

Matching Response to Context in Complex Political Emergencies: ‘Relief’, ‘Development’, ‘Peace-building’ or Something In-between?

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There is an ongoing debate over the value and pitfalls of the policy and practice of ‘linking relief and development’ or ‘developmental relief’ in aid responses to complex political emergencies (CPEs). Driven by concerns about relief creating dependence, sometimes doing harm and failing to address root causes of emergencies despite its high cost, pursuit of both relief and development has become a dominant paradigm among international aid agencies in CPEs as in ‘natural’ disasters. In CPEs a third objective of ‘peace-building’ has emerged, along with the logic that development can itself help prevent or resolve conflict and sustain peace. However, this broadening of relief objectives in ongoing CPEs has recently been criticised on a number of counts, central concerns being that it leads to a dilution of commitment to core humanitarian principles and is overly optimistic.

This paper addresses these issues in the light of two of the CPEs studied by the COPE project : Eritrea and Somalia/Somaliland.¹ It is argued that the debate has so far suffered from lack of clarity about what we mean by ‘relief’, ‘development’ and, for that matter, ‘rehabilitation’ and ‘peace-building’. The wide spectrum of possible aid outcomes does not divide neatly into these categories. The relief–development divide is not always as clear-cut, technically or politically, as the critics claim. Moreover such distinctions, constructed from the point of view of aid programmers, are often of little relevance to the concerns of intended beneficiaries. Second, there has been insufficient attention to context: rather than attempting to generalise within and across CPE cases, a more productive approach would be to examine more closely the conditions under which forms of aid other than basic life support can fruitfully be pursued. This leads to consideration of collective agency capacity to respond effectively to diverse needs in different and changing circumstances.

Keywords: conflict, humanitarian system, aid policy, relief–development links, relief–peace links, Eritrea, Somalia, Somaliland.

Introduction

The relationship between ‘relief’ and ‘development’ has been the subject of considerable debate among policymakers and analysts for some years now. Until the

early 1990s they were for the most part taken to be distinct and largely unrelated stages in responding to emergencies. More recently it has become fashionable to debate whether and how they should be functionally linked. An early version of the linking principle was the idea that relief and development constitute the poles of a 'continuum', the centre ground of which is occupied by 'rehabilitation'. Other variants are 'relief–development continuum', 'developmental relief', 'transition' or more generally 'linking relief and development'. Much of the debate concerns the applicability of a 'linking' approach not just in natural disasters but in ongoing complex political emergencies (CPEs) too, and about whether and how in CPEs a third pole of 'peace-building' can be added.

This paper enters the fray with some trepidation. The principle of linking relief and development in CPEs has come in for so much criticism in the last few years that many consider it a dead issue or at least one they would prefer not to discuss. Yet some form of broadening of aid objectives from pure survival support towards rehabilitation, development and/or peace-building has become and remains common practice in CPEs, across the spectrum of agencies including those which regard themselves as exclusively humanitarian, even though few now seem keen to describe such an approach in terms of a 'continuum'. Meanwhile, the criticism and occasional defence of such broadening continues, so clearly the issue is still very much alive. Indeed, other aspects of the current humanitarian discourse — for example the status of core humanitarian principles, the role of codes of conduct, or the relative merits of 'political humanitarianism' and 'humanitarian foreign policy' — continue to shape and be shaped by views on relief–development relationships.

This paper aims to contribute to the debate and perhaps help bring it to a timely conclusion by focusing on two sources of confusion. First, the argument has for the most part been about 'relief' and 'development', and occasionally 'rehabilitation' and 'peace-building', considered as forms — usually inadequately defined — of aid intervention. It examines whether these descriptions are in fact useful ways of characterising programming, or whether they are better seen as examples of a wider set of outcomes which may result from a given programming mix. This is an important distinction as a given form of intervention may contribute, intentionally or otherwise, to multiple outcomes all of which need to be considered in programme design, and some of which may not be well described by any of the four listed categories. The political distinction between relief and development aid highlighted by critics of the 'linking' principle is examined in this light, and in the light of recent developments in aid conditionality. The perspective of aid agencies is also contrasted with that of individuals and communities affected by CPEs, who — with or without aid — seek to balance immediate and longer term survival needs.

Second, much of the debate has suffered from inadequate contextualisation. As the foregoing paper in this issue has made clear, humanitarian crises (whether or not recognised as CPEs) encompass a wide range of very disparate situations, yet the debate seems often to be stuck at the level of generalities. Rather than argue that agencies should or should not attempt to link relief and development in CPEs, it seems more productive to ask: under what conditions does it make sense to pursue what outcomes by what means?

These two issues are explored with particular reference to two of the case studies investigated by the COPE project over the last three years: Eritrea and Somalia/Somaliland. Finally, some implications for aid policy and programming in CPEs are discussed.

'Linking' concepts and their role in the humanitarian system

The idea that relief and development should be mutually reinforcing in tackling disasters was already established by the beginning of the 1990s, and had been tied into a number of conceptual frameworks for explaining disasters and approaching policy, for example 'entitlements' (Sen, 1981), 'coping strategies' (Corbett, 1988) and 'capacities and vulnerabilities' (Anderson and Woodrow, 1989). The concept was launched into the mainstream of humanitarian affairs in 1991 with UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 on 'strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations' (UN, 1991), which refers to 'natural disasters and other emergencies' and ends with a section entitled 'Continuum from relief to rehabilitation and development' opening with the following paragraphs:

40. Emergency assistance must be provided in ways that will be supportive of recovery and long-term development. Development assistance organizations of the United Nations system should be involved at an early stage and should collaborate closely with those responsible for emergency relief and recovery, within their existing mandates.

41. International cooperation and support for rehabilitation and reconstruction should continue with sustained intensity after the initial relief stage. The rehabilitation phase should be used as an opportunity to restructure and improve facilities and services destroyed by emergencies in order to enable them to withstand the impact of future emergencies.

It was in order to ensure the necessary co-ordination between UN agencies working at different points of the 'continuum' that the resolution called for creation of an inter-agency standing committee and the appointment of an emergency relief co-ordinator supported by a secretariat. The latter emerged as the Department of Humanitarian Affairs the following year, a strengthened version of the former UN Disaster Relief Office, to be succeeded in turn by the Office for Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs in 1998.

The assumption of a linear, temporal sequence of stages or phases embodied in this 'continuum' idea soon attracted criticism from two different directions. First, many development and multi-mandate agency strategists argued that the normal division of programmes into 'relief', 'rehabilitation' and 'development' types is unhelpful and ignores the possibility of 'development' support in 'relief' situations and vice versa (for example, ACORD, 1992). Others suggested that the problem of a hiatus when relief programmes are wound down can be avoided if rehabilitation activities begin while relief is still ongoing, and development activities continue where possible throughout a crisis and incorporate disaster prevention and preparedness elements too. Second, writers such as Duffield (1994) drew attention to the problems of applying this model, with its presumption of a smooth return to 'normal' development, to complex emergencies which were distinct from natural disasters in that they tended to be protracted and self-sustaining, destroying the social and political systems and networks on which development depends and imposing serious political constraints on aid delivery of any kind.

By the mid-1990s a more-nuanced view had emerged which reflected at least some of these doubts. Again, the UN dialogue provides a useful signpost to

mainstream thinking. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 1995/56, a follow-up to 46/182, called upon all UN agencies to review and report on their respective roles and operational responsibilities in humanitarian situations ‘in regard to prevention, preparedness, humanitarian response, rehabilitation, recovery and development, as applicable’ (UN, 1995: annex) and for the secretary-general to submit a comprehensive report on the capacity of the UN system for humanitarian assistance. The report, submitted in 1996, referred to ‘synergies’ rather than a ‘continuum’, and declared that:

The relationship between relief and development activities has for some time been recognized as one which is not necessarily sequential. Relief and development activities proceed often at the same time, each therefore having an impact upon the other. Recognition of the limitations of the paradigm of a linear continuum was reflected in recent debates in governing boards and this recognition has given rise to the need to review the funding arrangements for relief and development activities (UN, 1996: para. 27).

and, in relation to conflict and displacement, recognised that:

the implications of working in volatile and insecure environments, have been a major factor defining how humanitarian organizations conceive of their role and operate on the ground. With these changes has come the realization that complex crises are not aberrations in a linear process of development. ... Moreover, the contexts in which humanitarian assistance is provided are often political, and all too frequently constitute the only effective response of the international community when the political will or the resources are lacking to tackle the root causes of crises (op. cit.: para. 105).

The report also incorporates ‘peace-building’ into the equation in stating that:

post-conflict recovery programmes that link relief and development can support peace processes by addressing the immediate needs of conflict-affected societies (op. cit.: para. 49).

In complying with Resolution 1995/56, the various UN organisations subscribed wholeheartedly to the linking principle in one form or other, welcoming it as an opportunity to justify an expanded mandate covering as many of the aforementioned roles as could credibly be claimed. Thus, for example, WFP and UNHCR (through the Quick Impact Projects for returnees) were able to highlight their roles in rehabilitation and development as well as relief, while UNDP and FAO claimed a leading role in relief and rehabilitation as well as development. As might be expected this made the task of co-ordination no less problematic.

During this period ‘linking’ concepts also found their way into policy statements of aid agencies outside the UN system. In 1996 the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) produced a communication from the commission entitled ‘Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD)’ which suggested that rather than ‘continuum’:

the term 'contiguum' would be more appropriate, reflecting the fact that operations in relief, rehabilitation and development may all be ongoing simultaneously within any given country (ECHO, 1996: Section 2).

and recognised that:

The basic justification for linking relief, rehabilitation and development is simple and sensible . . . This simple model, however, fails to deal with the realities of many current emergency situations. Most are not due to natural disasters, but are the result of the interaction of political, economic and social instability. . . . The assumption inherent in this model . . . [of] short term relief leading via rehabilitation to long term development, underestimates the chronic nature of many disaster situations (ibid.).

It also recommended that:

'peacebuilding' must be an intrinsic element of development cooperation strategies (op. cit., Section 4).

Likewise, preferring the term 'transition' to 'continuum', USAID established an Office for Transition Initiatives (OTI) in 1994 with a mandate to 'advance peaceful, democratic change in conflict-prone countries of strategic importance and humanitarian concern to the United States' and concentrating on '[n]ear-term, high-impact projects that increase momentum for peace, reconciliation, and reconstruction' (USAID, 1999: 2). The UK's then Overseas Development Administration created a Conflict Policy Unit in 1996 to 'help create the conditions necessary for conflict handling issues to be fully and effectively integrated into ODA policy and practice' (ODA, 1996: 8). The World Bank developed a focus on 'post-conflict reconstruction' from the mid-1990s, with the overall aim of 'helping to close the gap between relief and development' (World Bank, 1998: 10), and two objectives: 'to facilitate the transition to sustainable peace after hostilities have ceased and to support economic and social development' (op. cit.: 4), pursued through a staged programme including: 'preparation of a transitional support strategy as soon as resolution is in sight; early reconstruction activities, proceeding as soon as field conditions allow; post-conflict reconstruction (under emergency procedures); and a return to normal lending operations' (op. cit.: 6).

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCRCS) had become 'more and more tied into long term relief/rehabilitation assistance' (Walker, 1994: 107). A host of NGOs with 'dual mandates' for relief and development such as CARE, Oxfam, and World Vision adopted similar principles of pursuing relief/development/peace-building links or synergies wherever possible. These were included in the IFRCRCS (1996) Codes of Conduct to which a large number of NGOs subscribed:

8. Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs. All relief actions affect the prospects for long term development, either in a positive or a negative fashion. Recognising this, we will strive to implement relief programmes which actively reduce the beneficiaries' vulnerability to future disasters and which create sustainable

lifestyles. We will pay particular attention to environmental concerns in the design and management of relief programmes. We will also endeavour to minimise the negative impact of humanitarian assistance, seeking to avoid long term beneficiary dependence upon external aid.

Thus by the late 1990s, a ‘linking’ philosophy had in one form or another not only thoroughly permeated agency thinking on humanitarian assistance, but had also moved on from the simplistic ‘stagist’ and linear ‘continuum’ interpretations of the early part of the decade. Perhaps the most definitive, practical exposition of linking principles in relation to CPEs was offered in the *DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation* which, rejecting the continuum concept, held that:

Emergency relief, rehabilitation work and development assistance all co-exist in times of conflict and crisis, and they interact in innumerable ways. The challenge is to overcome the functional distinctions of the various agencies involved and to integrate, rather than merely co-ordinate, relief, rehabilitation and development objectives within the framework of a long-term strategy (OECD, 1997: 32).

It also explored opportunities for aid to promote peace-building through support for strengthened institutions of governance, stabilisation points or ‘voices of peace’, and for key pro-peace actors and mechanisms at the community level, and to avoid inadvertent support to ‘forces of war’ (op. cit.: 37). These latter concerns had already been voiced in Anderson’s *Do No Harm* (1996) focusing on relief and peace-building links.

These various statements of principle have been driven by a core set of concerns and expectations. Main concerns have been a marked decline in overall aid volumes and a rapidly growing proportion of this used for humanitarian relief in emergencies, a failure of such relief to address ‘root causes’ of emergencies including conflict, the potential for relief to create dependence and do harm by prolonging or exacerbating conflict, and the potential for underdevelopment and poverty to cause conflict. The core expectation has been a potential for relief/development/peace-building synergies to reduce the need for relief through supporting capacities for coping and recovery and helping to prevent, mitigate and resolve the conflict that causes CPEs, and to sustain peace.

The result in organisational and programming terms has been a blurring of the division of labour between humanitarian and development agencies, whether governmental or non-governmental, and of the distinction between relief and other objectives.

Critiques and counter-critiques

Despite their welcome evolution away from early ‘continuum’ formulations, linking concepts have been subject to ongoing criticism by writers — such as Bradbury (1998), Duffield (1998, 1999a), Leader (1998), Macrae (1997, 1998, 1999) and Stockton (1998) — who see them as instrumental in what has amounted to an erosion of core humanitarian principles.

Much of the concern of these writers centres on the extension of the linking concept from natural disasters into the very different political context of CPEs. Main strands of their critique were set out in a special issue of *Disasters* (1998, 22(4)) based on papers presented at a February 1998 Disasters Emergency Committee seminar entitled 'The Emperor's New Clothes: The Collapse of Humanitarian Principles', and can be crudely summarised as follows.

First, 'developmentalist' thinking, along with ideas that relief aid can do harm and is failing if it cannot build peace, have been central planks of what amounts to an 'attack on humanitarianism' (Macrae, 1998) and used to justify a disengagement by donor countries from humanitarian crises in countries that are non-strategic, as evidenced by a decline since 1994 in funding for humanitarian aid. Second, such thinking has become an orthodoxy in aid policy which 'normalises' crisis, promotes the myth of aid dependency and attributes CPEs largely to internal factors subject to internal solutions which can be supported by programming for sustainable development even in the midst of war (Bradbury, 1998; Stockton, 1998). This ignores the international dimensions of conflict, in particular new forms of political economy in the post-Cold War era which underpin many CPEs (Duffield, 1998). Third, the linking concept still assumes a smooth, automatic and relatively rapid return from conflict to 'normal' development which can be strengthened by developmental interventions: this ignores the protracted nature of many CPEs which contrasts with natural disasters. Finally, developmental programming in ongoing CPEs jeopardises core principles of humanitarian action — humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence — since, unlike relief, it necessarily involves working through authorities (state or non-state), which are often party to the conflict. While the aim may be to build capacities rather than undermine them (as relief is accused of doing), the politically charged context means that the capacity being built is often that of belligerents who aim to destroy the capacities of others, hence aid becomes complicit in further human rights abuses.

This counterattack has itself drawn some criticism. Responding in *Disasters* specifically to the 'Emperor' papers, Jackson and Walker (1999) take these 'back-to-basics' writers to task for their strong language which 'almost precludes rational debate' (99) and call for more subtlety in the debate: 'more light, less heat'. They accept that humanitarianism is expected to act as substitute for effective political or diplomatic engagement, is unjustly dismissed for not doing so, and is used by the West to further an agenda of crisis containment especially where refugees are concerned. They also accept that developmental programming, along with much of the criticism of relief, tends to ignore the important international political dimension of war, and should never come at the expense of relief.

However, they reject the notion that there has been 'an attack on humanitarianism' from within, by 'developmentalists'. They question whether relief budgets are declining due to 'reformist' critiques of relief: relief funding rose rapidly in the early 1990s, peaked in 1994 with the Rwanda crisis, then declined somewhat — but the overall trend is upwards, and periods of decline cannot in any case be put down to such critiques. Reformist critiques are not necessarily based on a notion of rapid return to 'normal' development: 'the more interesting assert only that there may be spaces within on-going wars in which either work towards peace, or development, or occasionally both, may constructively take place' (op. cit.:102).

Finally, they take issue with the assertion that 'developmentalism' relies on an unprovable assumption that relief actually does harm in creating dependency or

fuelling conflict. They argue that relief is sometimes ‘extended beyond the immediate crisis’ (op. cit.:107), so depressing prices for market producers or becoming long-term international welfare (as in Somalia in 1992 and post-genocide Rwanda) and can fuel conflict as Anderson (1996) and other writers such as Keen and Wilson (1994) demonstrate in certain situations.

Jackson and Walker’s plea is that rather than blaming shortcomings in international commitment to humanitarian aid on concepts and debates within the humanitarian community, there is a need to re-focus on ‘the much more real threats from without’ (111), for example, the notions that humanitarianism is irrelevant to the larger political debate or is an extension of colonial attitudes. Meanwhile there should be ‘more empirically grounded research on the thorny relationships between relief, conflict, peace and development’ (op. cit.: 94).

Overall, Jackson and Walker’s piece makes a number of valid points. As Minear (1999: v) has put it ‘understanding the connections between relief and development and the realization of synergy between them is central to effective humanitarian action’. The ‘relief–development continuum’ and ‘do no harm’ were dismissed as ‘unhelpful conceptual developments’ in the international humanitarian system in an ODI Briefing Paper (ODI, 1998) which seems to be based primarily on views of the ‘Emperor’ writers. Yet to hold the principles of seeking relief–development synergies (as we have seen most humanitarian analysts and policymakers had moved on from the ‘continuum’ by the mid-1990s) and avoiding conflict-exacerbating effects of aid responsible for failures of aid practice to uphold principles of humanitarian action, as well as for international agendas of disengagement, seems itself unhelpful and unlikely to further the debate. This is not to deny that fears of relief aid creating dependence and being diverted to further the aims of belligerents are influential and likely to have exerted a downward pressure on humanitarian aid volumes, both through effects on direct public largesse and through providing a rationale for governments seeking to limit aid. But there is an important distinction between ‘aid does harm’ and ‘aid can do harm’, and this is all the more reason for a discussion of how to achieve synergies without these negative effects.

The supposed dependence-creating capacity of relief is debatable: in emergencies — and especially CPEs in which markets rarely function normally — the risk of inducing dependence is often overstated. While the price effects of late arrival of emergency food aid can disrupt recovery of agricultural livelihoods which depend on marketing food crops, to suppose that people who are in a position to plant crops or pursue other livelihoods will opt to remain idle on the expectation of continued relief is to overestimate the impact of relief and grossly underestimate their capacity for risk aversion. Long-term dependence on relief, as in post-genocide Goma, has more to do with disruption of access to productive resources. One might, however, question the extent to which the so-called ‘developmentalist’ stance actually relies on such a myth: certainly there is no need to subscribe to it in order to look for relief–development synergies in CPEs.

The problem of categories

More fundamentally, both Jackson and Walker and those they dub the ‘back-to-basics’ writers seem to gloss over the problem of where ‘relief’ ends and

'development' begins. The definitions of these two concepts seem relatively uncontentious. 'Relief' is normally taken to mean the 'five essentials' of protection/rescue, health, food, water and shelter (Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell, 1994: 14). These are, for example, the areas for which the Sphere Project has established minimum standards for humanitarian assistance. 'Development' implies a process of moving forward in the direction of 'peace, justice, social equity, and an absence of, or at least a declining trend in, ignorance, disease, and poverty' (Smillie, 1998: xx). 'Peace-building', which has become a much discussed objective of recent programming in CPEs on a par with 'relief' and 'development', is somewhat less clear but can be defined as:

Local or structural efforts that foster or support those social, political and institutional structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful co-existence and decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence or continuation of violence (Goodhand, Lewer and Hulme, 1999: 4).

Although, as we have seen, the UN documents tend to see peace-building as a 'post-conflict' activity, the above definition cuts across the conflict/peace and relief/development axes and so is more in line with usage of the concept by Anderson and others.

There seems to be less clarity still about the meaning of 'rehabilitation'. For many it is the essential bridge between relief and development — a process, once the immediate cause of a disaster has passed, of restoring a country to something approaching or better than its pre-disaster status (see Green, in this issue). Put thus it is by nature a 'stagist' concept which runs into trouble in protracted CPEs where pre- and post- prefixes lose their meaning — more of this below. However, 'rehabilitation' can also cover a host of short-term measures to bring about a situation in which life does not depend totally on (often less than adequate) relief supplies, measures which can yield benefits realisable within the relatively calm spaces in ongoing CPEs as well as providing a 'bridge' to some kind of development if perchance those spaces coalesce into a more widespread, lasting peace.

One such form of short-term 'rehabilitation' is support for livelihoods. This often includes, but is not confined to, agricultural livelihoods. Sometimes this is included in a broadened definition of 'relief'. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), for example, has a Special Relief Operations Service which provides what it calls 'agricultural relief' — seeds, tools, fertilisers, livestock and veterinary supplies, and fishing gear — on an emergency, short-term basis in order to restore assets and food production and/or income levels in disaster-affected communities. Rather than an effort to restore agricultural systems to 'normal', this may be simply a temporary stop-gap during a lull in fighting to help displaced populations with access to land, plant some crops in time for the next rainy season, and so does not fit neatly into either 'relief' or 'rehabilitation' categories. In recent years some three-quarters of these projects have been implemented in what have been recognised as protracted CPEs (Afghanistan, DRC, Liberia, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan) and most (though not all) of these have been implemented in partnership with NGOs and outside state structures (FAO, 1997; White, 1999). Several NGOs are initiating such projects themselves.

There are many other examples of forms of aid that inhabit the grey area between ‘relief’, ‘development’ and ‘peace-building’. Rehabilitation of port facilities or roads to enable handling of relief supplies may logically fall within ‘relief’, but may well be developmental. Short-term projects for basic educational provision in the midst of a protracted CPE are not ‘relief’ — but are they ‘rehabilitation’ or ‘development’ or even ‘peace-building’? In fact, it is often the practice for UN agencies and other donors to classify (completely arbitrarily) provision of primary education as ‘relief’ while secondary and higher are ‘developmental’. On these formalistic grounds, primary education was supported by UNESCO in Somalia, while there was little attempt to regenerate secondary; the EU turned down support for a programme for funding higher education scholarships for Somalis which they had commissioned by the same logic. Food aid which enables pastoralists to build up depleted herds is a form of livelihood rehabilitation rather than ‘relief’. This is because pastoralists who have lost the bulk of their herds through drought and/or war must still sell stock to buy food, so that without food aid their herds have no chance to recover. How, also, should one categorise psycho-social counselling for the war-traumatised, or basic skills training for income-generating activities or support for the establishment of women’s organisations in conflict situations?

When we consider the difficulties inherent in assigning the diverse forms of aid intervention to one or other of the categories of ‘relief’, ‘rehabilitation’, ‘development’ or ‘peace-building’, even where we do take care to define such categories, it becomes clear that these are labels which can more meaningfully be applied to objectives or better still outcomes of aid programming rather than its content or even its ‘modalities’. A given form or intervention can further more than one outcome. Food can result in relief when used for immediate survival support, or rehabilitation when used to enable herd recovery, or development when used in a food-for-work or school feeding project, or all three at once. Likewise, if we do accept FAO’s broadened definition of ‘relief’, seeds or fertilisers or outboard motors or training could likewise serve each of these ends. Assisting the establishment of local administrative capacity for the purpose of distributing relief supplies could serve all four outcomes.

Moreover, there are other possible outcomes. On the positive side, prevention, preparedness and early warning and information are remaining elements in the ‘disaster response cycle’ traditionally used for natural disasters which with adaptations are applicable to CPEs, but are less often written about. Other cross-cutting outcomes relate to issues such as gender, human rights, governance or environmental impact. Desirable outcomes are of course mirrored by negative equivalents, for example, the exacerbation of tensions, empowerment of human rights abusers, misinformation or erosion of livelihoods, enrichment of warlords, perpetuation of negative gender impacts and so on. Aid agencies have come to regard all these as key concerns of programming, with the overall objective of maximising positive outcomes and minimising negative ones.

Critics of the ‘linking’ principle are concerned to demonstrate that relief and development are analytically distinct, in both technical and political terms. Technical arguments highlight ways in which the linking principle seems to have been used to justify a premature phasing out of relief aid in ongoing CPEs, and the severe constraints to moving towards development aid, with its normal criterion of sustainability, where conflict continues to undermine the institutions and infrastructure on which development depends. These arguments are sound, yet they

do not challenge the principle of seeking relief–development synergies, merely the manner in which such a principle has on occasion been put to use and the assumed ease with which longer term development outcomes can be realised in a protracted CPE context.

More challenging is the political distinction based on the observation that development aid necessarily involves institutional relations of compliance with the state:

On the one hand, relief aid is unconditional but delivered outside the state. On the other hand, development aid is conditional upon the presence of an internationally accepted recognised state and assumes that the government is the legitimate and primary counterpart for aid relations. Relief and development aid are thus categorically distinct in terms of their political meaning and modalities, not conceptually seamless (Macrae, 1999: 17).

Thus, it is argued, where no legitimate state exists (in the sense of being accepted internationally) donors have tended to confine assistance to humanitarian and relief aid, and where it does exist donors are prepared to provide long-term development aid. Where agencies try to provide development aid through a non-legitimate state — or what Macrae (1999: 16, following Jackson, 1990) has called a ‘quasi-state’ (this could include a rebel movement acting as a state in areas under its control) — impartiality and independence are likely to be compromised.

To the extent that donors do aim at such a black-and-white separation of relief and development aid, they face a problem of what to do about aid options which could serve either of these ends, and those which promote neither but can produce other outcomes. With the exception of positive or negative peace-building outcomes, this question appears to be conveniently side-stepped by both the linking critics and donors. In fact many outcomes other than pure relief can be supported by forms of aid which do not necessarily depend on or have to be channelled through institutions of a ‘quasi-state’, but can like relief-oriented aid be implemented at the meso- and micro-levels through NGOs and in partnership with community-based organisations. Yet it seems the only criterion offered for deciding whether in each case these constitute broadened relief or the dreaded ‘developmentalism’ is in terms of donor relations with the quasi-state, in which case the reasoning of the ‘linking’ critics becomes quite circular.

This is illustrated for Sudan by Macrae et al. (1997) which, based on the 1996 review of Operation Lifeline Sudan, is devoted to a demonstration of how uncritical application of the ‘relief-to-development continuum’ in the Northern Sector by UN agencies and NGOs, along with a failure to monitor aid impacts, had resulted in a premature phasing out of relief for vulnerable war-displaced southerners and their replacement by ‘rehabilitation’ and ‘development’ projects — mainly seeds and tools provision, including in camps for the displaced — that worked through government structures and legitimised government war aims. In the Southern Sector, donors applied similar ‘continuum’ principles, but monitoring was better, the target group were on their home ground and more sophisticated food-security and livelihood-support programmes were implemented aimed at ‘reinforcing or rebuilding the local subsistence economy’. The conclusion was that these latter programmes were justified because they did not support rebel movement war aims, and so ‘the concept of "development" ... has an entirely different meaning in the Southern and Northern

Sectors of OLS' (235). Similar points are made by Duffield (1999) and Macrae (1999).

When we also take into account the many cases of 'pure' relief aid being manipulated by 'quasi-states' or other factions and furthering their interests, it becomes clear that criticism would be better directed at any aid, whether aimed at relief or development or peace-building or something in-between, which confers legitimacy upon factions that commit human rights abuses. To propose that the root of the problem lies in the principle of seeking relief-development synergies is to miss the point.

Indeed, donors are arguably more concerned about relations with the recipient country's state than about 'relief' versus 'development' categories, but even in this respect there is evidence of a move away from the sharp distinction suggested by the linking critics. In a recent radio interview Clare Short, UK Secretary of State for International Development, suggested that although the scope for long-term development aid to countries embroiled in conflict is limited,

there have been big advances in thinking in recent years away from one-off charitable interventions either by governments or by NGOs where you rush in and try and do a bit of good, to backing governments or parts of governments or local government — any bit that you can find that's really interested in development for its people — then putting money into, say, the budget of the education ministry. That's a good way of doing development ... The challenge of what you do to help people move forward when they've got a rotten government that you can't work with is a serious problem, but in most countries it's not as black and white as that. If you can get an entry point where you can work for good reform, you should do it wherever you can ('The Aid Business', BBC Radio 4, 28 August 2000).

Finally, a moment's reflection brings home the realisation that these categories and the debate about linking them refer only to dilemmas about policies and practices of donors. It is a discussion about aid. For the people and communities who are involved in a conflict-related crisis, choices have to be seen in a different light. They will always be seeking survival through means other than or in addition to whatever relief goods and services are available from outside agencies or within communities. Whether there is peace and 'adequate security' or not, households will always be seeking to provide for the future beyond food for today and shelter for the night: ensuring there is seed for next season; vital tools and equipment are to hand; breeding stock survive and are built up; some household goods and some form of savings are put by; education, skills and other means for additional livelihoods open up. And in pursuing both immediate needs and their own social reproduction, people will be routinely engaged in economic activities — production and exchange — even if those are part of a war economy, and even if entering that economy is on terms greatly to their relative disadvantage and to the benefit of warlords or others. Other social needs and infrastructure — schools, clinics, access roads, market-places, supplies of agricultural inputs, public transport — will be sought, by new building or restoration, by group or community action, or through the market, even if the social capital and public institutions to promote them are impaired by conflict.

Thus, for the people involved, their communities and any political organisations that are not bent on total destruction, the starting-point for what action

can be taken is the pattern along which the particular economic arrangements have evolved during conflict. Some of the initiatives they take to survive may be 'developmental', but only in the sense that the sustainability of their livelihoods may be enhanced rather than diminished, or that some of their economic activity is concerned with the longer term rather than immediate physical reproduction.

The problem of context

It would make sense therefore for outside agencies to approach these debates from the same perspective: what does the economic activity during conflict allow and require that is to do with the longer term and investment oriented? Such an analysis will be shaped by the nature of the conflict: how it is conducted, how the 'sides' are organised, the nature of the current spatial, temporal and social pattern of violence and the short- and long-term trajectories along which this pattern seems to be evolving, more than what was originally at issue. Such an approach also underlines the limited mileage to be gained from some generalised discussion of 'relief-to-development' or 'relief, then development'.

Key concerns for aid agencies in a CPE are assessing, understanding and monitoring the situation, securing funding for interventions, matching types of intervention to the various priorities of affected populations, gaining timely access to those populations with the chosen mix of goods and services, minimising the risk of benefits being swept away by renewed violence or manipulated in favour of belligerents, ensuring the safety of staff and so on. Sometimes they get it wrong, and when they do it is often because they fail to grasp the political complexities of the context in which they are working.

As we have seen such cases are highlighted by critics of linking relief and development. Indeed a substantial portion of their work, though by no means all of it, relates to Sudan (for example, Macrae et al., 1997; Bradbury, 1998; Duffield et al., 1999; Duffield, 2000; Leader, 2000) where the dilemmas aid agencies have faced in working through a 'quasi-state' have been particularly acute. Macrae et al. (1997), stressing that their findings are not generalisable across the country or to other CPEs without further research, suggest that along with a minimum level of security/access and donor acceptance of the legitimacy of government (or in the Southern Sector, rebel movement) structures, a precondition for a legitimate move from relief to development is evidence that the emergency is 'over', and that none of these conditions had been satisfied in either the Northern or Southern Sectors.

The trouble with this is that protracted CPEs are almost by definition not uniform situations with a clear finish after which 'development' can begin. Indeed it is this assumption for which much of the 'post-conflict' discourse of the World Bank has been rightly criticised (for example, Moore, 2000 — but see Cliffe and Luckham in this issue for discussion of different 'end-games'). As Jackson and Walker note (1999: 111), it depends on what we define as 'the emergency'. The conflict in Sudan pre-dates independence in 1956, since when there has been a constantly changing temporal and spatial pattern of violence, expropriation, exploitation and relative peace — including the decade of fragile peace between 1972 and 1982 — overlaid with periods of acute and widespread emergency in which drought and conflict have interacted. There have also been important and shifting regional dimensions to the

conflict, involving Eritrea, Ethiopia, Chad, Egypt and northern Uganda in particular, and international ones as well.

Even if we take ‘the Sudanese CPE’ as starting in 1982, then it is difficult not to agree with Jackson and Walker’s view that there are ‘spaces within’ which allow aid to aim at outcomes beyond pure life support. But we must also accept, with Macrae et al., that there are severe technical and political constraints which become progressively more severe as we move in the direction of longer term investment and more involvement of the institutions of government or movements. Hence the generalised assertion that ‘developmental relief’ does harm in ongoing CPEs is unhelpful. One can grant like Anderson (1996) that it may, but then one must specify what outcomes of aid are harmful when, where, how and for whom.

The argument in Macrae et al. about the preconditions for linking relief to development will continue to be tested in southern Sudan, where the UN agencies have revamped OLS and, in turn, linked it to a more integrated plan involving all agencies. According to the most recent UN consolidated appeal, ‘This approach is based on the inter-related and indivisible priorities of saving lives, protecting people from flagrant violations of human rights, and building sustainable capacities for recovery, reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction’ (UN, 1999b). This new strategy is rooted in what we are here calling for: analysis of the varied conditions and scenarios operating in different regions of the South and of lessons learnt from past experience including the 1998 Bahr-el-Ghazal emergency. It is also to include the extension of OLS and related ‘rehabilitation’ programmes to the Nuba Mountains for the first time. It is too early to proclaim on the ‘success’ of these ambitious plans, but their conceptualisation shows a learning process on the part of the UN and its eventual evaluation should shed light on what is possible in what kinds of conditions.

A general conclusion emerging from the COPE research which is relevant here is that these constraints and circumstances — ‘preconditions’ may not always be the best way of looking at them — are not confined to the type of conflict and its direct implications for people, livelihoods and economies. The aggregate effect of spontaneous and more organised initiatives, by households, groups, communities, market mechanisms and other key actors including aid agencies themselves and combatants and their organisations, all need to be brought into the equation. The political character of the latter, and their commitment if any to ‘public welfare’, their relationship to international bodies, and the strategies of these external actors are also going to determine what development is possible.

Some findings from COPE case studies

If a prominent part of the critique of linking relief and development has focused on the particular case of Sudan, where agencies have been obliged to work under the jurisdiction of either government or rebel movements which have both been accused of serious violations of human rights, what of other cases? What spaces are there for going beyond pure relief in other CPEs, and what, for example, are the implications of an assessment that one or other side was not guilty of significant abuses of human rights? Space here does not permit a systematic comparison with all the COPE case study countries, but it is useful to look in particular at two other CPEs which have

been as violent and protracted as that in Sudan but with contextual differences which have significant implications for attempts to exploit relief and development synergies.

Development alongside relief during war: the Eritrean experience up to 1991

One notable example of initiatives which could be described as 'developmental', and where such programmes and projects did receive support from external donors, was in the 'liberated' areas of Eritrea during the 1980s. That experience has been the subject of a specific re-analysis as part of the COPE programme by, among others, one of the principal actors involved in the Eritrean Relief Association (Tseggay, 2000). It was also directly observed by the two authors in 1983, 1987 and immediately after the end of the war in 1991. In this paper, a full review of those activities will not be attempted but some effort will be made to tease out some of the possible broader lessons for other situations, especially to try to identify the circumstances and context which made them possible.

A brief review of what was achieved reveals three kinds of programmes, initiated by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and/or its relief wing, the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA). First, activities were undertaken alongside the distribution of immediate relief food: distributing seed for planting and occasionally tools; the replenishment of draught oxen, and less frequently other livestock; infrastructure and environmental conservation works put in place under 'food-for-work' or other community self-help; etc. These were mainly administered by ERA, with funds or food provided through international NGOs. Planning of these activities and actual food delivery, including targeting of beneficiaries, often involved a sophisticated process of surveying and logistics, assisted occasionally from outside (see, for example, Leeds Needs Assessment Surveys, 1988 and 1991). The public works associated with the relief distributions were almost entirely concentrated on conservation measures (reforestation and terracing of hillsides) and provision of infrastructure (small dams, feeder roads and sometimes irrigation). There is some controversy about how effective these activities were. Some assessments at the time by supporting international NGOs saw them as more than simply gainful work creation and evaluated the projects positively. Others felt that there was an obsession with soil conservation that was unsustainable once such labour was no longer available, and involved massive effort to reverse an environmental degradation that was widely assumed but rarely substantiated. But whatever the assessment, these activities were certainly intended as long-term investments.

A second set of economic entrepreneurial activities were directed by EPLF departments. There were small-scale industries producing pharmaceuticals, sanitary towels, soap (though not very successfully), the ubiquitous plastic sandals, furniture and clothing, as well as repair and maintenance workshops for vehicles (including a fleet of several hundred food-delivery lorries) and of course ordnance, provision of water supplies and electricity generation (often by converting lorry engines) for towns and villages. After the 1988 bombardment and capture of the port of Massawa, the docks had to be administered and their capacity restored and sustained. One of the greatest capabilities that the EPLF developed was in road maintenance and building, as well as other public works.

A third set of initiatives was a preoccupation of the EPLF — and was also given priority by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the neighbouring Tigray province of Ethiopia (Chiari, 1995). Both fronts pursued land reform in the agricultural areas which they controlled. The aim was to reactivate, modernise and democratise systems of periodic redistribution of land, which had often fallen into abeyance, leaving many young households with no access to land. Such measures were seen as tackling the needs of the impoverished — especially younger men — and also as a material basis for mobilising political support. Again, the results are a matter of some controversy: some early analyses sympathetic to the liberation struggle (Pool, 1983; Cliffe, 1988; Gebre-Medhin, 1984; Pateman, 1990) may have overstated the extent and political significance of such measures, given more detailed local histories such as Tronvoll (1998). However, these were measures that showed an ambition that went far beyond emergency relief and sought to re-shape rural social relations. It is of note that the Ethiopian government pursued similar measures, with different results, in parts of Eritrea it controlled — in some instances as late as the mid-1980s.

Many of these activities could be classified as 'developmental' in that they expanded or at least rehabilitated the capacity of household livelihood options and of infrastructure. Many of them, however, were simply the 'normal' activities of providing the macro- or meso- framework for an economy, operating at a level above what is (simplistically) thought of as household subsistence (under threat in an emergency). Some entrepreneurial activity served to diversify income opportunities for households and the broader economy, and some measures sought to transform social relations.

But some of the broader economic activity that was initiated in Eritrea, as in other places where no such 'benevolent' rebel administration is in place, was the aggregate product of the myriad survival strategies of people themselves. In the liberated areas of Eritrea, mainly in the north and west, even those people who did not cross as refugees to Sudan, engaged in travel and trade there: seasonal labour on commercial farms or in towns; the long trek to sell (or occasionally buy) camels and cattle; the bringing back of essentials such as salt, clothes, sugar, coffee, even the use of the Sudanese currency. These kinds of links were strengthened, often as an alternative to economic interchange with the towns and highlands of the Ethiopian-occupied or contested areas. There was even a camel trade, across enemy lines, and another in bottled beer brewed in Asmara, supplied to the rewarding black market of Sudanese towns dominated by sharia law.

In looking back to this experience, particularly if the purpose is to isolate potential insights and lessons for aid policy elsewhere, what we have termed the constraining context and the enabling circumstances need to be brought out. First, characteristics of the fighting have to be recognised: for almost 20 years areas in the west and north remained 'liberated' and not subject to the long periods of contestation experienced by other regions of the country. This situation was partly a product of a form of warfare that was in part conventional and positional, with discernible battle lines, and where there was great repression by the Ethiopian army and administration but little in the way of indiscriminate targeting of civilians *en masse*.

There was, too, an 'alternative' EPLF administration that was recognised by visitors, and not just by its own rhetoric, as having concern for the welfare of ordinary Eritreans and was by and large respected for its effectiveness and accountability. That perception in turn led to a willingness on the part of some NGOs, and even

international donors, to deal with EPLF/ERA. For most of these donors, their involvement during the mid-1980s was in the provision of food and other relief aid. But among them, and after debates and disagreements (documented by Duffield and Prendergast, 1994), some began to accept a relationship with the EPLF's departments and not just with ERA, and to support 'development' not just 'relief'. External funding and technical support were not confined to foreign donors; the Eritrean diaspora — in Sudan and elsewhere in the region, in the Gulf, and in Europe and North America — was very effectively mobilised and generated considerable material support, probably on a scale greater than the international NGOs.

The whole range of these circumstances has seldom been repeated. Certainly the humanitarian agenda is more limited where civilians are the main targets and where there is a patchwork of small pockets controlled, if at all, by either side. But one key element was the aid agencies' willingness to provide aid through organs of the fronts, in both Tigray as well as Eritrea. This collaboration was debated at the time, and still is in other conflict zones, partly on grounds that such aid contributes to perpetuation of the conflict and that the only legitimate stance can only be one of neutrality. Those arguments, and how far they are true in particular contexts, do have to be confronted. So too does the consideration that rebel movements with a more ambiguous reputation and lesser capabilities than the EPLF might be deserving of support for those activities that are developmental as well as relief.

A slow awakening to opportunities in Somalia and Somaliland

While Somalia, like Sudan, has a long history of conflict, drought and famine, the present political and humanitarian situation, sometimes referred to as an archetypal protracted CPE, began with outbreak of war in the north between Siad Barre's forces and the Somali National Movement (SNM) in 1988, and subsequently involved other movements in other regions. These led to the fall of the Barre dictatorship, the declaration of independence by Somaliland (formerly British Somaliland) in 1991, and the fighting mainly between the remnants of Barre's forces and two rival factions of the United Somali Congress (USC) under Mohammed Aideed and Ali Mahdi, respectively, which devastated central and southern parts of the country but also affected other regions at times. Since then Somaliland has established its own representative government and state apparatus and achieved a substantial measure of peace, law and order and economic growth based on a thriving private sector — although as yet no formal international recognition. In contrast most of the remainder of the former Somalia (what we shall call Somalia proper) has been caught up, like Sudan, in a state of ongoing emergency involving shifting and spatially differentiated patterns of insecurity, violent conflict and humanitarian crisis.

The conventional view of the situation in Somalia, which has guided programming decisions of UN and other international aid agencies and is still offered in much of the international media, is that of a stateless country in which infrastructure and basic services have been and remain more or less totally destroyed by civil war, and which is fought over by a plethora of factional militias at the expense of a population caught in the cross-fire, struggling on the margins of survival, subject to displacement, looting and human rights abuses and vulnerable to recurring droughts and other natural disasters as well. Indeed, some 1.2 million people are thought to be at risk of severe food security, 300,000 people remain displaced, only

one-third of the population has access to safe water, one-fifth of children are malnourished, only one-tenth of 6- to 14-year-olds are enrolled in schools, and thousands are directly affected by sporadic fighting resulting in deaths, injuries, looting and rape (UN, 1999a). In no sense can the CPE in Somalia proper be said to be 'over' or in a 'post-war' situation.

Yet there is also an emerging picture of substantial 'islands of stability' in which peace, law and order and some degree of socio-economic recovery have been established. The longest lived of these (Somaliland apart) is the north-east, Puntland, which is enjoying a significant if weakly based economic boom based mainly on the export of livestock and other international trade through the port of Bossaso and fishing, and which now seeks its own, non-secessionist form of autonomy from the rest of Somalia. However, much of the port trade, and around half the population who are from the Majerteen sub-clan, are displaced by conflict from Mogadishu and likely to return there when conditions allow. There is also ongoing tension between the Majerteen and the Islamic theocratic opposition, Al-Itihaad; the fishing grounds are being over-exploited through lack of control; and the capacity of the civil administration, controlled by the Majerteen-based Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), to support rehabilitation and recovery is weak.

A number of central and southern areas such as Baidoa and substantial parts of surrounding Bay region, Belet Wein and Bardhere are also relatively peaceful with a degree of law and order. Again, the pattern of peace and conflict in these latter areas has been an unstable and constantly shifting one, partly determined by cross-border and regional involvements. There is also Ethiopia's support for the Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA) and, as a second front in its border war with Ethiopia, Eritrea's support for Oromo insurgency, Ogadeni irredentism and Hussain Aideed's militia.

For now, the RRA recapture of Baidoa, Bay and beyond in 1999 and the restitution of local governance based on mosque, professional and civil society groups has markedly improved conditions for aid delivery there, yet international agencies whose efforts were overturned when Baidoa fell to Mohamed Aideed in 1994 have been reluctant to return (Green, forthcoming). Meanwhile security has continued to deteriorate in Mogadishu (especially Aideed's southern part) with the collapse of the short-lived Benadir administration, and in Kismayo as Aideed captured the port from General 'Morgan' (Barre's son-in-law) who had held it since 1993. Large areas such as Lower and Middle Juba have been off-limits to most aid agencies.

What seems to have surprised outside observers is the degree to which communities have been able to maintain livelihoods and conduct business and trade even in central and southern Somalia. Some of this economic activity is undoubtedly 'taxed' or even operated by factions as part of the war economy, but by no means all. And even this may be positive: in Bossaso, for instance, one-third of port dues extracted by the armed gang that controlled the port were, by negotiated agreement, devoted to the local hospital run by an Italian NGO. More generally, according to the UN Resident Coordinator for Somalia:

there is growing weariness throughout much of Somali society with the corrosive instability that pervades so much of the country's south and central regions. This is clearly linked to the increasingly profound disillusion with the so-called 'warlords', and the emergence of myriad clan and local conclaves to seek some alternative to violence (UN, 2000a: 1).

The combined effect of the plethora of international agencies operating in Somalia and the wide variety of programmes implemented by them has often been confused and contradictory despite the many lives undoubtedly saved, and the conditions for implementation severely constrained by insecurity and lack of information and understanding. The famine crisis of 1991–2, the result of a major drought coinciding with the height of the civil war, killed up to half a million people and came at a time when UN agencies and all but a handful of international NGOs had withdrawn. The chequered history of the international military/humanitarian response to this crisis that eventually got under way — tragically late, hugely expensive and with multiple and contradictory mandates — in the form of UNOSOM I, UNITAF/Operation Restore Hope, UNOSOM II and the various NGO interventions of this period does not need to be re-told here, but it is worth noting the rather obvious point that failures during this period were associated not with the premature broadening of relief to include development or peace-building, but to the manner in which relief operations were themselves conducted. This applies not only to the forcible military intervention and the blunderings of UNITAF and UNOSOM II in first waging war with Aideed then seeking a partnership with him, but also to the ‘protection racket’ in which agencies paid huge sums to militias for safe conduct of relief supplies and personnel, the attempt to undermine the warlords by flooding the food market to reduce prices — an example of the form of relief operations being subordinated to the aim of creating conditions for peace — and the concentration of relief on Mogadishu which resulted in significant in-migration from rural areas.

A large-scale international relief and peace-building effort is still under way, operating under security constraints which severely limit the extent to which aid agencies can operate out of Nairobi. The ‘Nairobi syndrome’: the tendency for comfortably situated, often out-of-touch agency staff based there to control all important operational and policy decisions on programme content and delivery (to the extent these are devolved from headquarters), leaving little to field-workers’ discretion, was first articulated by Sahnoun, UN special representative to Somalia in 1992 (1994: 37), but persists as a common source of complaint both in Somalia proper and Somaliland. One consequence until recently has been a tendency in UN and some NGO circles to treat Somalia and Somaliland as a uniformly chaotic CPE which is not yet ‘over’, and accordingly to limit aid for rehabilitation and recovery to minimal operations geared mostly to facilitating relief delivery. This neglects the needs of those areas in which various forms of rehabilitation and intermediate support make good sense; in Somaliland especially, and in Puntland and other ‘peace pockets’ in a somewhat shorter term manner.

Thus Somaliland’s notable success since 1991 in achieving reconciliation, disarming militias and recruiting most into a Somaliland army, electing an assembly, Houses of Elders and president, restoring local governance and a paid civil service, re-establishing basic services and a legal system, encouraging civil society, creating conditions for private commerce, trade and services and moving towards a workable taxation system has all been largely without UN assistance (Ahmed and Green, 1998; Ahmed, 2000).

For the UN a prime concern has been the restoration of a centralised Somali state. This might be seen as prioritising peace-building, but the preoccupation with this one possible formula for peace has tended to blind it to opportunities for more concerted support for longer term rehabilitation in those regions where stability is

more established, in particular Somaliland and Puntland. The dozen peace conferences held with UN support in regional capitals throughout the Horn have been brief, top-down, foreign-mediated affairs focused more on warlords than on elders and civil society leaders, and have all failed. The latest conference, hosted by Djibouti at Arta in mid-2000, has sought a more representative balance of delegates, but in doing so has included many exiled representatives of the Barre regime and, in its objective of a unified Somali territory, overlooked the aspirations of Somaliland and Puntland whose leaders have therefore stayed away (along with Hussein Aideed and other faction leaders), and so seems unlikely to bring an end to conflict. These approaches to peacemaking contrast sharply with the more successful reconciliation and reconstruction conferences in Somaliland which were based on traditional, *in situ*, less rushed and more participative conflict mediation processes, again without outside help (Ahmed, 2000).

At the same time, a growing trend in humanitarian operations in Somalia proper has been a broadening of relief into a range of livelihood and basic service support activities, recently accompanied by infrastructural, environmental, social and local governance projects where conditions have been thought suitable. Agricultural and horticultural projects involving inputs (seeds, tools and equipment, fertilisers, pesticides) and training are being supported by FAO in Bay and Bakool regions, and by SCF-UK in Hiran and Gedo. Africa 70 and FAO are also implementing projects to support animal health and productivity in pastoralist and agro-pastoralist systems. Interventions aimed at establishing self-sustaining services in health, water and sanitation are also under way, for example, through ADRA in Middle Shebelle, ACORD in Mogadishu, Oxfam Quebec in Hiram, Africa 70 in Bossaso, as well as WHO, UNICEF and WFP. UNESCO has projects for emergency re-establishment of education services at regional and district levels, as does ADRA in Middle Shebelle and Galgadud. UNESCO, UNDP, the EU and USAID support local governance, peace-building, capacity- and institution-building projects in many areas, and so on. Some of this support has been through large multisectoral rehabilitation programmes, such as the EU's First and Second Rehabilitation Programmes or UNDP's Somalia Rehabilitation Programme.

The kinds of institutional constraints that can impede this attempt to broaden aid agendas is illustrated by the fate of UN efforts to repatriate refugees to Somaliland. Of the roughly 600,000 refugees who fled to Ethiopia by the time the SNM gained control of Somaliland in 1991, some 400,000 had returned spontaneously by 1994. Up to the end of 1996 there had been no official UNHCR repatriation programme, largely because UN agencies generally judged the security situation, and thus what was possible beyond emergency relief, on the basis of their assessment of the security situation in Somalia as a whole, based on problem areas like Mogadishu. It was not until early 1997 that, under an agreement with the Government of Ethiopia and that of (unrecognised) Somaliland, UNHCR began a repatriation programme which by the end of 1998 had returned 80,000 people — a programme that because of its tripartite character was run from UNHCR headquarters in Geneva through its office in the Ethiopian capital to a field office in Somaliland. The programme also provided tools, seed, livestock and more to sustain the returnees as well as transport and food relief during the transition, and even 'development' aid for infrastructure in receiving communities. However, the UN office co-ordinating all the other agencies operating in Somalia out of Nairobi, then still not venturing much beyond relief, managed to call this repatriation-with-development package to a halt:

clearly it was inconsistent with its view of Somalia as an integral territory and its strategy of avoiding *de-facto* partial recognition of Somaliland.

How then are we to judge aid effectiveness in Somalia in terms of linking relief, development and peace-building? In particular, do recent agency attempts to move beyond relief fall into the trap of complicity in human rights abuses or fuelling conflict through support for belligerents? Are they destined to remain good intentions whose implementation is trapped by institutional forms which still preserve these artificial distinctions? Two recent trends suggest that the capacity to avoid such pitfalls for both pure relief-oriented programmes and those aimed at broader objectives may be improving.

First, there has been a concerted effort to co-ordinate agency activities in accordance with common principles and shared understanding of context through the Somalia Aid Co-ordination Body (SACB) — a voluntary forum of donors, NGOs and UN agencies created in December 1993 as a unique experiment aimed at the consensual management of aid operations. As Ahmed (2000: 26) notes, donor agencies agreed on criteria for providing rehabilitation aid to Somalia as ‘peace and security and the existence of responsible Somali authorities on a regional and local level’ (EC Somalia Unit, 1997: 4). This led to EU aid for rehabilitation being channelled to Somaliland and the north-east, and more intermediate support to several other areas, although other agencies were slower to take up the challenge. Nevertheless, the SACB has developed into an important conduit for sharing information about what is possible when and where. Its strategy of differentiating Somalia/Somaliland into ‘crisis’, ‘transition’ and ‘recovery’ zones and tailoring programming accordingly is a step forward which has recently begun to have a significant impact on aid modalities, if not yet on outcomes.

Second, there is a renewed emphasis on working through local NGOs and such district or local governance and civil society organisations as are emerging. The phenomenon of dubious ‘briefcase’ NGOs which mushroomed during the UNOSOM period led to a regrettable loss of agency interest in establishing local partnerships for aid operations, but there are signs that this is now being reversed. UN agencies are now pursuing a policy of ‘progressive engagement’ with Somali communities, in line with the ‘Framework for UN Engagement in Somalia’ agreed in December 1999 (UN, 2000b). Linked to the aforementioned zoning strategy is a ‘building-blocks’ approach to peace-building, which has some appeal in its recognition of the improbability of a unitary Somali state in the foreseeable future and of the prospect of replacement of factions by representative local administrations in at least some of the proposed blocks (Somaliland, Puntland and Rahanwein), though Somalilanders view its implied federal structure with alarm and the proposed Benadir (central Hawiye) and Jubaland (southern Darod) blocks seem a long way from reality (IRIN-CEA, 1999).

COPE research in Somalia proper and Nairobi (Olewe-Nyunya, 2000) suggests that many agencies still feel that for security reasons they have no choice but to work with unrepresentative faction leaders, while others feel that as outsiders they have no right to judge whether authority structures are representative or not. Many, however, are attempting to identify non-warlord, pro-peace partners with whom to work; several can claim some success in this regard despite information constraints and expatriate staff turnover (Somali staff turnover is lower), and the majority claim to involve local communities and community elders in decision-making and to have contributed to peace-building in so doing. The researchers were not in a position to evaluate these claims empirically, but it appears that these constraints still apply as

much to purely relief-oriented aid as to aid with longer term, broadened objectives. Indeed, the conditions under which broader objectives are pursued — where peace and order are more established and security for aid delivery at a higher level — tend to be those which allow a closer monitoring of potential complicity in abuses compared with the more constrained circumstances of active conflict in which agencies rely more on such local partnerships as they are able to put together to deliver relief supplies.

Agency staff in Nairobi surveyed by COPE are well aware of the need for flexibility in working in the highly differentiated and fluid conflict/peace landscape of Somalia. There is an imperative of meeting immediate relief needs adequately, and a risk of pursuing development outcomes at the expense of effective relief or where these are likely to support factional war aims or be swept away by renewed conflict. They are also wrestling with the stark dilemmas of neutrality and impartiality with which they are daily confronted and the need to make essentially political decisions about which structures to support and which to bypass in delivering aid of any kind. Agencies, including those of the UN, are now moving towards long-term support in Somaliland, and to a lesser extent in Puntland and other ‘islands of peace’, and in so doing are making judgements about the legitimacy as well as stability of the local authority structures with which they collaborate.

The overall impression is not of a premature and politically ill-advised move away from relief and into development, but rather of a conservative approach which has resulted in some of the most urgent needs being met but which has failed until recently to complement relief with adequate longer term support where this has been advisable. The UN resident co-ordinator puts this failure down to funding constraints:

there is still much to be done to improve flexibility and preventive capacity for aid agencies to respond to emergencies; to link emergency and longer-term interventions when conditions allow; and to increase presence in southern and central Somalia of UN Agencies and NGOs. Many aspects of these insufficiencies reflect the death of flexible funding for emergency preparedness and response, as opposed to food aid and short-term specific-purpose emergency funding (UN, 2000a: 21).

Yet there is no doubt that the problem also reflects a tendency, only recently being reversed (but perhaps still prevalent in UN security circles in New York), to use too broad a brush in labelling all of Somalia proper as a complex emergency which is not yet ‘over’, and in the case of Somaliland to overlook opportunities of supporting legitimate authorities which do not constitute an officially recognised government in their efforts to sustain peace and promote recovery. This contrasts with the willingness highlighted by Macrae et al. (1997) of UN agencies to work with the Sudanese government whose legitimacy has been so severely compromised by human rights abuses and the pursuit of war: two opposite scenarios, yet both instances of flawed political judgement. Some of the lack of flexibility in some situations is also a reflection of formal divisions of labour and inflexible practices within and between UN agencies, and in other donors.

Conclusions: political judgement, flexibility and constraints

Critics of linking relief and development in CPEs point to the political and technical inevitability of development-oriented aid interventions working through organs of the state, so that in a CPE where the state (or 'quasi-state') is a party to conflict, humanitarian aid which moves into the development arena loses its essential elements of neutrality and impartiality. Such critics have cited as examples of aid programmes of this kind those involving collusion with warring regimes which, along with instances of premature withdrawal of relief, were apparently carried out in the name of 'linking relief and development', a principle the application of which they therefore condemn in any CPE context until the CPE is 'over'.

By targeting the linking principle itself rather than collusion with belligerents or premature withdrawal of relief supplies, this argument runs into a problem of defining and separating 'relief' and 'development', in particular how to treat aid aimed at intermediate, relatively short-term objectives which may not involve collusion. In the case of protracted, low-intensity or intermittent conflicts there is also a problem of defining 'the emergency' and overlooking areas within it of comparative tranquillity where such aid objectives can coincide closely with priorities of affected populations. Further, there is failure to distinguish between the outmoded linear 'continuum' form of the linking principle which implies that aid policy can aim at only one point on the continuum at any time (which may well lead to a detrimental substitution of rehabilitation for relief aid), and later forms which promote simultaneous multiple objectives.

Comparing Sudan (Northern and Southern OLS Sectors), Eritrea, Somalia proper and Somaliland we find that 'linking' principles were applied in all cases, but with very different results. In Sudan, Northern Sector aid for rehabilitation has furthered the illegitimate war aims of the state. In the Southern Sector that same aid has not been deemed to have furthered rebel war aims. In Eritrea and Tigray up to 1991 aid for relief and for rehabilitation and development was channelled through rebel movements and did further their war aims by bolstering their popular support, but drew much more praise than criticism because the movement strongly represented the bulk of the population, carried out its own development programmes and protected rather than violated human rights. In Somalia proper relief-oriented aid has furthered the war aims of illegitimate factions, whereas aid for rehabilitation — where it has been attempted — has probably done so less as it has been used more discriminatingly and largely to support structures of peace. In Somaliland a significant opportunity to use aid for rehabilitation to support peace aims of a legitimate government has until recently been missed mainly because that government has not been officially recognised as a 'state' by the UN, and that in turn has been used as a basis for precluding longer term aid.

There is a need to re-focus the critique not only, as Jackson and Walker suggest, on those outside the humanitarian aid system who would use due and welcome recognition of the dilemmas agencies face in CPEs as a rationale for cutting aid funding, but also on failures of political judgement which have led aid agencies into complicity with illegitimate regimes and neglect or undermining of legitimate ones, and this applies both to 'relief' and more 'developmental' interventions. Such

failures are rooted both in lack of contextual understanding and in a lack of an ethical framework within which to apply that understanding.

Smillie (1998) is correct in pointing to funding, timing and understanding as main challenges to the realisation of relief–development synergies, and identifying the last as the most important of these. Of course these three constraints are interconnected. For example, lack of institutional memory is a significant barrier to agency understanding as both Smillie and, for Sudan, Duffield et al. (1999) have noted. This in turn reflects the short-term nature both of expatriate staff contracts and emergency project funding which rules out effective continuity in contextual understanding, lesson learning and the building of relationships with local actors and organisations. Lack of understanding is also one reflection of a prevailing neo-liberal interpretation of conflict as a temporary aberration in the development process rather than a product of it, with the result that there is little donor or NGO interest in investing in analyses of the political economy of rebel movements or states embroiled in protracted conflict (Duffield, 1999: 7).

Even with perfect understanding, however, the dilemmas of how to apply that understanding remain. For many, designing relief and rehabilitation programmes in line with political judgements about the character of the local authorities through which such programmes must be implemented effectively requires the humanitarian principle of neutrality to be applied selectively (for example, El Bushra, 1999) or replaced with one of solidarity (Duffield, 1999b: 21). This causes consternation among humanitarians such as Leader, who asks:

Much of the debate and controversy in humanitarianism in recent years is due to the fact that the ‘calculus’ required to implement this utilitarian approach does not exist. Who is to say that the long-term benefits of withholding aid outweigh its short term results, and based on what criteria, and on what analysis (2000: 3)?

The need for an internationally recognised ethical framework or code of conduct of this kind is acute, and is not overlooked by the linking critics. Not only would it provide a point of reference for agencies confronted with the political dilemmas of working towards effective relief, rehabilitation and development outcomes — and making the most of the synergies between them — but it would also help insulate the political side of humanitarianism from the ‘humanitarian’ or ‘ethical’ side of donor foreign policy which is always influenced by donor ‘national interests’ — a distinction which is increasingly blurred (Macrae, 2000). Such a framework would require a strong human rights dimension to be sure, but in doing so it would also need to balance the case for ‘just wars’ and class, ethnic and gender struggles against those of states, territorial integrity and global capital (areas which Anderson’s *Do No Harm* (1996) work tends to overlook), and deal with the equally problematic area of conditions under which use of forcible military intervention in support of humanitarian aims is appropriate — topics explored in the preceding paper in this issue by Cliffe and Luckham.

A further debate to be addressed in establishing any ethical framework of this kind relates to the current trend of aid conditionality noted earlier, whereby countries ruled by states deemed to be illegitimate (in terms of human rights violations, the balance of military and development expenditure and so on) are denied ‘development’ aid while purely humanitarian aid is maintained — or as some argue

also withheld — in an apparent attempt to exert political leverage or avoid negative aid effects. The British government has been at the forefront of this trend, for example in its policies towards Sudan, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan, although as we have seen there are signs of a policy change. To some extent selectivity of this kind is consistent with the principle of solidarity mentioned above, but there are two kinds of distinctions to consider. One is made between pure relief and other ('developmental') objectives which is problematic — for example provision of emergency food aid alongside denial of support for short-term rehabilitation, or disaster prevention, preparedness and early warning measures for that matter — and inherently contradictory (White and Cliffe, 2000). The other is the distinction which does need to be made between the provision or denial of aid for political leverage — the scope for which is arguably very limited when one weighs up the costs of aid denial against the opportunities arising from the war economy from the perspective of belligerent regimes — and the provision or denial of aid to maximise access and minimise negative effects. The former motivates selectivity between countries, and is open to foreign policy manipulation and ethically very questionable; and the latter motivates selectivity in programme design within countries and can be ethically sound.

A final constraint to the realisation of relief–development synergies considered here is that of flexibility. A COPE survey of UK and Irish-based NGOs in 1997 (O'Brien, 1997) suggests that these agencies, like those surveyed in Nairobi, have been well aware of this elusive goal for some time. Key features of best practice identified by the NGOs surveyed included flexibility to match operations to changing circumstances along, *inter alia*, with a commitment to maintaining a presence during conflict, developing better systems of information and contextual analysis, maximising the role of local staff and establishing closer, more open relationships with local organisations and beneficiaries.

How can agencies organise themselves to achieve the flexibility required to aim for multiple objectives simultaneously but also to change the emphasis between objectives in line with ongoing developments in a protracted CPE? Logic suggests that either there must be a flexible mix of several single-mandate agencies on the ground covering different specialities, or there must be fewer multi-mandate agencies flexible in the mix of specialities they provide. The first of these options carries with it the constraints inherent in gearing up and winding down an agency presence in any given area, including start-up costs, staff recruitment and induction, and all the disadvantages of short-term involvement including lack of contextual understanding and weak partnerships with local organisations and affected communities. As Smillie (1998: 73) points out, multi-mandate organisations such as ACORD, Oxfam and SCF-UK are better placed in terms of the second option than more specialised ones.

Nevertheless agencies cannot be all things to all people and a certain amount of specialisation is inevitable; hence the importance of systems and fora for improved inter-agency co-ordination. Even where agencies do establish a long-term presence in protracted CPE contexts such as Sudan, their programming is often shaped by the short-term nature of their funding arrangements, especially during periods of heightened crisis when media attention briefly erupts and pressure is put on donors and their publics to respond to an emergency appeal. Thus the protracted CPE is 'normalised' and effective linking between pure relief and other objectives lost.

The solutions to these dilemmas does not lie in condemning the principle of seeking synergies between different aid modalities and outcomes in protracted CPEs,

or advocating a retreat to the illusory safety of ‘neutrality’ and short-term survival support to the exclusion of all else. Perhaps it is now time — finally — to lay the ‘linking relief and development’ debate to rest so that it ceases to clutter our analysis of the capacity of the humanitarian system to act more effectively in the interests of people who suffer in CPEs. This the system can do only through long-term commitment to a range of interconnected objectives and strategies within an ethical framework which gives priority to relief where lives are at stake, but also addresses those people’s other basic priorities while minimising complicity in human rights abuses.

Note

1. The Consortium for Political Emergencies (COPE) is a consortium funded by the Department for International Development to conduct research on ‘Complex Political Emergencies: From Relief to Sustainable Development?’ from 1997 to 2000. COPE is led by the Centre for Development Studies at the University of Leeds, and includes ACORD, The Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, and the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex.

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