

Researching livelihoods and
services affected by conflict

Livelihood strategies and interventions in fragile and conflict-affected areas

Assessing trends and changes from
2012 to 2016

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Elizabeth Stites and Kristin Bushby

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Written by
Elizabeth Stites and Kristin Bushby

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Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
Overseas Development Institute (ODI)
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 3817 0031
F +44 (0)20 7922 0399
E slrc@odi.org.uk
www.securelivelihoods.org
[@SLRCtweet](https://twitter.com/SLRCtweet)

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About us



The **Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC)** aims to generate a stronger evidence base on how people make a living, educate their children, deal with illness and access other basic services in conflict-affected situations (CAS). Providing better access to basic services, social protection and support to livelihoods matters for the human welfare of people affected by conflict, the achievement of development targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and international efforts at peace- and state-building.

At the centre of SLRC's research are three core themes, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception phase:

- State legitimacy: experiences, perceptions and expectations of the state and local governance in conflict-affected situations
- State capacity: building effective states that deliver services and social protection in conflict-affected situations;
- Livelihood trajectories and economic activity under conflict

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation. SLRC partners include the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka, Feinstein International Center (FIC, Tufts University), the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Pakistan, Disaster Studies of Wageningen University (WUR) in the Netherlands, the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

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Acronyms



3ie	International Initiative for Impact Evaluation	LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
BHP	Business-humanitarian partnership	M4P	Making markets work for the poor
CCA	Climate change adaptation	NGO	Non-governmental organisation
CCT	Conditional cash transfer	NRM	Natural resource management
CFW	Cash for work	ODI	Overseas Development Institute
CMAM	Community-based management of acute malnutrition	PEA	Political economy analysis
CVE	Countering violent extremism	PMT	Proxy means test
DFID	UK Department for International Development	PWP	Public works programmes
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	RUTF	Ready-to-use therapeutic Foods
DRR	Disaster risk reduction	SACCO	Savings and credit cooperatives
ESCAP	UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	SLF	Sustainable livelihoods framework
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	SLRC	Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
FDI	Foreign direct investment	VCD	Value chain development
GCF	Green Climate Fund	VSLA	Village savings and loan associations
FFW	Food for work	UN	United Nations
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Society for International Cooperation)	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IDP	Internally displaced populations/person	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change	UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
LEGS	Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
		WFP	World Food Programme
		WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

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Executive summary



Most people survive conflict and crisis not through international interventions but by relying on their own efforts, adaptations, networks and systems. By the same token, some of the greatest suffering and repercussions of conflict and crisis arise from the damage done to these systems and the institutions that support them. In the early 1980s, a growing number of international practitioners and academics began focusing on the systems and strategies that people pursue, and the environments in which these systems operate. This thinking found its way into donor discourse and the programming of international organisations, and became known as the 'livelihoods approach'. Although initially envisaged as most relevant to development contexts, by the late 1990s there was a growing recognition within the humanitarian community of the need to better understand livelihoods in conflict-affected and fragile environments. Today there is increased attention to both the ways in which local populations seek to survive or prosper within contexts of hardship and crisis, and to the successes, failures and lessons learned from national and international interventions undertaken in an effort to protect, support or promote local livelihoods.

This report discusses some of the major conceptual trends in how stakeholders view livelihoods; examines selected livelihood strategies of conflict-affected populations that have become more visible in recent years; and reviews advances in the nature, type and scope of interventions initiated by humanitarian agencies and organisations. It builds upon a review of livelihoods by Mallet and Slater (2012) undertaken as part of the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC), which is headed by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). The period under review for the current report is 2012-2016.

Conceptual shifts in donor policy and academic discourse influence the ways in which external actors view and respond to the livelihood needs of local populations. This report examines several of the major conceptual trends that have gained prominence in recent years, namely: resilience, climate change adaptation (CCA), and politicisation.

Our discussion of **resilience** acknowledges the concept's **prominence in donor funding strategies, but illustrates the continued lack of clarity on how it should be measured**

or evaluated. Some argue that the concept of resilience is an improvement on the livelihoods approach and allows for a more dynamic model. Others find that wide variations in frameworks, indicators and application limits the usefulness of this approach, and that a focus on resilience can detract from addressing the root causes of violence and vulnerability. On a theoretical level, the link between resilience and livelihoods seems straightforward – i.e., a successful livelihood is resilient to shocks and stresses. However, at the practical level there remains a lack of evidence as to how households or communities might build resilience to conflict and humanitarian crisis, and insufficient empirical work on the characteristics of resilient livelihoods.

While international stakeholders are increasingly cognizant of the need to better understand climate change impacts and adaptations, some critics feel that the climate change rhetoric is a rebranding of the existing development agenda. Much of the evidence to date on CCA consists of micro-level case studies, largely due to the highly context-specific nature of climate change effects and varied responses. Additional work is needed to build evidence on how local governance systems are responding (positively or negatively) to climate change, and on the emergence of new mechanisms to manage vulnerable systems such as shared natural resources.

The increased **politicisation of foreign aid in recent years directly affects both livelihood programming and the lens through which external actors view local livelihoods.** Stakeholders and observers seek to understand radicalisation through a livelihoods lens, often drawing linkages between economic opportunities (or lack thereof); the role of informal and formal influences; and close analysis of particular political, social and cultural trajectories. **Containment policies** seek to control security and public health threats, as well as to prevent undesirable or potentially dangerous populations – including those seen as likely to radicalise – from moving out of specific countries or regions.

Diversification has long been a standard form of livelihood adaptation, but the past four years have seen an **increase in the evidence on pastoral and agro-pastoral communities, on urbanisation, and on the gendered implications of**

diversification within a household. Migration as a specific form of livelihood diversification is not new, but has increased in visibility with the mass migration towards Europe from parts of the Middle East and Africa. The highly gendered nature of migration is also becoming more visible, with attention to unaccompanied children and the specific vulnerabilities that children face, but evidence remains scant on the livelihood strategies of adults and children when they are on the move.

The political upheaval and humanitarian crises in the Middle East in recent years have brought a sharp increase in populations **living under siege conditions**. In such circumstances we see that people have adopted **livelihood strategies aimed at basic survival**, including local production of medical supplies, rooftop gardening, and the expansion of smuggling networks and the black market. These strategies and their associated risks are highly gendered, with women taking on increased responsibility for providing for their households to limit the exposure of men and boys to armed groups and possible forced recruitment. At the same time, men and boys have joined armed groups for a number of reasons, including lack of alternative means to provide for and protect their families and communities.

We also review research since 2012 **on the role of social networks as a means through which local populations survive conflict and humanitarian crises**, such as the 2011-2012 famine in Somalia when social networks were a key factor in how well people were able to cope with the famine. Social connections are also critical for migrants, who rely on such links to learn about safe routes, send money back home, and find housing and employment in their destinations, yet more evidence is needed on social capital and the importance of social networks.

Turning to trends in livelihood interventions implemented by outside actors, we highlight areas of **influential developments and advances since 2012** while recognising that these external interventions are taking place in the context of increased protracted conflicts and the shrinking ability by donors to meet global needs. We examine **shifts in aid modalities** linked to livelihoods in conflict-affected or fragile areas, including increased emphasis on **cash transfers; food-aid programming**; new evidence on the use of **vouchers** and other benefits such as **food and cash for work**; the role of **infrastructure** to promote access to markets and encourage longer-term economic growth; and renewed attention to **pastoral, agro-pastoral and agricultural interventions**. While developments have been made in this area, it is evident that such interventions

need to be more responsive to local populations, and that inequalities must be addressed to ensure that the most vulnerable groups are supported.

We also discuss the increased attention by international actors to the importance of **access to capital and markets in fragile or conflict-affected locations; following innovations in microfinance; the expansion of markets; and the development of value chains**. Evidence is mixed as to the impacts and effectiveness of microfinance and microcredit programmes in fragile states, and there is limited robust evidence on programmes seeking to expand market access to the poor. A challenge is the highly complex and context-specific nature of any such initiative, making comparisons across multiple locations difficult. We examine taxation policies, skill-building and job-creation programmes, with a specific eye to linkages between the employment programmes and conflict reduction, although evidence remains mixed in this regard.

Lastly, we consider how donors have **changed their approaches to livelihood interventions and associated evaluations** in recent years. We examine the need for robust **political economy analyses** as a component of interventions, and an awareness of **elite capture as an obstacle to successful programming**. We review cross-cutting developments and advances on gender analysis, needs assessments, market analysis and targeting, and also consider the continued hurdles for adequately incorporating local knowledge and context-specific components into livelihood interventions and evaluations. Gender analysis is increasingly visible in programme design and implementation, but incorporation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) sensitivity into programmes or evidence collection remains extremely limited.

Overall, the **quality of evaluations of livelihood programmes is varied, but there is growing awareness of the components of a 'good evaluation'**. Methods are frequently opaque and outputs continue to be conflated with impacts. Evaluations of project outcomes should therefore be more rigorous, and higher quality data is needed on which to base programme decisions and policy. Long-standing issues also remain in terms of how to make interventions more needs-based and responsive to local populations. New research using mixed-method approaches, as well as investigations of the impact of programmes designed to reduce or prevent conflict and the use of technology by conflict-affected populations, could provide further insight on livelihood strategies in fragile contexts.

1 Introduction



1.1 The livelihoods approach

Tens of millions of people around the world live in conflict settings and in dire humanitarian conditions. In 2013 the United Nations (UN) estimated that conflict affected 1.5 billion people.¹ Most are not reached by humanitarian assistance or other forms of external emergency relief. Rather, they navigate the risks and seek survival through their own systems, networks and strategies. Modern technology has broadcast these conditions into people's living rooms in the developed world, beginning with images from the Biafra conflict in the late 1960s, the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s, and the famine in Ethiopia in the 1980s. Seeing these tragedies unfold in the pages of newspapers and on television screens, it has become clear that it is not conflict itself that has killed most people but rather the consequences of conflict – impoverishment, loss of assets, collapse of health and education systems, displacement and disease. While we wonder why so many die in these conditions, we also wonder why so many more *do not*, and seek to understand civilian experiences and coping strategies from the perspective of people themselves. This has influenced the emergence of an approach to conflict that recognises 'that it is usually a loss of livelihood rather than a bullet that kills people in war' (Slim, 2008).

The 'livelihoods' approach was developed to counter what had been a highly technical approach to rural development (Levine, 2014a), and became integrated with development theory and practice in the early 1990s. Early influential work includes that by Chambers and Conway (1992), who developed a still widely used definition of livelihoods,² and later by Scoones (1998), who put forth a framework for sustainable livelihoods. The United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) began using a version of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) in 1997, and by the late 1990s livelihoods approaches were in wide use by major international organisations such as CARE

¹ In 2013, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) reported to the UN at the International Development for All Conference that about 1.5 billion people were living in conflict worldwide: <http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/2013/02/more-than-1-5-billion-people-still-live-in-conflict-affected-countries-escap/>. This figure is generally attributed to the 2011 *World Development Report on Conflict, Security, and Development* WORLD BANK 2011. World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development. Washington, DC: World Bank..

² Defined by Chambers and Conway (1992) as: 'the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term'.

International, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and Oxfam (Carney et al., 1999). This new approach was initially used almost exclusively in non-crisis and non-conflict settings. But, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, efforts were made to understand the relationship between livelihoods and conflict, including important theoretical work and case studies commissioned by the ODI (Collinson, 2003, Longley and Maxwell, 2003, Schafer, 2002, Seddon and Hussein, 2002, Pain, 2002). Additional analyses include descriptions of how adaptations to the livelihoods framework could make it more relevant for conflict and crisis settings, with adjustments, for instance, to the concept of vulnerability, the possibility of negative outcomes, and the repercussions of asset loss and a deteriorating governance environment as time progressed (Lautze and Raven-Roberts, 2006).

Livelihoods fundamentally are what people themselves do to get by over time, including response mechanisms to shocks.³ However, when asked to explain how they understand the term 'livelihoods', practitioner and donor audiences often describe externally driven livelihood *interventions* or responses, i.e. programmes and projects aimed at improving or supporting livelihood strategies (United Nations Development Programme, 2013). This view contrasts with those who are more removed from programming – such as academics or local populations themselves – who are more likely to conceive of livelihoods as the reality at the household and individual level. This is largely about perspective, i.e. the practitioners focus on how they can programme better, while the theorists are more interested in the data on what local populations are doing, with possible implications for how such livelihoods better adapt to shocks and changes over time. These two threads converge, at least in part, through the growth of livelihoods-based assessment methodologies, including understanding local strategies, coping adaptations, access to and use of institutions and services, the nature of shocks and vulnerability, and how formal and informal rights and policies influence daily lives.

The SLRC, led by ODI, completed an extensive review of the literature on livelihoods in conflict in 2012.⁴ Written by Mallett and Slater (2012), the paper examines empirical

evidence on programme effectiveness, economic growth and the impacts of conflict. The same authors published a journal article in *Disasters* in 2016 that refines central components of the earlier SLRC paper, and examines specific interventions common in livelihood programming, such as microfinance, value chain development, 'making markets work for the poor' (M4P), job-creation programmes and skills training (Mallett and Slater, 2016). More broadly, Mallett and Slater sought to 'explore the effectiveness of a range of interventions designed to promote the livelihoods of people living in fragile and conflict-affected situations, and to reflect on the nature and quality' of the evidence base.

In this report, we review new evidence and major trends in livelihoods in conflict since 2012. Unlike the earlier work by Mallett and Slater, we do not catalogue broad categories of interventions: rather, we focus on new observations or trends in how people manage their livelihoods in conflict situations, and new thinking or developments in how external interventions aim to support or protect these livelihoods. We gathered data through the review of approximately 140 manuscripts (including academic papers and grey literature), and conducted interviews with key practitioners and academics.

The body of this report (Section 2) examines the major conceptual trends in how donors and implementers have discussed and conceived of livelihood changes and interventions over 2012-2016. These concepts – including resilience, CCA and politicisation – existed prior to 2012, but have become more prominent in humanitarian and development debates in recent years, and continue to influence thinking and action on livelihood strategies and responses.

Sections 3 and 4 present a two-fold approach to examining major trends over the study period, i.e. as systems through which people live their lives, and as external interventions or programmes. Section 3 examines trends in the coping strategies and mechanisms of populations in conflict areas and fragile states, as well as the context and environment in which these livelihoods take place. While this approach purports to be about actual livelihood practices, any lens is specific to the viewer: we see what we are able to see and, often, what we are

³ Debt is owed here to Sue Lautze (teaching notes, September 1999) for the clearest definition of livelihoods as 'the sum of the means by which people get by over time'. The 2012 Mallett and Slater SLRC study conceives of this as livelihood trajectories, which effectively captures the temporal and dynamic nature of livelihoods, including the fact that livelihood outcomes largely determine the livelihood assets that will be available to a household going forward.

⁴ The report found four main categories of analysis in the literature on livelihoods in conflict and fragile states, including i) quantitative assessments and aggregate statistical evidence; ii) programmatic evidence on 'what worked' in the form of lessons learned and policy guidance; iii) context-specific, mostly qualitative analysis on the impacts of conflict; and iv) growth diagnostic and business-climate evidence on constraints to economic growth.

looking for (Buchanan Smith, June 27, 2016). This means that some apparently new livelihood practices may actually have been taking place for a long time, but simply beyond our gaze.⁵ Other livelihood strategies may be those that we consider to be negative, or maladaptive, as they have deleterious impacts on specific groups, natural resources or conflict dynamics (Young, 2009). Shifts in the contextual environment may be more clearly new, or may simply be aspects that we are now affording greater attention – global migration is a good example, where attention to migrants into Europe has sparked increased media and public attention to migration streams more broadly.

In Section 4 we examine select trends in livelihood interventions since 2012. Mallet and Slater (2012) used a typology of livelihood interventions influenced by the work of Jaspars and Maxwell (2009) that groups interventions into provision, protection and promotion of livelihoods. Given the brevity of this report and the overlaps between

these categories, we do not adhere to a typology. Rather, we highlight areas where there have been advances in the evidence on livelihood interventions. To note, one of the findings of this report is that there has *not* been marked change in most types of livelihood interventions. There is more data and evaluation in some sectors (such as the use of cash in emergencies), as well as more evidence on best practices (such as the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS)). But there is less data as to the extent to which such new information has influenced practice and programming in the field.

In Section 5, we discuss what people are doing in conflict-affected and fragile environments along with changes in the nature of interventions that are being put in place. In other words, how do the interventions line up to the evidence base? We conclude in Section 6 with a discussion of areas for further research.

⁵ A good example of this comes from work in Karamoja, Uganda in 2006 and 2007. International and national actors were reporting an alarming rise in ‘child trafficking’ out of the region. A Tufts research team found that while children were leaving the region unaccompanied, the practice of sending children to the homes of distant relatives or friends in periods of hardship had been taking place for decades or longer. These practices had shifted and some had become more risky (for instance, when children went to people not previously known to the family), but the overall picture was not found to be one of child trafficking. Rather, the issue was just that external actors, some of whom were newly attuned to a rights-based agenda, took note of this movement of children for the first time STITES, E., MAZURANA, D. & AKABWAI, D. 2007. Out-migration, Return, and Resettlement in Karamoja, Uganda: The case of Kobulin, Bokora County. Somerville, MA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University.

1.2 Methodology

Our aim was to comprehensively and effectively analyse evidence on livelihoods in fragile and conflict-affected states published between 2012 and 2016. As the last SLRC review of the livelihoods evidence base was published in November 2012, our key references from that year either come from a later date or were not included in the original Mallet and Slater (2012) publication.

We followed a tiered strategy for evidence collection. First, we conducted an internal literature review to identify the most salient developments in the evidence base on livelihoods in conflict-affected states since 2012. We reviewed key databases in the areas of livelihoods and conflict, including: the SLRC publications database, DFID's Research for Development portal, the World Bank's Open Knowledge Repository, the Feinstein International Center's publications database, the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Development Experience Clearinghouse, and the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) systematic review database, among others. We also reviewed additional academic journals and practitioner publications such as *Disasters*, *Forced Migration Review*, and *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine*. We used a series of search strings for specific livelihood interventions through internet databases, including key words from the 2012 Mallett and Slater article, and

then utilised a strategic snowballing approach starting with influential livelihoods research prior to 2012 and known experts on the subject. We ultimately reviewed approximately 140 manuscripts to compile this report.

Some of the most recent developments in livelihoods and conflict have yet to appear in peer-reviewed literature. To address this, we held key informant interviews with recognised experts and practitioners⁶ on livelihoods in different conflict-affected areas, seeking to identify experts with diverse thematic backgrounds and experiences. We identified additional evidence, including grey literature, based on suggestions from these key informants regarding relevant publications that merited inclusion.

As in Mallet and Slater (2012), we chose a broad-based approach to determine whether a state is considered fragile or conflict-affected. This includes states that have previously been determined to be fragile or conflict-affected in Mallett and Slater's article – and appear to remain so – as well as those in which there have been notable increases in conflict and fragility since 2012. In this way, we did not limit ourselves to an exclusive list of countries but rather to the context of the research.

⁶ Including: Margie Buchanan Smith, Senior Research Associate, ODI; Andy Catley, Research Director, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University; Gilles Carbonnier, Professor, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies; Adam Pain, Visiting Senior Researcher, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit; Simon Richards, Conflict Management and Peacebuilding Consultant; Daniel Maxwell, Professor and Research Director, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University; and Lisa Inks, Peacebuilding Advisor, Mercy Corps.

2 Conceptual developments since 2012



The concepts discussed here all germinated prior to 2012; many were already influential in theory and practice at the time. In the intervening years, however, they have become increasingly prominent in discourse, donor funding, and/or programmatic interventions. Here, we touch on those concepts that – based on the review of evidence and key informant interviews – we feel are most relevant to the livelihoods debate, namely: resilience, CCA, and the politicisation of livelihoods and interventions.

2.1 Resilience

One of the most pronounced trends since 2012 is the increased emphasis on resilience in both development assistance and humanitarian aid. This is not a new development – donors and programmers were talking about resilience prior to 2012, but this agenda has garnered greater attention in recent years. Resilience may be loosely understood as the ability to recover from or withstand shock, but there lacks an accepted definition or theory on what resilience means in development and/or humanitarian settings (Barrett and Conostas, 2014). To note, there is much overlap in most definitions of resilience and the original definition of livelihoods. However, many of the definitions of resilience, such as the widely used DFID definition cited below, are specifically on resilience to *disasters*:

Disaster Resilience is the ability of countries, communities and households to manage change, by maintaining or transforming living standards in the face of shocks or stresses – such as earthquakes, drought or violent conflict – without compromising their long-term prospects (2011).

Empirical work has yet to be done on what resilience means more broadly – including how households or communities might be resilient to conflict or ensuing humanitarian crisis – and how to measure the characteristics of a resilient livelihood. This lack of an agreed definition and measurement system is not surprising, given the range of interpretations that exist even within the disciplines from which the notion of resilience is borrowed (e.g., ecology, engineering and psychology) (Folke et al., 2004, Grimm and Wissel, 1997, Fletcher and Sarkar, 2013). Recent work has proposed useful formulations of resilience as applied to economic development and, by extension, food security. However they take different approaches, with some focusing on resilience as a descriptor of the trajectory of welfare variables (Barrett and Conostas, 2014, Cisse and Barrett, 2015), while others focus on

the set of capacities needed to attain a certain welfare trajectory (Constas et al., 2014).

A number of frameworks exist to evaluate and assess resilience. Work by ODI to assess these different frameworks finds that comparison is difficult given the different conceptual entry points, gaps between the theory and the application of wellbeing indicators, and the incomplete picture of resilience often provided by the indicators (Schipper and Langston, 2015). Regardless of the lack of standardised measurement tools or a common definition, the concept of resilience has become a key component in donor discourse and, hence, international response.

The links between resilience and livelihoods are clear: a successful livelihood strategy must be one that can weather shocks and stresses without being derailed, and one that incorporates mechanisms for bouncing back when troubles emerge. Similarly, certain livelihood interventions are seen as promoting or improving resilience.⁷ Resilience, by some measures, and particularly in the climate change field, is seen as a near opposite of vulnerability (Folke, 2006, Gitz and Meybeck, 2012). However, in recent years, development theorists have increasingly argued that the relationship between these two concepts is more complex (Béné et al., September 2012, Levine, 2014b, Food and Agriculture Organization, 2014). Furthermore, some academics point out that resilience is an improvement on how we think about livelihoods, as resilience is seen as better able to capture the dynamic shifts and trajectories that are less well represented in the livelihoods framework (Maxwell, July 29, 2016).

While numerous resilience frameworks exist, those most often cited in regard to international response contain a discussion of capacities at the community and/or household level to navigate, respond to, or cope with shocks. Frameworks often delineate these capacities as being absorptive, adaptive or transformative in nature based on how well households are able to adapt to or recover from the shock (Béné et al., September 2012). Debate continues, however, as to the extent to which resilience can be built to withstand conflict or crises that are outside of the realm of natural hazards.

In the past four years, donors and implementers alike have increased their focus on resilience, with strategies promoted by USAID, DFID, Australian Aid, the World Bank, UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Food

and Agriculture Organization (FAO), to name a few. Resilience programming is promoted as helping to bridge the gap between relief and development (USAID, 2012a), and to allow for a holistic 'systems' approach to understanding shock (Béné et al., September 2012). Emphasising resilience is seen as a cost-effective strategy by improving the self-reliance of beneficiaries and decreasing the need for repeated emergency interventions. Studies on the extent of savings, however, point to the complex and hard-to-measure factors at play, and demonstrate that designing and implementing programmes that truly lead to more resilient livelihoods requires a great deal of investment in time, political will, and local and international commitment (Venton et al., June 2012). The lack of a consistent definition and measurements as to what constitutes resilience in various settings further complicates the evaluation of such programmes.

Not all of the donor attention to resilience is cost-based. The World Bank, for instance, has recently published a book on promoting resilience in dryland regions as a way to mitigate vulnerability and predicted pressures on natural resources caused by climate change and population growth (Cervigni and Morris, 2016). This book argues that migration away from these areas will provide only a limited amount of sustainable employment opportunities, and that much more work is needed to make rural resource-based livelihoods more resilient over the long term. The authors argue that governments and development partners need to make short-, medium- and long-term investments in programmes and policies to realise these results. On the other hand, other drylands experts argue the opposite, claiming that the only long-term option for many of those who exit pastoral prosecution is to migrate out of the dryland area (Catley, June 23, 2016).

Critics of the primacy of resilience thinking and programming in international assistance challenge both the emphasis on and the appropriateness of the notion of resilience to the development and humanitarian fields. These detractors argue that this focus i) misses the role of power and politics in determining vulnerability, as well as internal sources of vulnerability; ii) places the onus for strength or recovery primarily on the individual (or household or community) while overlooking inherent and structural conditions; iii) is too vague to allow for effective programme or policy design; and iv) detracts attention and funds away from needed forms of support, including conditions in which emergency assistance is inevitable

⁷ In an edition of the on-line publication *FrontLines*, USAID (2015) lists a number of such programmes seen to improve resilience. Examples include better access to markets for pastoralists in Ethiopia, teaching business skills and commercial farming in Ghana, oasis gardening for women in Niger, a nutrition programme that integrates education in Nepal, a community irrigation project in Zimbabwe, and a credit programme in Niger, among others.

(Levine et al., 2012, Pain, June 29, 2016). A major criticism is that promoting resilience does not necessarily reduce poverty because households can be very poor while still being resilient to shock (Béné et al., September 2012), though some authors build normative thresholds into their models to take this into account (Barrett and Conostas, 2014). Work in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, for instance, finds that poor households have been able to accumulate and hold assets up to a certain point – even during the hunger season – but that many have had difficulty in accumulating enough wealth to move out of poverty (Maxwell et al., 2013a). While such findings should not detract from the goal of increasing resilience (as being poor and resilient is preferable to being poor and vulnerable), they do indicate that resilience is not a panacea.

Relatively few sources examine resilient livelihoods in the face of conflict. Some international organisations working in conflict and crises have compiled lessons learned or commissioned guidance for building or analysing resilience in conflict or fragile settings, including USAID and Mercy Corps (Bujones et al., 2013, Mercy Corps, 2015a). Most of the post-2012 academic sources on this topic examine resilience in places where conflict overlaps with environmental fragility or the threat of climate change (Vivekananda et al., 2014, Smith, 2015). The psychological literature examines individual resilience to trauma, adversity or tragedy (Betancourt and Khan, 2008), with the early research on psychological resilience examining the traits and factors that make certain individuals better able to adapt to traumatic life events than others. After the early 1990s, however, studies shifted away from these protective factors to instead examine the processes that allow individuals to overcome adversity (Fletcher and Sarkar, 2013). Similarly, analyses of the traits and processes relevant to resilience to conflict remain largely under-researched.

Research published in 2010 on Sri Lanka finds that it is difficult for households to maintain resilience through adaptive livelihood strategies when faced with conflict (Morais and Ahmad, 2010). Kuol's (2014) paper on the civil war in southern Sudan in the 1990s examines the resilience of livelihood strategies when exposed to conflict and characterises these strategies by effectiveness. He finds that the determining factor is whether the conflict is exogenous or endogenous – i.e. the external structural

aspects were more important than the internal traits or processes. At a more macro level regarding the importance of external factors, Cali (2015) examines the ways in which trade and trade policy might mitigate or exacerbate the risk of conflict. Here, the author points out that economic policies can have unintended consequences for fragile states through, for instance, changing relative food and commodity prices and affecting economic opportunities in local markets.

Recognising the overlap between types of risk and vulnerability, a 2013 ODI report (Harris et al., 2013) examines the links between disaster resilience and conflict prevention. While the evidence shows that natural disasters frequently exacerbate conflict, few programmes actively integrate resilience into natural disaster and conflict prevention. The authors conclude that the complex dynamics of conflict and natural disasters – and the overlapping questions of risk, vulnerability and resilience – are highly context specific. As with the discussion on the cost-benefits of resilience programming, this again indicates that interventions to build resilience are not a quick fix but rather require extensive commitments in time, planning and follow-up.

An outstanding question is whether or not conflict is qualitatively different than natural disaster, hunger gaps, or any number of covariate or idiosyncratic shocks. To what extent can the existing work on resilience contribute to how we think about livelihoods in conflict? Can people structure their livelihoods in such a way as to be more resilient to conflict as one type of shock, or is conflict fundamentally different? Can international interventions encourage resilience to conflict as one of many shocks without implying that people should be better at withstanding human rights violations or other depravations? There is growing attention to how people protect themselves in conflict,⁸ but it remains to be seen if some broader strategies can contribute to overall conflict resilience.

2.2 Climate change adaptation (CCA)

Climate change has been on the policy agenda for decades, but discussions of livelihoods and climate change became prominent in the mid-1990s with an emphasis on CCA (Ireland, 2012).⁹ Resilience is central to

⁸ Such as a workshop hosted by the World Peace Foundation and held at Tufts University in September 2016, 'Staying safe in armed conflict contexts: What do crisis-affected people prioritize and does it work? Do humanitarian actors and others take note?'

⁹ According to Ireland, CCA became a theme in reports by the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) at this time. The IPCC defines CCA as the 'adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm and exploits beneficial opportunities' (cited in Ireland, 2012: 93). However, as with resilience, there is no agreed upon definition as to the meaning of adaptation in relation to climate change SCHIPPER, E. L. F. 2007. Climate Change Adaptation and Development: Exploring the Linkages. *Tyndall Centre Working Paper No. 107*. Norwich, UK: School of Environmental Studies, University of East Anglia.

CCA, as a major consideration is the extent to which local livelihood systems are resilient to the impacts of climate change. Indeed, the subtitle of USAID's change and development strategy for 2012-2016 is 'Clean resilient growth' (USAID, 2012b). In this report we examine CCA as an emerging trend separate from discussions on resilience, as CCA has become increasingly influential in donor funding over the past decade (OECD, 2009, United Nations Environmental Program, 2011). In addition, many conflict or fragile areas are already seeing marked impacts from climate change, such as the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Concerns about the impacts of climate change extend beyond relief and development actors to the international security sector, with institutions such as the US Department of Defense (2015) releasing policy briefs to assess the likely global implications of climate change for military strategy.

Recent increases in funds (or commitments of funds) from developed countries prioritise programming on CCA. Example mechanisms include the Adaptation Fund, which has spent more than US\$225 million over three years in 34 developing countries, and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), which is meant to be the main multilateral financing initiative to support programming of US\$100 billion per year starting in 2020 (Eriksen et al., 2015). Some observers, however, point out that much of CCA programming seems to re-label existing ideas, such as disaster risk reduction and livelihood diversification, without introducing new initiatives or priorities (Ireland, 2012). In addition, relatively little is known about how the actual impacts of such interventions address underlying vulnerability to climate change, particularly over the longer term. The IPCC report released in 2014 was the first to actively examine the intersection of climate change with livelihoods and poverty (Olsson et al., 2014).

Beyond concerns that CCA programming is little more than 'development as usual', a growing body of research indicates that some local and global responses to the impacts of climate change (i.e. land grabbing) may in fact exacerbate vulnerability (Eriksen et al., 2015, Olsson et al., 2014). Other recent conceptual work not only labels interventions or adaptations that have uneven outcomes as maladaptive, but also those interventions that increase vulnerability to climate change, as well as deliberate non-action and strategies that do not take climate change into account (Jones et al., 2015).

The literature on local adaptations consists mostly of micro-level studies of responses that differ widely by context. For instance, research on efforts to mitigate against floods finds that households opted to 'defend

against, live with or withdraw from flood risks' (Wilby and Keenan, 2012). Various options exist within each of these response categories, such as creating water barriers, adding higher stories onto buildings, and moving assets such as livestock to higher ground. Similarly, widespread responses exist in other categories of risk and response, such as shifting to more drought-resistant crops, diversifying livestock holdings, building water catchment systems, or adopting entirely new livelihood strategies. Migration may be a last resort or a form of insurance against risk, entailing either household-level diversification through the out-migration of specific household members or relocation of the entire household (Choumert et al., 2015). Remittances from specific household members can have micro- as well as macro-level impacts on the sending locations (Couharde and Generoso, 2015). Multiple factors contribute to most migration decisions; the impacts of climate change are often combined with more gradual economic and livelihood shifts in local or household productive strategies. However, the increase in migration from areas such as the Sahel and the rise in urbanisation in dryland areas in East Africa and parts of South America are likely driven, at least in part, by CCA.

Attention to the impacts of climate change is likely to continue to increase as the effects become more pronounced, and if, as expected, the economic and social costs for developed nations increase. Livelihoods are integral to understanding local CCA and how national and international actors respond (or not) to this issue. Many countries categorised as conflict-affected or fragile states are particularly at risk to the impacts of climate change (Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan and Somalia, to name a few), with their most vulnerable populations at heightened risk. Poor and marginalised populations in rural areas often rely heavily on natural resources to sustain their livelihoods, and as climate change negatively impacts these resources it can lead to displacement and increased competition among groups. Climate-induced displacement has occurred, for instance, in response to the desertification of highland agricultural areas in Argentina (Torres et al., 2015). Fishing and pastoral communities around Lake Turkana in Kenya are facing a reduction in water levels (exacerbated by dams in Ethiopia) and increased tensions over access to the lake (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Climate change also negatively impacts the systems that manage natural resource use, further undermining important local governance systems. For example, in work on Darfur, Young (2009) demonstrates how drought and environmental degradation lead to increased competition over resources at the same time that the mechanisms to manage natural resources and conflict are also under stress.

2.3 Politicisation: radicalisation and containment

2.3.1 Radicalisation

The politicisation of humanitarian and development assistance illustrates a steady trend over the past 15 years. Political imperative determines what is funded and to what degree, the prioritisation of programmes, and the extent of oversight and regulations imposed by donors. This has become more important in influencing foreign spending since 2012, due in large part to the political upheaval and conflict in the Middle East, the spread of violent extremism, and unprecedented displacement and migration. Politicisation also impacts both the lens through which local livelihoods are viewed and the nature of external livelihood interventions (Donini, 2012). In this section, we discuss radicalisation and containment as two issues that reflect the politicisation of aid and the lens through which outsiders view local populations.

The path to radicalisation, and the links between it and violent action, are pressing concerns for governments (this includes both western powers and leaders of states where terror attacks are most common, such as Afghanistan, Kenya, Iraq and Nigeria, among others). While radical Islam garners centre stage, extremist elements within other religions have also used violent terror tactics in recent years, including those linked with radical Zionist, Christian, Buddhist and Hindu beliefs.¹⁰ Notably, extremist violence is not exclusively religious; prior to 2016, most attacks in the US were carried out by white men inspired by radical beliefs, often in the name of white supremacy (such as the killing of black worshippers in a church in South Carolina in 2015 and an attack on a Sikh temple in Wisconsin in 2012) (Shane, 2015).¹¹ Most of these extremist actors and incidents are examined *post facto* by the media, public and investigators. Concerns about the threats of radical Islam, on the other hand, have led to a number of proactive efforts by western governments to limit the influence of radicalisation prior to violence, with efforts made at federal and local levels,

as well as within Muslim communities, to prevent or slow radicalisation among groups considered at-risk.¹²

A focus on livelihoods is often central to both *post facto* analysis and to efforts to limit radicalisation. The media, police and the public seek to understand what pathway has led to a given action, and how dangerous or negative influences can be prevented in the future. This attention to pathways to radicalisation also informs international policies, with countering violent extremism (CVE) programmes being integrated into the foreign assistance programmes of developed nations and some UN agencies for those African and Middle Eastern states that are viewed as potential sources of radicalism. Recruitment efforts by radical groups (such as Islamic State aimed at westerners) also focus in part on livelihoods, emphasising perceived feelings of economic and social exclusion, alienation and thwarted promises (Bienaimé, 22 October 2014, Lyons-Padilla et al., 2015). These messages are often tailored by gender, playing into traditional roles and stereotypes in an effort to appeal to those who may feel misunderstood or excluded in their communities (Van Leuven et al., 2016).

Related, though less prominent in mainstream media at present, is the broader conceptual link between men without meaningful livelihoods and potential recruitment or mobilisation for engagement in conflict. This is captured, for instance, in the earlier (and often criticised) literature on the youth bulge (Urdal, 2006, Sommers, 2011), in the analysis of underemployed young men joining right-wing extremist groups in Germany (Falk and Zweimüller, 2009), and in the correlation between low educational attainment of males (among other factors) and the return of ex-combatants into armed conflict in Colombia (Korbel and Nussio, 2016). Other research questions the extent to which unemployment or limited livelihood opportunities serve as drivers towards radicalisation or participation in conflict more generally. A report by Mercy Corps (2015b) finds that perceptions of injustice can be a much bigger driver of youth radicalisation than poverty or unemployment, and that employment programmes need to be linked to

¹⁰ In a few of many possible examples, recent years have seen violence carried out by radical Zionists against Palestinians in the West Bank, by far-right Christians in assassinations in the US, by radical Buddhists in purges against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, and by Hindu extremists against Muslim and Christian populations in India.

¹¹ Violence in the US in late 2015 and in 2016 by those with alleged links to radical Islamist groups (such as the attacks on a workplace in San Bernardino, California in December 2015; and on a nightclub in Orlando, Florida in June 2016) shifted this equation. However, given that many acts of gun violence in the US are ascribed to 'lone wolf' actors (including mass causality incidents such as the 2012 Newtown, Connecticut school shootings and the attack on a cinema in Aurora, Colorado in the same year), it is very difficult to generate an accurate tally based on the motivation for such incidents.

¹² Numerous governments have developed anti-radicalisation plans or programmes, including Canada, Denmark, Germany, the UK, and the US, among others. Various private and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including mosques and numerous Muslim groups, have also developed such programmes. Due to the newness of these initiatives, few evaluations or academic articles exist on these topics.

governance reform and meaningful change, particularly because youth who are more civically engaged are *more likely* to support armed opposition. While there is still merit in livelihood programmes that seek to promote and provide job opportunities and greater economic integration, the links are questionable as to whether such activities have any direct impact on the political imperative to counter radicalisation or participation in violent extremism (Mallett and Slater, 2016). This means that such programmes should not be incorporated unquestioningly into efforts to prevent radicalisation, but rather need to be based on empirical work and combined with extensive understanding of the local factors that motivate young men to participate in such groups.

2.3.2 Containment

Originating in Cold War terminology, 'containment' is technically thought of as military action to stop the expansion of an enemy (Bowie and Immerman, 2000), but is increasingly used to refer to efforts to minimise the spread of unrest in fragile states to more developed nations (Posen, 2015, Metz, 2013, Lee, 2011). Containment terminology has also been used in regard to stopping public health crisis, such as the spread of Ebola in West Africa in 2014 (De Waal, 2014, Chan, 2014). And containment thinking has been central to efforts to limit current refugee flows into Europe (Lee, 2011).

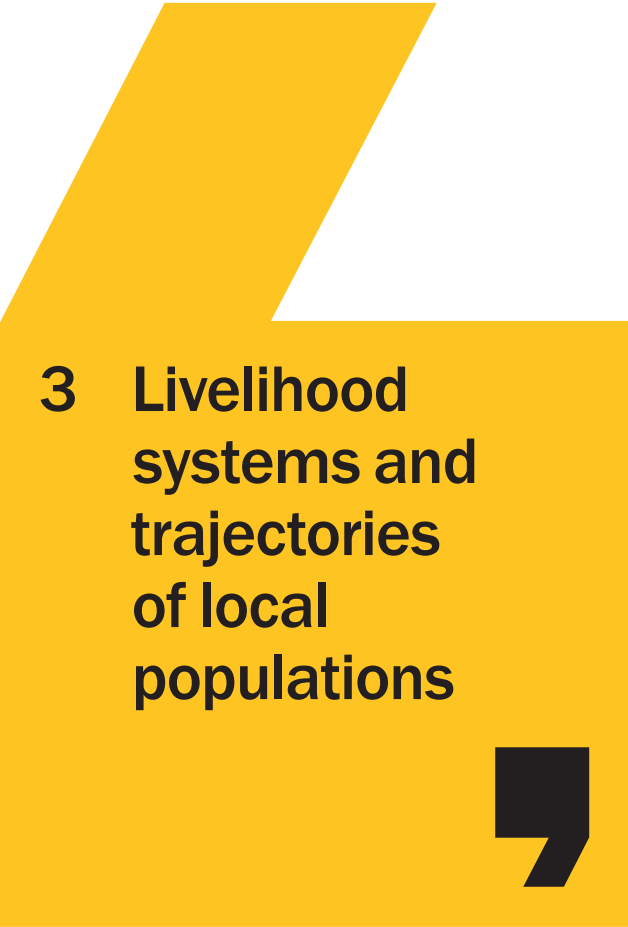
As discussed earlier, migration is a key form of livelihood adaptation in the face of conflict or crises. Hence we should examine and consider the impacts of a containment-based strategy on the livelihood choices of people living in

conflict or fragile states. Foreign and domestic strategies based upon or influenced by containment ideology can have a profound effect on the governance environment in which both local livelihoods and livelihood interventions take place. In addition, external support to livelihoods can itself be framed as part of a containment strategy, with the logic that improving local economic options will prevent people from undertaking international migration.¹³ However, the evidence to support this logic is limited and mixed in its findings. In fact, some of the evidence points to the opposite, i.e. that as people become better off they are more – not less – likely to migrate (Deshingkar, 2016). In addition, advances in the literature highlight the complex social and cultural factors that inform and shape migration, and illustrate that migration decisions go well beyond push-pull models or an economic calculus based on income differentials (Hagen-Zanker et al., 2014, Clemens et al., 2014). Subsequently efforts to influence the dynamics that shape migration need to go well beyond job-training programmes or poverty reduction strategies in countries of origin.

For civilians in conflict zones, the border policies of neighbouring countries will often determine if flight is an option. Debates on the extent to which refugee movements should be allowed or contained have become central to relations between European nations, and between Europe and Turkey, over the past several years. These relations and interactions impact not only the ability of civilians to seek safe passage and asylum, but also the ways in which international agencies and organisations are able to deliver humanitarian assistance and provide protection.

¹³ Thanks to Paul Harvey for making the point on how livelihood interventions can themselves support strategies aimed at containment and for highlighting the lack of evidence in this regard.

3 Livelihood systems and trajectories of local populations



This section examines the livelihood systems and trajectories of local populations in conflict-affected and fragile states, with a focus on trends and changes that have emerged or become more prominent through research or in the media. Some of these trends are new, while others have featured in a variety of conflict settings for many years. What is new is the extent to which these livelihoods or livelihood conditions have become part of western discourse and understanding of livelihoods in conflict settings. As with the previous section, our intent is not to cover every issue, but rather to highlight select aspects that appear to be the most relevant, pressing or influential in determining the lens through which outsiders view the livelihood adaptations of conflict-affected populations. To note, this section includes observations and discussion of some trends that have not yet been detailed in depth in the academic literature: some represent gaps in the research while others are the subject of on-going or completed studies that have yet to be published.

3.1 Diversification patterns

Diversification has always been an important part of household livelihood strategies, serving as a means of expanding and testing economic opportunities; spreading risk; building social and political networks; and dividing human, natural and physical capital across multiple sectors (Ellis, 1998). Households use combined or sequenced strategies of diversification, intensification and migration to cope or adapt to shocks (Hussein and Nelson, 1998, Scoones, 1998). Much has been written on the establishment of a diverse portfolio of assets and strategies as a critical part of sustainable rural livelihoods, and innumerable programmes have been designed to help rural populations to diversify their livelihood base. Although to a lesser extent, the literature also examines diversification as a coping response to conflict or situations of chronic vulnerability (Hamid, 1992, Carswell, 2000).

Specific forms of diversification to livelihoods in conflict or fragile states are particularly visible when we examine local responses over the past four years. The first is the diversification of livelihoods in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas, many of which are located in conflict-prone or politically fragile regions. This diversification is part of a decades-long shift as communities respond to erratic rainfall patterns, barriers to transhumance, and a negative policy environment for pastoral livelihoods in many countries (Levine, 2010, Markakis, 2004). Catley and Aklilu (2012) describe the process through which many pastoralists either exit animal husbandry entirely or seek to diversify their portfolios with urban labour, greater

investment in agriculture, or other rural-based activities. A smaller number are able to continue to grow and profit from large herds. Catley explains, however, that it is increasingly apparent in recent years that the diversification out of pastoralism while remaining *within* pastoral ecological zones is unsustainable for most who attempt this route. This is due to a number of factors, including limited economic growth in smaller urban centres in predominately pastoral regions, a limited skills base of those moving to urban areas, market saturation of the opportunities that do exist, and dwindling natural resources to exploit for activities such as sale of timber and firewood. Household gender dynamics and divisions of labour also shift as people move out of pastoralism, with women taking on greater responsibility in providing for their families through natural resource exploitation or domestic jobs (such as brewing or cleaning) in towns. Young men are the most likely to secure the manual labour jobs in urban areas, such as construction, brick-making, and acting as porters. However, these sectors are limited and depend heavily on men retaining their youth and strength, and on natural resources being available (Stites et al., 2014). Furthermore, the stagnation in the pastoral ecological zones may be worsened by government social protection safety net programmes that aim to limit migration out of these areas (Catley, June 23, 2016).

Urbanisation, particularly to towns and small cities, is another form of livelihood diversification receiving increased attention. Such moves are common in many dryland regions as pastoral or marginalised agrarian populations seek to acquire a foothold in urban settings. Evidence from pastoral regions of Uganda illustrates the many push and pull factors bringing people to these urban areas, but urban expansion is likely to only be sustainable if accompanied by the growth of diverse economic opportunities supported by appropriate infrastructure and services (Stites et al., 2014). Urbanisation is also growing in countries that host large refugee populations: cities, peri-urban areas, and informal settlements in Jordan and Lebanon have grown rapidly in the past four years due to an influx of refugees from Syria (Verme et al., 2016); internally displaced populations (IDPs) have swelled urban populations in numerous other conflict-affected countries, such as Nigeria, South Sudan and Libya; while cities across Iraq host large numbers of IDPs and also, in northern areas, Syrian refugees (IDMC, 2015). UNICEF (2016) reports that more than half of all refugees are under the age of 18 – with double the number of child refugees under the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) mandate in 2015 as compared to 2005 – burdening schools and health centres in areas where refugees are

allowed to access such services. Displaced populations in urban and camp environments often have few or sub-standard economic opportunities, limited access to services, and few legal protections. More research, with particular attention to age and gender, is needed on the diversity of both the livelihood systems and on the risks that these populations face as they attempt to survive in precarious conditions.

3.2 Migration as a form of diversification

Migration is normally considered distinct from diversification in the literature on sustainable livelihoods (Hussein and Nelson, 1998, Scoones, 1998). However, when examining the patterns associated with response to conflict or protracted crisis – particularly economic crisis – migration is a clear form of livelihood diversification. This is particularly true when we apply a livelihoods lens to intra-household dynamics, as opposed to the more standard ‘household’ unit of analysis for livelihood studies (Levine, 2014a).

Migration as a form of intra-household diversification has been particularly apparent in population movements since 2012. While entire families flee areas of extreme danger, young men are often the first to leave from areas that are in protracted conflict or economic stagnation. This is evident, for instance, in recent media and other reports on the high number of young male migrants attempting the journey across the Mediterranean from Libya to Italy; through the Sahel from West Africa; and from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria towards Europe (The Economist, 2015, Hudson, 2016). Seasonal or long-term migration by men has been taking place in these and other locations for decades or longer (Davies, 1996). What is new is that such flows are ever more *visible* as part of wider migration trends – i.e. policy-makers in middle- and high-income countries are more aware and (often) concerned about such movements. This concern arises in large part because of the second new component of these migrations: movements appear to be increasingly *international* (although data are needed to test this observation) and many migrants are seeking to reach high-income countries as their final destination. These countries are particularly attractive to migrants because livelihood options and services in transit countries are limited, especially in locations coping with an influx of millions of refugees (such as Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon in the case of Syrian refugees). This has led to concerns about containment and a growing awareness on the part of international actors of the need to limit or attempt to prevent such flows of migrants from reaching their borders.

Household-level diversification through gender- and age-specific migration illustrates a number of trends. It is clearly an economic strategy in line with the more common household-splitting that often occurs between rural and urban areas, within a region or across economic sectors. The increased importance of migration as an economic strategy aimed at household wellbeing is apparent in the increase in remittances to low-income countries over time.¹⁴ As an economic decision, the gender-specific component is based on markets and demand for labour. The increase in male migration is very visible (in part because of fears of radicalisation, as discussed above), but females dominate migration flows from several countries, such as the Philippines where women make up 55-60% of migrants (Scalbrini Migration Center, 2013). Economic issues are not the only driving force in male out-migration, however. Men may migrate from conflict zones in the hope of establishing a home, securing employment, or testing a migration route before attempting to bring their family to join them. Protection concerns may also drive male out-migration, as young men may be targeted for forced recruitment by armed groups or face higher rates of detention, torture and killing than their female counterparts. This diversification strategy is also apparent when some members of a household live in IDP or refugee camps. In work on the 2011-2012 famine in Somalia, Majid et al. (2016) find that some household members went to camps to access food, education and other resources, or entire households moved in and out of camps on a seasonal basis.

The international migration of children, including those who are unaccompanied, has also been more visible in recent years. Children migrate alone for multiple reasons, including being orphaned or separated from parents or caregivers, fleeing or being sent away from neglectful or abusive family situations, seeking work as economic migrants (either to help themselves or to contribute to their families), or to take advantage of other opportunities such as education. Trafficking and smuggling of children also contributes to large numbers of children crossing borders. Tens of thousands of children attempt to migrate from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to Mexico and the US each year. Many of these children are fleeing gang violence or forced recruitment, or have been sent on the journey by their parents in an attempt to keep their children safe (Human Rights Watch, 2016). While the movement of children is not new, global attention to it as a coping strategy

in conflict situations has increased in recent years due to the pervasiveness of social media, donor campaigns, and the increase in children attempting dangerous journeys into Europe and North America (UNICEF, 2016).

3.3 Livelihoods on the move

The wave of migration from conflict zones in the Middle East, South Asia and Africa is one of the most visible and profound examples of livelihood adaptations to crisis. As discussed above, some of this migration follows specific gender and age patterns, with men leaving their countries in search of better economic opportunities, to find a safe place before sending for their families, or to avoid physical and/or political threats. Others move as complete families, or women and/or children travel alone or with groups. Motivating factors include fleeing conflict as well as a search for a stable livelihood and future, and migratory routes are both irregular and formal (Cummings et al., 2015). Much of the international focus has been on big-picture issues, such as upheaval within Europe regarding shifting migration policy (Robertson, 2016, BBC, 2016). But, media outlets have documented the personal stories, mostly along broad themes of the dangerous nature of the routes (particularly sea-crossings), the barriers to entry at given borders and the impacts on migrants, and the relations between migrant and potential host communities (Schmidle, 2015).

To date, less attention has been paid to the actual livelihood strategies that migrants employ while on the move. Many spend weeks or months attempting to reach their final destination, and most are outside of any formal system of assistance (Katz, 2016). While research is beginning in some areas and anecdotal reports exist in various media sources, there remain critical questions and large gaps in knowledge. For instance, how do people manage their financial, social and political assets (Pop, 2015, Malek, 2016)? What are their daily strategies for safety, sustenance and survival (Schmidle, 2015)? How does this change based on group or family demographic – i.e. how do the strategies for families travelling with children differ from those of men travelling alone, or a mixed group of adults? How do social and cultural norms change while en route, or in a specific country, or when in contact with migrants from other locations? How do migrants understand violence and how do they seek to avoid it?

¹⁴ The World Bank RATHA, D., DE, S., PLAZA, S., SCHUETTLER, K., SHAW, W., WYSS, H. & YI, S. 2016. Migration and Remittances– Recent Developments and Outlook. *Migration and Development Brief* 26. Washington, DC: World Bank. estimated remittances of US\$431.6 billion to low-income countries in 2015, showing only a slight increase (of 0.4%) from 2014 (explained by low oil prices and other factors impacting the international labour market). The economic recession brought an overall contraction in the growth pace of global remittance flows starting in 2012. However, even though global flows (which include remittances to middle- and high-income nations) decreased by US\$10 billion between 2014 and 2015, overall flows to low-income countries have continued to rise.

3.4 Livelihoods in states of siege

The past four years have seen an increase in populations living under states of siege, and a growing awareness by the international community and media of these conditions. The worsening conflict in Syria is the starkest example, with large numbers of civilians living for months or years at a time cut off from necessities and basic services. Defining an area as ‘under siege’ has become highly politicised, evident, in part, from discrepancies in estimates of the number of civilians living under siege in Syria (which range from approximately 400,000 by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to well over 1 million by (Siege Watch, 2016)). Prolonged sieges also currently exist in Yemen, where the second-largest city, Taiz, was cut off from supplies for well over a year.

Information from besieged areas is normally scant, although continued access to social media in some areas has improved the flow of information. Local populations make radical adaptations in their livelihood strategies in order to survive, particularly as a siege continues over time. Evidence collected by the Siege Watch project (ibid.), a collaborative non-governmental effort focused on Syria, reports that civilians in besieged locations are surviving through efforts such as rooftop gardening, the burning of plastic to extract oil derivatives, and the production of basic medical supplies through locally available materials. Food and non-food items, when available, must be purchased on the black market at inflated prices; bribery, extortion and violence are daily realities. Boys and men face constant threats of forced conscription by armed groups. Local forms of government exist in most siege areas through local councils, and two locations in the Siege Watch sample reported having a local civil police force that was unaffiliated with any armed group.

States of siege can radically alter the social fabric and local systems of governance. Reports from Taiz, Yemen point to the erosion of education systems and the taking up of arms by children and youth to assist in local protection efforts. Fleeing civilians and traders seeking to break the siege were killed by landmines planted by Houthi forces as they retreated along the main access road (Al-Sakkaf, March 20, 2016). Hoping for improvements after the end of the siege, local civilians faced months of fighting between different armed factions of the Popular Resistance forces that were vying for control of the city. A Yemeni journalist reported in June 2016 that there was no rule of law, no functioning courts, no civil government, and no police force functioning in Taiz. Various factions of the Popular Resistance forces

were engaged in extortion, land seizure, and abuse of the population. Illustrating how conflict transforms the livelihood options that are available, many of the male fighters with the Popular Resistance forces reported joining up to due to the lack of any other form of income or survival (MEE Contributor, June 17, 2016).

States of siege severely constrain livelihood opportunities and reduce the range of possible adaptations that can be taken in response to conflict. Standard coping responses of migration and diversification are curtailed and only possible with extreme personal risk. In some instances, those who have been able to migrate have left behind the poorest and most vulnerable, as well as families with many dependents or members with disabilities. Women, children and the elderly are often over-represented in populations under siege, as they may face more social, economic and cultural barriers to migrating (Save the Children, 2016).

Huge pressures are put on existing systems in siege areas due to lack of assistance or trade, whether these be systems of food production, social connectedness, health facilities or local governance. Any movement of goods or people across siege lines comes at great risk, further intensifying the difficult decisions and trade-offs that are common for households in conflict zones. For example, the Syrian Government has allowed students from some areas under siege to temporarily exit these locations in order to take their annual national exams. Families must decide whether to allow their teenage children to make such journeys, often through areas contested by multiple armed groups (Associated Press, 2016, Doucet, 2014). In besieged areas around Damascus, the students were reported to be searched on their way back into the sieged neighbourhood and any food or medicine they were found to be carrying was confiscated (Save the Children, 2016). Many of these young people likely faced the impossible decision of whether to return to their families in the siege areas, or try to find greater safety elsewhere. Examining livelihoods under siege illustrates the extreme measures that individuals, households and communities must take to survive conflict.

3.5 Social networks

Since 2012 attention has increased on the importance of social capital and social networks for local populations facing conflict and crisis. The role of violent conflict in *damaging* social capital has been documented (Kitissou and Yoon, 2014, Bandaralage, 2009, Stites et al., 2006), and the importance of social capital as a *positive* force

in economic and political development has long been understood (Fukuyama, 2001). Social capital is not static, and changes to social and political relations arising from conflict have gender- and age-specific impacts, bringing new roles, responsibilities and relationship dynamics for men and women. For women in conflict areas, some of these changes bring hardships – such as bearing the brunt of an increasingly masculinised, militarised society and facing increased violations due to human trafficking – but also new economic opportunities in both the formal and informal economy (Raven-Roberts, 2013).

Research by Maxwell et al. (2015) on the 2011-2012 famine in Somalia documents the importance of social connections in Somali responses to the crisis. This research finds that the ability of people to use their social networks to mobilise resources was the determining factor in whether, and how well, people survived the famine. They emphasise the importance of social *connectedness* as opposed to social *capital*, as the latter implies something that can be counted or saved. The notion of connectedness, on the other hand, emphasises the way that connections ‘foster inclusion or exclusion from social networks and the diversity of claims that can be made within networks’ (ibid.). In the case of the Somali famine, connectedness to two layers of a social network outside of the immediate kin (the ‘first circle’) was central to survival. Both the extent of connectedness to the second and third circles (described respectively as sub-clan/lineage/community and more distant external actors, within or outside of the clan) and the characteristics of these circles themselves were important components. For instance, the extent of livelihood diversification (beyond the rural sector) within the second circle was important, as was the accessibility and responsiveness of the third circle. Interestingly, the researchers found that the onset of the famine conditions

corresponded to the collapse of the second circle in May or June of 2011 – i.e. the second circle was no longer able to meet local needs, and people shifted to reliance on the third circle of social connectedness. Some of the groups hit hardest by the famine (such as the Somali Bantu and the Rahanweyn) were those who – due to historical marginalisation and lack of a diversified livelihood base – were not able to mobilise adequate support in their second and third circles (ibid.). In terms of livelihoods and crisis, this research provides critical insight into the importance of social linkages – regardless of actual proximity – and how these linkages fluctuate in response to shock. In addition, we see that the most important variable in surviving the famine – who you know and how well you are able to leverage these relations – can be difficult to influence through external interventions. According to Maxwell and colleagues, this variable was not well understood by outside actors, making it difficult to target humanitarian assistance effectively towards those groups that were truly in greatest need (i.e. lacked adequate social connectedness).

There are other visible, though less thoroughly researched, examples of the importance of social networks in managing crisis. Turning again to the refugee flow from Africa and the Middle East towards Europe, we see the critical role of social media in enabling migrants to learn about the best routes, shifting obstacles, safe houses, and means of smuggling (Schmidle, 2015). Migrants rely on social connections to carry money back home, to find housing and employment in new locations, and to gain knowledge on dangerous routes or individuals to avoid. This is not a new finding, but the increased awareness of and attention to how people survive in the absence of external interventions means that the importance of these social networks is increasingly visible.

4 Livelihood interventions

This section reviews developments in livelihood and economic growth interventions since 2012¹⁵ that increasingly take into account the importance of conflict sensitivity of interventions. Just as livelihoods are critical for economic development and promoting resilience, they can also cause heightened vulnerability to individuals in conflict environments. This is particularly true when assets become liabilities – such as humanitarian assistance that may be seized by armed groups – which can also contribute to the perpetuation of conflict (Lautze and Raven-Roberts, 2006). In recent years, the literature has also begun to assess how well interventions apply political economy analysis (PEA) to ensure that efforts not only do no harm, but also assist the most vulnerable populations and address structural inequalities with limited resources (Buchanan Smith, June 27, 2016, Pain, June 29, 2016).

The livelihood and economic growth interventions discussed in Mallet and Slater (2012) were analysed through a framework developed by Jaspars and Maxwell (2009). Under this framework, there are three objectives to supporting livelihoods in conflict, namely:

- livelihood provision;
- protection; and
- promotion.

This encompasses a distinction among interventions that contribute to civilian protection and meet basic needs; help protect and recover assets; and strengthen institutions and influence policy to improve livelihood strategies and the accumulation of assets (Mallett and Slater, 2012). However, increasingly, international actors and aid organisations recognise the overlap between these categories (Maxwell, July 29, 2016) and programmes integrate these approaches as a result. For example, in Pakistan's Swat Valley the focus of long-term interventions after 2009 was to protect livelihoods through the distribution of agricultural inputs and tools, and livestock and poultry, while simultaneously promoting livelihoods by rebuilding infrastructure and holding capacity-building trainings (Shah and Shabaz, 2015).

This section reviews select influential developments and critical changes in livelihood interventions in conflict- and fragile-affected states since 2012. The overall effectiveness of donor interventions is assessed in greater detail in Section 5.

¹⁵ This includes literature published after 2012, evaluating interventions prior to this.

4.1 Developments in livelihood interventions

4.1.1 Overview

During the 2012-2016 period, there were several major shifts in livelihood interventions. These shifts largely reflect the changing nature of conflict in recent years, including increased protracted conflict coupled with limited donor resources with which to respond to livelihood needs in fragile environments. Conflict has resulted in unprecedented numbers of IDPs and refugees in recent years; 65.3 million people were displaced by the end of 2015 (UNHCR, 2016). This compares to 43.7 million people forcibly displaced by the end of 2010, or an increase of over 21 million displaced persons in five years (UNHCR, 2011). Over 80% of refugee crises today last for at least 10 years, while 40% last more than 20 years (Crawford et al., 2015). Internal displacement has been on the rise, in addition to cross-border migration, and the phenomenon of urbanisation, which have all had major impacts on livelihood needs in conflict-affected countries.

The flow of international and internal migrants has heightened tensions with 'host' communities over competition for scarce resources and livelihoods. This is particularly true in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, which have hosted millions of refugees fleeing civil wars in Syria and Iraq that have lasted nearly six years. Donor agencies have developed specific targeting criteria to try to assist the most vulnerable (including those in host communities), and to better understand and mitigate these tensions between refugees and host communities (Search for Common Ground, 2014). Some donors view livelihood support in humanitarian crises as increasingly necessary, given protracted conflicts and their increasing emphasis on resilience and self-reliance. However, others view humanitarian needs as too great and the funding too little to do anything other than support basic human needs such as food and shelter (Carbonnier, 2015).

An emerging consensus has developed on the way that cash transfers are viewed in emergency environments and humanitarian crises. In short, cash has become 'king' (Aker, 2014). Unconditional, multi-sectoral cash transfers offer greater flexibility for livelihood support, in addition to other donor objectives (Carbonnier, 2015). In parallel, food aid has become increasingly more expensive vis-à-vis cash, given the protracted and cross-border nature of major conflicts in recent years, which have led to budget constraints, logistical challenges (including for aid delivery), and donor fatigue (ibid.). However, even with this supposed evidence supporting a shift to cash, there are still differing

opinions on how and when cash should be used as opposed to vouchers. And with reforms still needed, for many people, cash transfers are not always as effective as they have the potential to be (Harvey and Bailey, 2015). Disaster risk resilience (DRR) and natural resource management (NRM) have also become increasingly common in recent years, especially as competition over scarce resources is predicted to increase with rapid population growth and climate change, specifically in sub-Saharan Africa (Cervigni and Morris, 2016).

New actors have begun to contribute to livelihoods and economic growth in conflict contexts since 2012, including a growth in business-humanitarian partnerships (BHPs) and greater private-sector involvement, as well as specific initiatives at the local level, such as hosting of refugees by German towns and Swedish churches. The private sector has played a role in fostering trade, supporting stabilisation, and promoting long-term economic growth – all livelihood approaches. Specific interventions include advancing income-generating activities, providing access to finance, service provision in the absence of effective governance, and value-chain development. One key informant identified a trend of increasing influence of non-traditional livelihood actors, including China and India (Richards, June 30, 2016).

There remains mixed evidence for how the private sector should best engage in economic growth and livelihood support (Avis, 2016). This is particularly true in environments characterised by high levels of corruption, limited rule of law, and weak governance – characteristics common in many conflict-affected states. Additionally, the private sector is diverse, encompassing formal and informal actors, diaspora communities, and legal and illegal goods and actors (ibid.), all of whom influence livelihood opportunities and networks. Hence, while working with the local private sector may seem a good way to build the sustainability of livelihood responses, these variations in strength, formality and legality of the private sector in conflict settings make it very difficult for outside actors to know how – and who – to partner with or support.

Non-western donors are increasingly poised to contribute to livelihood support in coming years. The 2015 launch of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank positions China to have an increased role in contributing to the global economic agenda, including in fragile and conflict-affected countries (Perlez, 2015). In recent years, non-state armed groups such as the Islamic State have also provided economic support to fighters and their families, and particular war economies have developed in areas held by powerful non-state groups. This review does not cover the

role of non-traditional actors in depth, but it is important to acknowledge the rise of illegal and non-state armed groups that contribute to livelihoods – albeit for self-interested purposes of recruitment and holding power – particularly for populations under siege.

The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) provided a high-profile opportunity for theory and practice to converge on the topic of livelihoods in humanitarian contexts. However, regardless of the high-level attention, one key informant noted that livelihood programming still has a long way to go to fully address the needs of populations in conflict environments (Buchanan Smith, June 27, 2016). Livelihood programming has been critiqued for its dearth of market linkages, time limitations that do not allow for sustainable livelihood growth, limited technical support, and scale (Crawford et al., 2015). However, aid professionals are paying more attention to the complexity of the environments in which they provide livelihood support (ibid.), and the ways in which their interventions influence this context. This, in addition to the rise in interventions to support activities that individuals are already pursuing, reveals an increased donor appreciation for individual and household agency, including in conflict and fragile environments.

4.1.2 Aid modalities

We now discuss the most salient developments in livelihood programming since 2012, starting with aid modalities – i.e. cash transfers, food assistance and vouchers. We then turn to developments in infrastructure and public works programmes, followed by livestock and farming interventions. Next we review advancements in microfinance, making markets work for the poor (M4P), and value chain development, recognising that programmatically there are overlaps between these areas. We then turn to institutional policies, focusing on assessments of the impacts of taxation policies on livelihoods. Finally, we address changes in job creation and entrepreneurship interventions since 2012, before reviewing changes in skills-based training and capacity-building interventions.

Cash transfers

Cash transfers are among the most rigorously evaluated and researched interventions in recent years, with cash being particularly important for livelihood considerations given its fungibility. While it can be used for immediate needs, cash can also be invested into asset creation or livelihood development, and can be adjusted based on the specific circumstances of household family members. The High Level Panel on Cash Transfers, convened by ODI

in 2015, identified more than 200 well-researched studies – many commissioned in recent years – discussing the efficacy, feasibility and effectiveness of cash transfers in crisis environments, in an effort to recommend shifts to cash assistance. Despite robust evidence suggesting cash should be used more in conflict environments, there has yet to be an operational shift in practice from food assistance and vouchers, with only 6% of humanitarian aid currently provided via cash transfers (High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015). The ‘Grand Bargain’ negotiated at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit seeks to change this, emphasising that cash can help empower affected persons and bolster local markets. However, there is scepticism about how effective the Grand Bargain will be, as neither hard targets nor a timeframe to achieve the shift to cash were agreed upon by international actors (Parker, 2016).

Cash assistance has emerged as the preferred aid modality in various conflict contexts, in part because it allows people to choose how to support their own livelihood strategies. Technological innovations (mobile money, biometric recognition and smart cards) have also enabled cash assistance to operate in environments that were previously not feasible (Carbonnier, 2015). In Lebanon, multi-sectoral cash transfer programmes for Syrian refugees are common in covering food, housing, transport, education, water, heating, and even winterisation needs (High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015; Carbonnier, 2015). In Uganda, evidence suggests that there are high economic returns to cash transfers, especially when coupled with training programmes (Blattman et al., 2015). In Somalia, a final evaluation of the cash response to the 2011-2012 famine reveals that unconditional cash transfers reached an ‘impressive scale’ that enabled a more rapid recovery and did not result in food-price inflation, contrary to concerns (Hedlund et al., 2013). In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), evidence from a randomised experiment to assess the costs of cash transfers versus vouchers found that cash was more cost effective for both beneficiaries and the implementing donor (Aker, 2015).

The above evidence provides compelling reasons for the use of cash over other forms of assistance in conflict and humanitarian environments, many of which directly relate to impacts on livelihoods. Cash enables investments and supports local markets; usually costs less than in-kind aid due to reduced transaction costs such as transport, delivery, and storage; and can make limited budgets go further (High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015; Carbonnier, 2015). One study published on research

in Ecuador, Niger, Uganda and Yemen finds that if cash was provided instead of food, an additional 44,769 people could have received support at no additional cost (Margolies and Hodinott, 2014). Initial concerns that cash could be more prone to diversion than forms of in-kind assistance have been debunked (High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015). And, quantitative evidence from Africa, Latin America and Asia counters concerns that cash is spent on temptation goods such as alcohol, cigarettes or confectionary (Evans and Popova, 2014, Aker, 2015). During the Somali famine of 2011-2012, people spent their cash transfers fairly predictably – to repay loans and buy food (Hedlund et al., 2013). Both men and women recipients often prefer cash (High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015), and it gives beneficiaries more personal agency to make decisions about resource allocation (Carbonnier, 2015).

Some argue that unconditional cash transfers are better than conditional cash transfers (CCTs) based on their flexibility. For instance, the High Level Panel on Cash Transfers recommends that, whenever possible, unconditional cash transfers be used. However, CCTs have still been reported to be beneficial in certain contexts, and the High Level Panel finding is contested. During the famine in Somalia, conditional transfers were viewed as more appropriate vis-à-vis unconditional transfers because they demonstrated an intent not just to provide urgent assistance, but also a longer commitment to invest in communities through public works programmes (Maxwell, July 29, 2016). An evaluation of the *Pantawid Pamilya* programme in the Philippines reveals that CCTs caused a decrease in incidents of conflict and reduced insurgent influence in the receiving villages (Croft et al., 2016). This is in contrast to evidence that food aid has been found to increase the incidence and lethality of conflict (ibid.; (Nunn and Qian, 2014). One DFID systematic review on CCTs laments the lack of data that meets robust methodological criteria (Kabeer et al., 2012). However, this same report concludes that the evidence that does meet these criteria is strong and consistent in the areas of increased household consumption, including food diversity, increased school attendance for children, and protected consumption during crises (ibid.) – thus demonstrating how cash transfers influence how people prioritise needs via livelihood strategies.

However cash is still not appropriate in all situations. Understanding this requires humanitarian and development actors to have a clear sense of local livelihoods, as well as of the direct and indirect impacts any intervention may have on livelihood strategies. When markets are weak or

supply is unable to respond or is constrained, cash transfers run the risk of leading to inflation (High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015; Carbonnier, 2015). Since 2012, a new area of response analysis has emerged, assessing the process by which the objectives and modalities of programme response options are chosen in an emergency. This includes tools that incorporate market analysis, nutrition, modality-specific references, risk- or harm-mitigation tools, process-oriented tools, and – importantly – livelihood-specific tools (Maxwell et al., 2013b). However, while more tools exist to assess which modality is most appropriate in a given conflict or emergency context, the degree to which agencies apply the various tools to determine a specific approach remains unknown (ibid.).

Why are more cash transfers not allocated? One key informant commented that global political economy dynamics mitigate against the shift to cash (Carbonnier, June 27, 2016). For donors, multi-sectoral cash assistance represents a loss of market shares, because it could be done by one central agency instead of individually by many. Cash is also not as visible as food assistance from a donor perspective (Carbonnier, 2015). A senior NGO official interviewed by the High Level Panel on Cash Transfers (2015) echoed this, stating that the US Congress and other international donors prefer aid that produces tangible benefits that can be clearly branded by the donor. This has been referred to as the ‘flag effect’ (Carbonnier, 2015). The High Level Panel on Cash Transfers argues that, contrary to this, using cash ultimately frees up resources that could enable the donor to be more present on the ground, and that it allows donors to have close proximity to populations they are working to assist (High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015). However, our key informant also pointed out that there is a research gap in understanding how these cost savings are allocated across organisations, and whether the administrative savings that cash transfers generate lead to a significant impact on beneficiaries’ wellbeing (Carbonnier, June 27, 2016). Moreover, cash has been said to be outside the confines of the cluster approach of the current humanitarian system, as beneficiaries are able to make decisions about their own spending patterns (Carbonnier, 2015).

While cash is seen as the most viable modality to assist individuals in conflict environments, evidence suggests that tangible steps are needed to make it more efficient (High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015; Carbonnier, 2015). In 2014, more than 30 different agencies provided cash and vouchers for 14 different purposes in Lebanon. One key informant underscored the

issue with these inefficiencies by noting that duplicitous systems cause confusion for beneficiaries. From their perspective, the need to obtain different cards for different items is both superfluous and unnecessary (Carbonnier, June 27, 2016). Calls by various actors to improve this include the need for greater coordination between humanitarian and development actors; enhanced measurement of cash distribution; better engagement with the private sector to deliver payments and promote financial inclusion; and a better understanding of the security context in which the specific vouchers are delivered (High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015; Aker, 2014). This is particularly true in fragile and conflict-affected states, as cash can be an asset but at the same time cause vulnerability by creating an incentive for theft or attack. A more efficient cash transfer system could potentially enable greater funds for beneficiaries to use to meet key livelihood needs.

Food aid

Food assistance has long been an important component of asset provision, and continues to be a major form of assistance. Achieving food security is central to the livelihood strategies of many households living in fragile and conflict states (Lautze et al., 2002, Stites et al., 2006). If households receive food assistance, they can direct some of their resources towards other, potentially longer-term, livelihood goals. In addition, food assistance is often sold or exchanged in conflict settings, allowing households to acquire other essential commodities. However, in light of its increased costs vis-à-vis cash transfers and in recognition of the positive evidence for cash support, food assistance has lost some support as the main means of assisting individuals in conflict environments (High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015). As discussed above, unconditional cash transfers allow beneficiary households flexibility, which may extend to investments in livelihood activities; this is much less likely to be the case when food is provided (unless households sell food aid in order to generate cash to meet other needs). Rising transportation costs and commodity prices have also limited the volume of food assistance that major donors, such as USAID and the US Department of Agriculture, have been able to deliver (United States Office for Food for Peace, 2014). In Chad, for example, the WFP's cost estimates for 2015-2016 reveal that for each US dollar spent on food assistance, another was spent on logistics and transportation, whereas for cash transfers, only 19% of the total costs were organisational and logistical (World Bank, 2016). Speaking on his research in Somalia, Daniel Maxwell estimated that only one third of

the value of the overall budget reached beneficiaries at the local level (Maxwell, July 29, 2016).

Food assistance has gone through shifts since 2012. First, there have been major developments in the area of nutritional programming in emergencies, with a great increase in attention to community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM), as well as ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTF) and other products to address micronutrient deficiencies (Maxwell et al., 2013b). A 2014 study by the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that the country's commodity prepositioning sites – of which there are six around the world for emergency food response – reduced transfer times for food deliveries (United States Office for Food for Peace, 2014). Yet the same report also finds that the delivery of prepositioned food was 31% more expensive than traditional emergency assistance, leading the US government to seek to lower management and operational costs of these sites as a result (ibid.). Ultimately, faster delivery times of food during crises can offer valuable support to households – especially rapid onset crises – and thus, innovations in food assistance that reduce time can be valuable in spite of marginally increased costs.

While food assistance still remains a common modality for support in humanitarian emergencies and conflict environments, emergency food delivery has become even more challenging in protracted conflicts – such as Syria – where humanitarian access is a major challenge. Moreover, recent research from northern Uganda on livelihood recovery patterns reveals that access to food often yields little insight on how well households manage to rebuild their lives and recover assets (Levine, 2016). This suggests that food access may not be a good proxy indicator for long-term livelihood security, or the ability to recover from shocks.

Vouchers

Similar to other transfers, vouchers allow for greater asset development and creation, which may result in changes to livelihood needs and the strategies that populations in fragile and conflict-affected states use to meet these. Vouchers are reviewed and compared to cash in several of the publications already discussed, with cash found to be the preferred aid modality to both vouchers and food assistance. In the specific context of DRC, one study finds that, when compared to households that received vouchers, cash households utilised their transfers to purchase more diverse food and non-food items (Aker, 2015). This same study also finds that cash is safer than vouchers because it can be easily hidden and, in the study context, led to

reduced vulnerability from theft than physical assets did (ibid.). Although limited in scope, these findings imply greater livelihood benefits and flexibility from cash when compared to vouchers or food.

Other benefits

Other notable evidence with implications for livelihood interventions includes research on food for work (FFW), cash for work (CFW), and pension benefits. A comparative study conducted by the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) in South Sudan finds that CFW performed better than FFW in terms of giving respondents agency, cost efficiency, dietary diversification, and participant preferences (Metz et al., 2013). Both groups of participants reported increased food consumption overall, however. Interestingly, an increased percentage of female over male participants declared a preference for FFW, or a combination of FFW and CFW, as opposed to CFW on its own (ibid.). In Nepal, an analysis of the old-age allowance in Rolpa District reveals that while the programme supported livelihoods, it was not sufficient to provide for livelihoods entirely, and ultimately exacerbated social divisions and inequalities (Sony et al., 2014). While limited in number, these studies illustrate the importance of tailored programming that considers not only the desired end result of improved livelihoods or better food security but also takes into account social and gender dynamics when designing and monitoring programmes.

4.1.3 Infrastructure

Infrastructure has increasingly emerged as a priority among donors in conflict environments to promote access to markets and establish preconditions for reconstruction and long-term economic growth (Ali et al., 2015). In SLRC's 2012 review of livelihoods and economic growth in fragile and conflict-affected states, Mallett and Slater (2012) note that targeting was a major challenge to infrastructure programmes, and that there was limited evidence to suggest that investing in infrastructure yields stabilisation benefits. Recent evidence echoes this concern. A study conducted by the World Bank in DRC in 2015 finds that, despite the assumptions in policy circles that infrastructure development yields economic benefits in conflict-affected areas, the impacts of infrastructure are more nuanced (Ali et al., 2015). In places with high levels of conflict, the benefit of road development is said to be limited and, in some cases, had negative impacts. Because remoteness can provide a partial refuge from conflict, heightened connectivity via improved roads can also enhance the mobility of actors in the conflict (ibid.). A 2014 study on

rural road construction in South Kivu, DRC also supports the finding that the benefits of road development are limited, and that donors have false expectations that building roads will lead to decreased transport costs, and increased market connectivity and economic growth (Ferdinand et al., 2014).

However, Ali et al.'s (2015) study in DRC acknowledges that following conflict and during reconstruction phases, infrastructural development can be a catalyst for growth and can end a cycle of repeated conflict (sometimes referred to as the 'conflict trap'). In Swat Valley, Pakistan, for example, infrastructural development has opened up new possibilities for labourers, who have shifted into construction work and have reported increased wages due to the demand for this type of labour (Suleri et al., 2016). Hence, we see evidence on both the positive and negative livelihood impacts from infrastructure programmes.

4.1.4 Public works programmes (PWP)

Increased numbers of IDPs and refugees, coupled with urbanisation in conflict environments, have strained resources in cities, many of which often suffer from poor urban planning or destroyed infrastructure and public works. Yet, despite this, the evidence on the impact of PWPs on promoting economic growth and mitigating conflict appears to be limited, and evidence supporting the causal pathways between PWPs and violent conflict is both scarce and mixed (Beazley et al., 2016). Critics point out that the design and evaluation of PWPs often focus on consumption-smoothing and short-term economic benefit, in contrast to long-term economic growth (ibid.). A review commissioned by GIZ and conducted by the German Development Institute finds that evidence of direct effects of PWPs on violence reduction is rare (Gehrke and Hartwig, 2015). However, the evidence that does exist suggests that PWPs have expanded their scope and focus on broader human development and social protection objectives – including conflict-reduction – in addition to economic growth. This evidence suggests that project selection entails trade-offs between short-term employment and long-term employment and benefits (Beazley et al., 2016). Water conservation, road construction, land development and rehabilitation, and irrigation are identified among the activities that may yield the greatest rise in employment in both the short and long term. However, Beazley et al. (ibid.) call for the PWP goals of reducing poverty and violent conflict to be separated, as sometimes, addressing actors or certain populations to mitigate conflict may mean that the most vulnerable populations are not targeted.

4.1.5 Foreign direct investment (FDI)

There has been increased attention on the role of corruption, infrastructure and conflict since 2012, with research calling for enhanced governance and oversight of the infrastructure sector, which also impacts PWPs (Ferf et al., 2014). One study on FDI and corruption finds that, in DRC, Kenya and Sierra Leone, corruption has limited the long-term impacts of FDI (Fahad and Amhed, 2016). Another study describes how donors are well positioned to leverage their investments in infrastructure and public works by encouraging good governance and sound taxation policies with local governments, even in conflict environments (Ferf et al., 2014). Overall, the findings thus appear to be both mixed and highly dependent on context, including the degree of conflict and whether or not actors in the conflict are likely to benefit from enhanced mobility, the strength of markets, and the degree of corruption and good governance.

4.1.6 Livestock and farming interventions

Maintaining livestock is the dominant livelihood strategy for 40 million people in the Sahel and Horn of Africa (Cervigni and Morris, 2016). Many of these are conflict-affected and fragile states, and many of the pastoral and agro-pastoral populations within them live in areas that are socially, politically and economically marginalised. Conflict (of varying degrees) and low levels of law and order are the norm, which contributes to difficult livelihood environments. Andy Catley, an expert on pastoralism, stated that there have not been many recent changes in the evidence base on livestock interventions in recent years (Catley, June 23, 2016).¹⁶ With respect to practice, the *Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards Report*, initially published in 2009, remains a vital resource for livestock interventions in emergency contexts. However, uptake of the best-practice guidelines remains ad hoc and is subject to various institutional constraints, including training limitations, institutional memory, and high staff turnover in conflict environments (ibid.). In Pakistan's Swat Valley, a report by Shah and Shahbaz (2015) reveals that while the provision of livestock – goats and poultry in particular – was appreciated, the intervention lacked a rigorous assessment of the suitability of these breeds within the local context. A 2016 assessment of livelihood recovery in northern Uganda also reveals that while donors view livestock as a sound investment because

they reproduce, in reality, many animals die quickly and those that survive fail to reproduce at the anticipated rates (Levine, 2016).

Agriculture generates between 10-30% of national gross domestic product in countries in the East and West African drylands (Cervigni and Morris, 2016), with investments in crop farming and livestock systems having improved sustainability and productivity of livelihood strategies, specifically in the Horn of Africa (ibid.). In northern Uganda, for example, there have been advances in the development and operation of farmer field schools and crop and livestock extension services (Mazurana et al., 2014). One World Bank report (Cervigni and Morris, 2016) recommends that interventions in the African drylands intensify production systems to increase the value and volume of commercial sales for livestock. This could include improving animal health and veterinary care services, improving animal genetics, improving the quality and quantity of feed resources, and supporting the development of livestock value chains. The World Bank and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development have also highlighted opportunities to support farming livelihoods by improving water management, the development of irrigation, soil fertility management, and the availability of hybrids (ibid.).

Supporting agro-pastoral, pastoral and agrarian livelihoods has gained increased attention in recent years due to climate change and the push for greater resilience to natural disasters. Given the aforementioned linkages between natural disasters, conflicts and state fragility, it will be increasingly important to pay attention to agricultural and pastoral livelihoods, given that they are often pursued by marginalised populations. However, such interventions must be implemented carefully and with extensive local participation in conflict-affected areas, as livestock assets can easily expose households to greater risk through theft, for example.

There have also been developments in seeds-and-tools interventions in the period under review, although the state of new evidence is limited. Only nine out of the 2,562 studies initially identified during the SLRC's systematic review of seeds-and-tools evidence since 2012 were deemed to be robust and relevant for analysis, demonstrating the dearth of available resources overall (Carpenter, 2012).¹⁷ However, the studies that did meet the

¹⁶ Catley reported challenges in searching for new evidence, because many findings on livestock are buried within larger reports and therefore are not necessarily included in search strings.

¹⁷ This systematic review includes literature published prior to 2012.

criteria yielded interesting results. This same systematic review concludes that the assumption that seeds are always unavailable in conflict situations is untrue, and further to this that more recent seeds-and-tools programmes have had positive impacts on food security, stability and wealth. For example, in Pakistan's Swat Valley, the provision of seeds, fruit saplings and fertilisers to farmers was a key livelihood intervention following the Taliban's control of the region (Suleri et al., 2016). This intervention is said to have had positive impacts overall: new stores opened up in previously-remote areas as a result of the increased demand, and this may have also contributed to the shift from the production of subsistence crops to cash crops (ibid.). It is worth noting that despite these successes, however, targeting of populations was problematic for this programme. Small farmers in Swat Valley were seen to be generally excluded, raising concerns about inequality in farming and livestock interventions in the region (Shah and Shahbaz, 2015).

In northern Uganda, research reveals similar concerns about inequality in agro-pastoral interventions. In a 2014 SLRC survey, Mazurana et al. conclude that some of the most vulnerable populations may have not been chosen to receive livelihood assistance. Of those surveyed, only 16% of households reported that they received any livelihood assistance in the last three years. Those who did receive assistance were both wealthier and had greater food security prior to receiving assistance. Additionally, those who were the wealthiest and who worked for an NGO, in the private sector, or owned livestock were found to be 'significantly more likely' to receive assistance.

Inequality should be an important consideration for livestock and farming interventions moving forward, as smaller stockholders have increasingly been excluded from accessing markets given wide-scale commercialisation in the sector. Research from the Horn of Africa on livestock ownership patterns reveals that wealthier holders were able to maintain and increase their holdings, while asset levels of the poor either remained constant or collapsed, causing some to abandon pastoralism altogether (Catley and Aklilu, 2012). One recommendation is to introduce progressive taxation policies to promote a more equitable distribution of animal ownership (Cervigni and Morris, 2016), but such policies would be difficult to enforce in areas with limited state reach and a history of distrust of the state.

Market expansion in fragile and conflict-affected countries has also raised new opportunities for livestock owners

and farmers. One key informant with extensive knowledge of Sudan told us that an important recent opportunity was the market for hides and skins, which had previously been viewed as worthless (Buchanan Smith, June 27, 2016). There has also been a lively and growing dairy industry around Darfur's towns, but this has yet to receive significant international support (ibid.). This underscores the need for donors to continuously evaluate the conflict context and political economy to ensure that windows of opportunity are seized, especially when they support productive activities that individuals are already pursuing (ibid).

Finally, in conflict-affected zones, security and physical mobility for both people and animals are critical to the livelihoods of pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and farmers (Cervigni and Morris, 2016). Interventions that promote this security, especially in cross-border areas where migration patterns are common, would bolster pastoral and agrarian livelihoods further. However, ultimately, the degree to which pastoral and agrarian interventions are successful depends on the context, and, as a takeaway point, we note the increasing concern among actors that interventions may actually increase income inequality in these sectors, and fail to benefit the most vulnerable populations.

4.1.7 Access to capital and markets

Microfinance

Access to markets has been viewed as a critical component of livelihood support in donor programming for years. Within this area, microfinance is one of the most discussed interventions in fragile and conflict-affected states, having gone through periods of strong support as well as criticism. Ultimately, the evidence base for microfinance and microcredit programmes – specifically in situations of conflict and fragility – appears mixed (Mallett and Slater, 2016). Prior to the 2004 tsunami in Muhudupitiya, Sri Lanka, 57% of households were in debt, including person-to-person loans (Kapadia, 2015).¹⁸ After the tsunami, microfinance was promoted heavily by aid organisations while private lenders simultaneously sought to collect their debts. As a result, some private lenders generated 'tremendous profit' and lent again at extortionate rates of approximately 10% per month (ibid.). Thus, microfinance served to reinforce existing social inequalities in this context, which raises questions about how the poor are being incorporated into global markets, and the degree to which microfinance supports livelihoods of the most vulnerable populations in conflict and emergency environments.

¹⁸ Kapadia acknowledges private debt may have been challenging to assess, but the article's claims about person-to-person lending are also supported by other evidence.

Despite this criticism, there has been a recent surge of interest in innovation in microfinance for refugees in urban environments, as many are increasingly staying in cities instead of camps. In 2012, a project with Burundian, Congolese, Rwandan and Somali refugees demonstrated that people were already organising their own informal micro-savings groups (Hakiza and Easton-Calabria, 2016). The authors note the need for more research on village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) for urban refugees (ibid.).

Additionally, there have been calls for expansion of microfinance programmes in specific regions, such as in Karamoja, Uganda, where both VSLAs and savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) are available, albeit to varying degrees and with differing standards across the region (Stites et al., 2014). While VSLAs in Karamoja differ in their capacity, some are seen as a sustainable model to offer credit that could be strengthened by training programmes and collaboration with private-sector institutions (ibid.). While some micro-savings groups have wealth standards, VSLAs offer small-scale loans, and may be more accessible for poorer populations. However, research in northern Uganda finds that the poorest populations could not participate in VSLAs as they could not generate the cash needed to join, and as such it was primarily better-off households that participated (Marshak et al., 2017).

Sharia-compliant financial products have emerged since 2008, which combine both Islamic finance and microfinance. However, such programmes have yet to reach scale, partially due to the limited diversity of microfinance products that are available (El-Zoghbi and Tarazi, 2013). Evidence shows that these types of programmes provide opportunities in areas of conflict and fragility with Muslim populations (ibid.) – with ‘impressive increases’ seen in Islamic microfinance clients and providers – however a greater evidence-based approach is needed to tailor more diverse products that meet the needs of the Muslim poor (ibid.). Research from Yemen shows that there are opportunities to diversify products, yet the dearth of financial services, illiteracy, and contention among Islamic scholars about *Sharia*-compliant financial products have caused challenges (Alathary, 2013).

Making markets work for the poor (M4P)

Market systems approaches – known as M4P – that seek to reduce poverty by increasing the ways that poor

populations interact with markets, gained significant attention in 2011 and 2012, but the evidence base since then remains limited, particularly in conflict-affected situations. In SLRC’s systematic review discussed in *Disasters* (Mallett and Slater, 2016), only three out of 483 studies met the criteria for inclusion.¹⁹ It is likely, however, that governments and donors have embraced similar principles through a focus on financial inclusion interventions in fragile and conflict-affected states, even if evidence is lacking. Additionally, there have been some efforts to standardise M4P approaches that incorporate conflict sensitivity, including the second edition of the Springfield Centre’s (2015) organisational guide to M4P, which calls for heightened attention to PEA, gender inequalities, climate change, and conflict-affected states, among other areas. Ultimately, given the dearth of recent evaluations of M4P in conflict-affected situations, it is difficult to assess how effectively this guidance is implemented, and how this affects the livelihoods of the most vulnerable.

Value chain development

While the sustainable livelihoods framework typically analyses at the household level, value chain analysis yields insights into broader market structures. Understanding what these structures are, and how households interact with them, is key to understanding how to better support local livelihoods. Reports, case studies and evaluations of value chain development (VCD) frequently consist of unclear methodologies and a conflation of outputs with impact (Mallett and Slater, 2016), making it difficult to assess the validity of this intervention, particularly in complex conflict environments.

Thankfully, recent literature makes more of an effort to link the formal sector with the informal economy in global value chains, which has promising implications for the development of this area in conflict settings. In 2013, the World Bank published a report on the importance of value chains to promoting employment in Africa’s fragile states (Dudwick et al., 2013). The authors stress that understanding who the specific value chain will benefit – and if this will exacerbate tensions – is vital and requires a deep understanding of local contexts. In 2014, SLRC-supported research assessed the informal regulation of the onion value chain in Nangarhar, Afghanistan (Minoia et al., 2014). The research reveals that social networks and relations are essential to trading systems and market

¹⁹ Including the language of the review (English, Spanish, French or Portuguese); date (published after 1995); type of intervention; location in a conflict-affected state (determined by cross-referencing at least two out of three major databases); population (direct or indirect beneficiaries were analysed for each intervention in the review); study focus (had to be an outcome variable); and the study’s design and methodology (able to offer empirical evidence of causal links between an intervention and its outcome) (Carpenter et al., forthcoming).

exchange in Afghanistan, and underscores the need for external interventions in value chains (and otherwise) to fully understand the drivers of local economies. When these conditions are understood, research shows that value chains have potential as a form of collective action against rent seeking, and help to restore social capital (Dudwick et al., 2013). In fragile and conflict-affected environments, informal value chains may present a unique opportunity to strengthen livelihoods and to design interventions that foster the activities that people are already pursuing. However, it will be critical to conduct PEA and an assessment of who could benefit from value chains, the impact on conflict dynamics, and what livelihood benefits this could ultimately yield for households most in need.

4.1.8 Taxation policies

Institutional policies and governance, or lack thereof, in conflict-affected states have major direct and indirect impacts on livelihoods. Although taxation has been acknowledged to have a critical role in state formation the social contract between a government and its citizens, and the distribution of goods and services (Lough et al., 2013), there has been limited research on the linkages between taxation policies and livelihoods in war-affected and fragile contexts. A literature review conducted in 2013 by SLRC finds that primary research was uneven at the time and that analytical lenses often focused on formal taxation. The review argues that the lines between formal and informal taxation are often blurred, and informal taxation – including by actors to the conflict – merits more attention (ibid.). This may be especially true for groups that control territory and do not have strong external support in remittances or funding, such as the Taliban or Boko Haram. The worst livelihood outcomes were said to have occurred in areas where control of land was contested by armed forces and groups, as populations experienced double taxation and more extortive rates. The authors conclude that household livelihood expenditure, including taxation, merits additional attention in interventions.

In Nepal, a survey of 1,000 households examined this question. While many Nepalis reported paying fewer taxes to the government than they had in the past, the research also finds that people were paying in other ways (Mallett et al., 2016). Government spending on critical infrastructure and public services decreased, and while Nepalis paid fewer formal taxes, they ended up paying more to access the services through higher user fees (ibid.). This burden was greater for poorer populations, which paid more in relative terms to access services than wealthier households. In conflict-affected areas of Sierra Leone, research finds

that informal taxes account for approximately half of the total taxes paid annually by a household, and more than half of the informal taxes went to non-state actors. When asked to compare, taxpayers had a more positive perception of the taxes levied by non-state as opposed to state actors in regards to fairness, reciprocity and accountability (Jibao et al., forthcoming). Overall, the evidence shows that a much greater understanding of informal taxation is needed to inform interventions that seek to influence government, revise taxation policies, or implement reform in conflict-affected and fragile contexts.

4.1.9 Job creation and entrepreneurship

Reducing unemployment through job creation and promoting entrepreneurship has been the subject of donor interventions in recent years. This is especially true since the early conceptualisation of CVE promoted a potential causal link between unemployment and mobilisation into extremist networks. In recent years, donors have recognised that drivers of violence are more complex than solely poverty or unemployment (United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 2011), and interventions have sought to encompass this. However, some actors have still employed job-creation programmes as a focal point in the fight against violent extremism. A 2012 evaluation of job-creation and economic approaches to CVE in Afghanistan and Iraq yielded mixed results (Sambanis et al., 2012). Overall, however, donors have now acknowledged that the assumption that unemployment directly fosters violence and extremism is questionable, at best (Mallett and Slater, 2016).

The impacts of job-creation programmes on livelihoods are still largely unknown, thus interventions need to assess how conflict reconfigures and distorts labour markets and local power relations (ibid.). Livelihood interventions in Sri Lanka following the 2004 tsunami also demonstrate this need, as the promotion of entrepreneurship by major aid agencies and NGOs (which was not applicable in the local context) was found to have hampered the successful recovery of livelihoods (Kapadia, 2015). Needs assessments in Sri Lanka also failed to assess both the scale of the economy and the power dimensions of economic relations, with a later study focusing on youth employment in Jaffna revealing that, despite various approaches, no definitive methodology had been established to evaluate the success of employment interventions in the country post-war (Bowden and Binns, 2016).

In addition to economic employment outcomes, there has been an increased focus on evaluating whether livelihood programmes can contribute to conflict reduction, peace-

building and violence prevention, even when politically motivated. In Afghanistan, Mercy Corps (2015c) conducted a rigorous impact evaluation of one of their youth-targeted employment programmes that sought to also reduce youth participation in political violence. Their findings suggest that while the programme successfully impacted economic outcomes for participating youth, there were only minor impacts on social outcomes, and almost no impact on political outcomes. Mercy Corps conclude that the results may indicate that there are short-comings in theories that connect the reduction of political violence to employment, and recommend decoupling interventions that focus on employment generation and stabilisation in the future. In 2016, Blattman and Annan (2016) evaluated an intensive agricultural training programme in Liberia aimed at high-risk male youth, which included a socio-political integration component designed to decrease the risk of engagement in activities linked to instability. The evaluation finds that those who had gone through the training were more likely to be engaged in agriculture a year later and experienced increased wealth in the form of durable household assets. While there was less time spent engaging in illicit activities, the programme had little impact on the variables meant to measure social engagement, citizenship and stability; however, men in the programme reported less interest in working as mercenaries in the nearby conflict in Côte D'Ivoire (Blattman and Annan, 2016).

The World Bank has also acknowledged the need to develop methodological impacts of job-creation programmes on stabilisation outcomes (Ralston, 2014). An independent evaluation of the World Bank's assistance to fragile and conflict-affected states concluded that the Bank lacked an effective and strategic framework for creating jobs and that the short-term programmes to create jobs lacked linkages with the private sector and education (ibid.). The *World Bank Development Report 2013* shows positive associations between employment, social cohesion and trust overall, but notes less significance in low-income countries and difficulties in determining causality in this relationship. In fragile and conflict-affected areas, the report finds that jobs and employment programmes that shape social identity, build networks, and increase fairness can give voice to excluded groups and may defuse tensions.

Ultimately, much still remains unknown regarding the links between job creation and stability in fragile and conflict-affected locations. Additional evidence is needed to fill this knowledge gap, particularly given the frequency


with which aid organisations promote job creation and entrepreneurship as a solution to livelihood challenges in these contexts. Donor agencies should develop and apply rigorous methodological approaches to evaluating how job-creation programmes impact livelihoods, including livelihoods linked to political violence and those within conflict environments.

4.1.10 Skills and training

Skill- and capacity-building training has long been a common aspect of many donor livelihood interventions, and often runs alongside interventions concurrently. The evidence reveals drawbacks to these interventions, including failing to consider participants' needs and interests; failing to assess market viability of the promoted skill; an insufficient timeline to make an impact; having a limited understanding of barriers that participants may face; and lacking strong links with financial service providers or labour markets (Crawford et al., 2015). Training programmes have also been critiqued for pushing western models that may not fit local contexts (Kapadia, 2015), while capacity-building programmes are often overly technical and fail to recognise the complexity of local systems (Mallett and Denney, 2015).

While this criticism is not new, additional research since 2012 reveals some of the nuanced successes of skill- and capacity-building training in conflict- and fragile-affected contexts. One example is a recent evaluation of plant nursery interventions in Swat Valley, Pakistan, which were successful when accompanied by capacity-building training (Shah and Shahbaz, 2015). Agricultural extension practices and training on marketing products have also been viewed as complementing livestock and agrarian interventions in Uganda (Mazurana et al., 2014). A 2014 literature review commissioned by ODI finds that when designed with attention to the local context and power dynamics, training and vocational skills programmes in conflict environments have the potential to significantly improve livelihood opportunities. Further, they may generate additional benefits, including increased self-esteem, reduced localised violence, and improved gender relations (Pompa, 2014). Shah and Shahbaz (2015) recommend that relevant training be considered as part of livelihood interventions, while the World Bank recommends that technical assistance for institutional capacity-building be a priority in conflict-affected states (World Bank Global Program on Forced Displacement, 2014). Ultimately, questions remain about who accesses training programmes, how these are publicised among local populations, and the long-term benefits of such initiatives.

5 Approaches to livelihood interventions and evaluations



Donors and implementing partners experience unique challenges in conflict-affected environments. These institutional and operational constraints commonly include high staff turnover, limited resources, limited physical access to populations served in highly insecure areas, physical security risks, and corruption, among others. The politicisation of livelihood programming is nothing new and has continued to be represented in the literature since 2012 as a common challenge that prevents livelihood programming from being as effective as possible.

In this section, we discuss how approaches to livelihood interventions have changed from 2012 to 2016, and if these changes have resulted in noted improvement. We start with two major areas that have gained prominence since 2012, namely: PEA and elite capture. We follow with a brief discussion of regional approaches to livelihood programming, and then turn to continued trends and key developments in livelihood interventions in the areas of conflict sensitivity, gender analysis, needs assessments, market analysis and targeting. We briefly review the quality of evaluations of livelihood interventions, and provide illustrative examples of how donors have changed their approaches to livelihood interventions during the period under review.

5.1 PEA (Political economy analysis)

The need for more well-informed and thorough PEA has remained a major theme throughout the literature since 2012. Multiple key informants also cited this as a vital issue to address in order to improve livelihood support in fragile and conflict-affected environments (Pain, June 29, 2016, Buchanan Smith, June 27, 2016). Given the prominence of this recommendation in the literature prior to and after 2012, why have PEAs not been conducted in practice? One key informant critiqued the micro-level lens through which many livelihood interventions are carried out, arguing that a broader understanding of macroeconomic contexts, government policies and broader market dynamics are urgently needed (Buchanan Smith, June 27, 2016). The evidence base also strongly supports this perspective.

Collinson (2003) notes that the literature focuses too much on programme technicalities and design, and not enough on socio-political realities; Mallett and Slater (2016) echo the importance of this when stating that there is too much attention on programme logistics and not enough on impact. This poses challenges for extrapolating results and replicating programme models in different conflict contexts where certain assets may be more likely to become liabilities. In Afghanistan, for example, SLRC-supported

research emphasises the need to engage rural livelihood support with a deeper knowledge of local socio-political contexts (Minoia et al., 2014). Specifically, greater appreciation of the social networks surrounding the informal onion economy in Nangarhar would have led to a better understanding of how specific interventions could support value chain development that benefit the most vulnerable. In some contexts, the populations most in need of specific livelihood interventions did not benefit from them at all (Mazurana et al., 2014).

It is especially important that PEA be incorporated in future livelihood programming to understand who will benefit from specific interventions, how they will benefit, and how this will impact local power dynamics or exacerbate local inequalities. PEA should pay particular attention to gendered power dynamics, differences in ethnic groups or nationalities (e.g., host-country individuals and refugees), and class differences.

5.2 Elite capture

In several of the evaluations we have reviewed, a lack of PEA has led to the elite capture of aid, ultimately benefitting those who did not need the aid at the expense of those who did. While not new, this trend has gained increased attention by donors and implementers in recent years due to greater focus on monitoring and evaluation, concerns about diversion of aid to militant or radical groups, and more regular audits and reviews of major programmes. This challenges aid legitimacy from the perspective of people living in fragile- and conflict-affected states, as reported in northern Uganda (Mazurana et al., 2014). In Burundi, livelihood and food security interventions have reportedly failed to address the political economy of conflict and its impact on food security, leading to elite capture (Vervisch et al., 2013). Vervisch et al. propose social capital analysis to address this, adding an additional layer on to the traditional sustainable livelihoods framework. In a separate study in northern Uganda, asset transfers have been found to be frequently used by local elites in direct bribe-taking activities or as means to broker power (Levine, 2016). In Pakistan, local focal points and the need to rely on local leaders for access to populations have resulted in some people helping only their own friends and relatives, which reinforces patronage networks (Shah and Shahbaz, 2015). A key informant critiqued western aid interventions in Afghanistan, noting that they have strengthened patronage networks and even empowered opium brokers, thus supporting the rentier

economy (Pain, June 29, 2016). Interestingly, in northern Uganda, research by Levine (2016) and Mazurana et al. (2014) reveals that elite capture is intentional, in the sense that livelihood support is increasingly targeting 'viable' groups – or those who already have assets and, presumably, the ability to contribute to market growth – as opposed to the most vulnerable populations. While this was an intentional part of programme design, local populations perceived this as a form of elite capture, raising questions about the legitimacy of such livelihood interventions from local perspectives (specifically, those who did not benefit).

Elite capture and the failure to adequately conduct PEA prior to and throughout a programme's life cycle demonstrates a trade-off that aid actors face in complex operational environments. There is a tension between trying to meet the needs of people as fast as possible and social exclusion of vulnerable populations. This builds on existing tension between efforts to save lives and efforts to incorporate more meaningful or longer-term livelihood programmes. In seeking to develop and deliver livelihood support, aid organisations must be cognizant and seek to mitigate this tension, aiming to meet the most urgent needs while promoting inclusion and sustainable livelihood support that will not further exacerbate conflict or put certain individuals at risk.²⁰

5.3 Continued areas of focus

Since 2012, there has been a continued focus within the literature on several areas, including: conflict sensitivity and 'do no harm', gender analysis, needs assessments, market analysis and targeting. This highlights several priority considerations for implementers of livelihood programming in conflict- and fragile-affected situations that are critical to ensuring that livelihood programmes meet the needs of the most vulnerable populations.

5.3.1 Conflict sensitivity

An important aim is to ensure that livelihood interventions not only do no harm but, where possible, contribute to reversing the structural inequalities and unequal power dynamics that influence conflict. Requests for applications from donors consistently require that proposals incorporate strategies for ensuring conflict sensitivity and risk analysis. Despite this focus on paper, in practice budgetary resources still do not always allow for frequent assessments of the conflict and how it has changed throughout programme implementation. This is concerning, as political and social

²⁰ The risk we discuss pertains to the sustainable livelihoods framework, and assumes that in conflict environments, certain assets can become liabilities.

developments in conflict environments are fluid. In Iraq, for example, Sider (2015) points out that there is limited evidence that livelihood responses have been conflict-sensitive or have incorporated local dynamics, and argues that this has resulted in increased community tensions among IDPs and returnees and populations. Hence, more attention should be paid by donors and implementing partners to continuously assess the context of the conflict, and how proposed interventions could impact this (Zicherman et al., 2011).

5.3.2 Gender analysis

Gender analysis is no longer understood as an ‘add women and stir’ approach but rather a more reflective, nuanced approach on how conflict affects men, women, boys and girls in different ways. However, to date, there is little-to-no attention on non-gender binary or sexual minorities in conflict assessment or programming (including around livelihoods), which is a situation that needs to be reversed. Rumbach and Knight (2014) offer specific recommendations for how to better incorporate lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) sensitivity into programmes, including mechanisms for inclusive community participation, strengthening the sensitivity and confidentiality of support to LGBT populations, and holding LGBT sensitivity trainings to assess specific vulnerabilities in times of crisis.

It is now considered vital to capture both sex- and age-disaggregated data when evaluating programme impact (Mazurana et al., 2011). However, similarly to conflict sensitivity, the advanced nature of this theory does not always translate to practice. While many donors have gender specialists, organisational thinking on gender is not always mainstreamed into each programme component. Gender analysis – at its heart – is a power analysis. Hence, a lack of understanding about gendered livelihood dynamics limits the ability of livelihood programmes to be effective. Subsequently, there is a pressing need for increased attention on gender analysis not just by appointing more gender advisors but rather by taking a deeper analysis of the organisational culture of aid agencies, and trying to address the structural barriers that prohibit thorough gender analysis from translating into effective programming.

5.3.3 Needs assessments

Needs assessments – and specifically rapid needs assessments – have emerged as essential to any intervention in humanitarian contexts and have been advocated for since 2004, especially by the WFP

(Maxwell, July 29, 2016). While rapid assessments are vital, they should be followed by more robust assessments that understand the long-term implications of livelihood needs (Carbonnier, 2015). Admittedly, these are difficult to carry out in emergency environments (Shah and Shahbaz, 2015) due to the challenge of working with beneficiaries over long periods of time and security risks, among other factors. However, humanitarian organisations could explore strategic partnerships with local organisations and development actors – who typically have greater on-the-ground resources and presence – to assist in understanding the long-term context.

5.3.4 Market analysis

As discussed in Section 4, market analysis has continued to improve and has become a key area of focus for livelihood interventions. Response analysis has emerged as a burgeoning field in recent years for assessing aid modalities (Maxwell et al., 2013b), with one key informant informing us that many large aid organisations have recently developed their own market analysts and programmes to conduct such analyses (Buchanan Smith, June 27, 2016). Specific tools include the Emergency Market Mapping and Assessment (EMMA), and the Market Information and Food Insecurity Response Analysis (MIFIRA) (Barrett et al., 2007, Maxwell et al., 2013b, Carbonnier, 2015). Where possible, these market analyses should be leveraged with PEA and gender analyses to understand where power lies within markets and with whom.

5.3.5 Targeting of programmes

Interventions have increasingly sought to apply more advanced techniques to target populations, although the degree to which they are successful is still contested. Politically, this comes at a time when resources are scarce, especially in protracted emergencies, hence there is a need to carefully target beneficiaries for specific interventions. Organisations have increasingly applied proxy means tests (PMTs) to assess livelihoods, which allow for regression analysis of indicators that most directly correlate with livelihoods (Carbonnier, 2015). However, there are several limitations to the use of PMTs; while they assess poverty, they do not necessarily capture vulnerability in conflict-affected environments (ibid.). Other challenges may include subjectivity and bias, sampling errors, and inappropriately weighting certain indicators, which may lead to an arbitrary selection of recipients. More gender-sensitive targeting is also needed. If PMTs can be adapted to account for the impact of conflict on the most vulnerable, and promote social

inclusion, they will be an increasingly helpful tool for targeting populations. Additionally, concerns have been raised about other interventions that target people who already have assets instead of those in greater need, such as subsistence small farmers or marginalised pastoralists (Mazurana et al., 2014; Shah and Shahbaz, 2015). Ultimately, targeting practices must be clearly disseminated among the local community and selection criteria made transparent, so that livelihood interventions do not further exacerbate any pre-existing tensions in society.

5.4 Quality of evaluation

While noted technical approaches to evaluation have been employed since 2012, there are concerns that the evaluation literature still conflates outputs with impacts (Mallett and Slater, 2016). Methodologies for evaluations can also be opaque, which raises questions about the reliability of their assumptions and conclusions (ibid.). Mallett and Slater note that this is particularly troubling given the enhanced desire by donors to engage in

livelihood programming to promote transformational change, specifically with respect to peace-building outcomes. However, international donors have recently made some promising steps towards addressing this. In the UK, DFID has started to emphasise the need to evaluate programmes as to whether they address the underlying causes of poverty (ibid.). And, in July 2016, the US Congress approved the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act that will require government agencies to monitor and evaluate foreign aid programmes based on outcomes, and to share data on what is not working through publicly available databases (Saldinger, 2016). While this will mean an increased burden of monitoring and evaluation, it will hopefully also result in greater resources to assess programme impacts. As a key informant remarked, evaluations have begun to ask more of the right questions, even if the solutions to those questions are not there (Buchanan Smith, June 27, 2016). These questions have also led to new areas of focus for livelihoods in conflict-affected situations, including an increasing emphasis on social inclusion and equity.

6 Conclusion



The livelihood strategies and interventions discussed in this paper are diverse and varied. Sometimes these two components line up – as with efforts to provide cash to migrants – but often they do not. Having reviewed the available literature, we have reached several conclusions regarding trends and changes in livelihood strategies and interventions in fragile and conflict-affected areas.

- 1 The political environment continues to influence which programmes donors fund.** Some assistance is based on actual need, but much is based on political imperatives, with containment thinking influencing donor programming in both conflict-affected nations and countries of first-arrival for refugees fleeing conflict.
- 2 Building resilience is also an area of focus for donors.** While this paper discusses some of the challenges of resilience as a concept, it is true that notably more attention has been paid since 2012 to the strategies that people, households and communities pursue to minimise and mitigate risk. This attention is a promising development in recognising and supporting local agency, however we remain cautious of overreliance on notions of resilience for self-recovery, without coupling this approach with strategies to address the structural and root causes of violence and vulnerability and associated livelihood challenges. In addition, we question the feasibility and ethics of seeking to strengthen livelihoods so that they are adaptively resilient to conflict. Conflict is normally an exogenous shock, therefore we question whether we should be seeking to make people better able to ‘cope with’ the gross human rights violations and abuses that often accompany violent conflict, instead of supporting the broader structural factors that may cause these conditions.
- 3 Understanding the effects and livelihood implications of climate change is increasingly important in conflict- and fragile-affected states.** We welcome the increased focus on climate change adaptation. But, more research and evidence is needed on context-specific interventions and approaches that actively improve the ability of households and communities to cope with climate change, as well as follow-on impacts including livelihood loss, displacement and conflict.
- 4 The largest shift we have seen in interventions since 2012 is the increased emphasis on cash.** While cash assistance goes beyond livelihood support, and includes objectives ranging from food assistance to winterisation support, the implications for livelihoods could be significant especially as cash is fungible and can be used for both immediate or long-term needs. This is particularly the case if donors continue the shift away from food assistance and the cost savings are invested into beneficiary communities, though we

acknowledge the number of political obstacles (such as transport subsidies linked to US food aid) to making this transfer a reality. Moreover, given the increased logistical challenges in delivering food assistance to highly insecure areas or those under siege, innovations that utilise technology to deliver cash will likely become increasingly palatable for donors. However, it remains to be seen whether this will happen in a way that minimises risk to beneficiaries in conflict environments and does not negatively impact local power dynamics.

- 5 The evidence – including data from practitioners – calls for more robust PEA in interventions, but nothing has changed in practice.** Given the fluidity of conflict and power relations, we urge donors, academics and implementing partners to better incorporate PEA, conflict sensitivity and, more broadly speaking, context analysis into the early design phases of interventions as well as throughout project lifecycles. Lack of PEA can result in elite capture, which leads to interventions at the local level being perceived as supporting corrupt officials or local leaders, and thereby viewed as illegitimate at best.
- 6 Inequality within populations, particularly with respect to livestock and farming interventions, is an important factor for consideration and response.** This may be more important in contexts where agricultural or livestock sectors are becoming more commercialised, and where diversification or other adaptations mean that people must migrate or pursue livelihoods that are not adaptive or sustainable. It is especially concerning in conflict environments, as some of these maladaptive strategies may perpetuate or exacerbate conflict dynamics.
- 7 Increased attention should be given to rigorous evaluations of project outcomes and the use of high quality data on which to base decisions about livelihood behaviour and subsequent policy and programmatic decisions.** Livelihoods in conflict environments have faced pronounced challenges throughout 2012-2016, and remain poised to do so given the nature of conflict and the political system in which humanitarian and development programming operates. We support innovations in the area of 'lean research' that limits exposure and risk to beneficiaries (which we view as especially important in conflict environments) while maximising value and impact.²¹

Applying a livelihood lens is increasingly valuable to understanding why households and individuals make decisions in conflict environments. While significant progress has been made since 2012 in terms of research on livelihoods and conflict, we encourage additional research in particular areas.

One key informant noted that livelihood interventions in conflict-affected areas still have a long way to go to being **responsive to the needs of local populations** (Buchanan Smith, June 27, 2016). Whilst another key informant noted that there is a research gap on **social capital and the importance of social networks** (Pain, June 29, 2016). Many livelihoods in conflict-affected and fragile contexts are informal, and are based on the strength of social networks, familial ties and even patronage systems. Hence, understanding social networks and using this applied knowledge to design and implement interventions may address some of the concerns about the lack of PEA. Despite the robust state of the research on cash transfers, a key informant noted that there is still **limited understanding about leakages for cash transfers** (Carbonnier, June 27, 2016). There is also a limited evidence base comparing **cash in conflict and non-conflict environments**, including how security contexts influence the effectiveness and sensitivity of cash approaches. This may reflect the difficulty in obtaining evidence on hard leakages, especially in conflict contexts, but is worth exploring further.

Given the increased application of technologies in mobile money, information and communication for development, and financial inclusion, in the years to come we would expect to see **more research analysing the specific impacts of these technological advances for populations in conflict-affected environments**. There is limited new evidence since 2012 on M4P, and we would welcome additional evidence that analyses the impacts of M4P interventions in conflict areas in particular.

We note an additional gap in the literature in **mixed-methods approaches to obtain information about livelihoods**. Several of the evaluations we reviewed relied upon surveys that assessed poverty, and not necessarily household-level or individual-level livelihood vulnerability. Levine (2016) also calls for the use of more qualitative research in conjunction with surveys in his research from northern Uganda. As poverty levels are not necessarily

²¹ The Lean Research Project is operated jointly by a steering team from the D-Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Root Capital, and the Feinstein International Center at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University. It seeks to minimise the burden of international development and humanitarian research on participants, whilst maximising the value and positive impact. More information is available at: <https://leanresearchhub.org/>

indicative of livelihood challenges, strengthening research methodology with respect to livelihoods would also improve the likelihood of interventions being successful. In addition to improving methodological approaches to livelihoods for the objective of bettering economic outcomes, we call for **more research to rigorously assess the impacts of**

livelihood programming designed to reduce and prevent conflict. Additionally, more empirical means of **measuring resilience approaches in conflict** would assist both humanitarian and development practitioners as the debate continues over resilience and its effectiveness as a programme concept.

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Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
Overseas Development Institute (ODI)
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 3817 0031
F +44 (0)20 7922 0399
E slrc@odi.org.uk
www.securelivelihoods.org
[@SLRCtweet](https://twitter.com/SLRCtweet)

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