Addressing Food Insecurity in Fragile States: Case Studies from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Sudan

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Abstract
Drawing on case studies from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia and Sudan, this paper focuses on policy, programming and institutional issues related to addressing food insecurity in protracted crises and fragile states, with a focus on areas afflicted by conflicts. The case studies illustrate how dysfunctional institutions are at the root of structural food insecurity and show how local people and institutions have been able, to a certain extent, to adapt and cope with the crises. However, the protracted nature of the crises has substantially eroded people's assets and weakened the capacities of traditional safety net systems to provide protection. Against this background, mainstream humanitarian assistance – which has been the international community's dominant response – has not been able to address the basic determinants of food security and in particular has not sufficiently supported the positive efforts of local institutions. The case studies illustrate some innovative approaches for addressing food insecurity during protracted crises. They show that while it remains indispensable to ensure neutrality for immediate responses that protect the most vulnerable, it is also crucial to take into account institutional and policy dynamics that support processes to rebuild resilience; create opportunities for strengthening the livelihoods of affected population at the very early stages of the crisis; and develop an adequate basket of interventions to address a variety of needs.

Key Words: Food security, Institutions, Protracted crisis, Fragile states, Resilience, Livelihoods, Humanitarian assistance.
JEL: Q15, Q18, R20, R52.

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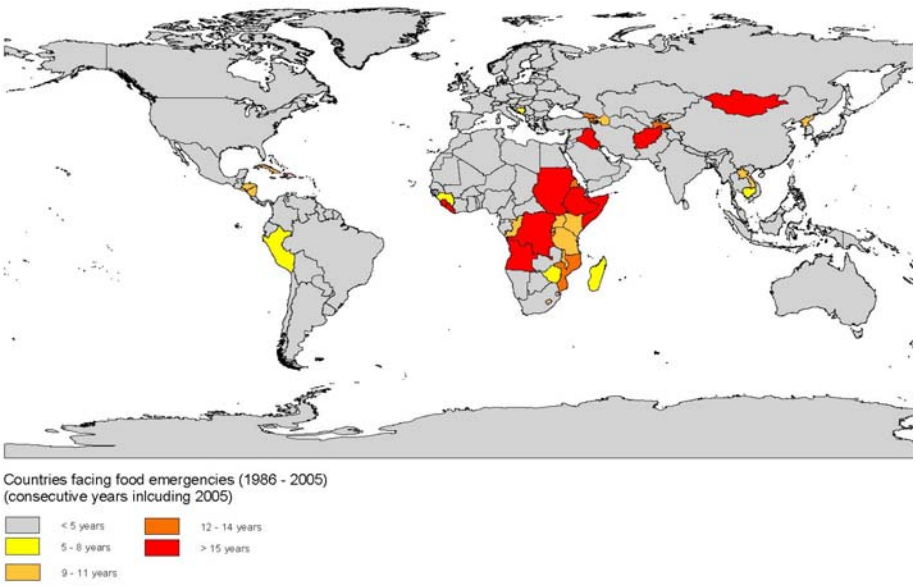
1 Food insecurity in protracted crises and fragile states

Drawing on case studies from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia and Sudan, this paper focuses on policy, programming and institutional issues related to addressing food insecurity in protracted crises and fragile states. The persistence of food insecurity and the protracted nature of food emergencies require a search for effective approaches and the right mix of instruments by way of which food security programmes and interventions are planned and implemented under difficult circumstances.

It is estimated that more than 50 million people worldwide live in areas affected by protracted crises that have lasted for five years or more.[1] In 2006, 25 of the 39 serious food emergencies were due to conflict and its aftermath or a combination of conflict and natural hazards.[2] Some of these crises have been going on for years, others for decades, with varying degrees of intensity and impacts on food insecurity. In such a context, a protracted food crisis may be defined as "the persistent uncertainties in people's access to food due to a range of interacting demand- and supply-side factors" (Flores *et al*., 2005). Indeed, the key features of most protracted crises, in addition to the loss of human lives due to conflicts, are the increasing levels of food insecurity and hunger. As shown in **Figure 1**, five countries in Africa, including the DRC, Somalia and Sudan, have declared food emergencies during 15 or more of the years since 1986.

[1] Commission of the European Communities (2006): 15
[2] FAO Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) reports

Figure 1 Protracted food emergencies in Africa



Source: FAO Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS).

The global effort to reduce chronic hunger (as manifested during the 1996 World Food Summit (WFS)) has stagnated for more than a decade, with the number of undernourished people remaining above 850 million. Significant progress in some regions and countries has been masked by setbacks in others. In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of undernourished people increased by 37 million between 1991 (the baseline period for the WFS target) and 2002, the latest reference period. This increase can largely be attributed to the changes in five war-torn countries, which accounted for 78 percent of the region's total increase (SOFI, 2006). Particularly dramatic was the worsening of food insecurity in the DRC, where the number of undernourished people tripled from 12 million to 36 million, and the prevalence increased from 31 to 72 percent of the population (SOFI, 2006).

In order to overcome the impasse, the persistence of protracted food security crises must be addressed. The picture of global food insecurity draws attention to vulnerable and fragile states that lack the capacity or institutional frameworks to implement long-term food security solutions in the face of unfolding crises.[3] United Nations and donor coordination bodies are devoting more attention to ways to better address the critical problem of food insecurity in

[3] Commission of the European Communities (2006): 4

situations of crisis (particularly those of a complex and protracted nature), instability and transition.

In recent years there has also been increasing interest in how best to engage with and work in fragile states, and a number of donors have developed specific fragile states strategies.[4] The various definitions of fragile states cover a wide spectrum of stages including state collapse, loss of territorial control, low administrative capacity, political instability, repressive policies and conflict.[5] Efforts have also been made to create indices to identify fragile or failed states.[6] However, it is easier to reach agreement on the broad range of problems associated with failed states than to agree on a definite list of fragile states. Some of the methodological challenges to identifying a fragile state include:

i) The framing of state fragility is necessarily subjective given the contested character of concepts of stability, governance and democratization.

ii) Statistical comparisons across countries do not explain trajectories for state collapse.

iii) Indices are not linked to strategic response frameworks.

Nevertheless, what is of interest from our perspective is that countries experiencing food security crises related to protracted conflict are consistently included in the top range of these lists.

Of particular interest is whether some of the strategy frameworks for fragile states can inform policy options for protracted food security crises, and whether some of the lessons from work on food security in protracted crises are relevant to discussions concerning the appropriate mechanisms for providing aid to fragile states. This paper extracts lessons from the DRC, Somalia and Sudan in relation to the following themes:

- **Linking relief and development.** Protracted crises are characterized by policy and funding gaps and "grey zones" between humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and development. The dynamic nature of food insecurity calls for a flexible and parallel use of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and development instruments, adapted to the

[4] For information on donor organizations that have designed fragile state strategies, see World Bank (2006), DFID (2005) and USAID (2005).
[5] Torres, Magüi Moreno and Anderson (2006): 6.
[6] Fragile or failed states indices include: the Low Income Countries under Stress list (LICUS) (World Bank) (http://www.worldbank.org/ieg/licus/licus05_map.html); the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA); and the Failed States Index (Fund for Peace) (http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/).

specific conditions of the crisis context. The experiences reviewed include the use and sequencing of these instruments in a variety of sectors and geographic settings.

- **Linkages between food security and conflict.** The United Nations Secretary-General's 2006 progress report on the prevention of armed conflict states that "tackling food insecurity and related problems of agricultural underproduction and resource scarcity can do much to stabilize a fragile situation". The report highlights the important role that food assistance plays before, during and after a crisis, demanding that "in addition to paying much closer attention to food insecurity that can lead to conflict, it is important to deliver food and other assistance in ways that do not contribute to conflict". We cite examples from the case studies of such links between conflict and food security.
- **Intervention levels.** Humanitarian interventions are usually targeted to vulnerable population groups, and are often delivered through non-governmental channels. Development interventions aimed at enhancing the service delivery capacity of governments are often targeted to the national level, with only limited focus on institutional capacity at meso-level. The case studies provide examples of opportunities and challenges for strengthening local institutions in crisis contexts and for building synergies between these different levels.
- **Partnerships.** Where states are fragile there is a tendency for humanitarian aid to be delivered by circumventing the government, for example through non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This raises the questions of what the options are for entering in dialogue with government, NGOs and other partners and how to provide incentives for, and how to invest in, government capacity-building, particularly at meso- and local levels. The Sudan Nuba Mountains case is particularly relevant on these aspects.

2 Characterizing food security perspectives and responses in case study scenarios

This section is based on the findings that emerged from six case studies undertaken in eastern DRC, Somalia and southern Sudan as part of a FAO-ESA research project on *Institutions and food security in protracted crises*. The case studies were conducted by researchers with experience in the field. Their aim was to describe and analyse processes in three conflict-affected and fragile states, which have led to extreme levels of institutional dysfunctionality and the depletion of assets and have resulted in high levels of human suffering and food insecurity. In Sudan, between 1983 and 2004 about 2 million people died and 6 million were

uprooted as a result of the conflict between the central government and rebel groups (in particular the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)) in the southern part of the country (Russo, 2007). The Congolese wars (1996–1998 and 1998–2003) constituted one of the most severe humanitarian disasters since the Second World War, involving at least six African nations and more than a dozen rebel groups; during the conflict, more than 3 million Congolese died a direct or indirect consequence of armed confrontations (Vlassenroot, 2007). Following the overthrow of late President Siad Barre in 1991, Somalia was propelled into two years of large-scale conflict and famine and a humanitarian crisis of historical proportions that claimed more than 100 000 lives and sparked a mass exodus of Somalis, which by 1999 had reached an outflow of more than 1 million people, the equivalent of about 15 percent of the country's 1990 population (Little, 2007).

The case studies also examine the responses undertaken by the international community during the conflict and in the post-conflict period to mitigate the effects of conflict and address the causes of the crisis and food insecurity, and they discuss the operational and conceptual limitations of such responses.

Box 1 The case studies

The six case studies on which this paper is based are:

Responding to protracted crises: the principled model of NMPACT in the Sudan (Pantuliano, 2007) describes the impact of the conflict on the Nuba Mountains population and how an alliance between donors, agencies and local stakeholders based on principles of engagement resulted in coordinated efforts to address the key determinants of the conflict and of food insecurity.

Policies, practice and participation in protracted crises: the case of livestock interventions in southern Sudan (Catley, Leyland and Bishop, 2007) describes how programmes to support pastoralist livelihoods in southern Sudan have been able to introduce innovative, participatory elements that go beyond the traditional humanitarian framework.

Livelihoods, assets and food security in a protracted political crisis: the case of the Jubba Region, southern Somalia (Little, 2007) focuses on the importance of assets and institutions for food security and describes how people and local institutions adapted to the conflict.

Livestock and livelihoods in protracted crisis: the case of southern Somalia (Leyland, Haji-Abdi, Catley and Hassan, 2007) describes the challenges and lessons learned from pastoralist development programmes in Somalia and advocates for a pastoralist-centred approach as opposed to more traditional interventions.

Land tenure, conflict and household strategies in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (Vlassenroot, 2007) analyses issues related to land tenure as factors of conflict and food security.

Conflict and food security in Beni-Lubero: back to the future? (Raeymaekers, 2007) presents area-based case studies in eastern DRC to describe the interaction between institutions, conflicts and food security.

Each crisis (and the resulting food insecurity manifestations) discussed here is unique in most aspects. In the case of Sudan, the major determinant of the crisis in southern regions has been the conflict between the central government and basically one rebel group, the SPLA, which controlled large parts of the country but had, until recently, very limited political legitimacy. Most of Somalia, on the other hand, remains outside the control of any formal state, while transient and structural food security problems have been exacerbated by local conflicts. In (eastern) DRC, food insecurity is largely attributable to the negative effects of militia conflicts on local institutions and governance, including lack of security.

However, there are also a number of features in common and cross-cutting issues that emerge. Governance-related issues are at the root of conflicts resulting in food insecurity and assets depletion and mainstream emergency and humanitarian responses have not adequately addressed the basic determinants of the crises. In this paper the issues are organized into three themes:

- the critical role of institutions;
- effects on livelihood systems (adaptation and the limits of resilience); and
- limitations and challenges in responses to the crises.

The critical role of institutions

The case studies provide ample evidence of the institutional changes caused by a general, prolonged lack of governance – which was often at the root of the conflict – and by conflict itself, and of the impact of these changes on livelihoods and the resilience of food systems. The resulting papers highlight the crucial importance of the institutional context in mediating, for better or worse, the food security impacts.

We adopt a broad definition of the term “institutions” to encompass processes that occur outside formal institutions but are relevant to the context of fragile states in conflict situations: “Institutions are the rules of the game in a society, or more formally are the humanly-devised constraints that shape human interaction” (North, 1990). The case studies provide examples of how institutional dysfunctionality started well before the conflict(s) and how it contributed directly or indirectly to the conflict(s) and to food insecurity. In the case of DRC and Somalia formal institutions were already undergoing a phase of deterioration prior to the conflict(s)

and were unable to play a role in guaranteeing the access of certain groups to vital natural resources or basic services. Access to land and institutional issues related to land tenure emerge from several studies as a crucial factor of conflict and food insecurity. In the case of DRC, access to land and land tenure issues had already been a factor in poverty and discrimination prior to the conflict(s). The 1973 General Property Law declared all land (including land under customary control) property of the state and integrated the traditional rural order into the urban-controlled modern political system. Consequently, traditional social order and integration were replaced by a system of social stratification in which proximity to the political centre was a condition for the accumulation of wealth. Various local wars then exacerbated conflict, and predatory behaviour in relation to land, and land itself, became factors of conflict, with politico-military elites consolidating their power bases and rewarding their supporters by extending control over land.

In Jubba (southern Somalia) also, conflicts and patronage led to the dispossession of land, particularly that of marginalized and fragile groups such as the Bantu minority (Little, 2007). In the case of Sudan, the role of formal institutions was so important as to be identified as a key triggering factor of the conflict. Pantuliano (2007) describes how Government of Sudan policies affected the level of food insecurity in the Nuba Mountains, first through the Unregistered Land Act of 1970 (which set the stage for land-grabbing for mechanized farming schemes) and later through the displacement of Nuba people in “peace village” policies (see **Box 2**) and the blockade of humanitarian aid in SPLA-controlled areas. These measures disrupted traditional farming systems and had a severe impact on the Nuba people and Nuba agro-ecology.

The case studies also provide evidence and examples of how informal institutions such as social norms, kinship-based safety nets and regulation of natural resource are relevant to food security and how they have been particularly affected by the protracted crises. For example, the regulatory agreement between Arab pastoralists and Nuba farmers in Sudan was disrupted by the conflict, with direct effects on food security.

Box 2 The impact of the conflict on traditional regulatory mechanisms in the Nuba Mountains

The relation between nomadic Arab groups and settled farmers in the Nuba Mountains has been characterized by both peaceful co-existence and confrontation. From the perspective of interacting production systems, settled farming and pastoralism are highly complementary. Until the 1970s in different parts of the Nuba Mountains pastoralists and farmers tried to capitalize on their interaction to maximize the use of available resources. Arab pastoralists were allowed into the mountains and other farming areas after the harvest was collected and usually stayed there until the first rains. They grazed their livestock on the harvested fields, thus fertilizing them, and helped the villagers transport their grain to the market with their camels. In some cases production and commercial links between farmers and pastoralists developed, fodder and grazing could be exploited after cultivation and draught linkages were even developed between them. Pastoral nomadic populations were therefore fully integrated into the sedentary political economy. However, patterns of political marginalization and economic exploitation of Nuba communities have caused current relationships in the region to be characterized by conflict rather than complementarity. The last decade and a half of war has further undermined the viability of previous regulatory agreements.

(*Adapted from Pantuliano, 2007*)

In Sudan, the breakages of social norms (linked to the conflict) led to more destructive and ruthless cattle raids, with massive displacements and loss of lives and livelihoods (see Catley *et al.*, 2007). Both studies on pastoralism observed that the regulatory function exercised by local institutions over water and pasture were weakened by conflict, and this led to overexploitation of natural resources and had a negative impact on pastoralists' livelihoods.

Another crucial element with a direct bearing on food security is the inability of traditional kinship-based mechanisms to provide social protection in case of massive and prolonged crises. The 1998 conflict-driven famine in Bahr El Ghazal (Sudan) was identified by some Dinka groups as the *famine of breaking relationships* (Deng, 1999; Catley *et al.*, 2007), which led to social entitlement failure and the supplanting of traditional elder authorities by military authorities. Similarly, in the Masisi region in eastern DRC, social structure and related kinship-based mechanisms for land distribution, already worn down prior to the conflict, eventually collapsed due to it. Many households were increasingly excluded from access to land and could no longer rely on the mechanisms of distribution and solidarity provided by the customary social structure (Vlassenroot, 2007).

The case studies also provide evidence that the capacities of local population and local institutions to adapt and eventually exploit the changing circumstances can mean that conflicts and institutional changes do not necessarily lead to a negative food security outcome. The absence of formal institutions and regulatory functions in eastern DRC favoured the movement of people from Lake Edward to the Virunga National Park. This offered fisherfolk

who had become food insecure because of the depletion of fisheries resources the opportunity to create an agricultural-based livelihood for themselves (see **Box 3**).

Box 3 Changing livelihoods in North Kivu (eastern DRC)

Lake Edward was once the fishing reserve of the entire province of North Kivu, but its halieutic output declined radically, from over 11 000 tonnes per year in 1954 to 3 000 in 1989. The reasons for this radical decline lie in the institutional disorganization surrounding the exploitation of Lake Edward: following independence from colonialism, an amalgam of actors and organizations (cooperatives, customary chiefs, environmental agents, regulatory organizations) emerged to compete for access to the lake's reserves. Another problem was the absence of an efficient protection mechanism to prevent the lake being overexploited, which resulted in widespread use of illegal fishing techniques.

Confronted with this decline in local production, the population started cultivating rice, maize, soya, bananas and manioc in the northern part of Virunga National Park. Due to its favourable location, the park offered a perfect alternative for the production of subsistence and commercial crops. Paradoxically, the war thus greatly facilitated an economic alternative to Lake Edward's declining potential. Rather than continuing to suffer from diminishing production, the population of Lake Edward gradually reclaimed its access to Virunga National Park, 'thanks' to the absence of a rigid regulation framework.

(*Adapted from Raeymaekers, 2007)*

In Jubba, Somalia, local institutions adapted to the conflict; local markets continued to function during the conflict and were extremely relevant to food security (see **Box 4**) (Little, 2007). These findings on markets were confirmed by other studies. Another commonly-held assumption was contradicted by the study of Beni Lubero in the DRC, where it was found that farmers confronted with acute crisis situations do not always withdraw into subsistence farming (Raeymaekers, 2007).

Box 4 Rural markets in protracted crisis situations

In a protracted emergency it is easy to misjudge the extent to which markets remain operational. There are numerous examples of well-intentioned NGOs providing emergency services and assistance in southern Somalia on the assumption that functioning markets were not present. For example, in the 1990s, free seed distribution was provided in Somalia when many local farmers were already accessing these inputs through private channels. Despite the misperception that markets cease functioning in a conflict, Jubba residents continue to rely heavily on them both to sell commodities and to purchase food. Consumption and expenditure patterns prior to 1991show that herding and agro-pastoral groups relied on the market for about 40 percent of their food needs during the year as a whole, and up to 70 percent during the long dry season. The largest single expenditure item was grain, which constituted as much as 70 percent of food purchases during the long dry season. The Food Security Analysis Unit for Somalia (FSAU) livelihood profiles show that there is still a similar dependence on market purchases for subsistence needs. With increased human population growth and the declines in per capita livestock holdings, the dependence on non-pastoral products in the diet has increased.

Settled farmers in the Jubba Valley also depend on the market to purchase food, although not to the extent that pastoral groups do. During good production years prior to 1991 they purchased about 20 percent of their grain needs from the market. Currently in a normal year households of mid-level wealth living in the riverine area rely on purchases for 30 to 40 percent of their food.

Evidence seems to indicate that in practice in Jubba most markets have remained operational and accessibility problems for individuals are due to poverty (low purchasing power) or high prices due to political distortions.

(Adapted from Little, 2007)

Nonetheless, as we will discuss in the next sections, international responses to the crises have focussed mainly on life-saving and short-term livelihoods protection measures. They have scarcely recognized the importance of institutional issues and have failed to support those institutional processes that could have mitigated the effects of the crises.

The effects on livelihood systems: adaptation and the limits of resilience

A feature distinguishing short-term shocks (such as floods or droughts) from protracted crises is the impact they have on people's livelihoods. While the impact of short-term shocks can be of a temporary nature and mitigated by people's coping strategies, in the case of protracted crises the effects tend to be of a more structural character. Unlike natural catastrophes, protracted crises are often characterized by conflicts as well as by an absence of public services, including security, health, education and regulations in the productive and trade sectors – all of which may lead to the sustained erosion of the livelihoods of specific groups, resulting in structural vulnerability.

All six case studies showed that conflict and governance-related protracted crisis situations caused considerable erosion of household and community assets and led to substantial

changes in the livelihoods basis of the affected populations. A number of cross-cutting issues and common trends emerged in relation to livelihoods.

Firstly, there were several common types of losses that affected people's key assets, which occurred due to lack of security that should have been provided by the state or by local institutions. One prime example is the substantial reduction or disappearance of livestock from people's livelihoods basis, as in Nuba in Sudan and Jubba in Somalia (and illustrated in detail by the case studies on pastoralism in Somalia and southern Sudan). Insecurity of land tenure provoked a change in cropping patterns in eastern DRC and the Nuba Mountains, while loss of labour opportunities occurred in most areas researched. Changing levels of access to markets, with a general worsening of the terms of trade for pastoralists and agropastoralists (as in Jubba) and also in some cases for farmers (as in eastern DRC) are also common features of crises.

Secondly, it appears that most changes in livelihoods bases that occur in prolonged crisis situations are not short term in nature. Typical traditional coping mechanisms, such as shifting of crop patterns or gathering of fruits and wild leaves, Davies (1993) defines as "short-term, temporary responses to declining food entitlements, which are characteristic of structurally secure livelihood systems". Instead, in the six case studies these changes were of an adaptive nature, both in negative and positive terms, and showed that farmers and other vulnerable groups do have long-term visions of the crises and are in certain circumstance able to exploit the "opportunities" offered by some crises. Farmers displaced by the conflict and afflicted by dwindling access to cultivated land due to population pressure moved from central to western Lubero, where conditions were better, at least for the time being. In Jubba, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists gradually moved toward agriculture as a normal response to population demands and volatile grain prices.

Civil society organizations have made important contributions in supporting the adaptive capacities of vulnerable groups and strengthening resilience. However, the opportunities they create are often ignored, if not undermined, by the international community. In Walungu, DRC, the only organizations playing a role in land disputes (the main cause of conflict) are informal community-based *chambres de paix* (peace councils). Local Nuba organizations in Sudan discouraged negative short-term approaches such as unrestricted food aid distribution, which could have eroded the overall resilience of food systems. Kinship support also played

an important role in strengthening resilience in the case of the Nuba. In Somalia, transfers of money from Somalis living outside the country (estimated at 22.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP)) play a crucial role in the economy and in the protection of Somalia households, a role that is normally ignored or underplayed in needs assessments and vulnerability analyses undertaken by external actors. However, as noted previously, social safety net mechanisms tend to break and lose effectiveness as crises progress and/or increase in intensity (on the DRC, see Vlassenroot, 2007; on southern Sudan, see Catley *et al*., 2007).

While the considerable adaptive capacities of local population and institutions was a constant, one matter of concern is the overall resilience of the society and more in particular of food systems – that is to say, the "measure of a system to remain stable or to adapt to new situation without undergoing catastrophic changes in its basic functions" (Pingali, *et al*., 2005). For example, the agricultural exploitation of Virunga National Park in DRC is already being affected by environmental degradation. Furthermore, this alternative livelihoods strategy faces obstacles from the same "institutional" factors from which the benefiting households (former fisherfolk) tried to escape, namely the "environmental services" that were complicit in the destruction of Lake Edward's productive output. In Sudan, Nuba farmers also adapted their farming systems to the conflict situation by concentrating cultivation practices in the more secure hilly areas. However, such a system is likely to have negative repercussions on the agro-ecology of the area, given that the traditional pre-conflict farming system comprised three separate pieces of land: the house farm, the hillside farm and the "far" farm in the clay plains, cultivated with long season sorghum and groundnuts.

Responding to protracted crises: limitations and challenges

In the contexts discussed here (southern Sudan, eastern DRC and southern Somalia), where state and government presence has been almost non-existent, international assistance has been the main – and sometimes the only – source of public transfer to support immediate needs and provide a few essential services aimed at specific vulnerable groups. In Sudan, development assistance dropped dramatically due to the economic boycott; [7] while in the southern part of the country controlled by the SPLA/M, the perceived lack of legitimacy of the SPLM meant that the only form of transfer was in the form of humanitarian assistance channelled through international agencies and NGOs. During the conflict the international community was

[7] Overseas development assistance (ODA) peaked in 1985 at US$1 900 million but dropped to US$100 million in 1996 (Lehtinen, 2001), to be replaced by humanitarian aid.

perceived as taking over many of the normal government functions,[8] focusing mainly on short-term responses and very few essential services.

In such a context, very rarely have international responses addressed the underlying and longer-term causes of food insecurity. The interventions have focussed mostly on addressing the effects or immediate causes of food insecurity rather than their determinants. This is probably due to the fact that humanitarian aid is virtually the only instrument available during conflict-related protracted crises and, as several authors correctly argue, its main focus should continue to be humanitarian (see Buchanan-Smith and Christoplos, 2004). However in such a context there remains a clear gap in knowledge and adequate instruments to address the longer-term determinants of the crises by, for example, supporting local formal and informal institutions, livelihood strategies and positive adaptive mechanisms adopted by the population in the face of the crises. The case studies provided details on the issues discussed below.

Short-term responses dominate

Responses to crises have been dominated by short-term interventions based on humanitarian principles ("neutrality" and "saving lives" in particular) undertaken outside state structures, and characterized by funding horizons of between six months and two years, with high volatility of aid flows. There is a marked tendency to focus on food availability (food aid and immediate agricultural recovery measures) rather than on the access and stability dimensions of food security. The DRC and Jubba studies pointed out the emphasis on agricultural rehabilitation through distribution of free seeds and tools, while in the case of Sudan food aid represented nearly 60 percent of all humanitarian assistance (Russo, 2005).

Another dominant feature is the absence of adequate linkages between the short-term time frame of the interventions and the long-term issues that need to be addressed. Free agricultural inputs were distributed in Jubba where local markets were functioning, which could have a potential negative impact in the longer term. By Lake Edward in the DRC, freely distributed fishing equipment further exacerbated the fisherfolks' problem of overexploitation of the fish and the subsequent depletion of coastal reserves.

[8] "In 1998…the huge amount of assistance provided, coupled with weak civil administration, has meant that within a brief period Operation Lifeline Sudan became the *de facto* government." (Deng, 1999))

In Sudan, faced with limited funding horizons, alternative response strategies based on longer-term and locally-based perspectives were undertaken that required that a common understanding be reached and an alliance forged between all stakeholders through a buy-in process. The Nuba Mountains Community Empowerment Project (NMPACT) was based on a number of principles of engagement to be adhered to by all agencies. It promoted inclusion in the coordinating structure of the two warring factions through their humanitarian agencies, creating the basis for a sustained peace process at the local level. This approach marked a substantial shift with respect to Operation Lifeline Sudan,[9] which was based essentially on the humanitarian principles of "neutrality" and "impartiality" and so avoided entering into peace building processes involving the warring factions. Within that framework, NMPACT promoted coordinated efforts based on key priorities identified by the Nuba, which led to development of a common plan of interventions made up of a combination of short-term and long-term measures addressing both immediate and longer-term issues.

The pastoralist programme in southern Sudan aimed at addressing the vulnerability of pastoralists with multi-year interventions tackling those longer-term issues necessary for protecting and strengthening pastoralists' herds. It included capacity-building, cost recovery, involvement of local institutions and direct engagement with the knowledge and know-how of the beneficiaries (including pastoralists and traditional healers). This helped to strengthen local capacities, establish the basis for a sound and locally-controlled policy framework and, to a certain degree, provide for the sustainability of the interventions.

In both of these cases, the interventions moved away from traditional mainstream emergency frameworks: they extended the use of humanitarian aid beyond mechanisms focused strictly on "saving lives", instead supporting ways to decrease vulnerability. Identifying, designing, and implementing this type of intervention required complicated and difficult processes involving donors, local people and technical agencies. The process also required understanding multi-dimensional problems, complex and evolving contexts and longer-term strategic implications. The programme designs were characterized by the high degree of

[9] Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) was a coordinating mechanism that includes all the major United Nations agencies (UNICEF, WFP, FAO, OCHA and WHO) and some NGOs. OLS was the first humanitarian programme established through a tripartite agreement (between the Government of Sudan, the SPLM and the United Nations) inside a foreign country to provide relief to war-affected and internally displaced people. It was established in 1989 following a devastating famine

flexibility required by the evolving context, while they needed to respect both limited time frames and the scope for initiatives considered acceptable for humanitarian actions.

Development paradigms are not always the answer

In protracted crisis contexts, mainstream longer-term programmes based on developmental paradigms (e.g. sustainability, participation, cost recovery) may not necessarily provide an alternative to humanitarian interventions. The agricultural support initiatives undertaken in the DRC or Somalia were focussed essentially on infrastructure rehabilitation and agricultural production and did not appear to offer long-term solutions to the structural and institutional causes of food insecurity. The rigid application of development paradigms such as "sustainability" or "participation" have sometimes been applied uncritically, failing to take into account the context within which the activities were undertaken. In Somalia, for example, some humanitarian and development agencies eager to promote participation worked with local groups that represented militia factions rather than households and communities, because the agencies had inadequate knowledge of clan politics in Somalia (Little, 2007).

Formal and informal policy contexts are not always taken into consideration

A cross-cutting issue (well illustrated by these case studies) is the weak linkage between the policy environment and the responses undertaken. Clearly, in these contexts, formal policies may be of little relevance due to weak institutional capacities and to the fact that they often come from governments whose capacity for policy implementation is limited and that are directly involved in the conflict. Therefore for the purposes of this paper we use the broader definition of policy as "a purposive course of action followed by an actor or a set of actors" (Anderson, 1994). The term can include formal donor and government policies, written declarations of intent or plans and more informal policy, which might not be written down but is apparent in certain decisions and actions. In a context characterized by poor governance, such informal policy may be more relevant than any formal policy.

Underlying policies can be revealed in the humanitarian community's programming or the responses of local institutions and communities in specific contexts. In Sudan during the 1998 Bahr el Gazhal crisis, clan and kinship structures refused to accept the targeting mechanism promoted by donors aimed at reaching those the outsiders perceived as most vulnerable (e.g. households headed by women, internally displaced people) and instead used a redistribution mechanism within the community (Harrigin, 1998; Deng, 1999). These actions reflected a

"policy" on the part of local communities that perceived food aid as a common good to be used to strengthen long-term kinship ties and strengthen social capital over the longer term, rather than to address the short-term needs of a part of the community.

There is a marked tendency on the part of the international community to ignore or downplay the underlying policy environment and formal or informal policy processes, whether because of concerns for humanitarian principles or lack of adequate in-depth analysis. This can have repercussions for the long-term perspectives of the actions undertaken. The Area Rehabilitation Scheme experience in the Nuba Mountains (See **Box 5**) was supported by the humanitarian community, in spite of the fact that it was instrumental to the Government of Sudan's policy of depopulating areas under SPLM/A control and was consequently a factor in the conflict.

Box 5 The ARS initiative: supporting disaster-producing policies

The Area Rehabilitation Scheme (ARS) in Kadugli (Nuba region, Sudan), implemented by the central Government of Sudan with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was to support agricultural rehabilitation in order to tackle the problem of inadequate food production, to "pave the road for sustainable development" and "reduce dependence on emergency assistance in areas affected by civil strife".

The approach and strategy of the ARS were intensely criticized by an external review (Karim *et al*., 1996). The review observed that the objectives of the ARS included supporting the local peace administration to "resettle returnees in peace villages and then promote agricultural development to strengthen their attachment to land". The review team concluded that given that the Nuba had been dispossessed of their land, the strategy suggested a disturbing ignorance of local realities and that the programme represented a *de facto* accommodation by the United Nations of disaster-producing policies of the Government of Sudan.

(Adapted from Pantuliano, 2007)

In Sudan there were also cases of utilization by warring factions of food aid provided within a humanitarian framework; in some cases, the food aid was utilized to reach consensus and feed militias but in others it was used to discriminate against "hostile" groups by curtailing their access to assistance (Russo, 2005). Thus its use was more reflective of an underlying policy of war and conflict than of humanitarian principles.

Governance issues are of key importance in delivering assistance

The issue of how to achieve improved operational coordination among parties and organizations seeking to provide assistance in protracted crises and humanitarian emergencies has received persistent attention from analysts in recent years (Macrae, 2002). Coordination

mechanisms are identified as key factors of success and failure in the responses undertaken in various countries. The two DRC case studies point to the complete lack of coordination mechanisms as a key shortcoming of external interventions. In both Sudan and Somalia there were formal coordinating structures for international assistance, though Operation Lifeline Sudan and the Somalia Aid Coordination Body had very different mandates.

The existence of a formal coordination mechanism is a condition that is necessary but not sufficient to improve the effectiveness of aid delivery. Coordination mechanisms need to be strengthened by agreed-upon enforcement mechanisms and should be based on shared basic operational principles, clearly spelt-out partnership arrangements and common frameworks for humanitarian and long-term interventions. (See, for example, Pantuliano (2007) and Leyland, *et al.* (2007) concerning the codes of conduct developed by stakeholders working in the pastoralist sector.)

Local partners and governments are often excluded from the development of humanitarian responses because they may be perceived as a party in the conflict. One of the attributes of good practice in long-term development initiatives – and a governance issue – is the involvement of local partners and institutions in the definition and implementation of responses, yet such involvement appears to be the exception rather than the rule in most interventions studied. In the DRC local partners often simply execute the projects defined by donors and are generally marginalized, while those initiatives with long-term perspectives and identified by local stakeholders as important (such as the land dispute committees) receive very little external support. In Somalia there is a large number of Islamic civil society organizations that have significant potential for providing access to services (such as water, education, vocational training and health) and for providing a popular political alternative to Somali clannism, violence and state collapse – but they are ignored by traditional donors.

In contrast, in Sudan there were systematic efforts to involve national and local stakeholders (including NGOs, pastoralist associations and government services) in establishing priorities and implementing responses, with important and positive consequences. The Nuba Rehabilitation, Relief and Development Organisation (NRRDO), a local NGO, helped international partners set the rules of the game on the basis of Nuba priorities (as described in Pantuliano, 2007).

Local partners were an essential component of the more successful interventions to address longer-term needs in DRC, Somalia and Sudan, but the identification and involvement of local partners remains a highly debated issue among both humanitarian and development camps (see for example Longley and Maxwell, 2003; Slaymaker, Christiansen and Hemming, 2005; HPG, 2006). It is particularly difficult to make decisions regarding local partner involvement in the absence of adequate analysis.

Analysis is often inadequate

An issue that emerges over and over again is the general inadequacy of the analysis on the basis of which decisions and responses are made. The case studies show food insecurity to be on the whole a manifestation of the social and political construct. This reconfirms the essentially political nature of famine and food emergencies (see Sen, 1981; and de Waal, 1993) and the need to incorporate the institutional, policy and livelihoods dimension of the crises into food security responses (Devereux, 2000). Yet most of the mainstream analytical tools utilized, particularly in the DRC and Sudan, have treated food insecurity as triggered basically by natural hazards such as crop failure, or at best as livelihoods crises at the household level caused by external factors. There are some experiences in Somalia that represent a notable exception to this trend.

The current analytical frameworks remain substantially sectoral and on the whole geared towards the identification of the basic needs of the affected populations, generally focussing on food deficits and key livelihood protection actions. However, the crises we studied have been characterized by institutional dysfunctioning or collapse and the disruption or collapse of livelihoods, with an overall reduction in the society's resilience. Further complicating matters is the fact that in some cases, the interaction of institutional breakdown and conflict has provoked the development of new, non-state centres of authority that consolidate themselves around alternative patterns of social control, protection and profit. Understanding such interactions requires a certain level of politico-economic analysis, which has sometimes been undertaken, but tends to remain confined mostly to academic circles, with little impact on the policy process.

In the DRC in particular, information analysis has been very limited and focussed mostly on immediate needs assessments; there are very few studies on nutrition and food economy, little analysis of land tenure issues, and no research on the dynamic nature of food systems. Furthermore, most of the analysis undertaken has been geared towards identifying needs that

correspond to the capacities of intervening agencies to deliver specific goods, rather than to adequate analyses for addressing both immediate and underlying causes. Cases in point are the fishing equipment supplied for Lake Edward (Raeymaekers, 2007) and free seeds and veterinary medicines supplied in Somalia (Leyland, *et al.*, 2007).

In practice what emerges is that mainstream analysis has led to the prioritization of investments dominated by humanitarian and emergency paradigms. While responses that would have helped address, and sometimes prevent, some of the determinants of food insecurity – such as land tenure insecurity, natural resource (mis)management, poor local capacities, insecurity of fragile groups – have represented only a tiny percentage of external assistance. However, broadening the scope of analysis is highly challenging due to the absence of reliable and current information, the continuous and sudden changes of highly volatile contexts and response frameworks limited mostly to humanitarian responses.

There are, however, a number of notable exceptions to this situation. The design of NMPACT was based on a comprehensive survey to define the Nuba's people short- and long-term priorities. In Somalia, the FAO-supported FSAU has gradually expanded the scope of its analysis; a forum approach encourages partners to share analysis and engage in building consensus, thus favouring interactive communication with decision-makers (Hemrich, 2005). Its recent development of the Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification has provided an opportunity for a shared and commonly agreed analysis, providing the platform needed for a multidimensional analysis aimed at informing responses to address the immediate and underlying causes of food insecurity. (See Flores and Andrews, paper for this conference.)

3 Conclusions

Food insecurity in conflict-related protracted crises is still understood as synonymous with the immediate food needs of the most vulnerable groups, while the underlying causes of food insecurity are either forgotten or sidelined. Yet, the case studies discussed here illustrate how the impacts of protracted crises on food security differ from those of shorter emergencies and how such crises call for different analyses and a different set of responses.

The protracted nature of the crises discussed tends to have long-term negative impacts on people and institutions that can hardly be addressed by mainstream short-term humanitarian

and emergency responses. The studies showed that conflicts are often the ultimate manifestation of long-term institutional dysfunctioning such as lack of adequate public services and adequate basic regulatory functions, and that therefore the process of erosion of livelihoods commenced well before the outbreak of the conflict. This highlighted the importance of institutions as a potential determinant of crises but also as a factor of resilience.

In many circumstances, people and organizations affected by crises have been able to organize themselves and adapt to the new environment irrespective of any external support provided. The case studies showed how people and local institutions continue to have long-term perspectives even in very volatile contexts, and that their adaptation mechanisms have followed patterns and modalities that are not perceived, understood or supported by external agencies. Information gathered and analysis used did not integrate the knowledge on local institution and policies necessary for supporting longer-term programmes (including peace processes) when appropriate.

The studies also showed that within a humanitarian framework, the failure to consider the institutional and policy contexts (in order to avoid the risk of "politicization" of the response) sometimes led to the promotion of interventions that fuelled the very determinants of the conflict. Given this context some of the innovative and institutionally sensitive interventions described in the case studies appeared to be the exception rather than the rule, and were the result of ad hoc initiatives rather than of systematic approaches.

Furthermore, given the context of conflict and the related humanitarian framework, the rare interventions that took policy and institutional issues into account focussed their attention for the most part at the local and decentralized level. They did not address institutional and policy issues at the country level that will need to be addressed for the longer term. The case studies also showed the inherent fragility of the basis of people's livelihoods and food systems in contexts where government institutions were unable or unwilling to provide a minimum level of social protection and economic development, or to ensure a proper policy environment.

Given these conditions, the current structure of aid is changing to address the need for flexible funding in those countries where the political situation is evolving from conflict toward peace, in order to address the longer-term needs inherent in unstable political environments. Several

donors have developed initiatives to promote peace processes in post-conflict situations (Lockhart, 2005). However, during conflict-related crises the humanitarian response framework continues to be virtually the only intervention mechanism, which often undermines those initiatives that require longer-term perspectives.

There is an obvious lack of aid instruments and conceptual and operational frameworks to address food security in conflict-related protracted crises and fragile states. On the one hand it remains indispensable to ensure neutrality for immediate responses that protect the most vulnerable. On the other hand, it is crucial to take into account institutional and policy dynamics that can support processes to rebuild resilience; create opportunities for strengthening the livelihoods of affected population at the very early stages of the crisis; and develop an adequate basket of interventions to address a variety of needs.

The main conclusion of the research work in DRC, Somalia and Sudan is that the crises analysed by the six case studies had a long-term impact on food security and showed a multi-dimensional structure involving different temporal and causal dimensions. It is thus of paramount importance to understand and address simultaneously both immediate needs and the institutional, policy and livelihoods dimensions of crises – to decrease vulnerability while building viable and resilient mechanisms in the affected societies.

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