# TOPIC GUIDE:

## Anticipating and responding to shocks: livelihoods and humanitarian responses

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The purpose of the Topic Guides is to provide resources to support professional development. Each Topic Guide is written by an expert. Topic Guides:

- Provide an overview of a topic;
- Present the issues and arguments relating to a topic;
- Are illustrated with examples and case studies;
- Stimulate thinking and questioning;
- Provide links to current best 'reads' in an annotated reading list;
- Provide signposts to detailed evidence and further information;
- Provide a glossary of terms for a topic.

Topic Guides are intended to get you started on an unfamiliar subject. If you are already familiar with a topic then you may still find a guide useful. Authors and editors of the guides have put together the best of current thinking and the main issues of debate.

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## I would like to read items in the reading list. Where can I access them?

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- Send an email to the Evidence on Demand Editor at enquiries@evidenceondemand.org with your recommendations for other Topic Guides.

# Abbreviations and acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AGD | Age, gender and diversity |
| CLA | Cluster Lead Agency |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee (of OECD) |
| DRC | Democratic Republic of Congo |
| DRR | Disaster risk reduction |
| EMMA | Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis |
| ERC | Enhanced Response Capacity |
| EWS | Early Warning System |
| FCAS | Fragile and conflict-affected states |
| GBV | Gender-based violence |
| GHA | Global Humanitarian Assistance |
| HC | Humanitarian Coordinator (UN) |
| HLP | Housing, Land and Property |
| IASC | Inter-Agency Standing Committee |
| ICLA | Information, Counselling, and Legal Assistance |
| IDP | Internally-Displaced Persons |
| IFRC | International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies |
| IHS | International Humanitarian System |
| IPC | Integrated Food Security Phase Classification |
| IRCM | International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement |
| LEGS | Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards |
| LRRD | Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development |
| MYHF | Multi-Year Humanitarian Funding |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PIPs | Policies, Institutions and Processes |
| PSNP | Productive Safety Net Programme |
| RC | Resident Coordinator (UN) |
| SEEP | Small Enterprise Education and Promotion |
| SLF | Sustainable Livelihoods Framework |
| UNOCHA | UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| WHS | World Humanitarian Summit (2016) |

# SECTION 1

# Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

This Topic Guide is written primarily for people working with longer-term perspectives to support what are commonly called the 'livelihoods' of people (i.e. the ways in which they meet their needs) living in places where crises are a threat, are recurrent or are even the norm. Although it should be natural to continue to approach livelihoods with such a perspective (or with what may be called 'a development approach') even through crises, the divide between 'emergency' (or 'humanitarian') and 'development' thinking and practice has resisted attempts to break it down for decades.

Development actors have often been accused of paying too little attention to crises. At the same time, those providing emergency relief, even when using the language of 'livelihoods', have tended to focus their attention on meeting immediate needs and have not always tried to understand the bigger picture demanded by livelihoods approaches. However, there are hopeful signs that both these criticisms are becoming less applicable. This Topic Guide is intended as a resource to support those on both sides of the bureaucratic divide who are striving to understand how to operate in the immediacy of a crisis but in situations that can only be understood by taking a wider and longer perspective.

## 1.2 Overview of the subject matter

No short Topic Guide can satisfactorily explain humanitarian action and how to support livelihoods in crises. This guide is neither a technical manual for non-humanitarians on how to respond to emergencies, nor is it a scientific review for humanitarians of the evidence for the impacts on livelihoods of different interventions in emergency response. Such a review is not possible, largely because the evidence of the impact of humanitarian interventions on people's *livelihoods* (as opposed to their immediate access to food) is almost entirely lacking. It is almost unheard of for emergency interventions to be assessed even one year after the end of a project.

This Guide offers perspectives on how livelihoods experts can think, position themselves and act in fast-changing high-stakes environments. It offers a way of thinking about crises, and highlights a need to be courageous in asking important questions in and about crises, questioning some assumptions and entrenched views about the role of long-term thinking in crises (e.g. 'it's not time for developmental approaches yet'). It can be challenging to call for genuine livelihoods thinking in a crisis where emergency ways of thinking and working are dominant, even if that crisis has been going on for decades.

Livelihoods, economic considerations and food security are only part (albeit an important part) of the multi-sectoral assistance needed and offered in crises. Although this Guide focuses on livelihoods, as the challenges addressed are not primarily technical, much of the material may also be relevant to those working in other sectors.

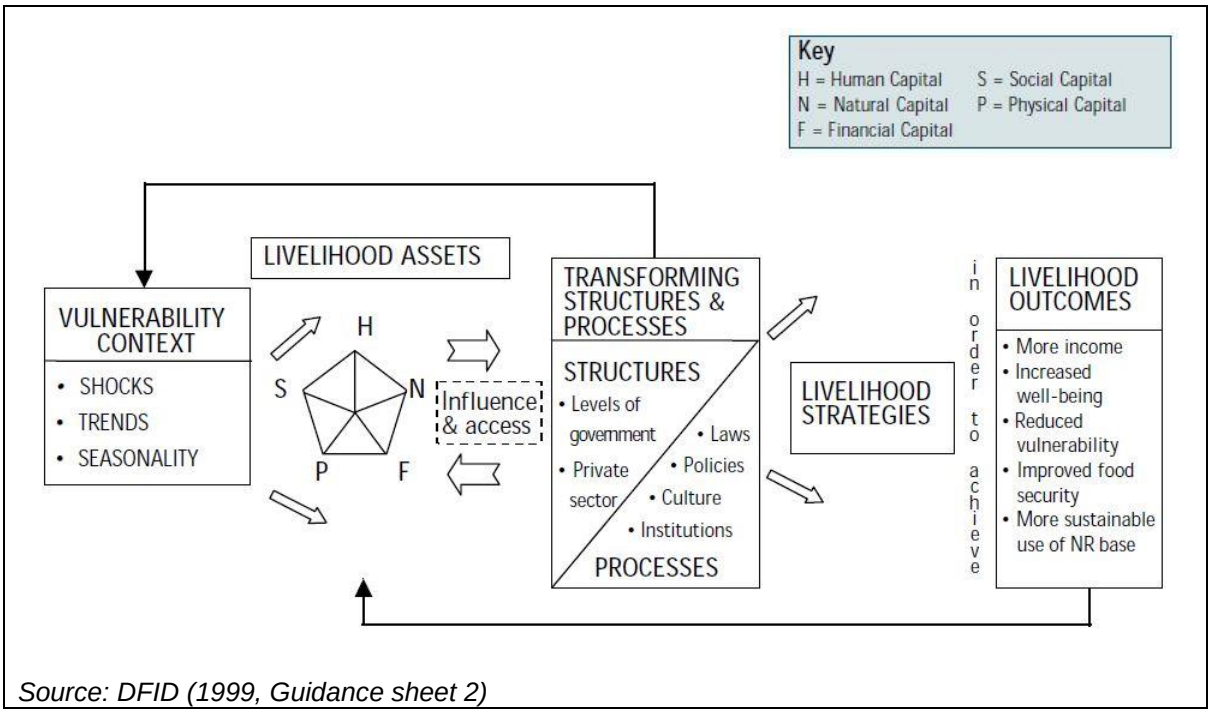
## 1.3 Applying a livelihoods approach

Using a livelihoods approach means something more than trying to improve the economic situation of individuals or households. The development of 'livelihoods thinking' was a response to overtly technical and apolitical approaches, concerned primarily with efficiency and productivity, that ignore questions about why people make the choices they do and the constraints they might face in trying to do otherwise. A livelihoods approach must combine two perspectives that have sometimes been viewed as opposites: an actor-oriented perspective and a 'political economy' approach. The actor oriented approach sees people as active agents; the political economy perspective insists that people's possibilities and choices – and the outcomes of those choices – must be understood as shaped by the broader structures of society in which they live, i.e. politics, power, institutions, culture and so forth.

DFID's sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF; shown for reference in Figure 1), itself a reworking of earlier frameworks such as Scoones (1998), has been redrawn and adapted many times, but remains a useful reminder of the various dimensions that need to be taken into account if people's livelihoods are to be understood and supported. More recent versions of the framework diagram have tended to rename the 'Transforming Structures and Processes' box as 'Policies, Institutions and Processes' (PIPs). They also frequently show the arrows between the asset pentagon and vulnerability going in both directions (as it has become increasingly common to see erosion or building of productive assets as a determinant, as well as an outcome, of vulnerability).

Shocks, stresses and crises can affect (destroy, disrupt or change – and for some people, enhance) any or all of the livelihood components represented by the boxes and arrows of the framework. As we will see particularly in Section 4, the framework thus offers a useful tool for thinking through the complex effects of a crisis on different livelihoods, and therefore the options for intervention.

**Figure 1 The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)**




*Source: DFID (1999, Guidance sheet 2)*

Some form of livelihood thinking is critical for those working to support people in crises, if there is any intention to do more than merely keep people alive. Those working in the humanitarian sector helping people meet basic needs (e.g. food security, shelter, water, or any of the services to which people need economic access) have to understand how those needs arise and where people's vulnerability comes from. If the causes of vulnerability and the reasons they have few assets or inadequate opportunities are not changed, then a simple resource transfer is unlikely to have the desired long-term impacts. Similarly, those working on longer-term issues of poverty or economic empowerment cannot continue business as usual in the middle of a crisis. Crises of all kinds are likely to change the rules of the game that determine both what people can do and what benefit they get from doing it. Even if the immediate ingredients (e.g. inputs and skills) of an economic activity remain unchanged through a crisis, people's livelihoods are determined by far wider forces than these. As noted above, changes may happen in every one of the boxes of the livelihoods diagram, from international governance to gender roles to supply and prices in input and produce markets.

The impacts of response decisions also need to be thought through from a holistic livelihoods perspective. All aid efforts have unintended consequences (positive and negative) because they always affect more than the small areas of life that they are designed to change. Making resources available may change power relations, or change the incentives for competition around resources or opportunities. In crises, this becomes even more important to understand – because the rules of the game are already in flux, because other resources may become scarcer, and because aid flows may be on a much larger scale. Trying to make sense of all this, and trying to use that understanding to inform choices about the best ways to offer support, is what is meant by using a livelihoods approach.

## Key references:


DFID (1999) *Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets (1 & 2).* London: DFID. Available at: www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0901/section1.pdf and www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0901/section2.pdf

*These documents, especially Guidance Sheet 2, explain the elements of the SLF and what they mean in real life.*

Scoones, I. (1998) *Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: a Framework for Analysis.* IDS Working Paper 72. Brighton; Institute of Development Studies. Available at: www.ids.ac.uk/publication/sustainable-rural-livelihoods-a-framework-for-analysis

*A key text in the development of the SLF, simply written and still worth reading.*

See also:
Levine, S. (2014) *How to Study Livelihoods: Bringing a sustainable livelihoods framework to life.* SLRC Working Paper 22. London: ODI. Available at: www.securelivelihoods.org/publications_details.aspx?resourceid=327

## 1.4 Structure of the guide

The guide is structured in short numbered sections, with key references and links for further reading at the end of each. The sections are ordered along a line of argument, so that for a full understanding of the issues and how they relate to each other the whole document should be read. However, the sections can also be read separately: the table of contents can thus be used as a menu to go directly to selected topics.

**Part 2 unpacks the meaning and characteristics of shocks, crises and emergencies**. Starting with the important perspective that disasters are caused by shocks or hazards interacting with vulnerability (Section 2.1), it then examines the various characteristics and dimensions of different crises and explores why the standard typologies of crises are unsatisfactory (Section 2.2).

**Part 3 gives an overview of what humanitarian response means, how it works, and some ways in which it differs from longer-term development assistance.** After setting out the key principles and standards to which most humanitarian agencies subscribe (Section 3.1), it describes the institutional architecture of the international humanitarian system, including the 'cluster' system (Section 3.2). Section 3.3 considers where livelihoods fit in humanitarian thinking, in relation to these principles and clusters. Finally, Section 3.4 examines the persistent humanitarian–development divide, in order to identify ways in which it might be bridged.

**Part 4 offers some tools and examples to examine how crises affect livelihoods (and vice versa),** drawing on adaptations and applications of the sustainable livelihoods framework (Section 4.1). The potential roles of aid itself in shaping crises and livelihoods are considered in Section 4.2, which includes a brief review of 'dependency syndrome'.

**Part 5 introduces the 'protection' domain of humanitarian work**, giving an outline of the general principles which relate to the safety, dignity and rights of people affected by disaster or conflict (Section 5.1). The remaining sections under this heading address some selected issues which fall under the protection umbrella in humanitarian response, and are also particularly relevant to livelihoods development: conflict sensitivity and 'do no harm' (Section 5.2); gender (Section 5.3); land rights (Section 5.4) and population displacement (Section 5.5).

**Part 6 concludes by indicating some areas of current thinking and practice where there are opportunities for livelihoods interventions to bridge the humanitarian–development divide**. This agenda is potentially huge, and Part 6 does not attempt a comprehensive review. It is hoped that the guide as a whole will provide numerous entry points for innovative engagement. The remaining sections discuss the following selected topics: response analysis (Section 6.1); the need for early *action* to follow early warning (Section 6.2); innovations in humanitarian funding (Section 6.3); shock-responsive social protection (Section 6.4); the difficulty of exiting from situations of protracted relief (Section 6.5); and building resilience (Section 6.6).

A full reference list will be found at the end of the document, and a final annex suggests some useful links and resources on topics not covered by the guide.

# SECTION 2

# Typologies of shocks and crises

## 2.1 Crises as an outcome of shocks *plus* vulnerability

Crises used to be thought of as events (e.g. droughts and earthquakes), but there is now a general recognition that emergencies or crises are situations which are caused by events (shocks or cumulative stresses) combined with pre-existing vulnerabilities, as described in models such as the 'pressure and release model' elaborated by Wisner et al. (2003). It is almost a cliché (but an important one) that 'there are no such things as natural disasters' – earthquakes cause more fatalities in countries where building standards are lower, and they mainly affect people who are poorer and more marginalised.[1]

**Box 1 Wisner's disaster risk equation**

In evaluating disaster risk, the social production of vulnerability needs to be considered with at least the same degree of importance that is devoted to understanding and addressing natural hazards. […] There are three elements here: risk (disaster), vulnerability, and hazard, whose relations we find it convenient to schematise in a pseudo-equation:

$$R = H \times V.$$

*Source: Wisner et al. (2003, p49)*

Nonetheless, the implications of the pressure model are not always evident in practice. Although the term 'natural disaster' is a shorter way of saying 'crises caused predominantly by chronically vulnerable people being hit by a natural phenomenon', it risks focusing attention on only one part of the problem. In a similar way, the restriction of the word 'disaster' to only these crises has deflected attention from the political dimension to many, if not most, crises (i.e. disasters).[2] The climate change agenda has widened the attention paid to the way in which crises are created by the *interaction* of several causal factors (many storms are 'perfect'). These may include natural features (e.g. rainfall and earthquakes), conflict, politics and the chronic web of power relations, economic and social constraints and other forces, which together may be called 'structural vulnerabilities'. Despite this, the attention paid to natural forces as proximate causes of crisis (in DRR and more widely) remains arguably disproportional.

The implications of a model that sees a crisis as being caused by a shock only because of a situation of pre-existing vulnerability[3] (in fire terms, what could be called a model of 'don't just blame the match, blame the petrol') are hugely significant. Not every shock results in a crisis. Indeed, the rationale for early action and resilience-building is precisely to minimise the impact of shocks and, if possible, to prevent a crisis developing, thus avoiding suffering and loss for the people affected and also reducing the scale and cost of humanitarian assistance. A crucial step in anticipating shocks is therefore to analyse and address

1 In Haiti, for example, most of the houses that fell down were those built on precarious slopes or on top of old rubbish tips.

2 'Disaster risk reduction (DRR)', for example, has ignored the need to reduce the risk of being marginalised, or from what Wisner et al. (2003, p8) call the "social causation of disasters".

3 In fire terms, what could be called a model of 'don't just blame the match, blame the petrol'.

*vulnerability* to specific, predictable types of shock. Crises are usually in some sense a continuation of the normal, albeit one where underlying problems are more acutely expressed. It is nearly always essential, then, to consider the context and causes of any current crisis over a much longer time period.

## Key references:

Wisner, B, P. Blaikie, T. Cannon, and I. Davis. 2003. *At risk: Natural hazards, people's vulnerability and disasters* (2nd ed). London and New York: Routledge.

*The first three chapters (which cover the framework and theory) are available online at www.preventionweb.net/files/670_72351.pdf. The remaining sections of the book examine different types of natural hazard and vulnerability in detail, and include a number of case study examples. The first edition of this influential book was published in 1994.*

## 2.2 Types and dimensions of crisis

Although it is universally accepted that crises can be very different from each other, it has been much harder to develop an accepted typology and an accompanying set of different practices and paradigms for intervening in each different crisis type. This may be because it is much easier to describe differences between crises than it is to see the generic implications of those differences. Among the typologies of crises that have been proposed are FAO (2010), which distinguished crises by their *causes* (natural disasters, human-induced crises and combined natural and human induced crises) or the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), which proposes a greater breakdown of causes. Others have distinguished crises by their *symptoms* (war, disease, hunger and displacement); or by the *capacity* and willingness of the government of the affected state to respond. Emergency situations can also be categorised by a *time* dimension, giving *sudden onset* disasters (e.g. earthquake and flood); *slow onset* disasters (e.g. drought); *protracted* crises (usually involving conflict); and situations of *recurrent* crisis.

'Protracted and recurrent crises' are often spoken of together, probably because they are both situations where humanitarian agencies have a long-term or permanent presence. However, there are important differences between them. Protracted crises almost always involve conflict and contested state legitimacy. Recurrent crises, on the other hand, are often caused by repeated natural hazards (such as droughts, floods or crop failures) in a situation of marginalisation and chronic underdevelopment.

Simple typologies of crises may not, in fact, be useful. None of the dimensions used (above) to categorise crises are necessarily important for everyone. Once a crisis has taken place, it may not matter how much warning it gave or what caused it. The dimensions that determine the impact of a crisis on affected populations and on how best to respond to it may be quite different, e.g. whether the affected areas are urban or rural, the state of market development or financial infrastructure, or the degree to which civil society is organised and has a voice.

Instead of worrying about a typology, then, it is more useful to think about why crises are different, from each other and from non-crises, in ways that relate to those who are trying to help. The classic paradigm is that emergency response is to meet temporary, life-threatening

and urgent needs. However, these three dimensions (*urgent vs. non-urgent, life-threatening vs. non-life-threatening,* and *temporary vs. chronic need*) are far from being the same thing and frequently do not all exist together.

### 2.2.1 Urgent vs. non-urgent

The business of emergency relief often characterises itself by urgency and the need for speedy action. In practice, this is rarely true. The vast majority of humanitarian funds are allocated to protracted crises, which usually involve rolling emergency programmes over many years. In slow-onset disasters, emergency relief is famously slow and often late. Even in the case of sudden onset disasters, most of the immediate life-saving work has been done by local people before national or international assistance arrives. (The case of the earthquake in Nepal was just the most recent illustration of this fact.) The urgency of emergency response is a common reason offered for the lack of investment of time in understanding the lives of affected people and in analysis, and there is sometimes a reluctance to appreciate that by the second month of a crisis there has already been an opportunity to have spent a month on such analysis.

**Box 2 Combining livelihoods understanding and speed in a sudden onset emergency**

The earthquake in Nepal in 2015 illustrates what can happen when emergency agencies send out international staff to understand markets in the very first missions. One agency found that a basic understanding of food markets and trade flows allowed them to identify areas of need in places that were not directly affected by the quake. They were also able to find ways of responding in areas that had been destroyed that included helping get the markets functioning again: the market could then deliver far more food and other basic goods than relief operations could ever do.

They were able to get a basic overview of markets and how they had been affected by the earthquake in a matter of days by working with both emergency experts and Nepalese market experts. This use of 'livelihoods experts' improved the appropriateness of the agency's emergency response, ensured greater coverage, was more cost-effective and helped achieve better 'connectedness'.[4] But, most critically, it also meant being much *quicker* in ensuring that many people were able to meet their basic needs. Being smart and thinking about how livelihoods work does not have to come at the cost of speed.

It was something of a revelation for the emergency team that instead of trying to understand everything for themselves, they could incorporate specific experts into their teams from outside the humanitarian sphere, such as market experts. Hopefully this appreciation and collaboration will rapidly become the norm.

*Source: Example discussed at the 2015 Interaction forum in Washington, in the session 'Making Markets Work for People in Crisis' www.interaction.org/forum-2015-workshops*

### 2.2.2 Life-threatening vs. non-life-threatening

At the core of the idea of emergency response is saving lives, and this usually forms part of its definition (see Section 2.3 below). However, it is not easy to use this as either a defining

[4] Connectedness is the need to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context that takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account. It is the most neglected of the standards to which humanitarian action should hold itself. See below.

or explanatory characteristic. Most life-saving work (e.g. hospital care) is obviously not classified as emergency response, and longer-term livelihood support may result in more lives saved than a short-term emergency operation. Equally, not all emergency response is about saving lives: for the past 20 years, many emergency operations in food security have had explicit objectives to save both lives and livelihoods (see Section 3.3). Both the degree to which lives are threatened, and the urgency of that threat, must affect the nature of any measures to be taken. A major (and urgent) threat to life on a large scale would obviously call for interventions that might not be in line with longer-term objectives and which might not otherwise be justifiable. However, although 'humanitarian indicators' such as malnutrition or mortality rates may reveal a dire problem in existing policy or practice, they do not say anything about *what* should happen or *how* any different or additional measures should be put in place.

### 2.2.3 Temporary need vs. chronic need

Emergency response is predicated on an assumption that it is addressing temporary needs, additional needs over and above the permanent or chronic needs that existed pre-crisis. Emergency agencies sometimes characterise themselves as providing 'surge capacity' to support the pre-existing capacity in dealing with this temporary surge in need. In reality, this characterisation is inaccurate on two counts. Humanitarian action usually delivers its aid in parallel systems, rather than by offering extra capacity to existing structures. Second, most humanitarian spending is on chronic (or 'protracted') crises, and not short-term 'spikes' of need. Even new crises caused by discrete natural hazards rarely conform to this model. A tsunami in Japan or a typhoon in the Philippines may require outside short-term assistance, but these are the exceptions. Most such disasters expose longstanding problems, which cannot easily or sensibly be separated from the needs caused by the specific disaster. The 2010 earthquake in Haiti is an obvious example: it is estimated that more than half of the homelessness in Port au Prince pre-dated the earthquake, though the combined problems were classified as an *emergency* problem of 'displacement'. This creates a very common but impossible dilemma for humanitarian action: to respond only to the newer needs would be both practically impossible and ethically questionable. However, no humanitarian emergency had been declared before the earthquake (or other crisis): but once the emergency *was* declared, it became impossible to walk away from the now-recognised 'emergency' needs which were, in fact, chronic (see Section 6.5).

Other dimensions often associated with crisis which have an important bearing on interventions are:

*Conflict.* The existence of armed conflict has several implications for the delivery of external assistance, discussed further below. The adoption of humanitarian principles in conflict may, for example, make it important to change the paradigm of intervention from one which works through supporting state structures to one of direct delivery of assistance – particularly if a state, and one whose legitimacy is challenged, is a party to the conflict. When state legitimacy is in question, international assistance is often channelled through the humanitarian aid architecture because financing can then flow through the UN system rather than through the government. However, the choice to use a humanitarian *architecture* may then result in an almost automatic and wholesale adoption of humanitarian *paradigms*, and thus may come at the expense of a switch away from longer-term perspectives.

*Fragile states*. Humanitarian action is also often associated with what are called 'fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS)' (though fragile may be an unusual term to use about some of the more dictatorial countries on the list). Of the top 15 recipients of humanitarian funds for 2001–2010 only Ethiopia and Indonesia (the main recipient of tsunami funds) might not be classified as FCAS – and that is clearly not a coincidence. Twelve out of 20 of the countries on DFID's list of FCAS were also characterised as being in protracted crises by

FAO (2010). However, being fragile or affected by conflict does not mean that a place is in an emergency. It often means that development work is much more difficult (e.g. security is poor, the economy is unstable, it is more difficult or less advisable to partner too closely with the government and the economy does not operate according to market principles). There may then be a tendency, and even a temptation, to use emergency responses, which will take place within a bureaucracy and a working culture that finds it easier to work around such problems, to implement its solutions directly and worry less about an intractable, messy reality. Rather than simply classifying the needs as 'humanitarian', such situations actually demand something different: approaches to longer-term development that are appropriate for conflicts, or for places which are insecure, where economies do not follow market principles, where corruption is sanctioned, etc. This argument has been made for over 20 years (see e.g. Lautze 1997). It is perhaps not the fault of humanitarian actors if they respond to a development vacuum with their less appropriate interventions.

## Key references:

The annual Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) reports detailing humanitarian spending can be found at www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org

www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/about-disasters/definition-of-hazard/ explains the standard classification of disasters by type of cause or hazard.

## 2.3 What is a humanitarian emergency?

The term 'emergency' is not clearly defined in the humanitarian literature, beyond the everyday meaning of a situation requiring quick action, and the assumed, often unspoken paradigm outlined above of a *temporary* spike in *urgent*, *life-threatening* need. More attention has been paid to defining humanitarian *assistance*. While the exact wording varies among agencies, "humanitarian assistance is generally accepted to mean the aid and action designed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters" (GHA[5]). In practice, a humanitarian emergency or crisis is a situation that has been deemed to require humanitarian assistance: that is, it is defined by the nature of the response rather than by the scale or nature of people's needs, or by any classification of causes.[6]

Those who are concerned that a long-term perspective should not simply be lost when an emergency is declared, and that livelihoods approaches should not necessarily be abandoned because emergency assistance is needed, should think about *why* any given situation is being called an emergency and in what sense humanitarian assistance is being called for. If the reasons why emergency relief is called for are understood, it is usually possible to incorporate them into a longer-term perspective. Three points stand out on the different dimensions and characteristics of crisis discussed above. First, all of them clearly indicate that different ways of working will be needed. To conduct business as usual in the middle of a conflict, or when massive and immediate threats to life are apparent would be perverse – and yet is less uncommon than we would like to recognise. Second, the various dimensions do not describe the same things. Although each of them may demand that ways of offering assistance need to be changed, they do not suggest anything like a uniform change. This suggests that, in terms of classifying situations, the two-way emergency/development dichotomy is inappropriate and that what is needed is the flexibility to adapt ways of working according to the demands of the situation. Third, none of the dimensions actually explains an emergency–development divide at all. Both emergency and long-term livelihood support may be needed and appropriate at the same time and wherever a situation appears on the scale on any of the dimensions.

**Box 3 What's in a name?**

Calling a situation an emergency has a profound impact on how it is treated. The way in which a crisis is classified can also be important. The language of complex political emergencies has largely been replaced by that of FCAS and protracted crises. As one analysis notes:

"Characterizing a situation as a *complex emergency* brings to the forefront humanitarian issues and often leads to a response led by the international community with an emphasis on emergency food assistance. In contrast, intervention in a *fragile state* focuses more on developing the state's capacity to deliver services to its citizens. Finally, intervention in protracted crises focuses on understanding and addressing longer-term issues and multiple causes at play in prolonged emergency situations."

*Source: Alinovi et al. (2008)*

5 www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/data-guides/defining-humanitarian-aid

6 The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification system (IPC) is an ongoing attempt to create a decision-making process which can better target humanitarian resources at situations where there are greater needs. Although it is sometimes presented as giving an objective standard for declaring a famine or emergency, the IPC aim is to create consensus-building decision-making tools. It is not in itself a discrete methodology for either data collection or analysis about food security needs.

Whether or not a crisis can be clearly defined and categorised, if a situation is *deemed to be* a crisis, there are huge implications for:

- The (international) funding that will be made available (including the size of aid flow, the speed of flow, the conditions for using funds and the duration of the flow);
- The mix of actors who will be involved in responding to needs;
- The codes of conduct and working norms of those involved in giving assistance;
- The ways in which policy and strategy are set and coordination takes place.

The next section outlines some of these key factors (principles, institutions and perspectives) which come into play once a situation is classified as a humanitarian crisis.

## Key references:

Alinovi, L., Hemrich, G. and Russo, L., eds. (2008) *Beyond Relief: Food Security in Protracted Crises.* Rugby, UK: Practical Action.

# SECTION 3

# Humanitarianism and development practice

## 3.1 Humanitarian principles and standards

Humanitarian action is founded on four widely accepted *principles*, shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2 The four core humanitarian principles**

| Humanity | Neutrality | Impartiality | Independence |
|---|---|---|---|
| Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings. | Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature. | Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions. | Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented. |

*Source: UNOCHA (2012)*

In practice the situation is not so clear cut. These principles have developed from two distinct, if related, motivations. The two principles of *humanity* and *impartiality* are the moral core, and underlie most definitions of humanitarian assistance (see Section 2.3):

> *"The primary objective of humanitarian action is to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity, without regard for race, ethnicity, religion or political affiliation."* www.interaction.org/work

The principles of *neutrality* and *independence* originate with the *instrumental* principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (IRCM), i.e. their way of ensuring the greatest probability of maintaining access in conflict situations. Neutrality, as distinct from impartiality, is not universally accepted by humanitarian agencies. Most agencies do not follow the principles slavishly – they are principles and not rules. Even agencies which nominally subscribe to the principles do not always do so in practice, and in operational settings it is rare to hear the principles discussed or invoked at all by those working on material relief. Flows of humanitarian aid money are often not free of all political considerations, and distinguishing the ways in which governments of affected states assist their own citizens in crises may not always be divorceable from their overall policies. Some agencies, including countries who do not see themselves as part of the 'humanitarian system' may offer aid on the basis of solidarity, and while not necessarily withholding aid from certain groups, this can affect their targeting. Discussions between organisations and societies with very different cultures of assistance in response to crisis, and who may

therefore operate by quite different principles, are beginning to gain more prominence as the Western-led 'international humanitarian system' (see below) has come to recognise the role of what it sometimes calls 'emerging donors' from the non-Western world.[7]

Among the many Western humanitarian agencies who do recognise the core principles, various codes and standards have been developed to expand and apply them. For example, the IRCM has formulated a voluntary *code of conduct* for disaster response, to which many agencies subscribe (see Box 4). In this formulation, which relates to *natural* disasters, neutrality does not appear: but additions include Principle 8, which recognises the need to reduce future vulnerabilities as well as meeting immediate needs.

**Box 4 Principles of conduct for the IRCM and NGOs in disaster response**

1. The humanitarian imperative comes first.
2. Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.
3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.
4. We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.
5. We shall respect culture and custom.
6. We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities.
7. Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid.
8. Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs.
9. We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.
10. In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified human beings, not hopeless objects.

*Source: IFRC (1995)*

The multi-agency Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS), shown in Figure 3, adds nine *commitments* to the four core principles.[8] It will be immediately apparent that most of these principles and commitments are generally applicable to livelihoods development efforts as well as emergency relief.

[7] There is disagreement over whether emergency relief provided by a military, whether of the host government or of a foreign army, can ever be called 'humanitarian'.

[8] See CHS (2014) for further details and explanation.

**Figure 3 Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability**


*Source: CHS (2014)*

In addition to these principles and codes of conduct, minimum *technical standards* for humanitarian action in various sectors have been developed by the Sphere Project (working on behalf of and in consultation with a broad community of Western humanitarian agencies). These standards are intended to help agencies put the humanitarian principles into practice, and were first developed in 1997. This initiative followed dissatisfaction with the quality of assistance offered by some agencies (particularly after the experience with Rwandan refugees in Goma, DR Congo in 1994). The Sphere standards (Sphere Project, 2011) remain a core handbook for many humanitarian organisations, and have been progressively updated and added to. Although they are often presented as neutral, technical standards of simple professionalism, Sphere is not entirely uncontroversial. The critique of the way in which humanitarian aid risks becoming overly governed by rigid and purely technical rules is almost as old as the standards themselves (see Heath, 2009). Nonetheless, Sphere standards remain an important reference for everyone working in a crisis, as long as they are not used as a 'bible': they neither cover everything that is important, nor were they ever intended to be followed blindly. Livelihoods and other development professionals could even help ensure that some of the broader principles, which may be neglected in an emergency, are given greater attention. Sphere Project (2011), for example, advises: "Base the interventions to support primary production on livelihoods assessment, context analysis […]." (p204). Spin-offs from the Sphere Project which are particularly relevant to livelihoods advisers are the *Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards* (LEGS, 2009), and the *Minimum Economic Recovery Standards* (MERS) produced by the SEEP (Small Enterprise Education and Promotion) network in 2010 (see *Key references* below).

## Key references:

Sphere Project (2011) *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response. Geneva;* Sphere Project. Available at: www.sphereproject.org/handbook/

LEGS Project (2009) *Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS)*. Rugby; Practical Action Publishing. Available at: www.livestock-emergency.net

*A set of international guidelines and standards for the design, implementation and assessment of livestock interventions to assist people affected by humanitarian crises*.

Small Enterprise Education and Promotion (SEEP) (2010) *Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS).* Washington DC; SEEP Network. Available at: www.seepnetwork.org/minimum-economic-recovery-standards-pages-10078.php

## 3.2 Humanitarian actors and institutions

As suggested in the previous section, there can be a multitude of different actors operating in a humanitarian emergency, including government to international NGOs, private individuals, local civil society organisations, 'emerging donors' and many others. The main assistance flow in a crisis may be a surge in remittances from relatives of affected people. Many states (e.g. China and Cuba) typically offer their assistance directly to host governments. In some crises, there can be hundreds of small organisations which choose to deliver their aid directly to communities or individuals, outside of any coordination mechanisms.

That said, there is a UN-led coordination structure, sometimes referred to as the 'International Humanitarian System' (IHS), which comes into operation in some emergencies when large-scale flows of aid (resources and personnel) are triggered. In theory, this international system is mainly designed to provide additional response capacity in emergencies that outstrip local capacity for coping and response. In principle, the government of the affected state is responsible for delivering assistance to its citizens (and, of course, to others, including refugees in territories under its sovereignty or control). If there is an effective national coordination mechanism already in place, UN agencies will, in theory, join existing working groups rather than setting up parallel structures. In practice, in large emergencies, the IHS tends to create its own systems of coordination and control, and the degree to which these coordinate with, or are coordinated by, the state will depend hugely on the capacity of the state to impose its authority. (Greater recognition of the role and responsibility of the governments of affected states by humanitarian agencies in general was reflected in the 2011 revisions to the Sphere standards, see below.)

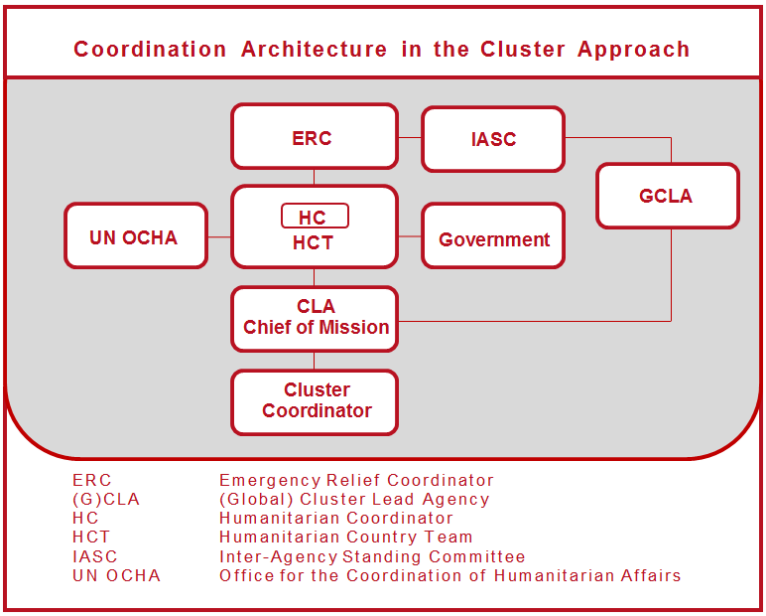
The IHS is also supposed to provide impartial, even neutral, assistance in cases of conflict. As an intergovernmental body, the UN is sometimes perceived to lack impartiality or neutrality in its official coordination of humanitarian action. This is particularly the case when a government is a party to a conflict. (Cases such as Somalia are even more difficult, since the UN as a political body was itself an active player in the conflict.)

The IHS, through UN resolutions, has established regulations, an institutional architecture and funding mechanisms for providing humanitarian assistance. However, the phrase 'the international humanitarian system' may be misleading, as there is not really a single system. There is no requirement for any agency or organisation wishing to offer assistance to be coordinated by the UN or even by the host government, unless that government makes it a legal requirement. Many countries and agencies operate independently; and even within the so-called system, the degree of coordination between elements is very variable. Individual sectors (or 'clusters' – see below) often work in silos, and within any sector individual agencies – both operational and donors – may formulate their own strategies, policies and projects without having first collaborated on a shared strategy and coordination which all agree to follow.

In spite of these caveats, and recognising that the actual arrangements put in place will vary from one context to another, it is useful to understand the structures and responsibilities of the IHS as it can provide important entry points for interaction and decision-making both at global and national levels. Figure 4 summarises the key players in the coordination hierarchy:

- The senior UN official in a country, usually designated as the Resident Coordinator (RC), may also be designated the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) in emergencies. The HC is the primary focal point for interaction between Government and the UN-led relief effort (including both UN organisations and those NGOs who choose to work within the UN-led system).
- Within the UN, responsibility for coordinating emergency relief and humanitarian action rests with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA).
- The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the global body for coordination, comprising UN organisations and leading international NGOs.

**Figure 4 Coordination architecture of the International Humanitarian System (IHS)**

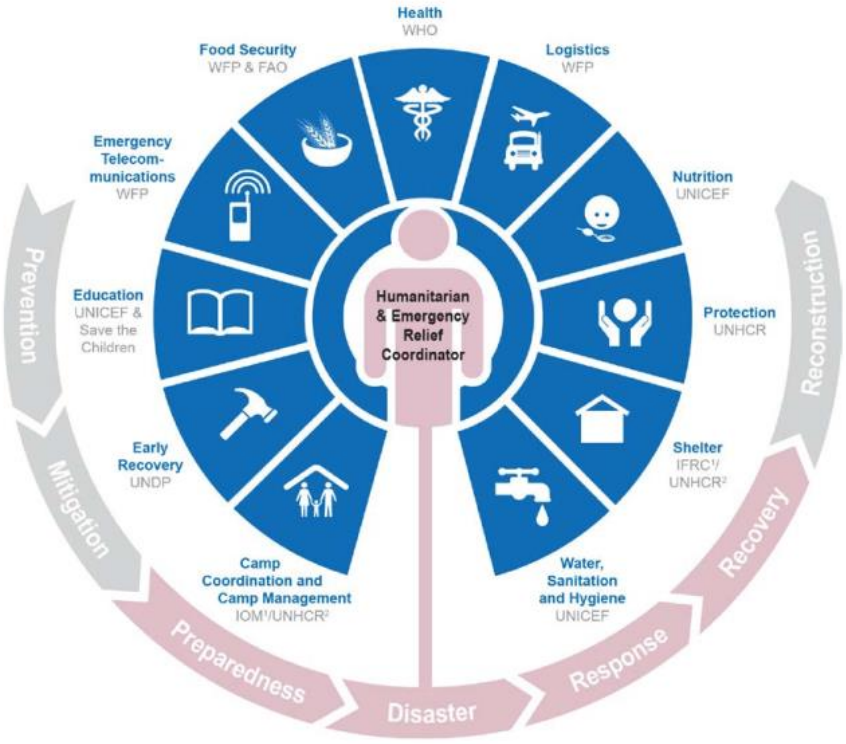



*Source: [www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters/who-does-what](www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters/who-does-what)*

Coordination both globally and, more importantly, at national level in a crisis is conducted by sector, through structures known as clusters (see Figure 5). Each cluster is led by a UN body (the Cluster Lead Agency), which is designated 'provider of last resort' (i.e. the agency

committed to providing necessary assistance in that sector if no other agency can or will do so).

**Figure 5 The IASC Cluster System**




*Source: [www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters/what-cluster-approach](www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters/what-cluster-approach)*

Perhaps the most obvious observation to make about the cluster system is that livelihoods, in humanitarian as much as in development assistance, are multi-sectoral. There is no one lead agency or cluster of partners responsible for analysing the whole picture of interacting factors which affect how people make a living (for a reminder, refer to Figure 1 above). Issues related to livelihoods could be dealt with in any or all of the clusters, e.g. food security (headed by WFP and FAO), early recovery (UNDP), nutrition (UNICEF), or protection (led by UNHCR – see Section 5.1). Land rights, for example, cut across protection, shelter, food security, early recovery and possibly also camp management. At the same time, with the exceptions of Health and Education (and, perhaps, Telecommunications), the clusters do not directly correspond with the usual sectoral division of responsibilities among line ministries and government services, which longer-term development programmes are likely to be working with. Coordination and networking from a livelihoods perspective can therefore be more than usually challenging.

Figure 5 also captures, around the outside of the diagram, the standard model of sequential phases in a disaster risk management cycle – prevention, mitigation, preparedness, disaster, response, recovery and reconstruction (or rehabilitation). The humanitarian system takes responsibility primarily for the disaster period itself, preparedness immediately before (usually meaning preparedness to mobilise relief), initial emergency response and then recovery. In this model, the longer-term issues of prevention and mitigation before a disaster, and reconstruction afterwards, are considered to be outside the humanitarian remit (although they may be addressed by the same organisations using different funding streams). This is, of course, a simplified model, and it is universally recognised that real

crises rarely follow these neat linear phases. In livelihoods programming, for example, it is increasingly accepted that support for economic recovery usually should and can begin much earlier, alongside the initial emergency response. Nevertheless the phased model remains an important part of the terminology and assumptions of much humanitarian aid, and the challenges of 'linking relief, rehabilitation and development' persist (see Section 3.4).

## Key references:

More information on the IHS and its architecture can be found at www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/about-clusters/who-does-what.

The IHS has also established a variety of mechanisms for *raising rapid funds* for an emergency (www.unocha.org/what-we-do/humanitarian-financing/overview) and for coordinating funding appeals though the *Humanitarian Programme Cycle*, which replaced the 'consolidated appeals process' or CAP in 2013. (www.humanitarianresponse.info/programme-cycle)

ALNAP (2015) *The State of the Humanitarian System.* London; ALNAP Available at: www.alnap.org/what-we-do/effectiveness/sohs

## 3.3 Where do livelihoods fit in humanitarian thinking?

The idea that humanitarian assistance should aim to 'save lives *and livelihoods*' came to the fore in the 1990s (see Davies, 1996; Lautze, 1997), and is now subscribed to by most humanitarian agencies. In relation to the principles and priorities outlined above, supporting livelihoods has been variously positioned as reducing future vulnerabilities, respecting the dignity and agency of people in crisis, and facilitating recovery (see Box 5) In many humanitarian contexts, helping people achieve or maintain the ability to meet their own survival needs can also be an effective and efficient way of saving lives.

**Box 5 Livelihoods and humanitarian principles**

"The opportunity to earn an income via employment or operation of a business is also fundamental to the dignity of individuals and to assisting them in recovering from crises.

[…]
Increasingly, practitioners and donors who respond to disasters are recognizing the need for rapid, tailored support for the livelihoods, enterprises, and economies affected in the wake of a crisis. This is often done in parallel with emergency efforts to meet basic human needs for shelter, water, food, and health services. In the past, economic recovery assistance had been viewed as a later-stage activity. However, disasters – such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the prolonged conflicts in the Middle East and South Asia, and the 2010 Haiti earthquake – illustrate that an economy continues to function during a crisis, albeit at a reduced or shrinking rate of growth. Affected populations require sources of income, at a minimum to survive and at best to thrive once again."
*Source: SEEP (2010, p3)*

In practice, most humanitarian assistance for livelihoods is conceived as targeting directly either the *Outcomes* or *Assets* boxes of the SLF framework (Figure 1). The primary focus on outcomes (such as food security, nutritional status and housing quality) is not surprising given the overriding objective of saving lives, and the traditional humanitarian response has been to provide in-kind assistance which directly improves people's outcomes (e.g. food, shelter, water and medical supplies). While still an option, and entirely appropriate in some situations, in-kind distributions are no longer the only or automatic choice: cash transfers or short-term employment provision to boost *incomes* (enabling people to purchase their own choice of food, etc.) are increasingly common.

Protecting or replacing people's productive *assets* has also become a common objective of humanitarian programming which aims to mitigate the impacts of a current crisis on people's ability to make a living, to speed economic recovery and to reduce future vulnerability. For example, the objectives of emergency cash transfers often include the prevention of distress sales of assets (such as livestock or even land); recovery programmes may distribute productive assets (or cash to buy assets) to replace those lost.

Livelihoods are most often analysed in humanitarian contexts as an underlying cause of the outcomes of interest, particularly *food security*. This is reflected, for example, in the *Sphere Handbook* (see Section 3.1 above), where 'livelihoods' is a sub-section of the food security chapter. 'Food security and livelihoods' are very often bundled together, both as a thematic area of analysis and intervention, and as a job title.

*Markets* are one key area where humanitarian agencies are rapidly expanding their analysis and programming (see Box 6). The application of protection principles (see Section 5) to critical issues such as land and property rights also extends the analysis of livelihoods towards a more holistic picture including the 'transforming structures and processes' (or PIPs) and the web of power relations which are essential parts of the whole livelihoods framework.

**Box 6 Cash transfers: are they changing more than just aid modalities?**

The past 10 years have seen a fast-growing recognition that giving people cash is often more appropriate than in-kind aid. Humanitarians have broadened their attention from the needs that they have identified (e.g. food) to an ability to work with the fact that people have many different needs and their own strategies for dealing with them.

The use of cash has been held to much higher standards of justification than in-kind aid. Forcing agencies to confront the fact that producers and markets will all inevitably be affected (positively or negatively) by the provision either of aid in-kind or through cash, has in turn driven increasing awareness of the importance of much broader problem analysis to supplement needs assessment. This has brought greater attention to understanding the wider economy in which needs are created and met, and has led to the development and use of tools for helping humanitarians to understand and monitor markets. In places prone to predictable shocks, it is important to understand markets before a crisis, with the option to either prepare for crisis or to intervene to strengthen the resilience of the markets to crisis. A pre-crisis market-mapping tool is now being piloted.

Cash transfers have thus catalysed humanitarian agencies to look much more widely and deeply at places experiencing crisis. This may have still further benefits. The 'markets for the poor' community of practice is long established, but has so far tended not to consider crises. The 'markets in crises' community of practice has remained separate, developing its own

tools and practices – until now. Market development experts and humanitarian market experts are increasingly working together (see Box 2 for the example of the NGO hiring national market specialists, rather than humanitarians, in Nepal). The extent to which the two areas of concern, markets for the poor and markets in crisis, will overlap remains to be seen, but the recent decision by the BEAM Exchange (Building Effective and Accessible Markets), a development forum, to co-host the markets in crisis web-community, is a welcome sign of convergence. This has the potential for wider importance as an example of closer collaboration across the 'humanitarian–development divide' (see Section 3.4).

Cash, unless bound by tight conditionality (which is rare in humanitarian contexts), is also inherently multi-sectoral. It enables recipients to make investments in their future livelihoods if they so choose. It also has the potential to bring major changes in the way the international humanitarian system works. As a member of the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers put it at the launch of their September 2015 report (see ODI and CGD, 2015), "using cash is like throwing a spanner into the cluster system".

Generally, though, livelihoods analysis in humanitarian contexts tends not to include all components of the whole framework. A complete livelihoods perspective involves trying to understand the interplay of political, social and economic forces on people's decision-making, how they influence how that decision making plays out in practice and what that means for people's outcomes. A 'livelihood' is both the thing studied (the interplay of the forces with people's strategies and actions) and the analytical approach. In humanitarian contexts, though, livelihoods analysis is usually replaced by snapshots of food access and food needs, and any analysis reduced to looking at household assets and areas where quick interventions can be made. As a result, 'livelihoods assistance' can become almost synonymous with 'emergency projects for supporting income or consumption, or protecting assets'. Activities tend to concentrate around the provision of inputs, and so 'livelihoods' has often come to be synonymous with 'livelihood inputs'. Even 'food security' is most often interpreted in humanitarian operations as ensuring short-term consumption, ignoring the longer-term economic and *security* dimensions of the accepted definition.[9] This focus on replacing what has been lost and enabling people to cope with the immediate impact of crises is linked with the short-term thinking horizons of emergency response (discussed in Section 3.4).

[9] The almost universally accepted definition of food security is "all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life".

## Key references:

Albu, M. (2010) *Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis Toolkit (EMMA*). Rugby, UK: Oxfam GB, Practical Action Publishing.

*The tool most commonly used (at the time of writing) by humanitarian agencies for rapid market assessments. It is largely designed to determine whether or not aid should be given in-kind or whether markets can make goods available if cash is given.*

*The book and other resources can be downloaded from www.emma-toolkit.org/*

Alinovi, L., Hemrich, G. and Russo L., eds. (2008) *Beyond Relief: Food Security in Protracted Crises*. Rugby, UK: Practical Action.

Davies, S. (1996) *Adaptable Livelihoods: Coping with Food Insecurity in the Malian Sahel.* London: Macmillan Press.

Lautze, S. (1997) *Saving Lives and Livelihoods: the Fundamentals of a Livelihoods Strategy*. Sommerville; Tufts University. Available at: dl.tufts.edu/file_assets/tufts:UA197.012.012.00022

*Early and influential text on why innovative approaches to providing relief and recovery assistance are essential in complex emergencies (or 'protracted crises'), and why tools for analysing the critical trade-offs between implementing more immediate survival interventions and fostering self-sufficiency to ensure longer-term survival are badly needed.*

ODI and CGD (2015) *Doing cash differently: How cash transfers can transform humanitarian aid*. Report of the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers. London; ODI Available at: www.odi.org/publications/9876-cash-transfers-humanitarian-vouchers-aid-emergencies

## See also:

ACF International (2010) *Food Security and Livelihood Assessments: A Practical Guide for Field Workers. ACF Internatjonal.* Available at: www.actionagainsthunger.org/publication/2010/04/food-security-and-livelihoods-assessments-practical-guide-field-workers

*There are three 'communities of practice' that host discussions and useful resource libraries, which include a variety of tools and reports and other relevant studies.*

BEAM (Building Effective and Accessible Markets) http://beamexchange.org/en/

*This approaches markets from a broadly development perspective.*

*Markets in Crisis* community of practice https://dgroups.org/dfid/mic

*This is a community focusing, as the name implies, on humanitarian crises.*

Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) www.cashlearning.org

*As well as hosting a useful resource library and being a source of information about current studies and projects, CaLP also provides training and coordination for cash based interventions in emergencies.*

## 3.4 The 'humanitarian–development divide': what is it, and why does it persist?

Much has been written on the 'humanitarian–development divide', and almost as much on the need to bridge it, without the perceived problem having been solved. 'Linking relief and development' and then 'linking relief, rehabilitation and development' (LRRD) have been discussed and advocated for at least 20 years, yet the topic is still on the agenda for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016.[10] This is not to say that nothing has changed. Many aid organisations now deliver both humanitarian and development assistance (though the divide persists even within organisations). This section considers some aspects of the divide, and suggests that it is due less to any fundamental or conceptual differences in context or objectives, and more to different ways of working and thinking, and different time-frames for funding and planning.

Both humanitarian and development assistance may deal with issues of life and death; development assistance may be urgent and most humanitarian assistance is non-urgent (in the sense that is given over protracted periods). Humanitarian principles are not uniformly applied or applicable in emergency response, and they may indeed be as relevant for development assistance as for emergency relief. Technically or substantively, they may deal with the same issues (malnutrition or the inability of a household to earn enough income to meet its needs) and they may use the same tools (e.g. cash transfers for social protection or emergency relief). If there are no core technical or conceptual reasons to separate emergency and development approaches to livelihoods, explanations must be sought elsewhere for the fact that two communities of practice exist. These communities understand each other with difficulty and, though they ostensibly have the same goals and values, are at times not only in competition but sometimes actively hostile to each other.

The *humanitarian principles* outlined in Section 3.1 do not in themselves create a distinction between humanitarian and development action. All of the principles of the core standard and most of the Red Cross code would often be applicable or at least acceptable for development initiatives (Principle 8 explicitly calls for longer-term thinking during crises). However, although all development actors ought to reflect on the humanitarian principles in their work, development assistance is not bound by them, and in some aspects this does signify a divide both in thinking and action. The purpose of development aid is not necessarily to save lives, and it accepts no obligation to offer support wherever there is need; it is often deliberately not neutral but is intended to build states, even where they are parties to conflict (e.g. Afghanistan, Somalia and Pakistan). It is normal and is regarded as acceptable for bilateral development aid to have explicitly political objectives. Target groups may be different: while humanitarian assistance should always prioritise the neediest and most vulnerable, developmental livelihood programmes are likely to focus on the *working* poor (i.e. those who have the capacity to make use of the assistance and opportunities offered). The most vulnerable and dependent groups (such as the elderly, disabled and children) should ideally be supported through some form of social protection[11].

10 See www.worldhumanitariansummit.org; and Carpenter and Bennett (2015)

11 This difference in target groups can be a challenge, for example, when using social protection as a base for emergency response (see Slater et al., 2015).

Idealised *paradigms* of development and humanitarian action (see Box 7) may not accurately reflect actual practice but they are important in shaping attitudes and working cultures. Emergency relief often by-passes state structures, whether because it is influenced by humanitarian principles of 'neutrality' or by fear that inefficiency, lack of competence or corruption will delay or divert urgent life-saving aid. It sees itself as accountable directly for its impact on the individuals affected by crisis who were identified as beneficiaries for its projects. Developmental livelihood support may be judged more on macro-indicators. There may be no moral difference between these but they do create different world views and make it harder for the two communities to see how they can cooperate. Many experts in livelihood-related fields rely on 'hard' evidence and hesitate to make conclusions and decisions without solid data. Such evidence is usually much harder to obtain in crises, where humanitarians are more accustomed to working with unscientific small samples, impressionistic or even anecdotal evidence or with largely qualitative assessments.

**Box 7 The 'paradigm dichotomy'**

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

[…]
[N]either paradigm fits reality very well […] Nevertheless, the two paradigms still matter, because they continue to exert a powerful influence on the way in which aid is organised. They set the bureaucratic and administrative framework which influences, and at times determines, how aid interventions are conceptualised, designed, implemented – and funded.

*Source: Levine (2012, p2)*

As we saw in Section 2, it is difficult to define a crisis: there is no clearly defined set of situations where people need an 'emergency response' rather than other kinds of support for meeting the needs to which they have a right. There are obviously occasions when there is little alternative to immediate relief, even at the cost of eroding longer-term benefits of other interventions. However, the justification for calling a situation 'an emergency' is very blurry. It is very rarely necessary to act with such speed that there is no time to think about livelihoods. (Almost all humanitarian action occurs in place where it has continued for months and usually for years.) The existence of an emergency does not often justify ignoring the longer-term needs of affected populations. Yet, in many crises, those providing emergency relief justify a lack of engagement with livelihood analysis (and with longer term and wider perspectives in general) by reference to the life-saving nature of their assistance and to the urgency with which their assistance is needed. This rush to help can trample both on the attempts by livelihoods analysts to inform humanitarian action and on longer-term initiatives that were in place before emergency relief arrived (see Box 8).

**Box 8 When development gets trampled on by relief**

Free seeds and tools, distributed in 'emergencies' by many emergency agencies, have caused huge frustration to donors who judge the situation to be one where it is possible for longer-term initiatives to build up a strong private sector capable of supplying farmers with the inputs that they need in a sustainable way. Originally free inputs have found their way onto the market within hours at highly reduced prices, making a self-sustaining market supply impossible. It is well known that food aid can have a strong impact on prices and markets (Barrett, 2006) – when used inappropriately, food aid can undermine businesses by displacing trade and discouraging production through lowering local prices. Schemes to establish a private sector animal health service, for example, can be set back by free treatment offered directly by emergency relief agencies. Used appropriately, of course, each of these intervention types can have a positive impact on livelihoods in the short and medium term.

At times, livelihoods development has been undermined more indirectly. Relationships built up over a long period of time are pushed aside. Agencies trying to attract emergency funds may feel that they have a vested interest in portraying a situation as one where only immediate and direct relief is possible, discouraging investment in longer-term development. Sadly, it has even been known for individuals working in emergency relief to see livelihoods approaches and 'development' as a direct threat to their *raison d'être*.

Territorialism can work both ways, though. Managers of longer-term projects may find an emergency operation in their area overwhelming, but a failure to appreciate the degree of urgent need in a crisis has sometimes led them to try to persuade their agencies not to send in an emergency presence.

As well as working through separate institutional structures (Section 3.2), humanitarians have a tendency to develop their own tools and *separate communities of practice* rather than to call upon subject matter specialists from non-emergency backgrounds (see Box 9), and this too can reinforce the degree to which the two fail to communicate.

**Box 9 Do we need more tools or wider horizons?**

It was noted in the previous section that humanitarian NGOs, trying to understand market functioning in crises and how they can best prepare for crises, have recently developed a 'pre-crisis market assessment tool'. The focus on markets and on a longer time frame of understanding are of enormous significance. However, one developmental market expert pointed out the paradoxically self-referential nature of taking a normal economic topic of study – market chain analysis – and defining it purely by reference to a crisis that hasn't yet happened ('pre-crisis'). Rather humanitarians could simply talk to other experts already undertaking this work. There is reason to be optimistic that the development of this tool is bringing an appreciation of what humanitarians need to understand – and that this will accelerate a shift in how they relate to experts from outside the emergency field.

The importance of the different *time horizons* cannot be overstated. Although the arguments about the urgency of the situation are often misplaced, emergency relief usually operates on 6-month or 1-year funding cycles. Even where a donor makes a longer-term commitment, as is beginning to happen, agency planning usually remains on an annual basis and staff contracts are often short term. Humanitarian activities are focused on the current situation,

on addressing symptoms rather than causes, and on the scale of needs. The rapid turnover of personnel can reinforce an ahistorical and de-contextualised approach to crisis response.

Where humanitarian and developmental assistance are being rendered in the same country even by the same agency, there may be *little or no geographical overlap*. Developmental assistance may be supporting government priorities which are more often to the high potential areas – marginalisation by the state is frequently at the root of vulnerability to crisis. There may be other reasons for a lack of overlap. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for example, humanitarian assistance is focused on the east of the country where conflict is ongoing, and where humanitarian indicators are appalling. However, those indicators are even worse in some other parts of the country, which, because they are peaceful, attract less emergency support. Each decision about resource allocation may make sense and be justified, and yet the result is an inability to use a combination of short- and long-term, humanitarian and developmental approaches to a permanent crisis because the two worlds simply never meet (Bailey, 2011).

**Box 10 Are development and humanitarian action compatible in conflict?**

Aid always has political implications: it changes power relations and it is susceptible to power imbalances. Development aid may not be bound by the need to remain neutral in a conflict, but it is essential to consider how aid might affect a conflict and the lives of people affected by conflict. Aid resources of all kinds can finance wars directly, can fuel war economies and can legitimise certain actors in a conflict. Aid given to structures operated by one party to a conflict may be used as a tool of war. In the civil war in Burundi, for example, where rural populations were forcibly displaced by the government, a principle was established that humanitarian assistance to the displaced should not involve the creation of any permanent structures or do anything to make the displacement more 'sustainable', permanent or legitimate.

In some situations it is appropriate to suspend development work and apply more purely humanitarian standards (e.g. directly delivering essential services, rather than supporting local structures) (see Macrae, 1998). The degree to which humanitarian assistance should (or can) be used to "strategically intervene to save lives through more 'livelihood-oriented' relief" (Lautze, 1997) in a given context should be decided jointly by livelihoods and humanitarian experts – together with political and conflict analysts.

*Evaluation* practice differs between humanitarian and development assistance. The evaluation of impact in humanitarian assistance is particularly challenging, not least because of the short funding time-frame discussed above, and the evidence base is weak compared to much development work (see Clarke et al., 2014). Also, the standard criteria of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD (DAC) diverge (as shown in Box 11). Criteria applied specifically to humanitarian operations include coverage (reaching the maximum proportion of people in need), and coherence (complementarity or consistency with other relevant policies, including humanitarian principles and human rights).

**Box 11 OECD/DAC evaluation criteria for humanitarian and development assistance**

| HUMANITARIAN | DEVELOPMENT |
|---|---|
| relevance/ appropriateness | |
| efficiency | |
| effectiveness | |
| impact | |
| connectedness | sustainability |
| coherence | |
| coverage | |

*Source: ALNAP (2006)*

Although 'sustainability' is not demanded of emergency operations, the third specific criterion is *connectedness*, i.e. "the need to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context that takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account" (ALNAP 2006). This has been a much neglected standard in humanitarian action, and the current tendency has been to equate it with an exit strategy, i.e. how well the emergency team hands over and leaves, rather than what it does before leaving. However, there are hopeful signs that as development and humanitarian actors come to talk to each other more, connectedness may begin to be interpreted much more fully and become much more central in planning and implementing emergency operations. Development and livelihoods actors have a critical role to play in this process, in supporting – and challenging – emergency operations.

## Key references:


Buchanan-Smith, M. and Maxwell, S. (1994) *Linking Relief and Development: An Introduction and Overview*. IDS Bulletin 25:4. Sussex; IDS Available at: www.eldis.org/fulltext/LinkingReliefandDevelopment.pdf

*One of the original papers to deal with LRRD.*

Carpenter, S. and Bennett, C. (2015) *Managing crises together: towards coherence and complementarity in recurrent and protracted crises*. HPG commissioned report. www.odi.org/publications/9723-protracted-crises-resilience-red-cross-crescent-whs

*Paper commissioned by the British Red Cross for the WHS 2016. Reviews persistent obstacles to more coherence between development and humanitarian action, and sets out recommendations for a proposed WHS action plan*.

Macrae, J. (1998) The death of humanitarianism? An anatomy of the attack. *Disasters* 22(4), 309–17.

*This paper offers the most cogent defence against the argument that emergency relief should always adopt development paradigms, and offers an important explanation and*

*justification of the need for humanitarian action* sometimes *to adopt different principles and practices*.

Mosel, I. and Levine, S. (2014) *Remaking the case for linking relief, rehabilitation and development: How LRRD can become a practically useful concept for assistance in difficult places.* London; ODI. Available at: www.odi.org/publications/8319-relief-rehabilitation-development-resilience

*Offers a fresh take on the old problem.*

Steets, J. (2011) *Donor Strategies for Addressing the Transition Gap and Linking Humanitarian and Development Assistance, A Contribution to the International Debate.* Berlin; GPPi (Global Public Policy Institute). Available at www.gppi.net/fileadmin/user_upload/media/pub/2011/steets_2011_transition_web.pdf

*A very thorough overview of the LRRD 'problem'.*

## See also:

Bennett, C. (2015) *The development agency of the future: Fit for protracted crises*? ODI Working Paper. London: ODI. Available at: www.odi.org/publications/9490-future-development-agencies-protracted-crises

# SECTION 4

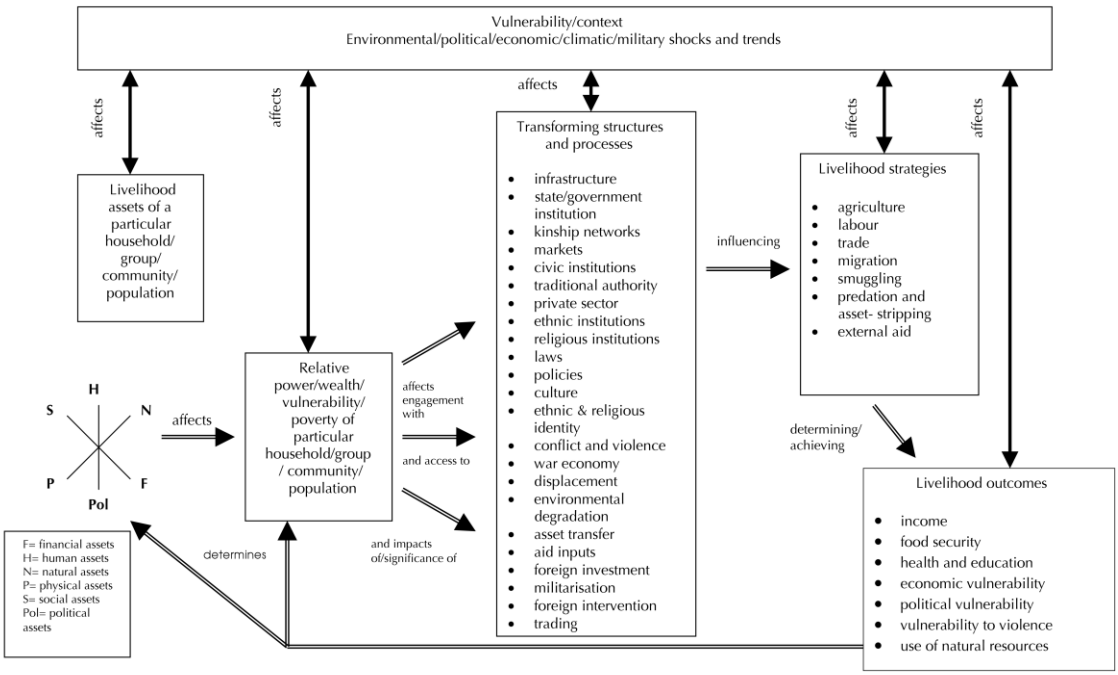
# How livelihoods and crises interact

## 4.1 Analysing the effects of crises on livelihoods

Livelihoods are transformed, and not merely limited or damaged, by crises – most obviously, though not exclusively, by conflicts. Applying a holistic livelihoods approach (see Figure 1 above) can help to avoid a tendency, common in crises and particularly in conflicts, to focus too narrowly on replacing lost material assets. Crises usually affect every single box in the framework. Material assets may indeed be lost (or may turn into sources of vulnerability, if they attract resentment or violence and looting). Human capital can be lost through illness or injury, but also through missed education. Crises affect social and physical capital. They may completely transform the rules of the game, the institutions and policies that shape decision-making. Household economies may be forced to adapt to disturbances in wider economic activity, caused by a loss of capital and financial services, through lack of investment due to uncertainty and through market disturbances. Even people's livelihood *objectives* may change, e.g. focusing on protecting land or on maintaining a split household in order to manage risk. Conflicts can drive people to make livelihoods choices that in turn drive conflict (Young et al., 2009). Trying to engage either in livelihoods support or in peace building without understanding these dynamics may be a dangerous folly. This is also true in non-conflict emergencies. In the 2014 Ebola crisis in West Africa, markets were disrupted by the fear of infection, the labour supply for agricultural work was disturbed and children lost a whole year's schooling – some may never return to education.

Various writers have applied and adapted the SLF to analyse and clarify the possible impacts of conflict situations. For example, Lautze and Raven-Roberts (2003) use the framework diagram to highlight the importance of considering the role of violence; and to argue that a livelihoods analytical framework is needed by humanitarians, for thinking about *resilient* livelihoods (in conflict) even where *sustainable* livelihoods are impossible. Another variation (Levine, 2014) was designed specifically for undertaking research in post-conflict situations, to stress the importance of understanding people's goals in recovery (economic and non-economic), and how perceptions and identity (factors neglected in traditional frameworks) may also shape decision making. Collinson's (2003) adaptation, shown in Figure 6, focuses more generally on the different ways in which each analytical component of livelihoods is affected, and how each change in turn affects everything else.

**Figure 6 A sustainable livelihoods framework in situations of conflict and political instability**




*Source: Collinson (2003, p13)*

Collinson's adaptation of the framework looks less elegant than the original, but what has really changed?

- There is a box between assets and PIPS, stressing that how any 'asset' can be used depends upon the relative power of people and populations. (Assets can become useless or even liabilities to some.)
- The context is no longer simply the starting point. Conflict (along the top) affects *everything* – decision making, outcomes and institutions. It is also affected *by* everything – livelihood choices and conflict can feed each other (see the example of Darfur, Box 14).
- There are far more arrows on the diagram. Less pretty, but it forces us to focus on *how* the conceptual elements (the boxes) affect each other. The arrows are twin-headed too: nothing is linear. The feedback loops from the outcomes are particularly important.
- There are also far more words. For example, outcome words ensure we think about far more than how much people make from a livelihood activity. Outcomes may increase or decrease vulnerability to violence, change how natural resources are used, etc. There is a long checklist of things to think about in the PIPs ('transforming structures') box too.

The frameworks and theoretical analysis of Collinson and Lautze are essential reading for livelihoods work in crises, in particular in conflict or post-conflict situations. However, reading a good practical example, analysing any actual situation of crisis, can be an easier entry point to the political economy analysis of livelihoods, illustrating what can be learnt and the practical importance of the conclusions that can be drawn. As a general lesson, these studies tend to show the need for any external intervention to be based on an understanding of how conflicts create a war economy which can further drive conflict – either as a deliberate strategy (because the war allows some to become incredibly rich) or because other livelihood options become unavailable.

Excellent examples of such analysis are Helen Young's work in Darfur (Box 14), Adam Pain's in Afghanistan (Box 12) or Vlassenroot and Raeymakers (2004) in Eastern DRC.

On Afghanistan, Paterson (2006) has commented that "[t]here is a persisting misconception that the conflict and Taliban period left the Afghan economy as a 'blank slate'. The conflict years did not damage all business interests; instead, they created opportunities for production of and trade in some commodities, as they closed opportunities for others." Box 12 gives more detail and links for further reading on this example.

**Box 12 Shifting power relations in Afghan markets**

AREU (the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit) has conducted much detailed research, and its work on markets is summarised in a couple of short, easy-to-read papers. These expose the fallacious premises of much reconstruction and state-building policy based on an objective of rebuilding supposedly 'collapsed markets' in a post-Taliban economy. In fact, markets were thriving, though business activity had been transformed by changing opportunities and new power relations, resulting in benefits flowing to only a few.

Detailed political–economic analysis of commodity chains showed how the construction industry was controlled by an oligopoly with strong political connections. The lucrative carpets sector had been taken over by a small number of big businessmen with access to capital and international connections. These changed trading patterns brought new consumers, different products, different production systems and much less income for the actual carpet makers – and a virtual end to the small independent producer. The studies show how business activity is reshaped by interests formed through close relationships between big business, political and military leaders. These interests are advanced through the use of tax exemption, privileged access to credit and access to lucrative contracts. The implications of this analysis ought to transform thinking on reconstruction policy: simply promoting economic growth where economic functioning is so distorted by conflict and post-conflict power relations will fuel inequality and further feed entrenched interests rather than resulting in less poverty.

*Sources: Lister and Pain (2004), Paterson (2006)*

**Box 13 Technical fix versus political economy: fishing in Somalia**

Fishing provides a poor living for small-scale Somali fishermen. Technical improvements can be made to the design of boats or nets to help them stay at sea longer. But how far is their poor catch due to the rampant uncontrolled fishing by large foreign trawlers in waters that ought to be sovereign fishing territory? Such fishing continues because the crisis destroyed Somalia as a state, and, as inevitably happens, others have been quick to exploit that for their own advantage.

**Box 14 Vulnerability, livelihoods and conflict in Darfur**

Young et al. (2005, 2009) show how livelihood vulnerability is embedded in the PIPs (marginalisation of Darfur by central government, inequitable systems of natural resource management and local governance which further marginalised certain ethnic and livelihood groups). Asset loss was the outcome of powerful economic forces that pushed people into livelihood options that were themselves drivers of conflict, as conflict constrained previous livelihood strategies by restricting mobility, trade routes and access to land. Treating this as a problem of scarce *availability* of resources can make this worse, since the same political–institutional realities continue to skew access to resources and services.

A developmental approach to livelihoods which was not accompanied by attention to the need for neutrality was also dangerous because it was feeding discrimination and conflict. Young et al.'s detailed analysis revealed the dangers of livelihood programming uninformed by a humanitarian respect for neutrality.

The studies also identify some quite specific interventions at the intersection of conflict and livelihood that can play a critical role, e.g. the 2009 study looks at investment in water infrastructure along livestock trade routes to Libya, improving telecommunications, facilitating remittance flows and facilitating agreement on taxes paid on livestock.

*Sources: Young et al. (2005, 2009)*

People's livelihood goals are also shaped by their socio-political situation. These will include both economic and non-economic goals, which can be difficult to separate. It is probably true that in all circumstances livelihood support is unlikely to be fully effective or appropriate if it is not designed and delivered based on a good understanding of people's lives and livelihoods. However, crises of all kinds will make this much more important – because the stakes are higher for affected people, situations may be much more uncertain, and normal norms and institutional rules may no longer apply. Their needs and goals, too, will probably be much more acute and more diverse, since much that can normally be taken for granted has to be rethought. In situations of danger – which are not limited to armed conflicts, though these are the obvious example – it is imperative to understand people's livelihoods with a whole-of-life lens, and not just an economic one.

**Box 15 Changing goals and strategies**

People's livelihood choices always have many different objectives apart from maximising income. In crises people have also been seen to prioritise the following goals:

- Minimise risk of personal harm for themselves and their families
- Protect their claims to their land (e.g. by maintaining a physical presence)
- Maintain good relations with other (e.g. ethnic) groups
- Stay where their children can get to school
- Minimise risk by splitting families and maximising access to aid
- Maintain social status
- Respect cultural norms, e.g. social solidarity and social hierarchies

Objectives change in one further way which is not widely appreciated. Recent (as yet unpublished) research in DRC brought out strongly how many people have simply lost hope because of the constant crisis. It is probable that many have clinical depression or some other related condition, and they appear to have no objectives beyond bare survival. The link

between the psychological impacts of crisis and changes in people's ability to maximise their opportunities through creative livelihood strategies is very much under-researched, but all those working on livelihoods, whether from short- or long-term perspectives, ought to be aware of this dimension.

## 4.2 Potential impacts of aid

Livelihoods are also impacted and changed (not always in wholly positive or predicted ways) by aid itself. In every situation, there will be competition for resources, both material and non-material (e.g. legitimacy, status/power and social capital); development interventions never play out as predicted by development agents; and all external interventions have an impact on the relations of people and institutions in the places they are trying to assist. In conflicts, these phenomena can be less predictable and also greatly magnified, e.g. because flows of aid can be much more substantial relative to other resources available and because social relations are by definition contested and in a state of tension in a conflict. On top of this, where people are living *in extremis* as a result of conflict, the costs of getting it wrong are also magnified. Where authority is contested, any development actor has to balance a desire to see an outcome where there is a strong, stable and competent authority enjoying broadly accepted legitimacy with the dangers of overtly supporting a party to the conflict whose legitimacy is contested and whose objectives for some of the people affected by conflict may be questioned. Overt support for one party may create difficulties for those connected to other parties to the conflict (e.g. overt support for the transitional government in Somalia may have made it harder to deliver emergency relief and livelihood support in areas controlled by Al Shabab) and may prejudice future possibilities to deliver aid if the political situation continues. Equally, support for state structures may be seen as political support and may encourage a conduct of war or politics that is less than welcome by the aid actor. This danger is accompanied by the heightened risk of such co-option in conflicts, where parties to conflict may have little incentive to be overly transparent about their real objectives. Peter Uvin's (1999) analysis of the contribution of aid to conflict in Rwanda remains a classic text, with importance well beyond Rwanda.

Inappropriate aid (whether humanitarian or development) may have negative effects on people's livelihoods and the wider economy. For example, in-kind food aid has the potential to undermine markets and local production (see Barrett 2006), but on its own this would usually be an argument for switching to cash aid, rather than necessarily stopping any transfers.

The idea of 'dependency syndrome', in the sense of aid (particularly protracted relief or welfare) causing people to abandon their usual livelihoods and lose motivation to work or innovate to support themselves, is often invoked but is not supported by evidence (see Box 16). Protracted or recurrent relief can, however, become a necessary part of poor people's incomes in the absence of viable livelihood opportunities or development assistance. Because there may be considerable economic difficulties for many people in finding sustainable alternative livelihoods after a crisis, long-term destitution may make it difficult for humanitarian agencies to exit from their relief programmes (see Section 6.5).

**Box 16 The evidence on dependency syndrome**

Some fear that if emergency aid is given in any other than the most extreme circumstances, it creates dependency and thus undermines development in the longer term. Recovery, in this view, can be hastened by phasing out relief as fast as possible following a crisis, forcing people to stand on their own two feet instead of feeding or encouraging their dependency. Dependency syndrome is often invoked, but *there is almost no evidence that it exists* or means anything very much. Relief is given to people when they need it – meaning that if they do depend on aid, this is because the need for it was correctly assessed. Dependency, in other words, is created by the crises to which relief is responding, and not by aid. There is no evidence that aid often encourages people to forego their own initiatives, if only because aid workers tend to inflate the importance of relief aid in people's lives. It is rarely either sufficient or dependable enough to create that kind of dependency.

*Source: Harvey and Lind (2005)*

The need for careful analysis of how any planned livelihood intervention in a crisis or unstable situation may affect different groups and interests ('who gains, who loses?') is discussed further in the following section on protection.

## Key references:


Collinson, S. (2003) *Power, livelihoods and conflict: case studies in political economy analysis for humanitarian action.* HPG Report 13. London: ODI. Available at: www.odi.org.uk/resources/docs/289.pdf


*The paper explains the 'political economy' of livelihoods in greater detail than the summary given above, and includes several case studies that illustrate why such an analysis is necessary.*


Young, H. et al. (2005) *Darfur – Livelihoods under Siege.* Somerville; Tufts University. Available at: http://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/darfur-livelihoods-under-siege


## See also:


Levine, S. (2012) *Livelihoods in protracted crises. Rome; FAO* Available at: http://technicalconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Livelihoods-in-protracted-crises.pdf

Uvin, P. (1999) *Development Aid and Structural Violence: The case of Rwanda. Development* 42, 49–56.

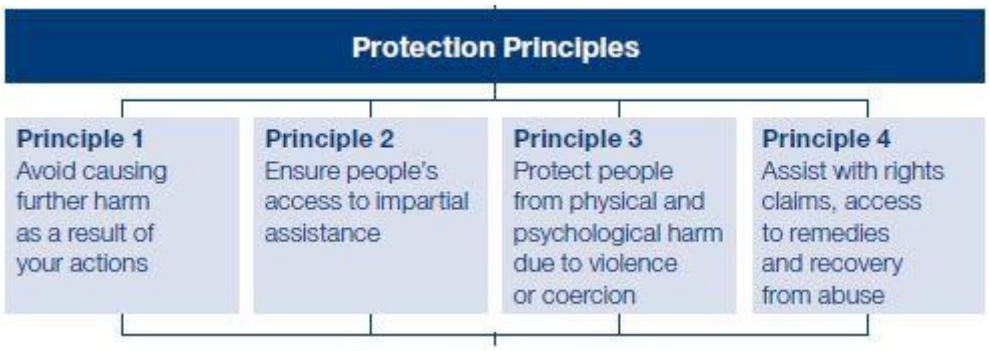
# SECTION 5

# Protection and livelihoods

## 5.1 'Protection' in the humanitarian context

Humanitarian action has a domain called 'protection', which is concerned with the safety, dignity and rights of people affected by disaster or armed conflict. The four basic principles of protection, intended to inform all humanitarian action, are set out in Figure 7: a detailed explanation can be found in the *Sphere Handbook*. In conflict situations, the most obvious protection priority is to ensure the physical safety of civilians, but the remit of protection is much broader than this. It includes gender-based violence (GBV); child protection; housing, land and property; human rights; mine action; and AGD (age, gender and diversity). In the IASC cluster system (see Figure 5) protection is led by UNHCR, and much refugee assistance is targeted according to protection criteria, prioritising groups most likely to be at risk of violence, abuse or loss of rights (e.g. the elderly, disabled, unaccompanied children, survivors of torture or GBV, and single mothers). However, protection principles apply to all people affected by crises, not only those who are displaced. The vision of the Global Protection Cluster is "a world in which boys, girls, women and men affected or threatened by humanitarian crises are fully protected in accordance with their rights" (see www.globalprotectioncluster.org for an overview and links to resources on each thematic area).

**Figure 7 Protection principles in humanitarian action**




*Source: Sphere Project (2011, p28)*

Of course, the need to assess and guard against harmful impacts, particularly those affecting vulnerable groups, is not limited to crisis situations. Pain and Kantor (2012), for example, showed how an attempt at economic advancement for rural tenants in Afghanistan created impossible vulnerabilities for people who were ultimately dependent on powerful landlords who would not tolerate an escape from subservience and dependency by the poor. Another example from a non-crisis situation is the use of irrigation development in arid areas to support state policies around resettlement. The impact of such interventions on the land rights, and other rights, of those being displaced, or of pastoral communities, has not always been well appreciated by those focusing narrowly on the direct economic consequences of their work on a specific beneficiary group. While these issues will not be new for livelihoods experts, they must be much higher on their agenda in crises.

In extreme situations anyone working on livelihoods, from the emergency food security to the long-term development end of the spectrum, should consider very carefully the implications for people's personal security and rights of any interventions that they propose to support. They should give particular thought to the non-economic factors – goals, threats, etc. – that shape people's livelihood opportunities and decisions. One of the strengths of the sustainable livelihoods framework is how it makes it impossible to think about livelihoods without including consideration of the whole context within which those livelihoods are played out – e.g. sources of vulnerability, politics, power and institutions. Adaptations of the framework, discussed above, have brought out more explicitly how crisis situations can transform certain livelihoods; for example, qualities that are normally be considered assets can become sources of vulnerability (e.g. ownership of cattle can make people a target for violent raids, and membership of a previously privileged group can become a liability).

The livelihood-protection link has been most explicitly studied by Jaspars and O'Callaghan (2010), but it is implicit in several of the studies from conflict areas, such as Darfur (Young et al., 2005, 2009 and Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars 2007). This is a very promising area for synergy in a collaborative analysis between humanitarian and development actors. Ironically, because development livelihoods actors tend to take a broader and longer-term perspective than emergency food security actors, they may be able to play a key role in helping two emergency sectors, food security and protection, to collaborate more widely and deeply.

The following sections outline some selected key areas where humanitarian protection principles are particularly relevant to livelihoods.

## Key references:

Jaspars, S. and O'Callaghan, S. (2010) Challenging choices: protection and livelihoods in conflict. Case studies from Darfur, Chechnya, Sri Lanka and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. HPG Report 31 London: ODI. Available at: www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6008.pdf

The global protection cluster has further information and references on many areas of protection. See www.globalprotectioncluster.org

## See also:

GPC (2014) Food Security & Livelihoods Programs: Tips for Protection Mainstreaming. Geneva; GPC Available at: www.globalprotectioncluster.org/en/areas-of-responsibility/protection-mainstreaming.html

GPC (2013) Strengthening Protection in Natural Disaster Response: Introduction. Geneva; GPC Available at: www.globalprotectioncluster.org/en/tools-and-guidance/protection-cluster-coordination-toolbox.html

One of a set of working documents providing practical guidance on protection issues in natural disasters.

## 5.2 'Do no harm'

The humanitarian world has adopted from medical ethics the principle of 'first, do no harm' (Protection Principle no. 1 in Figure 7 above). Of course, in humanitarian action as in medicine, this does not mean that simply doing no harm is enough: the principle requires the practitioner to systematically assess, predict and, as far as possible, prevent any harm that may be caused to any group of people by a proposed intervention.

In conflicts, there is a widely accepted principle that external interventions ought to be based on a proper understanding of the dynamics of the conflict. Although it would be naïve and simplistic to believe that development or aid can bring about peace, the ways in which aid is given often have an impact that can provoke further tension or resentment or which can create opportunities for more dialogue or mutual interest. This principle is now widely known through the classic text, Mary Anderson's (1999) *Do No Harm*. This principle, though often called 'do no harm', is not confined to the first protection principle (Figure 7), or to a narrow objective that interventions should avoid making things worse. Do no harm is as applicable and important for development actors and practice as for humanitarians. After a flurry of interest in do no harm some years ago, it seems to have slid down the agenda in the humanitarian world. Perhaps this is because it is easier to deal with technical problems and clear-cut solutions than with the shades of grey and need for judgement demanded when concerning oneself with politics and power. The principles of do no harm have been accepted as crucial for development practice in conflict by donors (see DFID 2010) but have never become an area of core expertise for development practitioners. Although a number of agencies have developed tools for analysing conflicts, the task still seems as difficult to master as ever. The complex insights that can be found in work emanating from years of study on conflicts[12] highlight perhaps why the task of understanding how to operate in a conflict is not one easily solved by applying frameworks.

## Key references:


Anderson, M.B. (1999) *Do No Harm: How Aid can Support Peace – or War*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers. www.conflictsensitivity.org/node/103

DFID (2010) *Working Effectively in Conflict-affected and Fragile Situations. Briefing Paper B: Do No Harm*. London: DFID. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67703/building-peaceful-states-B.pdf

Zicherman, N., with Khan, A., Street, A., Heyer, H. and Chevreau, O. (2011) *Applying conflict sensitivity in emergency response: Current practice and ways forward*. ODI HPN Network Paper 70. London: ODI. Available at: www.odihpn.org/hpn-resources/network-papers/applying-conflict-sensitivity-in-emergency-response-current-practice-and-ways-forward


[12] The work on conflict in DRC by Vlassenroot and others at the Conflict Research Group in Antwerp is one noteworthy example. See Vlassenroot and Raeymakers, eds. (2004), available at www.psw.ugent.be/crg/staff/publications/pub_vlassenroot.html.

## See also:

Haider, H. (2014) *Conflict: Topic Guide*. Revised edition with B. Rohwerder. Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham. Available at: www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/CON69.pdf

*See Chapter 1 for a list of 12 tools and frameworks developed by donor governments, UN, World Bank and NGOs.*

CDA (2004) *The "Do No Harm" Framework for Analyzing the Impact of Assistance on Conflict: A Handbook*. Cambridge, MA: CDA. Available at: www.cdacollaborative.org/publications/do-no-harm/dnh-tools/the-"do-no-harm"-framework-for-analyzing-the-impact-of-assistance-on-conflict-a-handbook-(english)/

*A collection of short papers on the Framework and its use. These materials assume a background in the Framework and are often used to supplement training programmes.*

## 5.3 Gender

The idea that different people have different needs and opportunities is obvious, as is the fact that gender is often one of the important determinants of those differences. Gender analysis is well developed outside the humanitarian domain, as is the recognition that gender is only one of the critical dimensions in establishing people's opportunities and needs, and in power inequality. Other dimensions, such as age and generation, are also well studied, if less often central to situational analysis. There are no great differences of principle in the way in which gender should be understood or analysed because a situation is a crisis or because a *humanitarian* intervention is being planned. It is necessary only to make *two* observations. First, in more extreme situations, where there may be more urgent and serious needs, it is important to know if some people's needs are not being addressed or if the interventions to address them will not be effective. Gender analysis (of both problems and proposed solutions) is thus more important the more serious and urgent the situation is, because the stakes are so much higher. Second, although the principles of gender analysis (i.e. the questions asked) may remain largely the same in crises, the content of the analysis (i.e. the answers received) may be very different. Crises throw up new threats, including gender-based threats, for men, women, boys and girls, e.g. the danger of boys being recruited by armed actors, state and non-state (though sadly this is not always recognised as an example of GBV). Gender-based roles change in crises, and those engaged in longer-term assistance need to be aware of these. The potential for assistance to have unintended consequences on gender relations, both positive and negative, is well known outside the humanitarian world. However, because humanitarian aid may play a much greater role in the households of affected people, it can have a much greater influence over gender roles and relations, for better or worse. For these reasons, it is necessary to incorporate a crisis perspective and crisis expertise into gender analysis, whether or not such analysis is specifically related to emergency response. On the other hand, because emergency responses tend to have a much shorter time perspective and to focus much more on immediate need than on structural causes of vulnerability (including power), gender analysis within humanitarian action may often be much less sophisticated. The scope for synergy between the two worlds through a more collaborative gender analysis is enormous.

## Key references:

IASC (2006) *Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action.* Available at: www.globalprotectioncluster.org/_assets/files/tools_and_guidance/IASC_Gender_Handbook_EN.pdf

Young Lee, A. (2014) *A Double-edged Sword: Livelihoods in Emergencies. Guidance and Tools for Improved Programming*. New York: Women's Refugee Commission. Available at: https://womensrefugeecommission.org/programs/livelihoods/research-and-resources/1046-a-double-edged-sword-livelihoods-in-emergencies

## 5.4 Land rights

Land rights have only found their way on to the emergency agenda in the last decade. They are an example of areas of concern that involve emergency relief, protection and longer-term livelihoods thinking. The area of land rights is never an easy one for external development actors. More than almost any other dimension of livelihoods they require in-depth understanding of the specific context even at sub-national level (the *de jure* and *de facto* legal situations, the institutions of administration and justice, the informal systems and cultural norms, etc.). The topic can only properly be addressed by simultaneously combining many perspectives (e.g. both macro-economic and micro-economic, political, legal, institutional and cultural). They are even more difficult for emergency actors to deal with, partly because the need for expertise in the humanitarian sector is still under-recognised. In addition, because of the way in which international humanitarian response is usually organised (short-term assignments to different countries), the necessary in-depth and multi-dimensional understanding of a particular context is hard to find.

Most attention to land rights in the emergency world falls under the 'Housing, Land and Property' (HLP) cluster,[13] and is concerned mainly with the question of who should receive help with shelter following a disaster. (Should aid be given to those who have lost property which they owned? Or does this discriminate against those who had no property or insecure land rights before the crisis?) Similar questions ought to be asked in other sectors, e.g. following floods in Sindh Province in Pakistan, the largely feudal system can mean that assistance given to help poor famers to restart agricultural production largely benefits only the hugely rich landlords (Zyck et al., 2015). It is safe to say that the humanitarian sector has not yet mastered these dilemmas, but they are now taking them seriously, particularly in urban crises where, because of higher population pressure, they are harder to ignore. Most attention has been given to the legal rights of the displaced and returnees, notably in long-running programmes such as ICLA (Information, Counselling, and Legal Assistance) by NRC.

However, there are many other reasons why land rights should be taken extra-seriously in crises, not least as an essential livelihood asset, by both humanitarian and development actors. Conflicts can be caused or exacerbated by struggles over land rights (e.g. it is known that they are at the heart of the problem in eastern DR Congo, but neither humanitarian nor development actors have been able to address them seriously). Both conflicts and other

[13] See http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/en/areas-of-responsibility/housing-land-and-property.html

disasters may disrupt the social and political norms that maintain a status quo in land rights protection, providing extra opportunities for the powerful to grab land rights from the vulnerable – including those made newly vulnerable by crisis. Many crises cause displacement (see Section 5.5), and in places where physical possession and use of land is a key to maintaining one's land rights, even short-term displacement opens up threats (e.g. the epidemic of land grabbing in Northern Uganda since the end of the civil war and return from forced displacement). Assistance provided in response to crisis may itself create more problems, and be used as a vehicle through which land rights are lost. The creation of IDP (internally-displaced persons) camps and infrastructure to serve them may be supported by donors, but they rarely pay significant attention to the land rights of the people on whose land the camps are constructed. (This criticism is not specifically aimed at humanitarian donors and agencies: development actors are often as negligent when supporting the construction of schools on private land 'provided by the community'.)

**Box 17 Land-grabbing in crises and DRR**

Crises and post-crisis situations can be opportunities for some to advance their own interests and even to manipulate aid interventions with a covert goal of grabbing land rights.

In Sri Lanka, following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the government declared exclusion zones close to the coast, preventing people from rebuilding their homes – whose construction without approval had been tolerated for years. However, exemptions to the exclusion were given to those constructing hotels, resulting in a *de facto* transfer of land rights from the poor to the wealthy.

In other countries, forced displacement on a smaller scale has occurred, ostensibly to prevent disasters caused by flooding. The vacated land may then be used by private companies. Following droughts in arid areas, governments may encourage development partners to invest in irrigation and settlement policies for transhumant pastoralists, even where (as in Somalia in 2011) it was the pastoralists who were least at risk of famine. The implications for land rights, which are often unrecognised by national laws for pastoralists, are very sensitive.

*Source: Harris (2005)*

In short, in crises far more attention should be given to the increased threat level to land rights. These threats are relevant to those interested in both humanitarian and development objectives. Development specialists are best placed to provide an understanding of land rights, especially if they are assisted in understanding the micro-level dynamics of the crisis and the vulnerabilities that it causes by emergency actors, who may have a good understanding of these. The collaborative analysis should then be used to guide both longer term and emergency interventions, not only in livelihoods and food security, but in all other areas where land is an issue (e.g. shelter, displacement camps and the construction of infrastructure for basic services).

## Key references:

Pantuliano, S., ed. (2009) *Uncharted Territory: Land, conflict and humanitarian action*. Rugby: Practical Action Publishing. Available at: www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/5556.pdf

UN-HABITAT (2010) *Land and Natural Disasters: Guidance for Practitioners.* Available at: http://unhabitat.org/books/land-and-natural-disasters-guidance-for-practitioners/

*This is the first manual for humanitarian agencies on land rights in disasters and an important work, but it also reveals many of the inherent difficulties that aid agencies have in dealing with the institutional complexity demanded by a livelihoods framework. See Levine et al. (2012, Chapter 7) for a critique.*

## See also:

Locke, A. and Henley, G. (2014) *Topic Guide: Land.* Evidence on Demand. Available at: www.evidenceondemand.info/topic-guide-land

*See particularly Section 4 – Land in fragile and conflict-affected states.*

## 5.5 Displacement

Many emergencies cause involuntary displacement. For a long time, the displacement itself has been considered in terms of 'crisis', and support to the displaced (IDPs or refugees) has been given using emergency modalities. This has increasingly been challenged in two ways. First, by an argument that refugees should not only be seen as a 'problem to be solved', but also as a resource and a spur to economic development. Second, by a recognition that most displacement lasts for many years (Crawford et al., 2015), and it may not make much sense to use paradigms of short-term assistance where what is needed is support for the displaced to develop their own livelihoods in displacement. For the past few years, the Transitional Solutions Initiative, pushed forward by several agencies (including people within UNHCR and the World Bank), has been trying to put displacement on the *development* agenda.

This involves a number of challenges for development agencies. First, encouraging the displaced and, in particular, refugees to have independent and successful livelihoods may not be seen as desirable by governments, which may not be sympathetic to a particular displaced population[14] (and may have deliberately caused its displacement) or which may fear a refugee influx.[15] Where donor governments or UN organisations see their primary goal as supporting government policy, in line with declarations made in Paris and Busan, this presents a challenge. Second, it may involve the need for a change in mind-set and ways of working, incorporating a more disaggregated analysis of different populations and attention beyond 'creating an enabling environment' for growth or development. Finally, but critically, it

[14] e.g. Sri Lanka, Burundi, Uganda and Sudan.

[15] In the UK, for example, "[w]ith certain exceptions, asylum applicants are not permitted to take employment" Asylum Policy Instruction, Permission To Work, Version 6.0. Home Office, UK Government (2014).

demands awareness of the need to understand specific issues related to displacement. Livelihood experts are unlikely to be similarly expert in the rights of refugees or IDPs and their protection, in the sociology of refugee identity or in the priorities, strategies or social networks of the displaced. There is no reason, though, why such expertise cannot be sought, provided only that they understand why it is so critical.

## Key references:

UNHCR, UNDP and World Bank (2010) *Concept Note: Transitional Solutions Initiative*. Available at: www.unhcr.org/4e27e2f06.html

*The Transitional Solutions Initiative, which aims to address protracted displacement by finding durable solutions through joint development and humanitarian action, was reframed in 2014 as the Solutions Alliance (www.solutionsalliance.org)*

GPC (2010) *Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons.* Available at: www.globalprotectioncluster.org/_assets/files/tools_and_guidance/protection_of_idps/IDP_Handbook_EN.pdf

## See also:

*The Forced Migration Review (FMR) has a forthcoming (2016) special issue on displacement, transition and solutions.* See www.fmreview.org/solutions#_edn1

# SECTION 6

# Anticipating and responding to shocks: current thinking on livelihood interventions

Anticipating and responding to shocks potentially covers a huge range of issues and interventions: this section does not attempt to give an overview of the whole subject. Instead it highlights selected areas of current thinking and innovation where development and humanitarian efforts can or should be combined (bridging the continuing divide outlined in Section 3.4), or where livelihoods advisers working on longer-term development could usefully engage with humanitarian processes and with disaster response or prevention.

## 6.1 Response analysis and the humanitarian toolbox

The range of responses used by emergency agencies has to be understood in the context of the paradigms discussed earlier (see Section 3). As we have seen, the focus of humanitarian action is on alleviating symptoms rather than causes, and usually on food security rather than livelihoods. Response is designed for acute short-term perturbations to food security. Although it is rare that anyone argues for such a crude paradigm, the underlying normative values often remain:

- Needs are urgent (the ultimate paradigm is that they are life threatening).
- Addressing causes of the needs could not mitigate the (acute) symptoms in time.
- Response therefore has to be designed to meet the needs immediately and directly.
- Since aid has to be addressed directly at the need, and not at the underlying causes, needs only have to be measured – to know how much assistance is needed. Analysis is optional.

In many cases, this model accurately describes the situations and the life-saving imperative to give assistance rapidly, even when the full complex realities that have caused the needs have not been studied. In many cases they do not, particularly when crises are protracted or when crises recur predictably in the same places. Nonetheless, these paradigms have shaped the way in which emergency relief is planned and delivered.

There are only a finite number of ways in which material assistance can be given to help people with their food security, which is why the notion of a toolbox adequately captures the way in which potential responses are thought about. (This is why it is commonly set up as a series of decision trees). The 2008 *Good Practice Review* on emergency eood security Interventions (Maxwell et al. 2008) may be slightly dated, but it remains a largely accurate description of the toolbox commonly used. It lists a fairly comprehensive inventory of possible tools which essentially boil down to:

- In-kind *food aid*
- Transfers of cash or vouchers
- *Feeding programmes* for malnourished individuals
- *Seed and tool* distributions
- *Livestock interventions* (because so many recurrent crises are associated with livestock keepers in arid and semi-arid lands).

Also mentioned but rarely of significance are:

- *'Barter shops'* (hardly ever used, if at all)
- *Micro-finance* (rarely used as an emergency intervention, though more often for recovery)
- *Monetisation of food aid* as a supply side intervention.

In many ways, the toolbox itself has changed little since 2008, though the frequency of using tools has certainly changed greatly. Household food shortages are finally understood by most as a problem of access to food and not necessarily one of absolute supply shortages, leading to cash transfers rapidly displacing in-kind food aid and to changes in the ways in which food is procured for in-kind distribution, with more local or regional purchasing. Although in-kind assistance still represents the overwhelming majority of material relief, the pace of change means that direct assistance through cash will one day almost certainly become the default choice[16] for meeting an urgent household deficit in the ability to access food. Distributions of seeds and tools, rarely of any genuine relevance to livelihoods, have perhaps become less frequent over the last decade.

There have, however, been some shifts in approach in recent years which may provide opportunities for livelihoods advisers to expand the toolbox, and to help ensure the best available tools are used in each specific situation. For example, emergency agencies have become much more aware of the importance of markets (see Section 3.3). This awareness, and the tools that they have developed for assessing markets, have so far been used to inform choices between using existing tools in the box (i.e. the choice of whether to give aid in-kind or as cash). They have not yet resulted in the development or widespread use of a new range of interventions during crises, though attention is beginning to turn towards ways in which markets can be supported before crises as preparedness or DRR.

Research conducted by Tufts University in 2011–2012 into how organisations make choices regarding food security interventions in emergency-affected and risk-prone areas found that:

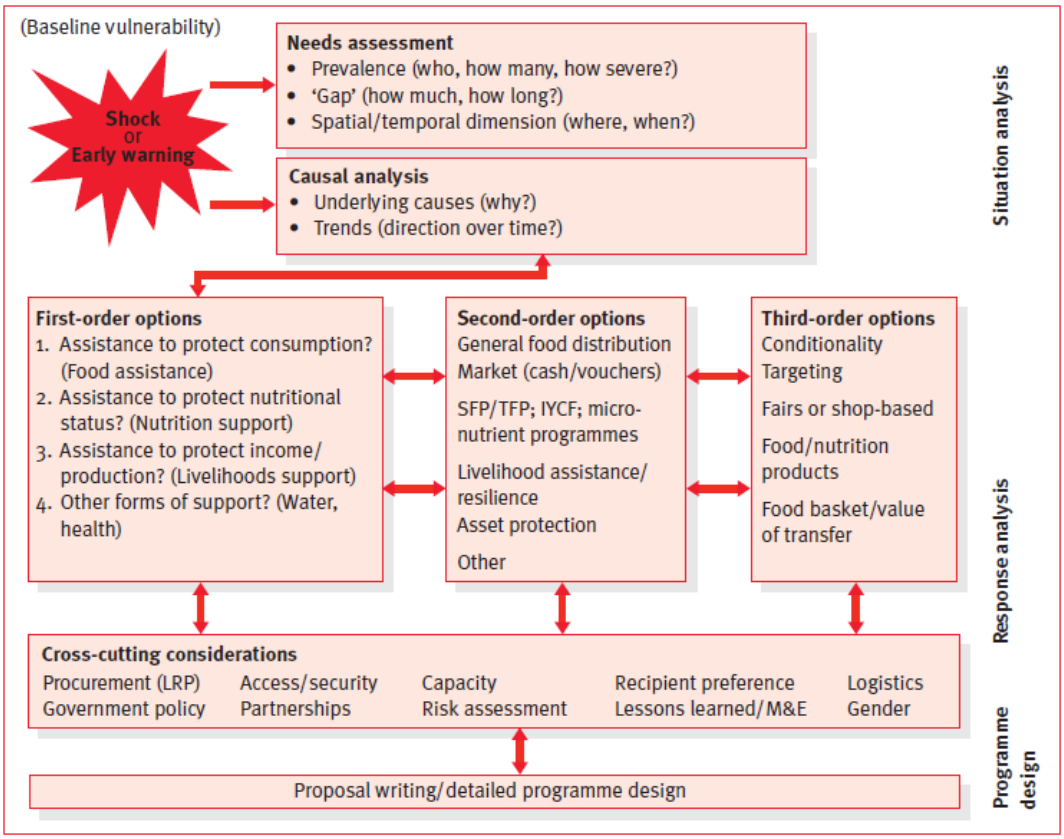
- Donors now support a much broader range of response options than they did a decade ago.
- Significant effort has gone into improving needs assessments and situation analyses, but there is often a disconnect between this information and response choice.
- Response choice does not always involve an evidence-based, analytical process but is also driven by the capacity and institutional ethos of the implementing agency, the experience of its staff and a range of external factors.
- These factors create a tendency to choose 'preferred' responses, which may not be the most appropriate options in a given context (Maxwell et al. 2013).

The report suggests a 'roadmap' for decision-making, reproduced here as Figure 8, showing how response analysis should logically and ideally be done (recognising that in the real world decisions are rarely made in such a linear way). Although this still emanates very much from the humanitarian perspective of choosing from a limited range of programme types for a limited range of objectives, the roadmap does offer a number of entry points for livelihoods advisers to engage with humanitarian decision-makers to broaden and improve response choices, from the causal analysis through the first-order ('objective-setting') options to the details of programme design. It is probably unrealistic to expect most emergency responses, even in protracted crises, to be designed starting from the specific situation analysis without having in mind a range of possible options from which a

[16] Hopefully, no one choice will ever again be a *standard* response, to be used without regard for the nature of the situation, as in-kind food aid was for several decades.

programme choice is made. Nonetheless, any attempt to widen the thinking and the range of ways in which interventions can be used in crises will be a significant step forward.

**Figure 8 A roadmap for response analysis in food security crises**




*Source: Maxwell et al. (2013, p4)*

## Key references:

Maxwell, D., Sadler, K., Sim, A., Mutonyi, M., Egan, R. and Webster, M. (2008) *Emergency food security interventions*. HPN Good Practice Review 10. London: ODI. Available at: www.odihpn.org/documents/gpr10.pdf

Maxwell, D., Stobaugh, H., Parker, J. and McGlinchy, M. (2013) *Response analysis and response choice in food security crises: a roadmap.* ODI HPN Network paper 73. London: ODI. Available at: www.odihpn.org/hpn-resources/network-papers/response-analysis-and-response-choice-in-food-security-crises-a-roadmap

## 6.2 Early warning, early action

There is a vast literature on early warning systems (EWS), particularly for natural hazards such as drought and flood, which is beyond the scope of this Topic Guide. However, in recent years there have been renewed efforts to understand and address the frequent failure

of EWS to trigger effective *early action* to prevent such hazards from causing humanitarian disasters. A key factor in the often slow response to predicted crises has been a lack of willingness to commit to expensive relief operations until donors are sure that a disaster is really imminent (or already on international media screens). This problem is exacerbated by a frequent failure to combine the early warning of a hazard (e.g. drought or flood) with an adequate livelihoods analysis. This could ensure that warnings covered the implications for people, and also that recommendations for action were linked to the livelihood calendars and the windows of opportunity for taking preventive action (see Box 18).

**Box 18 Windows of opportunity**

In theory, everyone welcomes the possibility of using assistance to *protect* the livelihoods of people threatened by crisis, and so prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. This approach has been championed for drought response in arid lands, e.g. helping to keep livestock alive and marketable, and thus avoiding the need to feed their owners and preventing their future destitution. A major problem is that livelihood interventions have a window of opportunity that is determined by a *livelihoods* calendar and not by a *humanitarian* calendar (i.e. the point at which humanitarian indicators pass a certain threshold). For example, supporting livestock to access fodder only makes sense from the time when grazing is scarce to the point when the animals die or when rains have returned. Agencies have struggled to respond on time, largely because the livelihoods calendar has not been thought about and the need to respond by certain deadlines – or not at all – is not acknowledged, in proposals, contracts or evaluations.

*Source: Levine et al. (2011)*

Once the time taken for any plans to reach actual implementation is taken into consideration, it is usually clear that 'emergency livelihoods support' has to be undertaken before any emergency has arisen. This should not be either a surprise or a problem – although NGOs sometimes engage in emergency measles vaccination in food security crises, no one would see the provision of a vaccination service as a purely emergency response. Thinking is now moving to measures which can be taken that would mitigate any crisis if it did occur, but which would be independently justifiable as important livelihood support measures even in the absence of crises – sometimes called *'no-regrets'* programming.[17] (LEGS, the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards, referred to earlier, is a good example of technical guidance on a range of early actions that can be taken to support livelihoods in pastoralist areas faced by a potential crisis.)

Early warning, early response and no-regrets programming are three key areas that are often categorised as the domain of emergency response. However, success can only be achieved if decision-making is based on collaborative analysis and contributions from both humanitarian and livelihood specialists.

[17] See for example ERC (2014) and Hillier (2012)

## Key references:

Bailey, R. (2013) *Managing famine risk: linking early warning to early action*. London: Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs). Available at: www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Energy%2C%20Environment%20and%20Development/0413r_earlywarnings.pdf

ERC (Enhanced Response Capacity) Consortium (2014) *The Situation and Response Analysis Framework. Improving early, appropriate and proportionate response to slow-onset food crises*. London: Save the Children. www.sraf-guidelines.org

## See also:

Melly, P. (2013) *Translating famine early warning into early action: a Sahel case study*. London: Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs).

Mosley, J. (2012) *Translating famine early warning into early action: an East Africa case study*. London: Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs).

*Case studies respectively of Niger, and the semi-arid rangelands of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. Outputs of a Chatham House research project on barriers to early action in slow-onset food crises.* www.chathamhouse.org/about/structure/eer-department/translating-early-warning-early-action-project

Hillier, D. (2012) Managing the risk, not the crisis. *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine*, 53. Available at: www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-53

*Looks at lessons from the delayed response to the famine in Somalia in 2011.*

## 6.3 Risk financing and multi-year humanitarian funding

Donors are turning their attention to innovative funding mechanisms to circumvent the limitations of the usual short-term funding cycle for humanitarian aid (see Section 3.4). As outlined above, humanitarian funding is often only given for 6 months, or a year at most. This limits the types of intervention that can be mobilised, causes excessive staff turnover and delays for recruitment or deployment. This makes it very difficult to assess effectiveness or impact. At the same time, the process of accessing humanitarian funding can be very slow, often leading to delayed response in a crisis and missing the window of opportunity for early preventive action.

*Risk financing* covers a range of mechanisms to enable rapid access to financing for humanitarian assistance or early action to prevent a crisis, in contexts where development programmes are ongoing but hazards that could trigger a crisis are highly likely or frequent. The term includes various types of insurance arrangements (e.g. the African Risk Capacity Initiative – www.africanriskcapacity.org) and contingency reserves. USAID uses the language of 'crisis modifiers' which are a facility built into the project contract that enables a proportion of the budget to be switched from development work to crisis contingency plans

as and when needed, with minimal bureaucracy. Risk financing can also be attached to social protection programmes to enable rapid scale-up when needed (e.g. Ethiopia's PSNP; see Section 6.5 below). If it is accepted that it makes little sense to continue business as normal if a crisis suddenly occurs (as discussed above), livelihoods advisers working in contexts with predictable or recurrent disaster risks should consider how flexibility can best be built into all longer-term development programmes. This may include looking at the feasibility of building in some form of risk financing or contingency planning.

In contexts where it is predictable that humanitarian assistance will be needed for several years, DFID is currently experimenting with *longer term (multi-year) funding* for humanitarian action. It is hoped that new ways of delivering aid can be found which will be able to support communities' own capacities for dealing with future crises, and which can go some way towards addressing the underlying causes of extreme vulnerability. It is also hoped that longer-term funding horizons can enable planning of more effective and livelihood-supportive interventions, easing the transition from relief to stable development where possible, and improving the quality of programming by reducing the turnover of staff on short contracts and the consequent recurrent start-up costs, loss of institutional memory and programme experience.[18]

## Key references:

Scott, R. (2015) *Financing in Crisis? Making humanitarian finance fit for the future*. OECD. www.oecd.org/dac/OECD-WP-Humanitarian-Financing-Crisis%20.pdf

Development Initiatives (2015) *Think Piece: Humanitarian Financing*. www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Final_Financing_Think-Piece_20140116.pdf

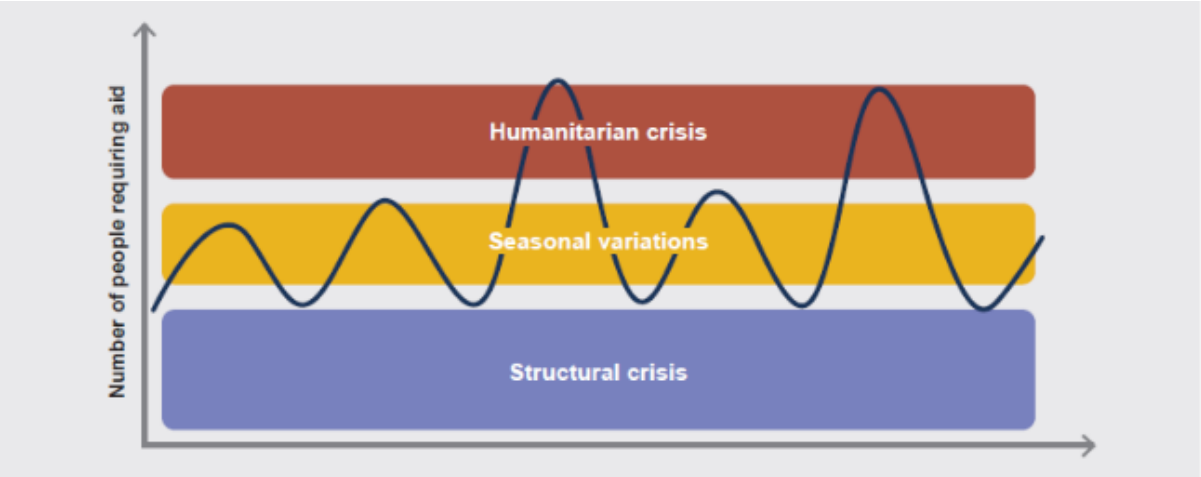
*A consultation paper for WHS 2016.*

## 6.4 Social protection

In many crises, and particularly in recurrent food security crises, emergency thresholds of need are reached because of a temporary spike in chronically high poverty (see Figure 9). If these needs were being addressed through permanent social protection measures and safety nets, then the degree of need to be met in a humanitarian crisis would be much lower, assuming that the targeting of social protection matched those suffering from crises to a large extent. Where extreme needs are predictable because they are seasonal or recurrent, there is an intuitive logic that they can be met more effectively and more cost-effectively by using such permanent structures and institutions. The use of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia to deal with the structural poverty that used to be categorised as (annual) 'emergency' needs has given impetus to the argument that emergency response can be moved from the realm of the *ad hoc* to a predictable, programmed response by a state institution.

[18] DFID's use of multi-year humanitarian funding (MYHF) in the DRC, Sudan and Ethiopia is the subject of an on-going thematic evaluation. See http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/Project/61123/

**Figure 9 Seeing humanitarian needs as an extension of structural, social need**




*Source: Cherrier (2014)*

Currently, few of the countries which receive the most emergency relief have functioning social protection systems. Some donors are supporting the more widespread development of social protection systems, which are gaining ground. Their adoption in conflict-affected states remains a problem, and yet protracted crises have a very high prevalence of chronic poverty of enormous depth. Where state social protection systems are not yet possible, some donors (including DFID) are arguing for international aid to be used through a temporary (but multi-year) structure that operates more like a social protection or safety net system. The hope is that it can gradually become a more permanent institution and be transferred over to state ownership. This idea has yet to be widely tested over a long period.

In countries where social protection can be designed for dealing with structural needs (the blue rectangle in Figure 9), then it can in principle be used selectively for when those needs rise periodically, e.g. in the hungry season or in years of poor harvests. By extension, it may also be possible to use these measures for dealing with the more serious spikes in need that are humanitarian crises. What is sometimes called 'shock responsive social protection' can cover a huge area, because social protection policy itself encompasses a range of policy instruments, both contributory and non-contributory, including in-kind (e.g. food or vouchers) and cash transfers, school feeding, active labour market programmes, public works programmes, insurance, subsidies and social care. These different programmes can be asked to respond to a crisis in many different ways:

1. **Vertical expansion**: increasing the benefit value or duration of an existing programme
2. **Horizontal expansion:** adding new beneficiaries to an existing programme
3. **Piggybacking**: using a social protection intervention's administrative framework, but running the shock-response programme separately
4. **Shadow alignment**: developing a parallel humanitarian system that aligns as best as possible with a current or possible future social protection programme
5. **Refocusing**: in the case of a budget cut, adjusting the social protection system to refocus assistance on groups most vulnerable to the shock.

Some countries have used social protection structures for providing assistance after crises (e.g. Sri Lanka and Pakistan). However, the use of social protection in this way has been very limited, mainly because the poorest countries and those in protracted crises are the least likely to have functioning and adequate social protection systems that have the capacity to respond in this way. There is, then, a legitimate fear that encouraging nascent

social protection systems to be shock responsive may, in fact, undermine the viability of those systems by asking them to run before they can walk (McCord 2013). Although the PSNP is seen as an example of the use of social protection to deal with emergency needs, it is not primarily itself a *shock* responsive programme. It was designed to deal with chronic poverty (that had, for a variety of reasons, historically been met by emergency relief). Success in expanding PSNP provisions in years of poor harvests through 'risk financing' have still largely been targeting chronic needs, i.e. those needs which only fell under the threshold for assistance following a poor year. The degree to which a system such as PSNP will be a useful vehicle for addressing completely new needs for different target groups in different places in the event of a sudden shock remains to be seen – as does the viability and advisability of shock responsive social protection in those countries most beset by humanitarian crises.

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*See particularly Section 3.6 ('Shocks and Risks'), which gives a concise overview of the current state of knowledge and further annotated references under the headings of Scalability and Climate Change.*

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## 6.5 Protracted relief and exit

Several parts of the world have been recipients of emergency relief every year for decades. Intuitively, this feels 'wrong': surely, one wants to ask, even in places with protracted conflict, it must be possible for people (or governments) to find some way to cope on their own after so long? The idea that it was wrong to use emergency aid for so long quickly becomes a subtly different argument: the emergency relief itself was wrong and played a role in

perpetuating a state of permanent need. Even the IASC used to warn that “the timeliness of an exit strategy is crucial in order to avoid dependence and false expectations” (IASC 2003).

There may well be negative effects from continued emergency aid in that it displaces developmental aid, if it is being given where emergency aid is not needed. This is almost certainly the case in some areas but the mere duration of relief aid is not in itself a reason to doubt that it is needed. Emergency aid can be given for many reasons, only one of which is need: vested interests and political interests are also powerful drivers.

In Eastern Kenya, even the aid agencies which distribute food aid have complained that food aid is unnecessary and is killing the local economy – but they fear to call a halt to it (Levine et al., 2011). Detailed household economy analysis showed that emergency aid has almost certainly not been necessary in very many years in the semi-arid parts of north-eastern Uganda, even though ‘droughts’ and food security crises are proclaimed with great regularity and food aid has been an almost constant part of the economy for decades. Household economy analysis in Karamoja shows very clearly that most households can cope with poor rains and poor harvests – which is why they keep livestock in semi-arid areas – and that the need for social protection for the very poor is being confused with a need for emergency relief, for a variety of political reasons and vested interests (Levine 2010).

Emergency agencies often find it hard to leave a crisis, but the reasons for their difficulties need to be understood. It begins with the difficulty, discussed in Section 2, of defining a crisis, where ever-present needs become a ‘humanitarian’ situation – and thus the impossibility, too, of defining when those needs cease to be ‘humanitarian’. This is compounded by the high minimum standards which are set for emergency relief (e.g. Sphere), standards that can often not be met without assistance after a crisis, just as they were not met before it. Even though the situation is clearly chronic, ‘development assistance’ is rarely visibly offering to take up support for the same caseloads. (Development assistance rarely deals with ‘caseloads’, focusing instead on structures, systems, enabling environments.) The moral imperative to help a malnourished child when malnourished children are 11% of the population does not seem to disappear so simply when prevalence rates fall to 10% (i.e. below the threshold deemed an emergency).

Though there is an obvious absurdity to using emergency relief to address long-term problems, there is a logic too that creates the trap. The possibility of escaping from this absurdity was demonstrated most famously in Ethiopia, where government and donors recognised that when several million people ‘need food aid’ even in the best years, the problem is not an emergency but chronic poverty. This recognition led to the establishment of a national Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). Transferring the treatment of this problem to a programmable social protection system allows it to be addressed. There is now an effort to go further and to specifically design social protection systems so that they can be flexible enough to respond, at least in part, to the needs created by crisis (see Section 6.4). Again, whether or not the creation of such systems eventually proves desirable or even possible is beside the point: conceptually, we can imagine a world where many situations which now become humanitarian crises are catered for through existing structural mechanisms for social protection. Since this is exactly what happens in Western welfare states, the main reason that emergency relief exists is to provide surge capacity where states have not been able to, or have chosen not to, create such systems. Nevertheless, the need for purely humanitarian operations will remain for a number of reasons:

- a different kind of aid may be needed in some conflicts (see Macrae, 1998)
- not all humanitarian assistance should be about resource transfers to needy households

- the groups covered by social protection mechanisms will never be the entirely same as those in need of emergency assistance
- it is simply not realistic to imagine that humanitarian crises are going to disappear in the foreseeable future, whether because of social protection mechanisms or investments in 'resilience'.

The idea that places exist at a certain point on a scale which determines the only kind of aid that is appropriate is an odd one, although relatively common. In fact, several kinds can, and usually do, coexist. Ideally, all would be harmonised within a single agreed strategy. Such a strategy would have to include a plan for modifying the way in which livelihoods support was given in accordance with the situation and changing needs. (This has been called a 'tracking strategy', i.e. a developmental effort should track the situation on the ground. For example, if a market for some service is being encouraged, then efforts will be made to encourage workable user fees. In times of greater hardship, rather than providing the service directly, the same strategy for developing a market-based system can continue, but using subsidies in the short term to cover a period when it is determined that people cannot otherwise access the service.) These ideas are yet to become commonplace.[19]

What then can a development actor do in places where they believe too much unnecessary emergency aid is being given? First and foremost, they must get involved in the debates. A livelihood expert should be an essential player in determining how emergency aid was designed from the beginning. It may not be reasonable to expect emergency aid to stop before it is seen on the ground which developmental aid actually arrives. Even then, it may not be possible for a livelihoods expert to call a halt to the aid programmes of others: but then, neither should those others be able to call a halt to the livelihoods support that they feel is necessary.

There is little good evidence yet on the impact of relief aid on the speed of recovery. However, there is evidence that social protection supports people to be more economically active rather than discouraging initiative, and there is some anecdotal evidence that the right kind of support for a more extended period following a crisis may help people to rebuild and recapitalise their lives.

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19 'Tracking strategies' was originally used to refer to the ways in which pastoralists adapt their herding patterns to the pasture conditions, and was used by analogy to suggest that aid agencies should also adapt their behaviour to the conditions. However, after an initial presentation by Simpkin (2005), the idea has not reappeared in the literature of crisis response. This is hard to understand.

## 6.6 Resilience and DRR

Much has been written in recent years about resilience, and its links to DRR. It is beyond the scope of this Topic Guide to deal with the subject adequately. Discussion here is limited to the argument that 'resilience' offers the possibility of a middle ground to counter the silos within which the development and humanitarian communities often work. The imperative of investing development resources in helping to address extreme vulnerability notwithstanding, this Guide has consistently offered an alternative framing of crises that denies any rationale for development and humanitarian action being in separate camps to start with. Livelihoods advisers and humanitarian professionals need to find how their whole areas of activity can overlap rather than looking for a narrow common ground limited to 'resilience'.

Resilience is not new ground for development. The aid and development world has *always* prioritised the objective of making people secure from crises. However, over time there have been continual changes in the focus of attention within this objective, the language in which it is expressed and the concepts through which it is analysed. 'Sustainable development' was always the expression of a desire to create a world where people were able to look after themselves, come what may. 'Food security', in its full sense,[20] is a somewhat narrower expression of the same broad objective, interpreted for times where extreme and acute crises for people being able to access food seemed to be common. 'Sustainable livelihoods' takes a wider and more political lens to the problem but with the same vision in mind. At the same time, DRR was embraced by those who wanted a politics-free way to work with states on technical solutions to prevent crises from ('natural') disasters. Now, 'resilience' is the word used to describe the objective of a world where people can lead independent lives, free from the fear that they will fall into crisis.[21] The introduction of the concept 'resilience' has been argued over from many perspectives. Some argue that it adds new conceptual thinking, informed by complexity theory and ecology, and others argue that the use of the word is not intended to add any technical or theoretical content to discussions, but is rather to refocus political choices about how aid and development policy should be used. What cannot be disputed about the introduction of 'resilience' as a way of talking about the goal of a crisis-free world is the way in which humanitarian action has moved to centre stage. Sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods were never expected to be delivered by emergency relief. Emergency assistance may have been expected to address acute food insecurity in the short term, but it was never used as a vehicle for realising the vision of a food secure Sahel or Horn of Africa. Resilience is, though, largely discussed in humanitarian circles (and perhaps in climate change circles), and it is increasingly being demanded of humanitarian aid that it leave people more resilient to future shocks. (DFID's own humanitarian policy (2011) is called 'Saving lives, preventing suffering *and building resilience*'.) There are many reasons for surprise that humanitarian action is now being expected to deliver what many years of development policy and assistance have not succeeded in achieving: making people resilient. The scale of resources given as humanitarian aid is far less than development assistance, even in countries suffering protracted crises such as DRC. Humanitarian assistance is only given when people have extra and acute needs, so there is simply no realistic possibility of having funds left after meeting immediate needs for somehow building things back better. Putting aside reflections on the suitability of the international cluster system as the best candidate for coordinating international resilience building, whether the short-term perspectives that underpin the humanitarian paradigms are best suited to addressing vulnerability will depend on the extent to which one thinks that vulnerability or resilience lie in structural factors relating to power

[20] i.e. people having long-term security that they will always have adequate food. See Section 3.3 for the way the term is often used in humanitarian contexts to refer narrowly to people's immediate access to food.

[21] This is not the only way in which 'resilience' is used, but it is the meaning in relation in to the proposition that resilience forms a middle or common ground between development and emergency relief.

and institutions. Too often 'resilience' is seen in the same terms as programming – with a narrow focus on (the provision of) assets.

This is not to deny the case for a convergence of humanitarian and development thinking for addressing challenges of vulnerability and resilience. As noted in Section 6.3, DFID is currently experimenting with multi-year financing for humanitarian action and hoping for a move into some middle ground between development and emergency from the emergency side.[22] Levine and Mosel (2014) argue that the more natural place from which to see movement into this ground is from the development side. Although resilience has always been an objective of 'development', it has often appeared that crisis-prone areas have not received the level of investment needed.

A hope is also sometimes voiced that if enough resources are invested in 'resilience building', then resources can be saved from humanitarian response because needs will be much less. Although there is as yet no empirical evidence for or against this hypothesis, it should be approached with much caution. The scale of development aid is usually a very small percentage of the recipient economy, even the household economy of 'project beneficiaries'. DFID's contribution to Ethiopia, for example, is around £300 million p.a. This is a generous contribution, but even if spent entirely on supporting resilience of the poorest 20% of the country, it would constitute around £17 per person or under 5p per day. Even if this money was all well programmed and implemented perfectly, the extent to which this can be transformative in preventing future humanitarian need is surely questionable. The need for investment in combating vulnerability is not in question. However, an easy discourse that the role of livelihoods interventions is to prevent future crises does not serve the cause of promoting a much greater collaboration between livelihood approaches and crisis response.

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# Key resources on areas not covered in this Topic Guide

## Emergency food security assessment tools

No single measure can capture all the various issues even relating to food access at a single point in time. These include the quantities of food consumed, the quality of diet, the costs (e.g. distress strategies) that people have to suffer to maintain that consumption, etc., each one of which can be measured by several indicators. The various tools used by different agencies include:

- Household Economy Analysis (HEA)
- Coping Strategies Index (CSI)
- Household Food Insecurity and Access Scale (HFIAS)
- The Household Hunger Scale (HHS), which was derived from HFIAS
- Household Dietary Diversity Scale (HDDS)
- Food Consumption Score (FCS).

See also WFP *CARI (Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security)* https://resources.vam.wfp.org/CARI

HEA is used to calculate a typical household's potential access to food and to make a prediction about future potential access to food on the basis of a given scenario. It is thus the only tool capable of quantifying need.

CSI does not look directly at consumption, but instead looks at the frequency with which households use behaviour associated with a lack of food (e.g. borrowing food, begging, reducing meal portions for some household members and skipping meals). The greater the use of such behaviours, the greater is the stress on the household to find sufficient food.

HFIAS calculates a hunger score based on recall questions about the number of times in the previous month that a household has exhibited various symptoms of lack of food (eating fewer meals, having only a restricted variety food and going to sleep hungry). HHS is an adaptation, removing questions that were found to be interpreted differently in different cultures.

HDDS is an indicator of actual food consumption, but it does not directly assess the quantity of food consumed. The score is based on recall of the number of times a household ate food from a number of defined food categories, e.g. grains, vegetables, pulses, oils and animal protein sources. (Different versions of HDDS use a slightly different breakdown, so care needs to be taken in making cross-study comparisons. The version linked has 12 groups, whereas an FAO version has 16 groups). Diversity is a proxy indicator of food consumption quality and a correlation has often been found between food consumption quantity and food diversity – though this is not unproblematic, and the provision of food aid can skew this correlation[23]. WFP uses an adaptation of dietary diversity as an indicator of food consumption. Food categories are weighted by their nutritional importance, and the frequency of consumption of each group is included in the calculation. Like HDDS, FCS is merely a proxy for actual consumption, which is not measured.

[23] See Wiesmann et al. (2009).

A statistical comparison of the different indicators in Ethiopia[24] showed a reasonable degree of correlation between them but also subtle differences in what dimension of food access they were actually measuring. This suggested that agencies should choose their methods by what exactly they wanted to know rather than, as currently, by institutional preference.

## International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and other standards

There are important legal frameworks, such as International Humanitarian Law (which addresses the conduct of states in wars and not of humanitarian agencies in crises) and International Refugee Law, which are beyond the scope of this Topic Guide.

There are also a number of other standards, principles and guidelines which apply to certain specific areas of emergency or humanitarian intervention, e.g. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, on durable solutions for IDPs, land issues in natural disasters, land and conflict (in draft) and gender in humanitarian action. The status of these varies, as does the extent to which humanitarian agencies know about or follow them. They are often essential (if neglected) reading for development livelihoods actors working in crises, both to gain understanding of how humanitarian actors think and work, but also because many of the principles apply equally to long-term and short-term action.

An informal initiative led by the Government of Sweden brought together many donors, practitioners and academics to formulate a further set of 23 principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship. These offer a practical guide on operationalising the basic principles (e.g. 'allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments' or 'respect and promote the implementation of IHL, refugee law and human rights') and they also cover areas such as funding, learning and accountability. www.ghdinitiative.org/ghd/gns/principles-good-practice-of-ghd/principles-good-practice-ghd.html

## Other useful websites and resources

*Urban crises* are a key area not covered in this guide for lack of space – see ALNAP's urban humanitarian response portal (www.urban-response.org)

Other good sources for regular updates and new publications on humanitarian issues include:

- ALNAP www.alnap.org/
- Groupe URD www.urd.org/?lang=en – worth signing up to get their monthly letter including a good review of new publications from around the world
- Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN) www.odihpn.org/ (Exchange magazine and network papers)
- Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at ODI www.odi.org/programmes/humanitarian-policy-group
- Feinstein International Center at Tufts University http://fic.tufts.edu/

[24] See Maxwell, Coates and Vaitla (2013).