Humanitarianism, the results agenda, innovations and the South Sudan crisis

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1. Introduction

A focus on objectives, results, outcomes and evidence has been increasing in international assistance, whether for development or for humanitarian relief. On the surface, this "results agenda" is not only reasonable, but commendable. However, when considered more closely, major problems become apparent. This applies especially to innovation, including humanitarian innovation. The answer is not to reject the results agenda, but to qualify it and adapt it to purpose and context. A particular concern of this paper is the current humanitarian crisis of South Sudan. With this crisis in mind, the paper will respond to the discussion of the results agenda by sketching an innovative component of the results agenda to provide a basis for connecting humanitarian relief, preventive humanitarian action through peacebuilding and the transition to reconstruction and development.

This paper will first describe the forms and elements of the results agenda. In Section 3 it will cover the most relevant and crucial points in the debate about the results agenda. In part, it will be informed by the tension between a recent paper from the Institute for Development Studies in Sussex (Eyben 2013), which is very critical of the results agenda, and another recent paper from the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University in Boston (Darcy et al. 2013), which is pushing humanitarian decision-making further in the direction of the results agenda, or at least the use of evidence. Section 4 finally focuses on innovation in relation to humanitarian practice and the results agenda, stressing the need for innovation in fragile states by linking humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding. The focus will then turn to the particular case of the current humanitarian crisis in South Sudan and its historical context. The historical context is important here if policies that prevent future humanitarian crises are to be developed. Section 6 then presents an innovation to the results agenda in the form of a needs-assessment framework for South Sudan that leaves room for innovation in remedies to the crisis. I should also note at this point that this is very much a conference paper. My thinking on this issue continues to evolve and I am here to learn from the other conference participants.

2. The results agenda explained

The results agenda is a term used by some (e.g. Gita Busjeet [2011: 4] at the World Bank), but by no means all those who use or debate the ideas that it comprises. (Eyben 2013, for example, uses the terms "results-and-evidence agenda [or] artefacts".) Many refer to particular elements of it, e.g. evidence-based decision-making, or monitoring and evaluation, or impact assessment. Sometimes the broader concept of good governance is invoked. However, I find it more useful to deal with the whole approach of "structured decision making" (Gregory et al. 2012) at the heart of which is the rational pursuit of beneficial results. Forms of it can be recognized in many areas, including military planning, business management and public administration. It has become increasingly prominent in international assistance, initially in the form of the logical

framework, but has become much more developed and demanding since then. (See e.g. Cracknell 2000, Dale 2004, Pitman et al. [eds.] 2005 and Carden 2009.) The results agenda as a whole has evolved since World War II and has a number of important sources. This is not the place to lay out the genealogy of this set of decision-making tools and protocols. (See Eyben 2013 for a short description.) Instead, as background I will simply indicate what I consider to be its core ideas.

In the business sector, there is a performance criterion that also serves as incentive for improvement; it is profits. The less personal a business is, i.e. the more it becomes an impersonal corporation, the more profits are the central indicator of performance of the business and its decision-makers. (Alternative use-value indicators, in lieu of market-generated exchange-value indicators that underlie profits, may have been generated in fully socialized economies, but none seem to have been very satisfactory. For that reason, some socialist thinkers have proposed market socialism, with worker-controlled enterprises pursuing maximal returns.) Coming to the public and civil-society sector, this raises the question of how to assess performance in such non-market contexts. Effective performance is at least as important in saving the lives of people affected by major floods or by a war-generated famine as in the production of World Cup paraphernalia or the distribution of recorded music. It is true that humanitarians will generally act to save as many lives as they can, but there is no clear metric making it evident that they are doing so very effectively or not, since it involves the relationship between the resources available to humanitarians and what is accomplished with them. And, given that saving lives is not the only consideration, the matter becomes in any case more complicated, as it also does when dealing with such aims as poverty reduction. It is in the context of this problem that the results agenda developed, first in the public sector and then in the civil-society sector, mostly at the insistence of government or foundation funders.

At its core is the notion of efficiency, i.e. maximum results for the least effort or cost. This is relatively open-ended, as results still need to be defined as do effort and cost. (Cost is not merely monetary cost, but more the economic concept of opportunity cost, i.e. what other good things cannot be done because of the initiative under consideration, or some form of loss beyond financial expenditure.) In economics, specifically welfare economics, however, a more specific concept of social (or societal) efficiency had been articulated and had provided the basis of (social) cost-benefit analysis as well as other economic optimization (really efficiency) prescriptions. It involved the utilitarian idea that well-being, as represented by the want satisfaction of individuals, was to be maximized and this was to be done by pursuing those projects, policies and budgets that maximize net (well-being) benefits, i.e. benefits minus (well-being) costs. Mathematics was used to demonstrate that under certain conditions (e.g. perfect competition and information and no externalities) markets can provide the values for many benefits and costs; where that is not the case, valuations can be determined by more complicated analyses. What is side-stepped in this process is the issue of distributive justice, both with respect to the differential valuations by the rich and the poor (e.g. the rich are willing to pay more to be protected from flooding than the poor) and with respect to projects, policies and budgets that provide uncompensated net harm to some individuals or groups. Some efforts were made to propose corrections in theory (equity-weighting), but these were not carried into the practice of cost-benefit analysis. In general, issues of distributive justice were to be left to "political" decision-making. With that, poverty reduction and humanitarian assistance largely

fell beyond the purview of this particularly technocratic and goal-predetermined form of the results agenda. (With the Washington Consensus, cost-benefit analysis as such, although not the logic on which it is based, atrophied to some extent, as the new thrust was to reduce the public sector more than to improve its operations, although more recently there has been some revival of cost-benefit analysis and the Stern Review used it to determine the costs of climate change and the benefits of mitigation. For a discussion of cost-benefit analysis in relation to population displacement by development, see Penz, Drydyk and Bose 2011: ch. 4.)

Even without subscribing to the (at least technically deep) logic of welfare economics, the efficiency agenda in a more open-ended form became increasingly prevalent. Funders, whether national or local governments or international donors or lenders, were looking for "value for money", even though the value of the result need not be measured in monetary terms. In the environmental area, where the concern was with harmful effects, i.e. negative results, impact assessment emerged, first in its strictly bio-environmental form, then also as social and even economic impact assessment, and has proliferated to more specific areas. The results agenda became tied to the new agenda of accountability (further pursued below).

That was intensified by a development of thought that, if it did not originate in economics, was reinforced by a certain theoretical orientation within it. Previously the prevailing tendency in economics had been to assume that people are selfish in the context of markets ("homo oeconomicus"), but governments pursue (or at least should pursue) the public interest. Public servants were taken to be conscientious as professionals or dutiful as functionaries and civil-society workers idealistic and altruistic and expected to do their best. When markets are inefficient ("market failures"), it is the responsibility of governments to make corrections for these failures (by regulation, by appropriate financial incentives, by public provision of services and even goods). The new theoretical orientation was to reject this bifurcation into selfishness in markets and public-interest action by governments and to apply the assumption of selfishness to governments as a whole as well as to individual functionaries. Selfishness could take not only the form of self-enrichment (including corruption), but also of promoting one's career and of "taking it easy". Moreover, civil-society organizations were deemed to be selfish, at least to the extent that they put their survival first and protected the interests of their most immediate stakeholders. With that the focus shifted from market failure to governance failure. (Coordination problems in bureaucracies were also blamed.) All this meant that, if good results were to be promoted, organizations and individuals would need to be monitored and appropriate incentives would need to be provided. This also led to instances of the most extreme form of the results agenda, "payment by results". While in most cases of the results agenda, payments are made for costs incurred, with various pressures to achieve good results, in this extreme form payments are made for results achieved. With that the private sector is increasingly invited into fields that were previously serviced by public and civil-society institutions.

Leaving payment by results to the side, the results orientation also led to the question of "what works?". Here the increasing prevalence of evidence-based medicine in the health field became a model for evidence-based policy-making and is very much now part of the results agenda. That definitely includes the humanitarian sector. (See e.g. Darcy 2013. At this point I want to note that I do not find Eyben's distinction between the results agenda and an evidence agenda persuasive and have not used that distinction.)

Before engaging with some of the debates about or within the results agenda, I will briefly consider what it means to make do without the results agenda and then go over some of the debates about it. If we do not use the various forms of structured decision-making that have emerged within the general area of the results agenda, how can decisions in areas such as humanitarian assistance be made? Certainly such decisions do get made; but what directs them? There are various possibilities. (1) One is customary practice. "We have always done it this way and that is the only right and proper way to do it." (2) Another possibility is the personal experience of a decision-maker who has accumulated insight from earlier participation in past efforts or their observation. When decisions are made in groups (committees, boards, cabinets, legislatures, etc.), the experiences of different individuals may interact, hopefully to supplement and enrich the concluding decision, or to become an occasion for a struggle for dominance. (3) A third possibility for avoiding formal techniques in decision-making is that decisions are made in a relatively open-ended manner giving much discretion to implementers to learn in the process of implementation. (4) A fourth possibility is that decisions are taken in the light of political optics, i.e. the decision has to "look good" in the eyes of superiors, the public, the media, etc. (5) Returning to homo oeconomicus, decisions can be taken in terms of the selfish interests of the decision-makers. This may also occur at the organizational level, as when corruption serves not individuals, but the treasury of a political party. Even humanitarian organizations may put their survival above the interests of beneficiaries. (6) A final basis for decisions that is worth mentioning is ideology. Ideology here is taken to be a configuration of values, understandings of how the world is and works and strategic prescriptions for action. In this generic sense all action is ideological. What makes it *purely* ideological is that value argumentation and verification of assumptions about how the world is and works are deemed improper. There is thus no need for decision-making techniques, other than perhaps monitoring decisions for ideological rectitude.

The results agenda that serves as an alternative by providing techniques to improve decisions is extremely diverse and even the basic functions performed by it have been articulated in different ways. Box 1 presents what I find to be the most insightful way of sketching the basics of what is referred to as "the project cycle" or, in other circles, "the policy cycle". I will refer to the

Box 1. The stages of the results agenda
1. Pre-Implementation: PLANNING
1.1. Problem analysis and formulation of aims
1.2. Identification of options
1.3. Comparison of options in relation to objectives, other outcomes, risks and resources required, using previously produced evidence
1.4. Selection of option
1.5. Funding, detailed planning, organization of resources, permissions
2. Implementation: MONITORING
2.1. Periodic or on-going monitoring
2.2. Adjustments as required
2.3. Possible termination before completion
3. Post-Implementation: EVALUATION
3.1. Actual results in relation to the original plan
3.2. Lessons learned

different points in the list as the stages of the results agenda.

This is a kind of ideal. In reality some of these stages are often conflated or skipped. Sometimes a project is conceived first, the problems that it tackles and the aims that it serves are then articulated and no other options are considered. In many of these instances the consideration of other options and comparison between them may have been done intuitively or informally. From the perspective of the results agenda this is less than satisfactory since an important part of planning is not done explicitly. If needs to be acknowledged, however, that relatively little attention has been given in the results agenda to criteria for the identification of options (1.2).

3. The results agenda disputed

In a world which is too complex and changes too rapidly to be readily understood, the advantages of some form of results agenda over the alternatives mentioned above are here taken to be self-evident and not in need of further argument. (This is not to rule out that there are many instances where customary decisions, or decisions based on personal experience, or even decisions based on political optics are justifiable, especially when the decisions are relatively minor, given that applying the results agenda requires resources. But in general it is preferable that major decisions aimed at desirable results are supported by relevant decision-making techniques.) What I will focus on next are debates about particular aspects, elements or forms of the results agenda. I will do so in terms of challenges, which will be grouped into (1) practicality challenges, (2) accountability challenges, (3) complexity challenges, and (4) comprehensiveness challenges. The purpose is to show how these challenges pull the results agenda from its techno-rationalist moorings and lead to qualifications, which then also have implications for humanitarian innovations and a concern with the latter reinforces the qualifications.

(1) The first set of challenges that I will address is that of practicality. In a sense it flows out of the earlier discussion of decision-making without the methods and decision-supporting structures of the results agenda. If such methods and structures do not change the ways that decisions are made, the results agenda is simply a waste of effort and can even serve as a misleading façade (with the pretense of employing rationality-based decision-supporting structures). Within democratic states, however, there is increasing pressure to move in that direction, partly through the expansion of the jurisdiction of government accountability institutions, such as auditors or comptrollers general. Even then, the results agenda can be challenged in terms of (i) its usability, (ii) delays to decision-making and implementation, and (iii) its costs.

(i) Decision-makers typically do not have the skills of the experts who carry out various analyses that provide supportive structures to decision-making. If there is no effort to make analyses comprehensible to decision-makers without a huge and time-consuming effort, such analyses are often ignored. The methods themselves have to be such that they actually make decision-making more manageable rather than less, or some kind of intermediation process between the technical studies and decision-making is needed. (ii) Technical studies and accountability processes often take considerable time. This is particularly an issue in sudden-onset humanitarian crises. For that reason, initial rapid assessments have been included in the results agenda repertoire. It

means that the time required for certain more in-depth analyses cannot be justified. Apart from crisis assessments, development projects important in poverty reduction can also be delayed by very thorough analyses when the questions about the projects may not warrant that. (iii) Elaborate studies such as cost-benefit analysis can be very costly. A second-level cost-benefit analysis of such a cost-benefit analysis may not indicate net benefits produced by the analysis. (It would of course involve much guessing.) Less thorough versions may be more appropriate for smaller projects, assuming that cost-benefit analysis is in principle appropriate at all. The same point applies to analyses other than cost-benefit analysis. It can easily lead to the judgement that an analysis has been carried out in a shoddy or less than professional manner, when a full-fledged analysis simply may not be warranted in terms of the small size of the project or the lack of contentiousness, from a public or an expert perspective.

(2) In its simplest techno-rationalistic formulation the results agenda simply consists of rational decision-making using whatever technical analyses help to rationally structure decision-making. But what stands in the way of technocratic ineptitude or intentional wrong-doing? Of course, in parallel to the culture of the scientific community, there could be a culture of technocrats who constantly reviewed each other's work. This might be an option in a system of public decision-making that is fully transparent, but such a tradition has not asserted itself against the political interests of decision-makers. Moreover, what is at stake in the scientific community is generally experimental and observational work that receives much scrutiny before being applied to engineering, medicine and other forms of applied science. Thus, in contrast to the considerable independence of science from political processes, this does not apply to the technocratic basis of public decision-making. Instead, the norm of accountability is emphasized.

One crucial and further reason why the techno-rational structures underlying public decision-making are different from science is that, unlike questions of science, public action inevitably involves ethical values. (Science is not entirely free of such issues either, but in the first instance they involve empirical and explanatory questions of fact, processes, causal relations and observation.) No action can be prescribed or decided without some value commitment underlying it. (This involves the well established is-ought issue in moral philosophy.) It may well be that the underlying value commitment is so consensual that it is not recognized, but it is always there to be unearthed by analysis. At the surface that seems to apply to humanitarian action, where saving lives has strong universal appeal. But even in this respect, it was not too many decades ago that people dying in other parts of world was a matter of regret, but did not necessarily evoke a sense of moral obligation to help. Moreover, even today, it is not clear that the world has accepted moral duties that are matched by the rights of the endangered to be helped. (Slim thought it necessary to make such an argument; see his 2002 article.) In other words, even in the humanitarian field there is scope for relevant and crucial moral debate. It is true that in welfare economics a particular moral position was incorporated into the technical apparatus, but it seems incomplete, having side-stepped issues of distributive justice, and it still leaves in dispute the question of whether the maximization of well-being is to be applied only to bordered political jurisdictions or to wider realms, such as all of humanity. At any rate, a crucial part of accountability is the determination of the relevant moral values.

Once accountability is brought into the picture, the question becomes: accountability to whom? The most obvious descriptive answer is accountability to the paymaster. Within bureaucracies

technical staff that serve to support public decision-making are accountable to the government that pays them. This is not inappropriate, as such governments, at least in democratic systems, are accountable then to the electorate. The electorate comprises the taxpayers, more or less, i.e. the ultimate funders, and also the beneficiaries of the actions taken by governments. That accountability, however, has its limits, especially when the transparency of public institutions is restricted. There is therefore an on-going process of pushing transparency and accountability of public authorities further, even in the most democratic countries.

What is striking about international assistance is that accountability is in the first instance to funders external to the country in which assistance is provided. At times the accountability relationship is of foreign implementers of the assistance to foreign funders of such assistance. As a matter of fact, much of the results agenda has developed in the context of this relationship. But such accountability has also been increasingly required of public authorities that have received assistance from international funders. Underlying some of the push for such accountability has been increased pressure within donor countries for accountability to their electorates. (Eyben 2013: 25.)

Eventually the emphasis on accountability led to another concern: transparency and voice for beneficiaries at the local level. While not backed up by incentives in the way that accountability to funders is (they can simply withdraw or withhold funding), accountability to and participation by local beneficiaries increasingly became part of the morality of international assistance. Complicated by local power structures, local participation and accountability often required external insistence on the inclusion and at times privileging of the marginalized. Morality and expectations may undergird this process, but power and the incentive of protecting funding can relegate it to secondary importance. Moreover, with respect to initial humanitarian relief for sudden-onset crises, there is a problem for consultative participation due to time pressure and the most urgent use of people available to help.

International assistance is provided from outside the territory of a sovereign state with its own authority. It formally requires the permission of this authority. Given that the first responsibility of communities that receive the assistance really lies with the national state and this state may be engaged in efforts of its own to help afflicted communities and they may be part of a national development plan, accountability is also owed to the national authorities. Coordination between international and national efforts can well be important. This is now a third answer to the question of accountability to whom. Unfortunately, international assistance has been a convenient opportunity for corruption in recipient countries and this has usually been at the expense of local beneficiaries. As in the case of local powerholders, part of the power of the purse-strings may have to be to contain maleficent control in the host country. The new ethos of good governance is thus brought into the picture. (Carothers and de Gramont 2013.) As a matter of fact, good governance consists not merely of the absence of predatory behaviour by state elites, but also some form of the results agenda within countries. International assistance can thus be an avenue to promote the internal adoption of a results agenda of some kind.

A problem, however, emerges when funders require not only accountability, but control right from the start. When there is full control, there is no need for accountability; accountability is needed only when there is less than full control. But how can funders exert control from

Brussels, Washington or Tokyo over projects carried out in rural Bangladesh, the cattle ranges of Jonglei State or the slums of Lagos? An extreme approach is payment by verified results, but the reliable verification of results can be costly. Short of this, local funder branch offices will be useful. More importantly, control can be exerted through certain forms of the results agenda. Objectives can become performance measures, with indicated targets in plans and subsequent verification through evaluation. When strictly applied, however, they are prone to perverse effects. For example, if poverty-reduction projects are assessed in terms of the number of households lifted out of poverty, the incentive to implementers is to focus on those easiest and least costly to lift out of poverty, often those whose poverty is less severe, and neglect those who need help more urgently. More generally, as Eyben (2013: 9) has stated, "rules and procedures … may be contrary to what the originating authority might be requiring or expecting." At times project proponents and implementers may simply use spurious data. (2013: 8-9.) Eyben has attributed such abuse of the results agenda to "an organisational environment in which hidden and invisible power determines what knowledge counts and hierarchical ways of working block communications and dialogue." (2013: 8.) A categorical distrust of the capabilities and intentions of professionals and aid workers leading to attempts at strict long-distance and hierarchical control does not bode well for project outcomes. In other words, using the results agenda for strict control can backfire against the basic aims of the results agenda.

(3) A different challenge that is of a somewhat more theoretical nature, but also has practical implications, is what I have labeled "complexity". It relates to stage 1.3 of the results agenda in Box 1 above, specifically the use of previously produced evidence in making decisions about the best action to take. The problem already arises in medicine, the field from which this approach was imported. Evidence-based medicine draws on statistical tests, based on randomized controlled tests, where, for example, a drug is tested for its effectiveness and side-effects. The challenge arises when, for example, the drug is found to be effective, but it is not properly understood why that is so. An understanding of the causal mechanism is missing. How important is this in humanitarian assistance? To the extent that humanitarian assistance is tested in relation to individuals, such as medical remedies to malnutrition or diseases, it coincides with medicine and has the same solutions. However, much humanitarian assistance is to be assessed in terms of the impacts on groups and populations. In that case, a sample consists of different instances of humanitarian assistance and different populations or groups. At this level it is much more difficult to develop a large sample. Moreover, unless there is little variation in the outcomes, in which case there is an argument for the universalizability of the humanitarian remedy, outcomes can be expected to depend on the particular environmental, economic, cultural or political contexts. Context dependence of humanitarian interventions make it crucial to understand why a particular intervention works in one context but not in another. The strict method of randomized controlled tests will generally not reveal that. An approach that probes what people are thinking and cultural patterns will be much more productive in this respect.

Understanding is further complicated when action occurs within what are referred to as "complex systems" with a high degree of uncertainty. Uncertainty can apply both to a non-intervention scenario, which is unlikely to remain fixed, and to an intervention scenario. In a complex system even risks cannot be specified. Humanitarian crises and the contexts for rehabilitative and preventive humanitarian action typically fit the description of complex systems. The application of the results agenda in complex situations has led to a burgeoning

literature (see e.g. Pawson 2013 and Patton 2011). I will confine myself here to merely referring to the general conclusion that in this kind of context a more exploratory approach is required, one that is consistent only with the most flexible forms of the results agenda. Still, the results agenda is not irrelevant; on-going feedback about the outcomes is particularly important in this kind of setting.

(4) One way to make decision-making more manageable is by reducing the range of problems to be addressed and the scope of the outcomes to be monitored. Presumably this was the rationale behind the clusters organization of humanitarian relief. But this calls forth the comprehensiveness challenge. When decision-making silos develop, it is natural to raise the question of what is neglected as a result. One focus in this paper is the connections between humanitarian relief, reconstruction and on-going development, and peacebuilding. Separating relief from reconstruction and reconstruction from the resumption of development and development from peacebuilding all have negative consequences. Ending relief suddenly without a transition to a sustainable process often leaves people in a condition of dependency without the means of re-establishing some form of self-reliance. Planning or shaping development without attention to peacebuilding ignores the fact that particular patterns of development are prone to leading to civil war and humanitarian crises, particularly patterns that accentuate or maintain horizontal inequities (see e.g. Stewart [ed.] 2008). Moreover, once civil war has broken out, as it has in South Sudan recently, hostilities, such as between ethnic groups, are sharply intensified and finding an approach to reconstruction and development that also serves a peacebuilding function becomes even more crucial. For those reasons, humanitarian relief, reconstructive and sustainable development and peacebuilding cannot be undertaken in complete separation from each other. A more comprehensive approach is required. The more comprehensive the decision-making scope is, the more complex it becomes.

This creates a dilemma. Decision-making is most manageable when undertaken on a relatively small scale. However, decision-making is often required on a large scale in order to have beneficial effects and avoid new problems. Of course, as in the cluster approach, it is possible to combine decision-making in relatively confined spheres with coordination across these spheres. All organizations use this combination. But it does not really resolve the dilemma. Coordination across decision-making spheres itself involves decision-making and typically the most crucial decision-making. The dilemma of manageability and comprehensiveness has simply been pushed up the hierarchy. What this means is that even if the strict form of the results agenda is appropriate for smaller and lower spheres of decision-making, it becomes less so as the sphere becomes more comprehensive. The need for supportive structures for decision-making may actually increase, but a more discretionary and less protocol-based use of the results agenda is called for.

In general the conclusion of these problems for the results agenda is not that it should be dropped, but rather than it needs to be used in a flexible manner. As a matter of fact, the results agenda should be self-reflexive in applying its criteria to itself. Does the application of the results agenda lead to good results? More usefully, in which form does the results agenda lead to good results?

4. Humanitarian innovation and the results agenda

At last I turn to the theme of this conference, namely humanitarian innovation. In doing so, I will first raise what may seem a dumb question: why innovate? It is a useful question to ask, because innovation involves both pros and cons, including with respect to humanitarian work, and it is conceivable that, in particular areas and forms, innovation does more harm than good. Innovation involves experimentation with options many of which turn out to be disadvantageous. When such experimentation cannot be done in the laboratory, but has to be done in the real world, the human costs of experimentation have to be taken into account. If experimentation can harm people in ways that cannot be compensated, the precautionary principle articulated in the context of environmental considerations should also be applied to humanitarian crises. (In its extreme form the principle ends up having absurd consequences; only a reasonable, moderate version of it is appealing on closer scrutiny.) A precautionary approach applies especially when differences in mortality are involved, because the dead cannot be compensated. (This blunt claim is sufficient to make the point, even though further analysis may lead to qualification of the claim, e.g. compensating dependents of the dead.) There is much to be said for the position that evolved practice has proven itself in the past and should not be tampered with without significant inhibition. Nevertheless, even though innovation in the real world has to be approached with caution, proven practice must have involved innovation in the past and that provides good reason for believing that innovation can do so in the future as well. An argument that after a sufficient period of experimentation we have arrived at a best practice is not persuasive, especially in a world where the humanitarian challenges change as do the means at our disposal for addressing them (technology, organizational structures, etc.).

In dealing with the application of the results agenda to humanitarian innovation, it is useful to begin with a distinction between two kinds of innovation: adaptive innovations and primary innovations. The distinction is made in the context of the stages of the results agenda. Primary innovations are introduced in the planning stage and become part of the original design. Adaptive innovations are adopted in the process of implementation as unexpected problems and opportunities arise.

Adaptive innovation can occur in many aspects of a project. One aspect that I particularly want to draw attention to is that of both value differences between major stakeholders and of value-learning by particular stakeholder groups. It is quite possible that there is a disagreement regarding what is valuable between the funders and the beneficiaries or, alternatively, that the beneficiaries initially agree with the values and goals articulated by the initiators of a project, but when they come to understand the significance of those goals, they find that they prefer to articulate different values and goals. Box 1 of the stages of the results agenda did not provide for feedback loops and implicitly assumed that aims or goals are fixed, once they are formulated. Unless there is scope for adaptive innovation, including with respect to something as fundamental as the goals and performance indicators, there can be an unresolved conflict among the stakeholders. To avoid this, the flexibility required for adaptive innovation is needed. This is an important point against rigid or strict forms of the Results agenda.

Before moving from adaptive to primary innovations, it is useful to provide further distinctions, in order to make humanitarian innovations somewhat more concrete. Table 1 represents a first cut at such a classification.

Table 1. Classification of humanitarian innovations		
Types of innovation	Elaboration	Examples
Technical-scientific	may first be tested in laboratories or other controlled conditions, but will then have to be introduced to social settings	ICT, double-bagged food drops, wells, vaccines
Organi-zational	coordination of different forms of expertise, organizations and need domains	the cluster system
Gover-nance	states and IGOs providing leadership, funding, supplies	Consolidated Appeal
Advocacy	many humanitarian organizations provide not only humanitarian assistance, but also engage in advocacy of various kind, ranging from fund-raising to preventing harmful developments	the global campaign to ban landmines
Sector-linking	humanitarian assistance overlaps with other activity sectors and these can be linked	Links of the humanitarian sector to the military, to development, to peacebuilding, to the environment

In each of these areas, it is possible for adaptive innovations during the implementation and monitoring stage to be sufficiently substantial and universalizable, i.e. not entirely specific to a particular context, that they can serve as primary innovations in the next round of project planning for a different context. This can emerge from the lessons learned in the evaluation of the first-round project or projects. Such evaluations, however, have turned out to manifest a tension between their accountability function and their lesson-learning function. It was found that evaluations of foreign aid projects and programs which focused on lessons learned were not very helpful in assessing their overall success. (Cracknell 2000: 54-57.) Humanitarian innovations are dependent on lessons learned, but also need to meet the accountability requirement, in particular the judgement as to whether they have been successful. The conclusion that this suggests is that the accountability functions and the lessons-learned functions of evaluations need to be clearly separated.

For primary innovations, whether they emerged from prior adaptive innovations or are transfers from other fields (such as the use of information and communication technology) or are based one someone's hunch or some collective intuition, there is also an accountability issue, this one at the planning stage. It concerns the question of how to respond to the risk of failure. If two project options are available, one using a tried and true approach yielding reasonably predictable results, and another using a novel approach with results that are potentially much better but involve a fairly high degree of uncertainty, accountability requirements that focus on "have you been successful or not?" will normally privilege the former. It is only if lessons learned count as

part of the success of a project that accountability does not have this bias. But it is hard to imagine that such lessons can be made comparable with conventional success indicators.

Because innovative proposals are therefore likely to lose out in the competition for funding to proposals based on currently valued practice, separate funding is probably needed to encourage primary innovations. Such innovations can, of course, be tried one innovation at a time, but, from an epistemic perspective, multiple experimentation is better. Trying different options and then comparing them in terms of outcomes is more informative than simply testing a single innovative option. However, humanitarian innovations involve human beings in crisis, not hydraulic engineering experiments. Ethics loom large in humanitarian crises. It is comparable to medical treatment experiments on people with fatal illnesses. One cannot simply take a consequentialist approach (implied in the term results agenda) and justify such experimentation on the grounds of doing more good than harm. While the do-no-harm principle is too simplistic in that it does not provide useful guidance on issues of probabilities, risks and uncertainty, it is an ethical caution against simple consequentialism. Here it may be important to distinguish between actions in humanitarian crises and development initiatives. In humanitarian crises experimentation and lesson learning, while important, has to be secondary to saving lives and respecting human dignity. Diversity in conditions and responses will produce a range of lessons, if attention is paid to them, and provide the basis for future innovation. Regarding development initiatives, different options may be pursed in response to different community choices. Multiple experimentation can thus be pursued by respecting community self-determination.

Whether experimenting with different options or simply exploring the merits of a particular innovation, the results agenda is relevant in the form of evaluation. In general, a commitment to sound innovation requires "liv[ing] the paradox between absolute dedication to a great vision and ruthless commitment to staring reality in the face." (Patton 2011: 6.) "Absolute dedication" is needed given the obstacles that innovation typically faces; but I here want to emphasize "staring reality in the face". It requires evaluation and evidence as guard against wishful thinking.

Evaluation can then become a tool of advocacy for the diffusion of innovations, as it did in the case of community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) which involved a shift from an inpatient to an outpatient approach. (Darcy et al. 2013: 30. I acknowledge the research assistance of Goretti Mpaka on this topic.) Advocacy for innovations can, of course, develop a momentum beyond what is warranted by evaluations, as has been demonstrated regarding the "stoves reduce rape" initiative. While sexual violence in and around refugee camps involves a complex set of factors, this particular initiative simplified ("technologized") the problem by focusing entirely on fuel-efficient stoves to minimize the need for women to collect firewood, which exposed them to the substantial risk of sexual attack. It misleadingly obviated a more complex solution. (Abdelnour and Saeed 2014.) Evaluation is thus also needed as a check on the advocacy of humanitarian innovations.

Eyben has argued that "short-term and fluctuating project-related rather than core funding, combined with the donor pooling of funds … [has] discouraged experimentation and risk-taking". (2013: 10.) In general, though, her critique is aimed at the results agenda. What is not clear from this is whether the funding strategy, which has accompanied a declining "interest in rights and social transformation" (p. 10), is inherently or contingently connected with the results

agenda. Is it inevitable that the results agenda has the effect of disciplining change such that social transformations, which are needed to tackle poverty, marginalization and vulnerability to disasters, are blocked? (For the dependence of vulnerability to natural disasters on social structures, see Wisner et al. 1994/2004: e.g. ch. 1.) Such deeper change requires flexibility of a kind that certainly the stricter forms of the results agenda generally do not accommodate. However, rather than seeing such conservatism as intrinsic to the results agenda, it can be viewed as shaping the form of the results agenda. The results agenda is, in principle, consistent with revolutionary change (although not the kind of revolutionary change that creates much suffering and in the end is mostly an exchange of elites rather than radical change in the structures that determine the living conditions of people in general). Without the results agenda social transformation is just as readily blocked as it is through the results agenda.

The focus of this paper, however, is not persistent poverty, but humanitarian crises and more specifically the complex emergencies that involve violent conflict and are a typical feature of fragile states, such as South Sudan. Later in this paper it will be argued that in South Sudan it is important to link humanitarian relief, reconstruction and development and peacebuilding. Here I will simply draw attention to the conclusion reached within the OECD's Development Assistance Committee by a review process about fragile states, which was "that successful development in a fragile environment depends, at least in part, on well-sequenced and coherent progress across the political, security, economic and administrative domains. Working effectively across these domains requires donor countries to adopt a 'whole-of-government' approach (WGA) …" (OECD/DAC 2006: 7.) The argument was that failure in one policy sphere risks failure in all the others. In this kind of context, coordination requires not only that policies in the different spheres are successful together, but also that the impacts that policies instituted in one sphere have on other policy spheres need to be taken into account in the design of policies. Regarding the particular concerns of this paper, the impacts of humanitarian relief on violent conflict (which in the case of assistance in response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004, for example, varied substantially between Aceh in Indonesia and Sri Lanka) and on development have to be considered, as does the impact of development on war and peace— there is now considerable literature on this relationship (see e.g. Langer et al., eds., 2012, Kozul-Wright et al., eds., 2011 and Stewart, ed., 2008)— and the function of peacebuilding in reducing disaster risk and the risk of future humanitarian crises.

Such broadening of scope has previously in this paper been referred to as the comprehensiveness challenge, in this case expressed as a particular requirement of fragile states. Part of the earlier discussion also was that increasing the scope of action increases the complexity faced and that makes the application of the results agenda much more difficult. One response to the complexity challenge mentioned earlier in this paper has been "developmental evaluation" (Patton 2011. "Developmental evaluation" and "development evaluation" developed independently of each other and need to be distinguished. [2011: 20-21.] Development evaluation refers to the field with which evaluation is concerned, namely socio-economic development. Developmental evaluation, on the other hand, refers to an approach to evaluation. Thus, developmental evaluation could be employed within development evaluation, but neither implies or requires the other.) Developmental evaluation has been proposed as an alternative to an orthodox approach in social development (e.g. anti-poverty and public-health programs) in some highly

industrialized countries, which consists of "formative" and "summative" evaluation. Formative evaluation is part of a phase of initial experimentation, before programs are fixed for implementation and at the end submitted to summative evaluation. Developmental evaluation, as a response to complexity, pulls the results-agenda steps outlined in quite simple terms in Box 1 above together into one stage by continuous rapid feedback for on-going adaptation. Such a highly flexible and loose process clearly has disadvantages: evaluations are likely to vary with evaluators, there will be little scope for comparative studies of lessons to be drawn from different cases (complexity itself may greatly limit that in any case) and knowledge obtained may be so context-specific that there will be little accumulation of knowledge useful across contexts. (Pawson [2013], who has also focused on evaluation in relation to complexity and wants to keep it as a "science", is skeptical of developmental evaluation in that he finds it too loose, unstructured and lacking in guiding principles.) I am referring here to developmental evaluation not to recommend it nor to set it up in order to offer a superior approach, but rather to make another point about the relationship between the results agenda and innovation, which is that the results agenda itself is in need of innovation.

The results agenda right from the start developed through a process of innovation and the transfer of decision-making techniques from one field to another, e.g. from military planning to social services (where talk of "target groups" became common) and from business management to public administration and from there to international assistance. But the field of development assistance developed its own decision-supporting protocol in the form of the logical framework. Moreover, it can in no way be said that the results agenda in international assistance has been so standardized and settled that there is now full agreement as to which methods are to be used for particular purposes. The area is very much in flux. The preceding discussion about the results agenda, in particular evaluation, in relation to complexity shows some of this. Moreover, the way the results agenda is used varies considerably among organizations. To the extent that there is something approaching consensus on certain points, it tends to be subject to intellectual and managerial fashion. Nevertheless, particular funders make particular commitments in terms of their expectations and requirements regarding the use of aspects of the results agenda. These then are critical.

Innovation within the results agenda can move in the direction increasing control by funders over proposers and implementers or in the direction of encouraging humanitarian innovation. It is true that humanitarian innovation is not unconditionally good; it depends on the results, which is the core idea of the results agenda and which requires evaluation from the results agenda tool-kit. Humanitarian innovation, however, is certainly required in assistance to fragile states, pursued with appropriate caution, of course. A conspicuous example of state fragility is South Sudan, to which we now turn. (The 2014 issue of the Fragile States Index of the Fund for Peace has now ranked South Sudan as the most fragile state in the world.)

5. The humanitarian crisis in South Sudan

(Detailed referencing is not used in this brief sketch; the sources include the internet news source *Sudan Tribune*, Natsios 2012 and Johnson 2003.)

The case focus in this paper is the complex humanitarian emergency in South Sudan. South Sudan became the world's newest state in 2011, when, on the basis of a referendum that had been provided for through a "Comprehensive Peace Agreement", it seceded from Sudan. It took with it about a quarter of Sudan's population of around 40 million as well as about a quarter of the territory of Sudan (previously the territorially largest state in Africa). The secession was the eventual conclusion of a protracted civil war. The longer-term view is that it was a half-century civil war with an 11-year intermission; the shorter-term view is to see the peace agreement in 2005 as ending a two-decade war. What is crucial is to recognize that, not only did the wars create massive death, displacement and suffering, but they were also paralleled by and partly responsible for serious underdevelopment. At the same time, South Sudan has substantial reserves of oil (that pre-division Sudan had seriously started to exploit in the late 1990s), which is a double-edged sword: it could fuel development, including agricultural development, but it can also be the basis of the "resource curse", with self-enriching elites contesting control over the oil revenues.

Towards the end of 2013, the fragility of the South Sudanese state became apparent through a political crisis that became a major humanitarian crisis. A political rivalry turned into civil war with a substantial ethnic dimension. The outcome has been at least 10,000 people killed, including a large number of non-combatants, over 1.5 million displaced, including a substantial proportion across the country's border to neighbouring countries and about 100,000 who have fled into UN compounds. Seven million, substantially more than half the population, are now deemed to be at risk of famine and disease. There have been intermittent negotiations between the two sides in conflict, one eventually leading to a guarantee for humanitarian access. Quite apart from threats from armed conflict, however, there is now the problem that, with the start of the rainy season in June, the movement of goods is greatly impeded, particularly in parts that are subject to the expansion of the large Nile wetland, the Sudd, which is in the middle of the country.

It is not as though this catastrophe has hit a country that, if not well developed, had at least a stable subsistence economy for its population. During the earlier war with Sudan, when most of the military confrontations tended to occur in the south, large numbers of people fled to the north and many of these formed a major part of the slum ring around Khartoum. Large numbers have been returning to South/ern Sudan, some after the end of the war, others after independence, when they were made to feel unwelcome by the Khartoum regime. After many years away, a substantial number no longer had a clear home base in the south and had to be accommodated in camps. In addition, several earlier rebellions had occurred in South Sudan, some triggered by leaders who failed to be elected. In particular, in the east of the country there was a violent conflict between the Murle and the Nuer that centred on cattle-raiding, involved revenge and was entangled with the disarmament process; it led to extensive death and displacement, including across the border with Kenya. Furthermore, although the horrendous warfare in Darfur did not seem to significantly affect South Sudan—the latter's peace agreement though must have affected the dynamic of violence in Darfur—there have been other insurgencies in the southern part of post-division Sudan to the north that have been tackled with characteristic brutality by the Khartoum regime and that have produced refugee flows into South Sudan. In other words, there was already a certain level of humanitarian emergency prior to the war that started last December.

If the focus were strictly on humanitarian relief, elaboration of this picture rather than historical contextualization would be needed. However, for reasons given above and below, the concern here is not so much with relief as such, but the links between relief, development and peacebuilding. That makes causal understanding important. For that reason, I will provide a short contextual sketch.

Although the civil war started with a shoot-out within the Presidential Guard in the night of December 15, 2013, the earlier trigger of the conflict goes back to developments one year ago. In response to the Vice-President, Riek Machar, making it known that he planned to stand for the position of President in the scheduled election of 2015, the President, Salva Kiir, who clearly plans to do the same, dismissed and replaced him as Vice-President. Moreover, he dismissed the whole cabinet and reconstituted a new and smaller one, excluding the immediate supporters and allies of the former Vice-President. Some replacements of elected state governors were also made. All this occurred within the ruling party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, which had, before the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, been the political arm of the insurgent army of the Southern Sudanese, the Sudan People's Liberation Army. It is still somewhat of a puzzle— certainly to me— what exactly happened in the first hours and days of the armed violence. The President and his government declared that a coup attempt had been made and rounded up about a dozen challengers, but the former Vice-President and some of his closest associates managed to evade arrest. There was large-scale killing in the capital, Juba. Units of the national army went into rebellion and were joined by militias of Nuer youths (the "White Army"); the former Vice-President took charge of this rebellion. The national army received support from the Ugandan army and there have been claims that rebel units that had been fighting in (northern) Sudan against Khartoum also fought on the side of the government.

What is evident is that from the beginning the violence acquired an ethnic dimension, most of it being conducted between the two largest ethnic groups in South Sudan, the largest group of Dinka (perhaps two-fifths of the country's population) and the second largest group, the Nuer (possibly between one-sixth and one-ninth of the total). The President is a Dinka and the former Vice-President a Nuer and this seems to have shaped much of the dynamic of the violence. But it should also be noted that important Nuer leaders within the national army remained loyal to the President and a number of Dinka leaders have opposed the President. Moreover, of what are at times cited as around 60 different ethnicities, none of the others seem to have been involved in a significant way in the armed conflict as ethnic groups. Geographically, apart from a few days of extensive violence in the capital of Juba, where most of the victims seem to have been Nuer, and a highly destructive struggle in the centrally located city of Bor, much of the warfare has occurred in the oil-rich areas of the north and north-east of South Sudan.

It is significant that "South" does not appear in the name of the party in power nor in the name of the army. This reflects certain historical aspirations. The key figure in the second civil war of Sudan (1983-2004) was John Garang. He led the Sudan People's Liberation Army, not with the aim of secession of the southern region of Sudan, but with the aim of regime change in Khartoum. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 was an acknowledgement of the military stalemate and, in the first instance, represented a formal reconciliation, with John Garang becoming Vice-President of the whole of Sudan. While the southern region was given

very substantial autonomy and a referendum that would allow the southern Sudanese to determine whether they would remain within Sudan or become fully independent, it was by no means foreordained that South Sudan's leadership would push for secession. However, shortly after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement John Garang was killed in a helicopter crash. He was replaced in his roles by Salva Kiir, an old stalwart of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). With that, the "New Sudan" vision seemed to slide off the agenda of the southern Sudanese leadership.

As a matter of fact, the insurgency of southern Sudan was neither consistently unified in its command and operations nor in its goals. Riek Machar, who later became the Vice-President and now leads the current rebellion, and others broke away from the SPLA in 1991, at times attempting to take over leadership from John Garang, at other times creating competing insurgencies that aspired to secession rather than regime change, but then made a separate (but eventually untenable) peace with Khartoum and engaged in warfare against the SPLA, with much bloodshed. (Machar rejoined the SPLA in 2002.) The SPLA of 2013 was really a corralling of old and new rebels and their military followers into a structure together with consistently loyal units, rather than a national army with a reliable, centralized command structure. It is thus not surprising that it broke up so easily and is a crucial part of the fragility of the South Sudanese state, which emerged out of the previously insurgent military, which at times was split and waged war against each other, but was reunited before the peace agreement with Khartoum.

Apart from the humanitarian necessities, what South Sudan needs first of all is a reliable peace—in the first instance, peace merely in the negative sense of absence of armed conflict and the security of people to be able to pursue their traditional livelihoods. But peace will not be easy to attain, since many structures and practices of communities of South Sudan are from an era in which the presence of state structures was minimal and security required self-reliance. This took the form of collective revenge as a deterrent to inter-communal harm. With the current civil war, many atrocities have been committed, and there is a strong tendency to see these as requiring revenge. Peacebuilding requires replacing the culture of collective revenge by a culture of interdependence and collaboration and, in the longer run, adjudication and punishment by state institutions. More immediately, at the local level traditional reconciliation practices will need to be invoked. But repairing the harm done by the war, together with older grievances, will need to be built into the development process. This places demands on the results agenda, which is the subject of the next and last substantial section.

6. A needs-assessment framework for South Sudan

What does South Sudan now need and how can the international community help? I will only briefly address this question substantively and then turn to an element of the results agenda, specifically an innovative sketch that focuses on needs assessment. A substantive answer to the question is that South Sudan needs humanitarian relief to avoid disastrous mortality, it needs peacebuilding to prevent future violent conflict and it needs sustainable and livelihood-oriented development, given the low standard of living and human development that it had even before the recent civil war and that clearly worsened as a result of the war. Moreover, given the size of

the government army, the rebel army and the various militias, which are legacies from the long civil wars in the then still formally united Sudan, it needs a process of long-term disarmament and demobilization combined with sufficiently attractive livelihoods for those demobilized that the process will not face strong resistance.

Not only does South Sudan need these processes, but a substantial degree of integration among them is needed. Relief that keeps displaced and starving people alive, but does not enable them to rebuild their lives and livelihoods leaves them impoverished and with a diminished future and open to expressing their discontent by following future challengers to state authority. Mere reconstruction that does not feed into a dynamic process of sustainable development can constitute a similarly fragile recovery. Relief, reconstruction and development that do not pay attention to peacebuilding and instead feed into current hostilities can also be stimuli to renewed war. The outbreak of the civil war stems, at least in part, from unfulfilled (and probably ethnically related) expectations regarding development. Finally, for disarmament and demobilization to be successful, individuals need to see a mutually beneficial exchange: a gun for a livelihood. Without a livelihoods-promoting pattern of development, this is not possible.

As much as possible, relief, reconstruction and livelihood-advancing and peacebuilding development that can accommodate disarmament and demobilization ought to come from the state of South Sudan. It does have oil revenues with which to do at least some of that, although a big portion of it currently goes into military pay. I am not in a position to quantitatively assess what these revenues should enable the state to accomplish. Certainly the size of the government debt and cutbacks in spending (in the 2014-2015 budget recently tabled) suggest that assistance from the international community is needed. Such assistance, to be effective, should also take the above substantive needs into account.

To return to the results agenda, I will now present a drawing-board sketch of a needs assessment for South Sudan. (I use the term "drawing-board sketch" to distinguish it from implemented innovations.) In Box 1 listing the stages and steps in a results agenda, the first step is a problem analysis and formulation of aims. This can, of course, be done in a manner that is based on experience, intuition and impressions, in other words without formal tools of the results agenda. The brief substantive discussion above did that, as far as it went. However, before determining strategic prescriptions, it is useful to identify at least one aspect of the the problem and that is the needs of the population. Identifying these is what is offered by the drawing-board sketch.

Moreover, the sketch provided is a response to recent critiques of humanitarian needs assessments. A summary of such critiques is presented in Box 2.

All these critical points can be sorted into three themes: (a) the use of a service conception of needs that is intended to justify funding for particular project proposals ("supply-driven"); (b) lack of comprehensiveness, geographic gaps and inconsistency across contexts; (c) practicality issues of usability, timeliness and institutional and expert capacity. The drawing-board sketch will offer responses to each in turn.

Box 2: Summary of critical assessments of humanitarian needs assessments

"… a plethora of criticisms has been clearly and repeatedly stated by practitioners and
researchers regarding needs assessment tools, processes, and systems (UNHCR, WFP et al.
2000; Darcy, Griekspoor et al. 2003; Darcy and Hofmann 2003; Mock and Garfield 2007; Bradt
2009). These include:
• Lack of uniform definitions around common terms;
• Objectives being limited and unclear;
• A blurring between identifying needs and filling perceived "service gaps;"
• Tendency to be conducted by operational agencies in order to substantiate a request for funds—
        introducing inevitable bias into the process;
• Missing vital information regarding wider contexts (including political, social, and greater
        economic factors);
• Seen as supply-driven and a "front-loaded" process;
• Disjointed across sectors and poorly coordinated, leading to contradictory information;
• Overlapping in geographic coverage while missing other areas;
• Poor data reliability due to inadequate institutional capacity and poor methodology;
• Too much data collected that go unused;
• Too little or incorrect data collected to demonstrate true needs;
• Data being specifically catered to justify a project design and donor proposal;
• Presenting outputs inadequately to decision makers;
• Results being too slow to drive humanitarian response."

(Darcy et al. 2013: 22.)

(a) One major concern that emerges from these evaluations of humanitarian needs assessments
is that such needs assessments seem to flow out of initial notions of service needs and are simply
used to justify proposals for particular services. They are not articulated in terms of deprivations
or threats regarding the conditions of people, e.g. articulating needs in terms of health services
rather than health conditions and vulnerabilities. (This conflation of needs and service
prescriptions applies even to the approach recommended by the World Bank's Watkins, West
Meiers and Visser 2012.) The service-needs approach pre-empts a more open-ended approach to
finding solutions to deprivations and vulnerabilities and thus tends to short-circuit the search for
possibly better solutions and innovations. It also may foreclose solutions consisting of
enhancing the capacities of communities to address and avert crises. Thus one feature of the
needs-assessment framework that is being laid out as a drawing-board sketch is to articulate
needs as deprivations and vulnerabilities such that various solutions are possibilities, including in
particular community self-reliance or assisted community capacity. Articulating needs as
deprivations and vulnerabilities is particularly important in a country such as South Sudan where
the reach and reliability of state institutions is still quite limited. (My interest in needs as
deprivations first emerged in Penz 1986: Part V, where needs were proposed as an alternative to
want-satisfaction in the ultimate assessment of the performance of economies. In Penz, Drydyk
and Bose 2011: 55, "forms of harm that can result from displacement" [Table 3.4] can also be
used as a check list of deprivations.)

There may now seem to be a contradiction between a concern with silo-bridging between relief,
development and peacebuilding, all of which are areas of action to be taken, and the insistence

on avoiding the articulation of needs in service terms. That would indeed be the case if needs were articulated as relief needs, development needs and peacebuilding needs and I did indeed use that language at the beginning of this section. But that is not the approach of this drawing-board initiative. Instead, under a sufficiently broad conception of human security, they could all be articulated as human-security needs. More specifically, they could be articulated as needs with respect to survival, livelihoods and capabilities and security in the narrower sense. This leaves open the question of how such needs are to be met and still requires a separate exploration of the best ways of doing this.

That means that needs assessment, as so formulated, performs a particular function in the results agenda. It is part of the first step in the results agenda (see Box 1), the problem analysis and formulation of aims. (Some project cycles are articulated such that a needs assessment would not be part of them, but would have to precede them. See e.g. Cracknell 2000: 95-99.)   A needs assessment then generates or at least informs the specification of objectives, indicators, i.e. measures, for such objectives and possibly targets. (An alternative to targets is to treat objectives and their measures simply as something to be maximized.) The function of needs assessments thus is to provide the information base to determine <u>what</u> should be accomplished, leaving open the question of <u>how</u> it is to be accomplished. Needs assessments thus provide a sense of direction for assistance activities and the basis for on-going monitoring as well as final retrospective ("summative" or "ex post") evaluations.

(b) The second theme of the critiques was the lack of comprehensiveness and coherence across sectors. The response of the drawing-board sketch here is twofold. First, the coverage should certainly be country-wide. Secondly, in accordance with the conception of needs articulated above, it should be largely separated from particular service sectors and cut across them.

In itself, this is not particularly innovative. A recent development in humanitarian needs assessment, which less than a decade ago "resembled a tower of Babel" (Garfield 2011: 1), has been moving in a similar direction, under the term "common needs assessment". (Garfield 2011.) Garfield adopted the following definition of such assessments provided in a 2009 Bangkok workshop on the Pakistan and Myanmar experiences: a "time-bound, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data to assess needs and inform decisions on humanitarian and early recovery responses". (2011: 3.) It thus cuts across the humanitarian clusters and it involves the collaboration of a number of agencies. However, it still seems tied to the larger humanitarian sector and does not seem to be concerned with providing an information base for development and peacebuilding, which is a major concern of the drawing-board scheme. In that sense the latter goes beyond the "common needs assessment". Moreover, the drawing-board scheme differs from the "common needs assessment" in that it is not "time-bound". Instead, it is intended as a <u>framework</u> for a permanent data base to be constantly updated.

In general, making a component of the results agenda more comprehensive exposes it to a greater extent to the complexity challenge and the problem of understanding. However, that does not apply to a needs assessment approach that is prior to and largely independent from policy making and project design. While it is true that, on the whole, different humanitarian clusters, for example, relate to different need domains (food for nutrition needs, clean water and sanitation

for health needs, etc.), when articulated in relatively generic terms, e.g. survival and mortality, the same needs can be served by different activity areas, e.g. medical clinics and protection services. And that goes for development as well. The complexity problem arises primarily in cause-and-effects relations and concerns the question of what works. While such questions may arise regarding vulnerability, it is generally not an overwhelming problem.

(c) Finally, there are critiques that fit into what was referred to in Section 3 above as the practicality challenge. They involve issues of usability, timeliness and institutional and expert capacity. Usability is somewhat complicated by the fact that there are quite different categories of users, from the general public and the communication media to particular communities and their leaders, political representatives and senior decision-makers, government officials, activists, local civil-society-organization leaders and service-providers, their counterparts in international civil-society organizations and analysts and decision-makers in international funding units. However, that challenge can be readily addressed by different levels and forms of summary of the needs data.

Timeliness may seem to be more of a challenge. It is true that the approach to needs assessment represented by the drawing-board sketch cannot help with the information needs required for humanitarian relief that is so urgent now. As a matter of fact, the brief description of the humanitarian crisis in the previous section indicates that such an information base is currently in place, even though it might have gaps such as concerning communities that have not come to the attention of the international humanitarian community, but are nevertheless suffering substantial deprivation. However, what the drawing-board sketch provides is a permanent data base that is constantly updated, provides information about vulnerabilities and thus provides a useful base in case a humanitarian crisis occurs again in the future. That then applies even to a sudden-onset crisis. In other words, while it cannot provide for timeliness now, it can do so in the future.

The third practicality issue that arises from the critiques of past needs assessments is that of capacity and expertise. By gradually building the needs data base within the framework of the drawing-board sketch, capacity for conducting needs assessments can be developed at the same time. If the data base is to be located in and managed by a national university, such as the University of Juba, it can involve faculty and students as well as civil-society members, all of whom can learn the criteria and techniques of gathering the data. If, on the other hand, it is to be located in the Government of South Sudan, so that the government has some commitment to it, then it is government officials, from the national to the county level, who will need the training. Some hybrid between these two options may be possible as well. The basic point is that the framework allows progressive and cumulative development of the data base that is accompanied by the necessary capacity building.

The drawing-board sketch is presented in Box 3. Several of the points have already been explained, but further elaboration is needed.

The first point to be made is that, in the first instance, it is not intended for the international assistance community, but rather for the citizens and government of South Sudan. While it is to be expected that the international community will be heavily involved in assistance, South Sudan should "own" the data base and can use it to negotiate assistance priorities with the international

Box 3. Drawing-board sketch of needs-assessment framework for South Sudan
Purpose and objectives

▪ To provide a basis for the Government of South Sudan (current and future) to determine the greatest needs for
   o The prioritization of state action to help communities across the country
   o Negotiations with international humanitarian and development partners in prioritizing their assistance

Core features
▪ A comprehensive frame into which particular needs assessments can be placed, while providing for compatibility and coherence across communities, areas, and service and governance sectors ▪ Progression from initial rapid assessment to more thorough comprehensive assessment (rounds of cumulative needs assessment) ▪ A conception of basic needs that involves (i) deprivation in relation to human security (broadly conceived), (ii) equity and (iii) participation ▪ Distinguishing levels of needs fulfillment ▪ Country ownership and in-country capacity building in needs assessment from the national to the local level ▪ Open-ended regarding remedies, but facilitating the integration of humanitarian assistance, socio-economic development, peacebuilding and environmental sustainability

donor community rather than simply react to what is offered. This is consistent with what de Waal (1997: ch. 1) has referred to as the important social contract between states and their people to prevent famine, in the way that it has worked in India since independence. While needs data in themselves do not constitute such a social contract, they facilitate it.

Secondly, it is conceived as a framework. As such it becomes the receptacle for needs assessments carried out at different times and for different occasions. This, of course, incurs the risk of incoherence. To minimize this risk it is important to have a shared conception of needs. As indicated above, this drawing-board sketch uses a deprivation and vulnerability conception. At the same time, given that it is to be owned by South Sudan, the articulation of the conception has to be negotiated within South Sudan. This involves a challenge related to accountability and potential disagreement among major stakeholders. One conceivable approach would be to let each community articulate its own needs. Many needs assessments do exactly that. However, such needs assessments usually rely on a conception of needs as needs for something rather than as deprivation and vulnerability. Moreover, such needs assessments do not lend themselves to determining the relative levels of neediness among different communities. For that, cross-community criteria are required. These do not have to be "objective" criteria, but they do have to be at least "inter-subjective" in that there is agreement across communities about the criteria and standards. In other words, it requires national criteria and standards. Ideally they would emerge from some cross-community process. Or they would be articulated by the state on behalf of the country as a whole.

At the same time, there has to be scope for communities to express their distinctive priorities. That means that the national conception of needs may have to be complemented by more specific local conceptions. For example, some subsistence communities might want to express their

deprivation in terms of cattle poverty, while others, producing for a market, might do so in terms of money to buy necessities. But arriving at some form of equivalence would be essential and this requires national criteria. The process of generating it will take some time. It may even require allowing for some adaptive innovation with respect to values as discussed in Section 4. Given the cumulative approach explained below, this does not need to delay data collection.

Since the conception of need refers not only to deprivation, but also vulnerability, early-warning elements can be built into it. This can be early warning regarding famine, early warning regarding violent conflict, or any other danger for which early-warning signals can be identified. Building an early-warning dimension into the needs-assessment framework would require considerable sophistication, but it is conceptually connected with vulnerability and such integration makes sense logistically.

The depth and thoroughness of the needs data would depend on the resources available for it. As a matter of practicality, the building of the needs data set can proceed in rounds. That is to say, the first round could consist of data that can be obtained quickly and cheaply, partly by using currently available statistics, partly by obtaining approximate pictures of local situations through informed impressions by local observers reached by phone or internet. It would also identify the gaps and unanswered questions that remain at this level. A second round might consist of a comprehensive but rapid survey, involving visits to counties and perhaps payams (a lower jurisdiction). Further surveys may then be required where certain questions remain. In other words, it would not have the procedural rigidity of a census, but would be flexible to first obtain maximum data quickly and cheaply and then proceed to greater thoroughness, including to answer questions that arise in the process of making policies and developing programs and projects.

The needs assessments— it is really several assessments integrated into one framework— should then allow a more particular kind of judgement to be made, and that is about relative levels of deprivation and vulnerability. It should provide a basis for making judgements about the urgency of providing assistance to different communities, whether in the form of relief or protection against disaster risks or development out of poverty.

Such judgements can be made prior to the consideration of policy and program alternatives. The latter should not only be guided by such prior needs-informed judgements, but should also be considered then in terms of their effects on levels of deprivation and vulnerability. For example, if the armed forces were to be downsized without complementary actions, what effects would that have on levels of deprivation and vulnerability? This prompts consideration of complementary policies that can then be assessed in terms of need reduction.

The drawing-board sketch of this needs-assessment framework for South Sudan makes no attempt at a strategic prescription for the humanitarian crisis for South Sudan. Rather, it serves to identify levels of deprivation in terms of different populations and communities, to determine levels of vulnerability and to identify early warning signals regarding potential disasters. As such it provides a basis for policy-making and project design, but is established independently of it.

7. Conclusion

The results agenda may appear as a rigid and procrustean discipline imposed, often with distorting impact, on aid organizations and workers, even though they are genuinely committed to assisting afflicted populations to the best of their abilities— and there is much truth to this impression of discipline. It has to be recognized, however, that the results agenda as such is anything but a standardized tool-kit. Some funders use some tools, while others use different ones; some respond to submissions using certain tools from the kit; still others are satisfied with processes that attend to results and evidence. At times they can militate against innovations in humanitarian and development assistance. But they can also promote innovations by showing that they are superior to prevailing practice in terms of results. Moreover, the results agenda itself has evolved through innovation and continues to do so. Innovation is particularly important in fragile states, including South Sudan, embroiled as it is in a massive humanitarian crisis. The drawing-board sketch of a needs-assessment framework is a longer-term response to this crisis and a possible addition to the results agenda tool-kit.

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