily) because power is in the hands of people who wanted it for the precise **purpose of furthering their own (or their ethnic group's) interest. To expect them to have any** interest in creating a state that is governed equitably and transparently may be naïve, though equally they may have an interest in presenting their strategy in a de-politicised way as about **'state institutions'**. **The creation of employment opportunities will not necessarily benefit those** who have been most marginalised if existing power imbalances and vested interests do not change. Indeed, investment in economic activity may, in some case, exacerbate grievances, since these economic opportunities may be fought over – just as other resources in conflicts are. Intricate understanding of the dynamics of power, conflict, livelihoods, institutions and politics may be needed, even before proposing an intervention as apparently straightforward as skills training for demobilised children<sup>8</sup>. **The very separation of 'institutions' and 'livelihoods' in the model is flawed** because institutions of many kinds are so fundamental to determining livelihoods.

This critique brings out the limitations of these models by focusing on how the details of conflict and livelihoods or food security play out at an individual, household or community level. This is significant and it illustrates the key difference in starting points between WDR 2011 and New Deal 2012 on the one hand and SOFI 2010 on the other. The former two are state-centric in approach: they address the problems of states (fragile and conflict affected ones) and they recommend what states or governments need to do about their problems and how international partners need to help them to do this. Their approach the problem at the level of an economy, or a political-economy. SOFI 2010 on the other hand is based on a micro-level understanding of crises: it deals

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<sup>7</sup> See OECD 2011 on South Sudan, Fishtein 2010 on Afghanistan, Bradbury and Kleinman 2010 on Kenya and Bailey 2011 on DR Congo.

<sup>8</sup> In DR Congo, the way in which demobilised children were favoured with such training tended to increase resentment against them and was found to hinder, rather than promote, their social reintegration into their communities.

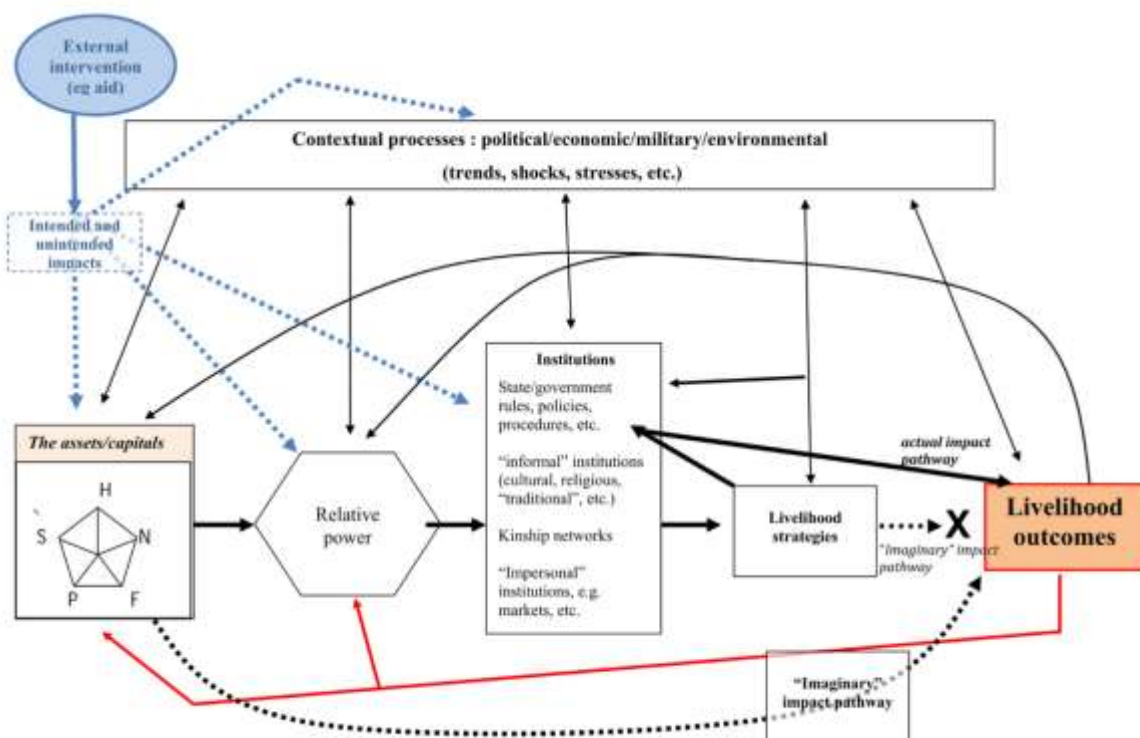


with food security, hunger and livelihoods at a household and individual level. The solution it strives to contribute towards is that people are no longer living in crisis. It is thus focused on the outcomes of any state building, peace-making or economic growth, and not on the processes themselves except as means to an end.

Such an analysis of protracted crises cannot use a simple conceptual framework, but must embrace one that encompasses the complexity of interactions between the myriad forces determining livelihoods. The most commonly used framework for looking at food security is the sustainable livelihood framework, developed by DFID. Variations of it have been developed specifically for looking at conflict, and the complexity contrasts with the simpler models illustrated above.

However, even this model may be too simplistic: external actors too have political and private interests, and their interventions are not a *deus ex machina* but may be shaped by national, regional and international processes of politics and business. It is also a simplification to show external action as emanating from one source: each external actor is driven by different influences and interests. In protracted crises, it is particularly critical that policy and livelihood support be designed to fit in to an arena where everything is contested, from within and without.

Though the approaches of WDR/New Deal and SOFI are different, this does not make them competitors. A micro- and a macro-approach are far from being mutually exclusive, and it would be wrong to characterise one as better or worse (or as more or less important) than the other. However, though a macro-economic story can be told without disaggregating the separate story



of the marginalised, those concerned with food security must understand problems from a household level perspective since it is at the level of households and individuals that problems are caused and are found. It is of course necessary to understand food security both globally (at regional, national and local level) and at household or individual level: the problem is that the

tools for linking these perspectives are lacking. Protracted crises and FCAS are the very last places where one can put faith in simple notions of benefits trickling down. A thorough understanding is needed of how the benefits of interventions and policies at the level of the state play out at local level for many reasons: in order to design interventions that will bring most benefits to those in need; to avoid doing harm; to have some assumptions of change pathways to serve as a basis for monitoring; and because until we are able to quantify likely impacts, in order to move beyond **vague concepts of 'improving livelihoods' (or 'improved security')** and to be able to assess how much of which kinds of interventions can end a state of food insecurity and a need for external aid. We need an idea of how much growth, how much investment will be needed to create how many jobs and how much extra income for specific populations in order to have a strategy that integrates the larger state level processes with aid for food security.

It is common for certain attributes or characteristics to be identified as leading to improved well-being (food security, higher income, increased resilience, less conflict etc.) and for it then to be assumed that any efforts to promote those characteristics will indeed contribute towards the desired end. There is a very real danger that the lessons of WDR 2011 and the New Deal will be drawn and applied in such a way, in the belief that any support to state institutions will be a contribution to ending conflict and fragility. (The New Deal lends itself to programing by checklist. WDR 2011 is a document of over 600 pages which will be read by few. Its subtleties and nuances will be lost, and the take away messages will be derived from short articles and overviews that present merely the simple headlines.) Three case studies illustrate why this is unlikely to bring the desired impact.

## Lessons from case studies

A detailed look at these three case studies can be used to shed light on general models. The case studies represent a protracted conflict and continual crisis (Somalia), a situation that would be described as post-conflict recovery (Uganda) and one which is post-war, but where stabilisation and development take place in an environment of continued conflict and residual crisis.

### Somalia

Somalia presents the ultimate challenge for understanding livelihoods in protracted crises. With no government at all in south-central Somalia for over two decades, a high degree of insecurity since 2006, rapidly shifting mosaics of de facto power, poor natural resources and frequent rain failures, it seems easier to understand why the famine occurred 2011 than to understand how people coped for so many years without famine. Closer examination shows a more complicated story.

Much of south-central Somalia has indeed been in chronic food security crisis for several years: although famine had not been declared, previous years showed very high levels of food insecurity (as reported by FSNAU). When famine did strike, though, it was concentrated in several areas and the analysis of Majid and McDowell (2012, forthcoming) questions the dominant narrative explaining the famine as a combination of drought/crop failure and restricted access because of *Al Shabaab*. They explain why a) the worst hit areas in 2011 were not those which had been most critical in the previous years; and b) most mortality came from 2 marginalised ethnic groups, the same groups that suffered high mortality in the 1991/2 famine, by tracing this to **"a unique**

convergence of risk factors facing the poor wealth groups of the agro-pastoral *Reewin* and riverine *Bantu* **within a broader context of narrowing livelihoods and diminishing resilience.**" These risk factors included the collapse of the urban economies (following the 2006 invasion) which provided labour for migrants from the rural areas; the greater vulnerability of the support and remittances for these ethnic groups to problems inside Somalia, because they had fewer international connections than others; long-standing oppression by more powerful ethnic groups/clans, which were also a physical barrier between the **'landlocked'** *Bantu* and *Reewin* and humanitarian aid in Kenya and Ethiopia; and the growth in disparity between rich and poor that had occurred over the previous decade. This analysis provides a dilemma for humanitarian assistance, because it challenges two of the **(*de facto*)** assumptions behind early warning, that there is a continuum of severity of food security crises leading to famine, along which situations move; and that technical monitoring and analysis of local parameters (rainfall, yields, prices) can be used to predict the need for and guide livelihood/food security support. Majid and McDowell suggest that chronic food security crises may have different causal networks to extreme spikes, **which would also challenge the idea that 'resilience building' for the majority of situations will necessarily be relevant to those facing occasional famine.** Their description of the way in which the *Bantu* and *Reewin* have been plundered and marginalised over a long period also reinforces the need for a perspective on conflict that looks for both winners and losers, and which sees beyond **conflict as one side against another. The internal dynamics and relations on each 'side' show that disaggregated analysis is as essential for conflict as for economics.**

Their analysis also paints a more nuanced picture of the relationship between conflict and both displacement and trade. They disagree that territorial advances of *Al Shabaab* brought insecurity which prevented trade: rather, within the context of conflict, *Al Shabaab* actually provided increased internal security, but it was their attempts to control trade through taxation that discouraged it. Displacement, in particular to Kenya, may also need to be nuanced, and may not always be simply an outcome of famine, but also one of its causes. They argue that those who migrated included those who predicted trouble coming and who were able to leave, i.e. the better off. Their exodus may have had a negative impact on those who remained as they were previously a source of employment and social support. Whether or not everyone agrees with this as a definitive explanation of the 2011 famine in Somalia matters little here: their narrative serves to reveal the need for a much more sophisticated politico-social and historically rooted analysis than normally occurs within the aid sector.

Although food aid has not been possible in *Al Shabaab* controlled areas, cash aid has been used with some degree of success, testimony to the smoothly functioning financial service institutions and the markets that have continued to operate despite the conflict and the politics – and the lack of a state. Models that equate conflict and weak states with weak institutions also need to be re-evaluated in the light of Somalia.

Finally, Somalia highlights one of the contradictions inherent in the more simplistic forms of the hegemonic models of aid in protracted crises, which treat the international community as no more than a source of funds and technical competence in aid. The crisis in Somalia was provoked in **2006 by international action. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the political stance taken by 'the international community' towards the Transitional Government,** it cannot be denied that the same community (including both donor governments and the intergovernmental UN) is both a provider of neutral, humanitarian aid *and* a partisan and political actor in the conflict. When humanitarian

aid becomes more 'developmental', it also necessarily becomes more political (i.e. about institutions and policy). A techno-centric portrayal of the solution to a protracted crisis being 'state building' (building institutions, improving governance, etc.) by a politically-neutral international community is simply unhelpful as a guiding model.

## Uganda<sup>9</sup>

Conflict and 'state fragility' affect livelihoods in subtle and sometimes unappreciated ways, because as well as their direct impacts, they can exacerbate all the 'normal' processes that condemn some people to vulnerability and poverty. These can easily be ignored by those who are focused 'on the conflict' even though the impact may be enormous, and permanent. The forced displacement of over a million people during the conflict in N Uganda caused immediate and life-threatening food security needs, met mainly by food aid. Within a year or two following the end of active conflict and insecurity, as most people were able to return home and resume farming, the urgency and severity of their livelihood needs subsided, and the focus of aid quickly transferred to economic recovery, including the usual range of support for infrastructure, services, vocational training and community based reconstruction, together with work at national level on supporting 'normal' economic development (including some work on justice). Tens of thousands of households who have been unable to join in normal processes of economic recovery were a low priority if they were not visible as a residual population of 'vulnerable' unable to move out of camps and in need of humanitarian assistance. Their invisibility was partly because their difficulties were not clearly caused directly by 'conflict specific' factors, but rather by the way that conflict has exacerbated many of the normal processes that create vulnerability.

Land is the main productive asset owned by the predominantly rural population affected by the war: loss of land rights on its own can be enough to bring permanent, deep poverty, and even destitution. Land rights are insecure across Uganda, but the civil war increased the risks of losing land rights through a multitude of causal pathways.

- Many women lost husbands through the war or displacement (one third of all households were female headed) and many children lost fathers. Because of the failures of both state and customary justice to protect women's legal rights, most widows and single women, and most orphans and fatherless children, face attempts at land grabbing that go unchecked.
- The customary justice system, which is the only accessible source of redress for most women facing land problems, was severely eroded by the war. Customary authorities were ignored by the structures created during forced displacement, and their respect was undermined; humanitarian and development actors ignored customary authorities, customary law and customary land rights in their operations, undermining their status still further.
- Land rights depend on physical possession. Because return was an uncertain and protracted process, many found that others had settled on their land before they could, and they had the difficult or impossible task of reversing occupation. Reclaiming possession also left more room for doubts about boundaries to be created by land grabbers.

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<sup>9</sup> The case study draws on the author's own fieldwork over several years in conjunction with Land and Equity Movement in Uganda and Norwegian Refugee Council, most particularly that presented in Levine et al 2012 and other studies available at [www.land-in-uganda.org](http://www.land-in-uganda.org)

- Whilst the land was unoccupied, there was significant degree of logging on private property by individuals connected with the armed services which has caused the loss of thousands of dollars of assets. In some areas outright land grabbing by senior military personnel.
- Many of those who had been abducted by LRA rebels were understandably resented by their communities. Given the generalised vulnerability faced by unmarried mothers –and their children - in asserting land rights, abducted girls who returned with children have suffered particularly.
- War has torn apart the social fabric of society in northern Uganda. International actors, more used to societies where the strongest rules governing behaviour are less socially embedded, often underplay the extent to which this erosion of the moral economy has been detrimental to the well-being of the less powerful in what has become an increasingly market oriented society.
- Although the JLOS is a focus of attention of some international actors, their attention has been on the formal and higher level systems which are not relevant to these kinds of problems.
- War and post-war turmoil has increased the opportunities for people in authority, in both the customary and state administrative systems, to profit privately from their offices. This dysfunctionality has been cultivated by those in the elite who benefit from general chaos in the justice and land sectors for the opportunities it provides to advance their own personal interests.

The above is not intended as a full analysis of land rights abuse in northern Uganda, but it illustrates again how context-dependent and nuanced any problem analysis has to be.

Though a full conflict-poverty-vulnerability analysis should have identified their problems, in practice this did not happen either within Government circles or among (most) aid agencies, because the problems are so context specific, and understanding is gained only slowly over several years of increasing familiarity and analysis of problems, their causes and why ostensible solutions have failed to prevent those causes. Nothing in a standard toolbox for post-conflicts, state-building or any other category helped guide attention to solving the problems described briefly above: a solution-focused approach makes it much harder to see patterns that only emerge when different details are brought together through and inter-sectoral analysis. The difficulty is enhanced because conflicts and recovery bring winners and losers . Some of those on whom research and analysis may depend (e.g. as **'key informants'**) **may be those who are profiting from the situation.**

The concluding refrain is a common one: detailed understanding of complex contexts is necessary. Though common, the message needs to be illustrated repeatedly. The increasing recognition of the need to establish justice and the protection of rights (e.g. WDR 2011) in post-conflict in order to build trust in the state is critical. It is much more difficult to know how to do this in any specific country. Institutions need to be supported – but the institutional fabric of society is not made up of building blocks in a simple modular fashion. One institution can support or replace another. Just as in Somalia, there has been no institutional void in the absence of a state (with clans, religious authorities and private sector institutions taking prominence), so in Uganda the creation of structures, including by international agencies, undermined others. Each institutional choice

taken by interventions or policy change thus has both winners and losers at institutional level: and each win or loss will in turn create winners and losers at individual level. The implications of such an analysis are considered further below.

## Afghanistan

The links between stabilisation, state building and economic development have been at the heart of international assistance in Afghanistan since the overthrow of the Taliban Government, and do not need further elaboration here. There has been, at best, mixed success in building peace, trust in a functioning state and reducing poverty. Pain and Kantor (2012) have used evidence from a panel survey to argue that one of the reasons for such limited success has been that so much of the development assistance has been based on models that have not incorporated analysis of the links between institutions and livelihoods. Pain and Kantor were able to explain the different development trajectories that actually occurred in different villages by reference to a few causal pathways based on factors for which there are some fairly straightforward and observable indicators.

They reveal, first of all, that the vast majority of households became worse off from 2002 to 2009. The few who became better off, almost all in one place, did so for very specific reasons: close personal connections to figures of authority; increase in the male labour in the household at a time when the opium economy was at its most profitable; connections allowing access to urban economic opportunities caused by a large increase in the wealth of elites.

At a village level, the strategies followed were dictated by the security goal of manoeuvring through the political minefield, avoiding damage or taking advantage of opportunities. The minefield itself was determined by the concentration of power regionally, the ethnic balance and homogeneity, the degree to which the area is integrated into national politics, and by the influence of international actors (e.g. the grant and withdrawal of support by the US to various local political leaders). Indeed, patronage in different forms could be said to be the main driver of economic fortune at all levels, from household to national. At village level, where power was concentrated in the hands of a single elite, there was little incentive to develop public goods or to share prosperity. Indeed, one of the economic strategies of elites has been to maintain the poor in dependency as a supply of dependable and cheap labour. In villages where there were competing sources of authority (e.g. military, political, religious), there were more likely to be institutions that were more responsive to the majority. Whether or not the outcome of an economic development initiative brought increased concentration of wealth to elites or brought wider benefits was thus foreseeable, based on an understanding of each village. Such an analysis was not, they found, included in the roll-out of predetermined and identical development projects across a wide range of contexts.

The two interlinked **factors which are highlighted by this study are 'institutions' and social relations**. Conflict does not just have the power to transform social relations: it also makes their role much more important for survival and for advancement. Critically, though these two goals are sometimes painted as be a continuum (crudely, survival strategies are improved to become development strategies, in fact they can be mutually exclusive choices. For example, one survival strategy is to remain dependant on a powerful patron, **but any attempt to develop one's own independence could be to break this patron-client relationship**. The need to make such explicit choices is heightened because, in the absence of a normal and formal economy, and with

ineffective formal institutions, such personal relations and clan affiliations are the only routes of access either to livelihood opportunities or to personal security.

At the same time that conflict increases the importance of these relations, it also makes them much more arbitrary, because the moral economy is eroded: conflicts can weaken the institutions and norms which exercise some check over behaviour (even of elites), can create new economic opportunities (often an immoral economy, e.g. opium) around which behaviour is not culturally embedded **and, by reducing overall opportunities and security, it can increase people's need to** engage in activities that would previously have been rejected. An example of how these forces can come together in Afghanistan has been the impact of displacement, the direct impact of conflict. These IDPs could be hired more cheaply than locals and there were no social ties or constraints to this economic relationship; and the social forces which might have constrained elites from using this to exploit the local poor still further were also weakened.

None of this analysis is surprising from a sociological perspective. What the study does, though, is to produce concrete examples to show why development interventions will continue to produce disappointing results for as long as development policy makers and practitioners regard studies such as these as of sociological interest only, rather than of central relevance for everything they do.

## Paradigms revisited

If the initial challenge of finding a new paradigm to replace the humanitarian vs. development dichotomy seemed hard, the task needed may now seem to be very much harder.

There appeared to be much common ground between several of the new initiatives to replace the dichotomy, e.g. taking the perspective from protracted crises and the WDR/New Deal on FCAS. A closer look suggests that they are more different than appeared. However, one of the key messages of SOFI 2010 was that no one approach will provide the answer to protracted crises. A less obvious but equally significant difference between SOFI and SDR/New Deal is that the latter call for quite specific steps to be taken in order to address a clearly defined problem. SOFI makes fewer general claims about what has proved successful in the past<sup>10</sup> is far less prescriptive, calling **rather for a need to better understand people's coping** mechanisms in crises and for reform of the aid architecture. In this sense, SOFI refrains from offering a new paradigm, arguing only that more paradigms need to be used (e.g. DRR, social protection) and that a way needs to be found to bring all paradigms together into a single coherent strategy in each specific crisis context.

The task may be harder, because though the various initiatives for rethinking aid in protracted crises and FCAS should not be separated, they cannot either be brought together. The prescriptive way forward of WDR 2011 cannot become an operational plan for dealing with protracted crises, if only because it speaks to a very different level of operation, the state and not the affected people, and because SOFI calls for something new, but resists the temptation to say that we know what new approaches would work. The task is thus neither to make the various initiatives one nor to choose between them, but rather to create an aid architecture capable of blending many paradigms into one long term strategy. Given the difficulty faced in blending just two, very familiar

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<sup>10</sup> Given the lack of real evidence of impact of interventions, it is unsurprising that SOFI 2010 is least convincing when talking of successful interventions outside very specific contexts.

paradigms (development and humanitarian) into a strategy, that task cannot be underestimated. This is all the more harder when the relative resources of those proposing different approaches is so unequal.

A second reason why the task may be even more difficult than is often appreciated is because the blending of these paradigms that look at crises from very different levels has to include actual plans, which involves moving from general principles to making specific choices. The problem is that the general principles give us very little guidance in how to do this. One example which will illustrate this difficulty is the now well recognised critique of much previous aid, that support to institutions has too often been neglected. The critique is surely true, but several challenges flow from this which remain less well recognised, and which can be seen in the case studies above. Choosing which institutions to support is not easy, and nor is knowing how to support them.

Supporting or creating institutions usually also entails undermining, weakening or replacing some other institutions. Since institutions can be forces for good and bad, and usually have elements of both, it can be extremely difficult to know which institutions should be supported and which replaced or undermined. This is further complicated because institution building does not take place in a vacuum. The institutions which emerge from external intervention are never a copy of some blue print design, but are always shaped by existing institutions and power relations. New institutions may be co-opted or taken over by old elites, they may use forms of authority taken from previous institutions, etc. Outcomes are thus impossible to predict. A more practical challenge is that international and national aid agencies have proved to have very poor skills at understanding institutions, or even recognising their existence. Those who have a mandate to work with Governments may have a very unreal perspective on the importance or benevolence of **state institutions on people's lives and a poor appreciation of 'informal' institutions.** (Research on local institutions by operational agencies often lists only local Government and local NGOs.) Those who wish to change society ought to be good at understanding it, but the opposite is more often true: activists tend to have poor anthropological skills. Informal rules of society are often misunderstood, and mis-portrayals may easily be believed. (The case of land rights in Uganda is an example.) Though this problem is not unique to protracted crises, there are grounds for thinking that misunderstanding may be more critical there and attempts to mis-portray institutions may be more widespread.

Although international aid agencies may not have built up a wide body of knowledge about institutional building, it may be thought easier at least to move from general principles to specific implementation about livelihoods and food security. Unfortunately, here too much less is known than is believed. Most livelihood or food security programming, at least by large international agencies, involves choosing a recognised project-type from a familiar range, possibly adapting it to a specific context, rather than designing an intervention specifically to address a particular problem in a given context. (Though this is far from ideal, progress must be recognised in that the range of generic interventions used is at least expanding.) The use of generic programming can only be justified if it is based on good knowledge about which kinds of programmes tend to work best in which kinds of situations, i.e. their impact on livelihoods and on other dimensions of the crisis (e.g. power, vulnerability, institutions, conflict etc.).

Unfortunately, assessment of impact has been a rare exception in livelihood support interventions in crises, and little can be said about how interventions have affected the various factors that



determine livelihoods. This finding ought to be surprising. A recent study for the Social Development Department of the World Bank found that the scale of the problem is extremely serious, and identified several causes. The study (World Bank, 2012), based on a review of all the documentation relating to projects supporting populations where displacement was significant, found that few interventions are based on a full livelihood analysis of the problems which they are **trying to address; still fewer analyse the institutional or 'political economy' factors that determine livelihoods**; few set out clear impact objectives, most not going beyond listing intended output; none had documented the impacts and influences which they expected the project in a way that could serve as a basis for monitoring – and monitoring, unsurprisingly, was limited to progress in project implementation. Even project evaluations did not always attempt to examine outcomes, and none looked at the wider indirect institutional impacts of interventions. A web search reveals one single example of an attempt (by UNHCR) to assess the impact of a project some years after it had closed. As a result, projects are frequently justified by reference to lessons having been learned about previous success of similar projects, even though neither the evidence of their impact nor any study of the context which determined that impact has ever been gathered.

This is a strong criticism of aid which is not made lightly. The implications for protracted crises are particularly serious. If a crisis has continued or been repeated over several years, then it is likely that the constraints to livelihoods, or the causes of food insecurity, will be complex and unlikely to be identified without proper analysis, including of political and institutional factors. These are precisely the situations where it is least possible to use any kind of linear assumptions from project planning to implementation and impact and where it is most critical to understand the interaction of factors which create the problem and which will shape the actual outcomes and impacts of aid interventions.

Until there is an inter-institutional commitment to building up evidence for how different kinds of intervention, implemented in different ways, play out in different contexts, there can be no continual improvement of livelihood support interventions in protracted crises.

## Do new paradigms mean the end of old humanitarian aid in protracted crises?

Although the humanitarian – development dichotomy is much criticised, this does not necessarily entail abandoning all use of them as different paradigms. But when crises persist for years, is this a **sign that any use of 'old fashioned' humanitarian/emergency** ways of working has proved inappropriate?

There has been a growing consensus for over a decade that developmental approaches are almost always appropriate, and even where life-saving aid is needed, the two approaches should be seen as complementary (e.g. the emergency-**development contiguum**'). If people affected by crises are always engaged in some livelihood strategies, it seems logical that, if at all practically feasible, it must always be right to support those strategies. This would argue for the primacy of development approaches in protracted crises.

The strength of the argument for taking a developmental approach in crises is strong and widely recognised, at least in humanitarian circles, though the more traditional development actors – and their funding mechanisms – are only slowly accepting their responsibility for PCs. The World

Bank's WDR 2011 is a welcome sign of this shift, as is the UNHCR-led shift to seeing the need for livelihood solutions for those suffering from protracted displacement, rather than only seeing them as an extended humanitarian case load. The arguments do not therefore need rehearsing here: rather, what is needed is some counter-weight to the assumption that developmental approaches are always appropriate in all PCs.

The argument that there are situations where a more purely humanitarian approach may still be needed rests on the recognition that aid has longer term impacts on institutions, on government (understood broadly), on policy and on legitimacy. Development approaches may have explicitly intended impacts in these areas, but where governance is contested, where the legitimacy of institutions is questioned and where external actors, such as international agencies feel that it would be wrong for their support to give de facto legitimisation to one or other actor or policy, it **may be necessary to withhold 'developmental' support and continue to provide neutral assistance** based on need alone in ways which are specifically intended not to have longer term consequences. This would sometimes be true in civil wars, either because the legitimacy of a de facto government is not accepted or because development approaches would be deemed to be acquiescent in a state policy which is deemed unacceptable. One example where this was a widely accepted stance was for **the 'regroupment camps' in the Burundi civil war, where** the Government had forcibly displaced the population into internment camps. International principles of engagement to support the displaced were that only life-saving aid should be given and nothing should be done to make the camps more permanent or to give them legitimacy. This principle was deemed to outweigh economic arguments, e.g. though drilling wells to provide water would have **been more 'sustainable', expensive trucking of water was deemed the correct principled response.**

Although humanitarian response is often considered to be more expensive than developmental interventions especially in the longer term, the costs borne by people affected by crises also need to be considered. Even where a crisis such as an IDP camp is expected to last for the medium term, **there may still, therefore, be arguments for preferring not to look for a 'sustainable' solution, e.g. to water and sanitation, where such solutions would give 'ownership' (read: responsibility for maintenance) of facilities.** Arguments about dependency, ownership and sustainability are too easily made when dealing with situations which are not supposed to be sustainable and where people are forced to be in places that they do not own. Cost sharing with those who, for reasons that are not their fault, are least able to afford it may sometimes be an unacceptable use of developmentalist arguments. Agencies may be encouraged to use these considerations by Governments who may prefer to promote developmental approaches because of a desire not to recognise that there is an emergency (e.g. northern Uganda). The political implications of any decision have to be made very carefully.

Developmental approaches promoted by inter-governmental bodies often **call for 'partnerships'** between international partners and the Government of the affected state in solving the problem (e.g. WDR 2010, the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States from Busan 2011, Hyogo Framework for Action, etc.). This is to give a Government the automatic status of being part of the solution to a crisis, whereas there are crises where Governments are clearly one of the causes. A humanitarian perspective of neutrality, that saw a Government as one among many conflicting actors may be more appropriate in situations such as in the Nuba mountains/South Kordofan in Sudan. This would not necessarily invalidate any interventions that went beyond the short term, but it would suggest caution is needed in the institutional design of such an intervention, and the

need to make very careful consideration of principles such as neutrality, the need for aid to be designed based purely on need (and not, for example, with state building or other political objectives in mind) and the institutional relations established by the intervention.

It may be easier in situations of open conflict for external, international agencies to decide whether or not a developmental approach is appropriate and how far to include institutional support, including support for Government policy (central or local). In practice, almost all Government policies in all countries are contested in one way or another. Politicians in all countries are cautious in maintaining a distinction between expressions of friendship and cooperation with other countries and their leaders on one hand, and support for any specific partisan political policy on the other. Paradoxically, this distinction is often maintained least in precisely those countries where the legitimacy of the Government, state and other institutions and policy are most **contested, i.e. countries which are recipients of foreign aid in general, and those receiving 'state building support' in particular.** Where a government's legitimacy is recognised internationally, but may be contested by some in the country, how should an international community respond to a Government policy which may be deemed – rightly or wrongly – as hostile by a significant proportion of the population affected by it? This dilemma is far from theoretical, but is in fact a day to day problem in many places, and particularly in protracted crises which so often involve contested legitimacy and power. Even what appear to be straightforwardly benign policies (e.g. a mass vaccination programme, introduction of free primary education or free school meals, etc.) may in fact be designed by a contested Government with the primary aim of extending power and authority (see, for example, Macrae 2001). The decision to support such a policy is inevitably a political choice, and not merely a technical one: the danger comes when it is made on technical grounds without a full recognition of the possible political implications. Such decisions become more acute when the policy itself is more obviously contested, e.g. any policy which changes land rights, patterns of settlement, etc. Quite simply, there can be no rules to decide when support to a **Government policy and 'state institutions' is likely to have long term** negative consequences on either conflict or on the livelihoods of those affected by it. Governments which recognise the contested nature of their policies will almost inevitably present their policies as technical solutions to a technical challenge<sup>11</sup>. In protracted crises in particular, there may be a tension between accepting the sovereignty of a Government and its right to set policy with what external actors believe to be the best interests of (some of) the citizens of that country. International actors do not always shy away from trying to influence Government policies, but once policy is determined, most international aid works on the principle that it would be unacceptable political interference to undermine it. In protracted crises, support to Government policy may be equally political interference: it is in the end a political, and not just a technical decision, as to when that interference is unacceptable and when it is necessary.

Macrae (2001) argued that conflicts are not always be the right time for long term policies to be developed where no policy making body has enough legitimacy. That argument needs to be repeated in a developmental discourse that too easily sees the solution to protracted crises in stabilisation and support for state building. The humanitarian – development distinction is partly bureaucratic, but, as illustrated by FAO 2010, also rests on some fundamental differences in the principles underlying them. At its simplest, all development must be political in some way, since

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<sup>11</sup> Policies which involve involuntary resettlement are an obvious case, which have been justified on grounds of reducing the risk from flooding or tsunamis, or arguing that replacing pastoralism with irrigated farming is a solution to 'droughts'.

power and institutions are the heart of any development outcome: humanitarian aid must strive to be neutral and to respond based on human need alone. The call for humanitarian or emergency aid to expand its response to situations which are not yet life threatening is understandable in protracted crises, and particularly in repeated crises which are associated with natural hazards. On the other hand, the impact of a drought is almost always determined by politics – pre-existing patterns of inequality, access to resource, marginalisation, poverty – and not simply rainfall. For the case of a country with a protracted crisis, when it suffers from a natural hazard, the disaster itself **cannot be seen simply as a 'natural disaster'**. **A debate is needed** about the extent to which engagement with such situations should remain as emergency response (using humanitarian funds, short term approaches, apolitical principles, etc.), how far this should be taken over by developmental approaches and how far the two should remain distinct. There are arguments for several different answers to these questions. What is certain is that any response, even an **'impartial' one, must never be politically blind.**

## Conclusions

It is now generally accepted that protracted crises are different from short term crises in type, and not merely in their duration. If a crisis does not resolve itself but instead remains protracted, then there are reasons for this, and these reasons almost invariably lie, at least in part, in politics and power.

Neat distinctions of chronic and acute need can rarely be made, though current aid paradigms rely on making this distinction. Support to protracted crises must find ways of balancing short term and long term needs, short term and long term processes of change, and must make explicit recognition of the tensions that exist between the two. Trade-offs are an inherent part of any strategic choice: in PCs, the trade-offs must be made through deliberate choice, and this can only happen if there is an overarching strategy that encompasses the short term and long term. The current aid architecture and bureaucracy does not allow this to happen.

The lack of understanding and communication between discrete sets of international actors is as important to address as the internal dichotomies within the same sets of actors (emergency/development). The UN-led aid system is the product of a political perspective as much as is the aid system of China, Gulf States and the aid-off-shoots of private sector businesses which now compete with ODA as donors, as policy influencers, as implementing agencies, and as **suppliers of 'solutions' to aid agencies**. Although it is not possible to envisage the incorporation of all these actors into one unified system the greater the degree of mutual understanding and opportunities for developing partially-shared strategies, the better.

Simplifying models are useful, but care must be taken not to over-stretch their application. This applies in particular to all generic descriptions of the causes of food insecurity. Even if the lack of economic opportunities is often a cause of resentment against a government that can drive a conflict, this does not mean that any initiative that creates jobs or increases economic opportunities will reduce resentment or help reduce conflict: similarly, though assets may be a contributing factor in developing livelihoods, this does not justify any distribution of any assets anywhere as a contribution to food security. Job creation programmes may fuel conflict, just as asset distribution programmes may increase marginalisation and vulnerability. Though this is obvious in theory, it is largely ignored in actual programming.

Protracted crises are distinguished first and foremost by their specificity. It is even more important in PCs than normal that support to livelihoods be based on a thorough understanding of the context – an understanding of livelihoods, power, politics, institutions and (where necessary) conflict. The implications of this simple fact for the aid architecture and for the way in which aid agencies operate are massive. Currently, intervention design relies on replicating lessons from **programming in one country to another 'similar' context: senior staff are moved from country to country** because the lessons they have learned in one country are deemed useful to another. The aid system will have to consider how to develop and maintain expertise and sophisticated understanding of individual crises and countries. Programming will have to become bespoke, rather than generic. This in turn has implications for the investment of time and resources in programme design and the development of bespoke monitoring systems, with further implications for the way in which donors look at cost-efficiency when selecting which projects to fund. There will be powerful bureaucratic forces, far beyond institutional inertia, trying to prevent this happening: cross-country comparisons, performance indicators, organisational management systems are all made easier when similar operations can be run in similar ways to address similar symptoms in different countries. These forces need to be recognised, the legitimate bureaucratic needs respected and an overt discussion needs to be had on how to balance these needs with a context specific approach.

Resilience to crises may need to be supported by states but it may also consist in increasing **people's resilience to a predatory state or predatory state institutions. Ways need to be found to work to identify ways of supporting this whilst at the same time engaging in long term work (where appropriate) on supporting the development of non-predatory state institutions. People's confidence in a state will depend not only on the responsiveness of a state at any one time, but in people's confidence that they can challenge lack of responsiveness and – paradoxically – in people's belief in their ability to maintain their livelihoods against the state.**

An injection of realism is needed into the debates that over-estimate the influence of international aid in resolving conflicts. Support to livelihoods in protracted crises does not necessarily entail supporting the resolution of the crisis: it will often entail a recognition that international actors should best not interfere at all in the crisis itself and concentrate rather on helping people to live with it.

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