Countries in protracted crisis: what are they and why do they deserve special attention?

Common features of countries in protracted crisis

Key message

Twenty-two countries are currently considered to be in protracted crisis. Protracted crisis situations are characterized by recurrent natural disasters and/or conflict, longevity of food crises, breakdown of livelihoods and insufficient institutional capacity to react to the crises. Countries in protracted crisis thus need to be considered as aspecial category with special requirements in terms of interventions by the development community.

There is no simple definition of a country in protracted crisis. Protracted crises have been defined as "those environments in which a significant proportion of the population is acutely vulnerable to death, disease and disruption of livelihoods over a prolonged period of time. The governance of these environments is usually very weak, with the state having a limited capacity to respond to, and mitigate, the threats to the population, or provide adequate levels of protection."[5] Food insecurity is the most common manifestation of protracted crises.[6]

Protracted crisis situations are not all alike, but they may share some (not necessarily all) of the following characteristics.[7]

- Duration or longevity. Afghanistan, Somalia and the Sudan, for example, have all been in one sort of crisis or another since the 1980s – nearly three decades.
- Conflict. Conflict is a common characteristic, but conflict alone does not make for a protracted crisis, and there are some countries in protracted crisis where overt, militarized conflict is not a significant factor or is a factor in only part of the country (e.g. Ethiopia or Uganda).
- Weak governance or public administration. This may simply be a lack of capacity in the face of overwhelming constraints, but may also reflect lack of political will to accord rights to all citizens.
- Unsustainable livelihood systems and poor food-security outcomes. These contribute to malnutrition and increased mortality rates. Both transitory and chronic food insecurity tend to increase in protracted crisis situations. However, unsustainable livelihood systems are not just a symptom of protracted crises; deterioration in the sustainability of livelihood systems can be a contributing factor to conflict, which may in turn trigger a protracted crisis.
- Breakdown of local institutions. This is often exacerbated by state fragility. Relatively sustainable customary institutional systems often break down under conditions of protracted crisis, but state-managed alternatives are rarely available to fill the gap.

Defining countries in protracted crisis

It is obvious from the above that the definition of a protracted crisis is somewhat fluid: no single characteristic identifies a protracted crisis and the absence of one or more of the characteristics outlined does not necessarily mean that a country or region is not in a protracted crisis. This report uses three measurable criteria to determine whether or not a country is in a protracted crisis: the longevity of the crisis, the composition of external aid flows, and the inclusion of the country on FAO's list of low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDCs).

- Longevity of crisis. The criterion for longevity of the crisis is based on the number of years a country has reported a crisis (whether a natural disaster, a human-induced crisis or disaster, or a combination of the two) that required external assistance. This information is collated annually for all UN member states by the FAO Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS). A country is considered to be in protracted crisis if it appears on the GIEWS list for eight years or more between 2001 and 2010 (to capture more recent crises) or 12 years or more between 1996 and 2010.
- Aid flows. The second defining criterion is the proportion of humanitarian assistance received by the country as a share of total assistance. Countries are defined as being in

protracted crisis if they have received 10 percent or more of their official development assistance (ODA) as humanitarian aid since 2000.[8]

- **Economic and food security status**. The final defining criterion is that countries in protracted crisis appear on the list of LIFDCs.

A total of 22 countries currently meet all three of these criteria (Table 1).

All the countries in Table 1 have suffered some kind of human-induced emergency – a conflict or political crisis of some kind. Sixteen of them have also experienced some kind of natural disaster at some point– either as a stand-alone crisis or combined with a human-induced emergency, while 15 have experienced at least one occurrence of combined natural and human-induced emergency.

Some protracted crisis situations are limited to a particular geographic area of a country and may not affect the entire population. For example, Uganda appears on the protracted crisis list, but the protracted crisis in Uganda is limited to the northern and northeastern parts of the country. A territory, such as the West Bank and Gaza Strip, could also be considered as being in protracted crisis and is among the case studies presented in this report.

There are other cases of countries that appear to have been in protracted crisis but are not included in this list. Sri Lanka, for example, is just emerging from a long civil conflict that devastated much of the northern part of the island and displaced a large proportion of the population. However, it appears on the GIEWS list of countries in crisis for only seven of the past ten years, thus narrowly missing the inclusion criterion.

There is thus a considerable degree of heterogeneity among countries in protracted crisis, including the capacity to handle crises, with some countries having a functioning government and others being currently considered as fragile or failed states.[9]

In terms of aid flows, countries in protracted crisis are characterized by a relatively high share of total aid received in the form of humanitarian assistance rather than development assistance. Globally, about 10 percent of total ODA is in the form of humanitarian assistance, but in countries in protracted crisis the share is generally much higher – as high as two-thirds in countries such as Somalia

TABLE **1**

Countries in protracted crisis: typology of crisis, 1996–2010, and proportion of humanitarian aid, 2000–08

Country	Natural disaster only	Human-induced disaster only	Combined natural and human-induced disaster	Total disasters (1996–2010)	Humanitarian aid/total ODA (2000–2008)
	(Number of years)				*(Percentage)*
Afghanistan		5	10	15	20
Angola	1	11		12	30
Burundi		14	1	15	32
Central African Republic		8		8	13
Chad	2	4	3	9	23
Congo		13		13	22
Côte d'Ivoire		9		9	15
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	6	3	6	15	47
Democratic Republic of the Congo		15		15	27
Eritrea	2	3	10	15	30
Ethiopia	2	2	11	15	21
Guinea		10		10	16
Haiti	11	1	3	15	11
Iraq		4	11	15	14
Kenya	9		3	12	14
Liberia		14	1	15	33
Sierra Leone		15		15	19
Somalia			15	15	64
Sudan		5	10	15	62
Tajikistan	3		8	11	13
Uganda		4	10	14	10
Zimbabwe	2	3	5	10	31

Sources: FAO GIEWS and Development Initiatives.

BOX **2**

Protracted crisis: the case of Somalia

Somalia has been without a central government since 1991, and was in a state of civil war for several years prior to that. Since 2004, a Transitional Federal Government has attempted to exercise some authority but has been unable to extend its control over much of the country. Quasi-independent regional governments have exercised some autonomy and administration in Somaliland and Puntland in the north. In recent years, the conflict has taken on elements of regional rivalry.

The conflict led to a major famine in south–central Somalia in 1992–93. Since 2000, there have been localized food-security crises in various parts of the country. Fierce fighting in Mogadishu in 2006 led some half a million residents of the city to flee to the relative safety of the Afgooye corridor, to the northwest of the city.

In 2009, some 3.2 million people in Somalia required immediate food assistance. Over half of these were internally displaced people; the remainder were affected either by the conflict, by drought and an underlying livelihoods crisis, or both. As of early 2010 and despite a good harvest in 2009, the food security situation for much of the population of south–central and central Somalia appeared increasingly worrying, while the security situation has forced almost all international agencies to withdraw from these areas.

BOX **3**

Protracted crisis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Since the onset of the Israeli occupation in 1967, the economy of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been largely dependent on the provision of labour to Israel and other countries. This has made the territory extremely vulnerable to changes in the Israeli labour and goods markets. Economic conditions have deteriorated since late September 2000. High population growth rates have outpaced GDP growth, leading to a steady decline in per capita GDP. The overall deterioration of the economy has worsened since the beginning of 2006. The impact on the socio-economic situation is particularly acute in the Gaza Strip.

The movement of goods and people into and out of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been severely restricted, and this has negatively impacted the lives of the Palestinian population. Unemployment reached 31 percent in mid-2002. It has since declined, but remains above 24 percent. The loss of jobs, earnings, assets and incomes has sharply reduced economic access to food, as real per capita income has halved since 1999. In mid-2006, six out of ten people had incomes below the US$2.10 per day poverty line, while 34 percent of all people living in the territory were considered to be food-insecure with a further 12 percent considered to be particularly vulnerable to becoming food-insecure. In the Gaza Strip, four out of every five families had to reduce expenditures, including on food.

Sources: FAO/WFP. 2003. *Report of the food security assessment, West Bank and Gaza Strip*. (available at ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/006/j1575e/j1575e01.pdf); and WFP/FAO. 2007. *West Bank and Gaza Strip, Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA)*, pp. 4–9. Rome.

and the Sudan. The amount of humanitarian assistance received per capita is also higher in all 22 countries in protracted crisis than the average for developing countries. Levels and allocation of aid flows will be discussed in greater detail later in the report (see pages 27–31).

Food insecurity: are countries in protracted crisis a different case?

Countries in protracted crisis show generally high levels of food insecurity (Table 2). In 2005–07 the proportion of undernourished people in countries in protracted crisis ranged from a low of 14 percent in Côte d'Ivoire to a high of 69 percent in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Global Hunger Index, made up of a composite of undernourishment data, the prevalence of underweight and the under-five mortality rate, varied from a low of 14.5 ("serious hunger problem") in Côte d'Ivoire to a high of 39.1 ("extremely alarming hunger problem") in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

TABLE **2**

All countries in protracted crisis show high levels of food insecurity

Country	Total population	Number of undernourished	Proportion of undernourished	Under-5 underweight for age	Under-5 mortality rate	Global Hunger Index	Stunting[1]	Wasting[2]
	2005-07	2005-07	2005-07	2002-07	2007	2009	2000-07	1996-07
	(Millions)		*(Percentage)*					
Afghanistan	na	na	na	32.8	25.7	na	59.3	8.6
Angola	17.1	7.1	41	14.2	15.8	25.3	50.8	8.6
Burundi	7.6	4.7	62	35.0	18.0	38.7	63.1	8.2
Central African Republic	4.2	1.7	40	24.0	17.2	28.1	44.6	10.5
Chad	10.3	3.8	37	33.9	20.9	31.3	44.8	16.1
Congo	3.5	0.5	15	11.8	12.5	15.4	31.2	8.0
Côte d'Ivoire	19.7	2.8	14	16.7	12.7	14.5	40.1	8.6
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	23.6	7.8	33	17.8	5.5	18.4	44.7	8.7
Democratic Republic of the Congo	60.8	41.9	69	25.1	16.1	39.1	45.8	14.0
Eritrea	4.6	3.0	64	34.5	7.0	36.5	43.7	14.9
Ethiopia	76.6	31.6	41	34.6	11.9	30.8	50.7	12.3
Guinea	9.4	1.6	17	22.5	15.0	18.2	39.3	10.8
Haiti	9.6	5.5	57	18.9	7.6	28.2	29.7	10.3
Iraq	na	na	na	7.1	4.4	na	27.5	5.8
Kenya	36.8	11.2	31	16.5	12.1	20.2	35.8	6.2
Liberia	3.5	1.2	33	20.4	13.3	24.6	39.4	7.8
Sierra Leone	5.3	1.8	35	28.3	26.2	33.8	46.9	10.2
Somalia	na	na	na	32.8	14.2	na	42.1	13.2
Sudan	39.6	8.8	22	27.0	10.9	19.6	37.9	21.0
Tajikistan	6.6	2.0	30	14.9	6.7	18.5	33.1	8.7
Uganda	29.7	6.1	21	16.4	13.0	14.8	38.7	6.3
Zimbabwe	12.5	3.7	30	14.0	9.0	21.0	35.8	7.3

Note: na = not available.
[1] Percentage height for age <-2SD.
[2] Percentage weight for height <-2SD.

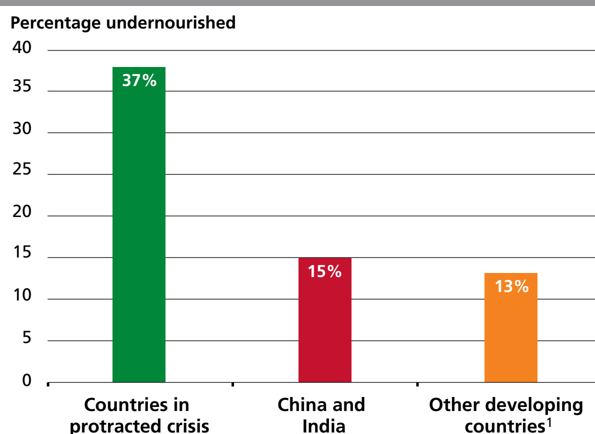
Sources: FAO, IFPRI and WHO.

Table 2 shows that, on average, the proportion of people who are undernourished is almost three times as high in countries in protracted crisis as in other developing countries (if countries in protracted crisis and China and India are excluded) (Figure 8). Nonetheless, not all countries in protracted crisis present very high levels of undernourishment as in some of these countries crises are localized to certain areas or regions. There are approximately 166 million undernourished people in countries in protracted crisis – roughly 20 percent of the world's undernourished people, or more than a third of the global total if China and India are excluded from the calculation.

Food security is significantly worse in the group of countries in protracted crisis than in the rest of developing countries in four out the of six key food security indicators: proportion undernourished (FAO); proportion stunted; mortality rate of children under five years old; and the Global Hunger Index (International Food Policy Research Institute [IFPRI]) (Table 3).

FIGURE **8**

The proportion of undernourished people is about three times as high in countries in protracted crisis as in other developing countries



Note: Data are for 2005–07.
[1] Excluding countries in protracted crisis, China and India.

Source: FAO.

A deeper analysis of the relationship between protracted crisis and food security outcomes shows that changes in income, government effectiveness, control of corruption and the number of years in crisis are significantly related to the proportion of the population who are undernourished (Table 4).[10] These factors, plus education, are also all significantly related to a country's Global Hunger Index. More importantly, it is not just the presence or absence of protracted crisis that is significant – the number of years a country has been in crisis also makes a difference. An increase in the number of years a country has been in crisis significantly increases the prevalence of undernourishment.

Engagement in protracted crises: constraints and opportunities

The characteristics of countries in protracted crisis make them some of the most difficult contexts for the international community to engage with. These difficulties are linked to two key issues: (a) the way in which the development community perceives protracted crises and its relationship to the development process and (b) the way in which aid is used to respond to protracted crises (aid architecture).

With regard to the first issue, "development" is sometimes viewed as a gradual improvement in quality of life. Disasters or acute emergencies (briefly) interrupt this trend, but the expectation is that a situation will return to the "normal" upward trend once the crisis is over (Figure 9) – hence the terminology of "disaster," "recovery" and "sustainable development" and the principles and interventions associated with each. However, in protracted crises the trend line is likely to be unpredictable for an extended period; not necessarily sharply downwards as in an acute emergency but not upwards either – at least not for a long time.

The second issue, closely related to the first, is that the architecture of intervention in a protracted crisis is

TABLE 3

Food security is significantly worse in countries in protracted crisis than in the least developed countries that are not in protracted crisis

Dependent variable	No protracted crisis	Protracted crisis	T-test Difference	Range
Percentage undernourished	18.8	31.4	–12.6**	1.0 – 69.0
Percentage underweight	17.9	19.9	–2.0	1.6 – 44.6
Percentage stunted	35.1	40.2	–5.1*	3.7 – 63.1
Percentage wasted	8.2	9.3	–1.1	1.0 – 22.9
Under-five mortality rate (%)	7.8	11.9	–4.1**	0.7 – 26.2
Global Hunger Index	16.5	22.3	–5.8**	5.2 – 39.1

Notes: Data are for 2005-07. Estimates differ from those in Figure 8 because they are not weighted by population.
* Significant difference between countries in protracted crisis and those not in protracted crisis, P <0.05 (95%).
** Significant difference between countries in protracted crisis and those not in protracted crisis, P <0.01 (99%).

Sources: FAO, IFPRI and WHO.

TABLE 4

Regression results: food insecurity, Human Development Index, World Governance Indicators and protracted crises

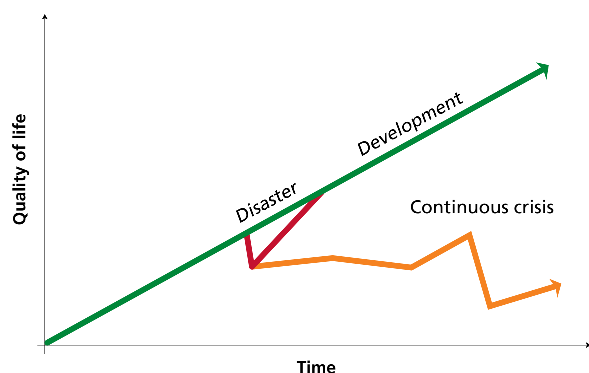
Dependent variable: *% undernourishment*			Dependent variable: *Global Hunger Index*		
Factor	**Elasticity**	**Z (sig)**	**Factor**	**Elasticity**	**Z (sig)**
Income[1]	–0.76	–2.85**	**Income**	–0.72	–4.58**
Education[2]	0.32	1.21	**Education**	–0.36	–2.36*
Government effectiveness[3]	–1.45	–3.63**	**Government effectiveness**	–0.65	–2.84**
Control of corruption[4]	1.05	2.79**	**Control of corruption**	0.48	2.14*
Years in crisis[5]	0.38	4.29**	**Years in crisis**	0.16	3.14**
Adjusted R^2 (OLS)[6]		0.52**	**Adjusted R^2 (OLS)**		0.72**

Notes:
* p < 0.05
** p < 0.01
[1] Human Development Index (UNDP).
[2] Human Development Index (UNDP).
[3] Worldwide Governance Indicators (World Bank Institute).
[4] Worldwide Governance Indicators (World Bank Institute).
[5] Number of years a country appeared on the FAO GIEWS list requiring external humanitarian assistance.
[6] Ordinary least squares.

Sources: FAO, IFPRI and WHO.

FIGURE 9

Protracted crises are fundamentally different from the model of acute disasters



Source: P. Walker. 2009. How to think about the future: history, climate change and conflict. Presentation to the Harvard Humanitarian Summit, Cambridge, September 2009.

typically similar to that designed for short crises followed by a return to some degree of long-term improvement. Yet this clearly does not fit the characteristics of most protracted crisis situations. Even some of the recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) principles for working in fragile state contexts do not seem appropriate for engaging in protracted crises (see Box 4). As a result, engagement, especially international engagement, in protracted crises is not well matched to the problems encountered, and the approach used is not sufficiently flexible to adjust to changing realities. In many cases, the state apparatus of the affected country is undermined by a protracted crisis, leaving both an institutional vacuum and a lingering question about the priorities for engagement: is the priority to strengthen or, in some cases, rebuild state institutions, or to strengthen or rebuild livelihoods and the local institutions that support livelihoods?

BOX 4

Principles for engagement in protracted crises?

Humanitarian principles have long been well articulated, though increasingly difficult to adhere to in protracted crisis situations. The principles underlying development efforts have never been as explicitly articulated, but are broadly as outlined in the second column of the table below. While both sets of principles may be applicable in protracted crises, there is little clarity about what principles apply when. To address this lack of clarity, the OECD issued a set of principles for "engagement in fragile states" – not precisely the same as countries in protracted crisis, but similar in many ways. These appear in the third column of the table. However, some of these principles would clearly clash in situations with ongoing conflict – particularly internal conflict or counter-insurgency where the state is one party to the conflict. With many of the same donors and the same external agencies involved in both humanitarian response and development programmes in protracted crises (or in fragile states or both), there remains a lack of clarity about what operating principles govern what kind of interventions, and when and where.

Principles for protracted crises?

Humanitarian principles	Developmental principles	OECD principles for "engagement in fragile states"
Humanity	Empowerment	Context-specificity
Impartiality	Participation	Do no harm
Neutrality	Sustainability	State building as central objective
Independence	Self-reliance	Prioritize prevention/risk reduction
Universality	Equity	Recognize political, security and development links
	Capacity building	
	Transparency/accountability	Promote non-discrimination

Sources: Based on OECD. 2007. *Principles for good international engagement in fragile states and situations* (available at http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/45/38368714.pdf); and D. Maxwell. 1999. Programs in chronically vulnerable areas: challenges and lessons learned. *Disasters*, 23(4): 373–84.

How livelihoods adapt in protracted crises

Key message

Improving food security in protracted crises requires going beyond short-term responses and protecting and promoting people's livelihoods. People living in protracted crises are often forced to make radical adjustments to their livelihoods, including relocation from rural areas for the relative safety of population centres. This can disrupt traditional livelihoods and coping mechanisms, either temporarily or permanently, but can also present new livelihood opportunities if properly supported.

Humanitarian assistance programmes have aimed at protecting livelihoods[11] since the mid-1980s, when it was realized that early efforts to do so would be more effective than those delayed until people were destitute or at risk of dying. In reality, however, humanitarian aid has predominantly focused on saving lives; it has not always been designed to support longer-term livelihood-protection goals and food security. Until recently, interventions other than food aid have been limited to activities such as adding the distribution of seeds and tools to regular food aid distributions. Programmes have been more likely to introduce interventions to support livelihoods as a crisis persists.

But protecting and promoting livelihoods requires a more holistic approach that addresses the causes of vulnerability to food insecurity as well as the consequences. In doing so, it needs to pay attention to what people are doing for themselves and to how their efforts can best be supported.

This section explores what happens to rural livelihoods in protracted crises, what this means for how livelihoods can be supported and what is needed to strengthen livelihoods programming in order to improve food security. It draws heavily on experience from the Sudan, where many parts of the country have suffered for decades from frequent periods of acute food insecurity as well as chronic food insecurity, caused by factors ranging from conflict(s) to socio-economic marginalization, environmental degradation and natural disasters. It also draws on case studies from other countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, where the longevity of the crises experienced has had similar impacts on rural livelihoods.

What happens to livelihoods during protracted crises?

Livelihoods are often severely disrupted in protracted crises. The impact of the Darfur crisis in the Sudan – now in its eighth year – is a concrete demonstration of that.

In Darfur, the first couple of years of the conflict were marked by the rapid devastation of livelihoods. Millions of people became displaced. Many lost everything – livestock, agricultural tools, access to land, their homes and even relatives. Those who remained in their area of origin also suffered heavy losses. Pastoralists in North Darfur lost over half of their livestock in the first three years of the conflict – around a quarter of their herd was looted while an even larger proportion died because poor security limited their access to feed and water supplies.[12] As the crisis became protracted, assets continued to be lost through a gradual process of attrition. As the economy shrank and freedom of movement declined, livelihood options inevitably became fewer. Many people became dependent on marginal subsistence activities. Rural people could not migrate for work or send remittances home, which had a serious impact on their livelihoods in the initial stages of the conflict.

The conflict in the Nuba Mountains, in central Sudan, which started in 1985 and escalated in the 1990s, also led to widespread destruction of traditional sources of livelihoods and large-scale internal displacement, with few Nuba retaining access to their traditional farmland. This was a key factor in triggering recurrent food insecurity. Insecurity on the plains drove many Nuba to flee to the rocky hilltops, abandoning the productive clay soils found in the plains. Harvest yields dropped to approximately one-tenth of previous levels in several areas.[13] Livestock productivity also fell significantly because of lack of access to pasture and water points on the plains. Many cattle were looted in the areas most affected by conflict, and lack of access to veterinary drugs in areas where fighting was most intense caused further declines in livestock holdings.[14]

Similarly, in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, agriculture-based livelihoods were yet another victim of the war. As a result of insecurity and the repeated displacement of households, local productivity fell to minimal levels (in North Kivu during the peak of the war, bean productivity fell 72 percent, that of manioc by 53 percent and bananas by 45 percent).[15] In Kismayo district

in Somalia, the average livestock holding – a key factor in determining households' resilience – decreased dramatically during the period 1988–2004 as a result of the protracted crisis. The average holding of households in the middle poverty quartiles fell from 6 to 2.5 tropical livestock units – TLU (1 TLU = 1 head of cattle equivalent).[16]

Short- to medium-term adaptations

Livelihood systems adapt over time in a variety of ways when crises are prolonged.

On the positive side, there are remarkable examples of human resilience and flexibility. Livestock traders in Darfur, for example, altered their trade routes to avoid areas of insecurity, in one case resorting to air-freighting sheep from the far west of Darfur to Khartoum.[17] The way in which remittances are sent has also changed, often creatively so, to avoid obstacles associated with the conflict (see Box 5 on page 20). Similarly, in the Jubba region in Somalia, pastoralists partially moved to agriculture to cope with increased crop prices as a result of the conflict.[18] In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lake Edward was once the fishing reserve of the entire province of North Kivu, but its fish output declined significantly, from over 11 000 tonnes per year in 1954 to 3 000 tonnes in 1989. The reasons for this decline include the institutional disintegration surrounding the exploitation of local resources related to the progressive breakdown of formal government institutions aggravated by the conflict(s). Confronted with this decline in local production, the population (mainly fisherfolk) began cultivating rice, maize, soya, bananas and manioc in the northern part of Virunga National Park. The favourable location of the park offered an attractive alternative for the production of subsistence and commercial crops. Paradoxically, the absence of formal institutions and regulatory functions in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo favoured the movement of people from Lake Edward to the Virunga National Park. This offered fisherfolk who had become food-insecure because of the depletion of fisheries resources the opportunity to create an agriculture-based livelihood for themselves.[19]

On the negative side, many adaptations are harmful or unsustainable. For example, in Darfur, as the economy contracted and large numbers of people moved from rural areas to urban areas, increasing competition for work in a saturated labour market forced more and more people to become dependent on the collection and sale of natural resources, especially firewood, and on brick-making. This led to devastating environmental degradation in ever-widening rings around Darfur's main towns.[20] Out of desperation, poor households (especially internally displaced people [IDPs]) have been engaging in high-risk livelihood strategies such as the collection of firewood from insecure areas. Pastoral populations have also increasingly turned to collecting firewood as a source of income, and this has fuelled the conflict as they compete with farmers and displaced people for this resource.[21] In many cases it would be more appropriate to call such strategies "maladaptation".[22]

Longer-term and permanent adaptations

As initial short-term responses to crises become longer-term adaptations, protracted crises can prompt or accelerate longer-term and permanent transitions.

The most common transition is the accelerated process of rural–urban migration that accompanies many protracted crises. This occurred throughout most of the Sudan. Khartoum grew rapidly as more than 4 million people were displaced during two decades of civil war in the south of the country. Around half of the displaced people have remained in urban areas, especially Khartoum, even after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in early 2005. The town of Nyala, the commercial centre of Darfur, has grown to approximately three times the size it was when the conflict began, and is now home to well over a million people. Similar trends have been recorded elsewhere: it is estimated, for instance, that the urban population grew by a factor of eight in Luanda in Angola, five in Kabul in Afghanistan and seven in Juba in southern Sudan. These phenomena are largely attributed to the conflicts and post-conflict–related dynamics.[23] Such changes in settlement patterns bring with them a significant change in livelihoods, with an increase in the number of people dependent on the urban labour market. As noted above, this may exceed the capacity of urban labour markets to support the influx, and may adversely affect the surrounding environment. Such migration may also jeopardize migrants' rights to the land they have left behind in rural areas.

Another common feature of protracted crises is increasing competition among different livelihood groups that may have coexisted peacefully before the crisis. As the economy contracts (and freedom of movement may also contract during a conflict), livelihoods have come under increasing pressure. There is strong evidence of this in Darfur, where competition between pastoralists and farmers over the natural resource base has intensified as both groups have become increasingly dependent on strategies such as grass and firewood collection to replace pre-conflict livelihood strategies that are no longer possible. In Jubba Region in Somalia, increased competition over irrigated land, resulting from the conflict, led to a further marginalization of the Bantu groups whose livelihoods depend on agriculture.[24] Similarly, in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, farmers moved from central Lubero to the forests of west Lubero to regain access to the land lost because of the conflict and institutional breakdown. Tensions with local communities and customary landlords led to marginalization of newcomers.[25]

BOX **5**

Remittances in protracted crises

Populations who suffer in situations of protracted crises are often dependent on remittances from family members and relatives elsewhere. The significance of remittances is often underestimated, and yet they represent a livelihood strategy that could be supported, building on local people's own creativity in maintaining remittance flows.

In Darfur, prior to the current conflict, remittances comprised an important component of people's livelihoods, particularly in drought-prone areas.[1] In Somalia and Sri Lanka, also, remittances have been essential to livelihoods for decades.

The impact and importance of remittances vary over time. At the start of a conflict, remittances are frequently disrupted by border closures, restrictions on movement and remittance senders returning home. In Darfur, new ways to transfer money were found, taking advantage of increased mobile network coverage and the possibility of using mobile phones for money transfers.[2] The importance of remittances increased during conflicts in Sri Lanka and Somalia.[3] With a million Somalis now living abroad, remittances have become a substantial source of external revenue – estimated at between US$700 million and US$1 billion in 2004.[4] In Sri Lanka, remittances may also have had a wider impact on the war economy given that the receipt of remittances for many Tamil populations was largely controlled and sustained by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).[5]

Efforts to facilitate remittance flows could thus make a significant difference to people's livelihoods in crisis-affected areas, yet they are rarely a component of humanitarian response. Improved communication systems, open borders and protection for remittance senders and receivers have been recommended as ways of facilitating remittances.[6]

[1] H. Young, A.M. Osman, Y.R. Aklilu Dale, B. Badri and A.J.A. Fuddle. 2005. *Darfur: livelihoods under siege*. Medford, USA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University.
[2] H. Young, K. Jacobson and A.M. Osman. 2009. *Livelihoods, migration and conflict: discussion of findings from two studies in West and North Darfur, 2006-2007*. Medford. USA: Feinstein International Center. Tufts University.
[3] B. Korf. 2003. *Conflict – threat or opportunity? War, livelihoods and vulnerability in Sri Lanka*. ICAR Discussion Paper on Institutional Change in Agriculture and Natural Resources No. 1. Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin; K. Savage and P. Harvey. 2007. *Remittances during crises: implications for humanitarian response*. HPG Report 25. London, ODI.
[4] Savage and Harvey (2007), see note 3.
[5] N. Palmer. 2005. *Defining a different war economy: the case of Sri Lanka*. Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management (available at http://berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue3_palmer.pdf).
[6] Young *et al*. (2005), see note 1; Young, Jacobsen and Osman (2009), see note 2; and Savage and Harvey (2007), see note 3.

What can be done to support livelihoods and food security in protracted crises?

So what can be done to support livelihoods and food security? There are three broad types of intervention: livelihood provisioning, livelihood protection and livelihood promotion.[26]

Livelihood provisioning – the most common type of intervention – aims to meet immediate basic needs and protect people's lives. Free food distribution is often carried out for livelihood provisioning; as well as meeting immediate food needs directly it frequently serves also as a form of income support. This income support function was the explicit intention of WFP when it increased food rations in Darfur in 2005–06, allowing beneficiaries to sell more and also helping to stabilize grain prices. Other examples of livelihood provisioning include interventions such as voucher systems, which people can use to buy essential goods and services. In Darfur, fuel-efficient stoves have been widely distributed, with the objective of reducing expenditure on firewood and protecting the environment, and vouchers for grain milling have been introduced. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the non-governmental organization (NGO) German Agro Action provided cash-for-work to people working on a road rehabilitation programme in order to help them to buy food and essential basic assets, while at the same time revitalizing markets and trade.

Livelihood protection interventions aim to protect and support people's assets and to prevent negative outcomes, such as divesting productive assets. Most examples of this in Darfur relate to projects with IDPs or assistance to rural populations aimed at discouraging migration to towns. In the IDP camps, livelihood programming commonly aimed to boost the incomes of IDPs so that they did not have to take high personal risks by venturing into insecure areas, for example to collect firewood. A number of NGOs provided life-saving support to donkeys early in the conflict – donkeys were often the only form of livestock owned by the IDPs and were essential for fetching water and firewood and as a means of transport. Fodder and veterinary care were provided and space to keep the animals was organized in the camps.

Livelihood promotion aims to improve livelihood strategies and assets, and to support key policies and institutions that can boost livelihoods. Projects that provide vocational training to IDPs, for example, can enhance their skill levels and thus their employability once the crisis is over. This has been done for IDPs from the north–south civil war in the Sudan, and more recently for displaced people currently living in camps in Darfur. In the

Democratic Republic of the Congo, the NGO *Action contre la Faim* provided agricultural services such as seed multiplication and crop protection as well as agricultural extension to improve farming practices. Generally, however, humanitarian agencies do not frequently engage with institutions and policies that could boost livelihoods during the crisis, such as helping to negotiate access to markets or engaging with issues over land rights and land "occupation". These are seen as "long-term" issues, whereas short-term planning and funding drive much humanitarian work. But there is growing demand for agencies to engage with some of these contentious issues when the crisis becomes protracted,[27] and a number of positive examples can be drawn upon. On the other hand, local institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs) seem to be more flexible in dealing with land-related issues. For instance in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the *chambres de paix* (local peace councils – see page 25) were the only informal community organization that played a role in local land disputes (see pages 24–26), while in Mozambique (see pages 43–44) customary authorities were one of the pillars of the land reform process.

What needs to be done to ensure more effective livelihood interventions?

The capability of the international humanitarian aid community to launch life-saving interventions has improved substantially in the last decade, but the capability for all types of livelihood programming has not kept pace.

Of particular concern is the time it takes for livelihood programming to start when crises become protracted. The chronology of the international humanitarian response in Darfur illustrates this well. It was not until 2006/07 – at least three years into the conflict – that agencies really engaged in discussions about livelihoods and that significant funding for livelihood programming became available. Even then, much of this was short-term programming focused on livelihood provisioning or, at best livelihood protection. Livelihood promotion received much less attention. Yet the reality in Darfur is that it has been undergoing a rapid process of urbanization during the crisis years that will not be reversed. What is needed is a vision for the urban economy for the future, and livelihood programming that is aligned to that vision.

There are three priorities for strengthening livelihoods programming in protracted crises in the future:

1. Livelihood assessments should be undertaken early in all crises (not just protracted crises), incorporating not only an assessment of basic life-saving needs but also an assessment of the causes of longer-term vulnerability to food insecurity for all groups. This should inform strategies to protect and promote livelihoods that should be implemented as soon as the emergency has been contained. This kind of programming should be seen as part of the first phase of response and should not be delayed.
2. The analysis that precedes livelihoods programming must pay attention to conflict and power dynamics, in particular the interactions among different livelihood groups. This is true not only for protracted crises caused by conflict but also for natural disasters. In both, there is a high probability that inequalities and exploitation by the powerful will intensify in the chaos and weakened governance that often prevails.
3. Humanitarian agencies must become aware of, and be prepared to engage with, the longer-term transitions that begin or are accelerated during prolonged crises, the most common of which is urbanization. This requirement challenges the short-term planning horizons that characterize humanitarian programming, yet will ensure more appropriate interventions that prepare for the post-crisis era.

Gender issues in protracted crises

Key message

Protracted crises affect men and women differently. Differences in gender roles and disparities in the way men and women are treated play a major role in how protracted crises emerge and are experienced. Better understanding of these differences can improve responses to protracted crises by the societies affected as well as by providers of humanitarian assistance and the international community as a whole.

Differences in gender roles and impacts result in part from unequal access by men and women to assets, economic opportunities, services, crisis aid and decision-making. For example, in many societies women tend to be less educated, less involved in the formal economy, less experienced in dealing with authorities, endowed with fewer and poorer-quality productive resources, and faced with more restrictions on their mobility than men. Men and women are often affected very differently in crisis situations. In armed conflicts, for example, men may be drafted by force into military groups or killed, while women are at high risk of sexual

violence and displacement. In other types of crisis, men may migrate in search of alternative employment, while women take on a higher proportion of work previously handled by men. These differences influence what resources women and men can draw upon in crisis situations, and thus their ability to respond.

Surprisingly, debates on humanitarian emergencies and protracted crises have largely ignored gender issues. In many crises, little is known about gender dynamics prior to the crisis, limiting the basis for analysing both the short- and long-term impacts of a crisis. These knowledge gaps are further compounded by a dearth of gender-disaggregated data on poverty and vulnerability in protracted crisis situations.[28]

Men and women are affected differently by protracted crises

Protracted crises affect men and women differently in three key areas: sexual exploitation and gender-based violence, access to social services such as health care and education, and stress on livelihood strategies and survival or coping mechanisms.

Sexual exploitation and gender-based violence

Vulnerable people trying to survive protracted crises are at heightened risk of being forced into exploitative sexual relationships. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable, but young males may also be victims. The fear of sexual exploitation may also force vulnerable women to form alliances with soldiers and other men in power as a safety measure. This frequently causes other problems, such as more abuse and eventual abandonment, as well as potential expulsion of affected women from their home communities. Evidence from disparate countries such as Liberia, Myanmar, Sierra Leone and Uganda shows that displaced children are frequently targets of abduction and recruitment by armed combatants.[29] Boys are typically recruited for combat and other military activities. While girls may also fight on the front lines, they are more likely to be recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage. In many cases, physical injury carries additional emotional, psychological, economic and social disadvantages.[30]

Violence against women and girls represents one of the most tragic gender-specific results of the collapse of institutions that characterizes protracted crises. Gender-based violence not only violates human rights, but also negatively affects human capital in terms of people's productive and reproductive abilities, access to health, nutrition, education and other productive resources, and ultimately undermines opportunities for economic growth. Rape and domestic violence cause more death and disability among girls and women aged 16–44 years than do cancer, motor vehicle accidents, war and malaria combined.[31]

Access to social services such as health care and education

Poor governance and lack of resources and capacities affect both the provision of public services and households' abilities to invest in education and health care. This has negative implications for both mothers and children, most notably in the form of high levels of maternal mortality.

Maternal mortality is high in countries that have been, or still are, in protracted crisis and at the same time are faced with chronic food insecurity (Figure 10). The average maternal mortality ratio (number of maternal deaths per 100 000 live births in a given year) in the 22 countries in protracted crisis is almost four times as high as the global average, and the rate increases significantly with the duration of the crisis.

Gender-based disparities are also evident in access to education. In countries in protracted crisis, girls tend to have much less access to education than boys do, particularly at the secondary level.

Several factors contribute to these disparities. For instance, when household resources are scarce, boys often get first priority for schooling.[32] Protracted crises can lead to higher drop-out rates for girls as they are forced to assume greater roles within their households.[33] If schools close and children have to travel further to get to school, parents might opt against exposing their daughters to dangers inherent in travel, such as sexual violence.[34]

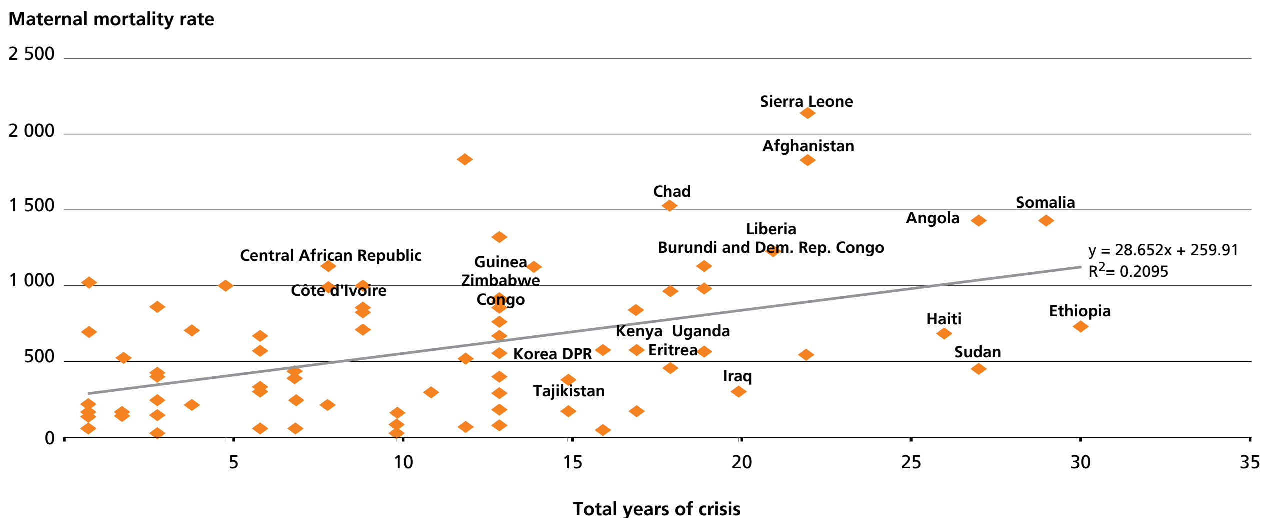
Low levels of school attainment by girls are associated with higher levels of malnutrition. For instance, the odds of having a stunted child decrease by about 4 to 5 percent for every additional year of formal education achieved by mothers.[35] Reduced livelihood opportunities can also increase the vulnerability of girls and women over the longer term. Yet public investment in the education sector in countries in protracted crises is generally low, as is investment from aid (see pages 27–31).

Stress on livelihood strategies and survival or coping mechanisms

Protracted crises reduce household livelihood security, most importantly by restricting access to economic opportunities, reducing investment choices and reducing or destroying household assets. Women are often over-represented in crisis zones because men are more likely to migrate in search of work elsewhere or to become fighters in military operations. The outcome is often a heavily altered demographic structure in the crisis-affected areas, with high proportions of female-headed households. Such households are particularly vulnerable because they commonly have a higher share of old people and children, fewer assets and less access to resources.[36] Liberia provides a telling example. In 2005, 14 years after the armed conflict began, over half of Liberian families were headed by a single parent, most of whom were women. In addition, there were many single mothers with children born outside of marriage, often the result of rape. Such women are extremely vulnerable to social isolation and discrimination.[37]

FIGURE **10**

Maternal mortality is generally high in countries in protracted crises, and increases with the duration of the crisis



Source: UNICEF.

Relations among household members and gender roles are also affected, but the extent to which crisis and conflict change gender roles (and for how long) remains the subject of debate. Crisis and conflict cause the breakdown of many traditional roles and barriers, and may open new space for women in terms of livelihoods, economic roles, and community leadership. Women may take a more active role in economic affairs and begin performing work that is confined to men in "normal" times. For example, during the civil war in Sri Lanka rural women took a larger role in marketing activities because men were more liable to be detained at army checkpoints or by the rebels.[38]

Yet in most cases gender roles may be modified only temporarily, returning to pre-crisis patterns when the crisis is over. For instance, urban insecurity in Zimbabwe in 2006 drove many men to return to their rural homes, resulting in a sharp decline in household earnings. As a consequence, the gender difference in incomes temporarily declined. However, economic improvements in 2007 provided fewer opportunities for women than for men, largely because rigid social norms have stereotyped them as household caretakers.[39] Thus, sharp gender disparities have re-emerged in rural Zimbabwe because of limited recognition and value given to women's domestic work, combined with severe constraints on women's mobility to participate in non-domestic economic opportunities.

Similarly, the demographic impact of the Liberian crisis undoubtedly contributed to the prominent role that women now play in the production of food crops and in the processing of agricultural produce. However, women's participation in cash crop production and other more lucrative agricultural activities continues to be constrained by an inflexible gender division of labour, reducing their households' food security as well as reducing the productivity of the agriculture sector in general.[40]

Incorporating a gender perspective into responses to protracted crises

By definition, humanitarian and early recovery responses to protracted crises are carried out in difficult situations. It is therefore understandable that they often focus on the "big picture": saving lives, delivering essential supplies, protecting basic human rights and trying to build the social and economic foundations for long-term recovery. In the midst of these urgent challenges, gender issues may seem irrelevant or of little importance.

Yet, in most cases, a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance can help address these more visible challenges. As noted in a Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) report, "a gender perspective can assist in the profiling and understanding of vulnerabilities and capacities, assist humanitarian agencies channel resources to those most in need, and also assist in the mobilization of a significant proportion of the population whose capacities are often underestimated".[41]

The first step to incorporating gender into humanitarian crisis policies and programmes is a sound analysis of differential vulnerabilities and impact generated by the crises as well as differential strengths and capabilities. This would allow planners to target those who face particularly adverse conditions or at least to ensure that their needs are not neglected. Evidence shows that when gender analysis is neglected, humanitarian programmes may cause more harm than good.[42]

Second, it is important to ensure that actual programmes on the ground are gender-sensitive. Such programmes

should seek to redress not only existing inequalities but to secure and build assets in ways that empower victims of crises (e.g. through safe and secure access to land, cash and other productive resources for women and the youth). Evidence indicates that relief programmes that adopt a gender perspective can avert widespread malnutrition and lead to quick and more widespread recovery in food production and other aspects of livelihoods.[43]

Third, humanitarian response must deliberately ensure that institutions embrace a gender perspective in which the needs and rights of both women and men are recognized and addressed. As such, community groups and professional networks (including women's organizations), civil society and other organizations must participate in dialogue to reconstruct the lives and livelihoods of the victims of protracted crises.

The fourth aspect in which gender issues could be integrated into response to protracted crises is in the provision of social services, including but not limited to health and education. The foregoing analysis has shown how the impact of protracted crises on health and education is higher on women than men. Improving access to health and education particularly for women would have a long-term positive effect on social and economic development in communities affected by protracted crises.

Learning from, and building on, community responses

Key message

Local socio-economic and institutional arrangements that existed prior to a protracted crisis – or were developed in response to it – can provide a sustainable basis for addressing drivers of the crisis and for rebuilding livelihoods after the crisis is over.

The role of local organizations and institutions in protracted crisis and post-crisis recovery situations is often ignored by humanitarian aid and development organizations. This section draws on case-study evidence from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Sudan to demonstrate how informal socio-economic and institutional arrangements can provide a sustainable basis for addressing drivers of the crisis, rebuilding livelihoods and improving food security. The case studies support the notion that situation assessments should go beyond the identification of immediate humanitarian needs and include an analysis of the local socio-economic and institutional context and the roles to be played by local people's organizations and institutions.

All four countries reviewed in this section have been affected by prolonged internal and external conflicts; of these, two remain, at least in some areas, in a "no peace, no war" situation. The drivers of the conflicts and of the overall institutional breakdown that have characterized these countries (or parts of these countries) are different but with a number of common elements, such as competition over access to land, conflicts over areas rich in natural resources, social exclusion mechanisms, and overall poor governance.

A major impact of these crises has been a dramatic increase in the level of food insecurity in the countries or regions affected. In Sierra Leone, for instance, two and a half million people (46 percent of the population) were undernourished in 2004–06, 600 000 more than when the war started, while in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the prevalence of undernourishment rose from 26 percent in the period 1990–92 to the current level of around 70 percent. In the Sudan, while national trends indicate progress in the reduction of the level of undernourishment, food insecurity worsened specifically in the regions affected by conflicts such as southern Sudan.[44] Furthermore, crises commonly lead to the displacement of large numbers of people and the disruption of the livelihood systems that formerly supported them.[45] These consequences, in turn, lead to a vicious cycle of political instability, breakdown of public services and conflict among sections of the population as they compete for access and control over the remaining resources and services.

With the weakening or breakdown of public services, people turn to local initiatives, often based on traditional institutions, for the provision of basic services. These institutions often prove effective and resilient in otherwise chaotic situations.

Local institutions and post-conflict recovery

Numerous studies on countries in protracted crisis have identified local socio-economic and institutional changes that have helped in addressing some of the structural drivers of crises and that could provide a sustainable basis for post-conflict recovery.

For example, in Sierra Leone, many communities developed strong informal networks and local institutions, partly as a reaction to the breakdown of national structures.[46] One study found that, three years after the end of the civil war, measures of local community mobilization and collective action – including the number of community meetings and voter registration – were higher in areas that had experienced more war-related violence against civilians than in areas that had experienced less violence.[47]

A 2009 World Bank report on youth employment in Sierra Leone noted an upsurge in self-organized social activism among young people after the war, including the establishment of business cooperatives, groups aiming at the development of a chiefdom and section or district and occupational groups, such as bike-riders and tape-sellers associations. In the Kono District alone, one NGO study counted 141 groups with membership of more than 17 000 young people.[48]

Fieldwork carried out in Sierra Leone in 2004 and 2008 in Kayima, a village situated in Sandor Chiefdom that had traditionally served as a pool of unskilled mining labour, found that tensions between chiefs and youth over land rights and mining revenues had decreased over the study period as "wartime displacement had fostered a new sense of self-reliance among people of all ages". Youths also showed a renewed interest in farming and family-oriented life in the village as they turned away from poorly paid diamond mining. Sixty-eight percent of interviewees in Kayima had joined labour cooperatives or social clubs, and credited these organizations with facilitating their successful return to farming. With the return of former miners and others displaced by the conflict, the pool of family labour had grown and local residents could now cultivate larger farms.[49]

Similarly, in eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, local people relied on their own institutions to deal with issues related to access to land that were fuelling the conflict. They established so-called *chambres de paix* or "peace councils", composed of elders and tasked with investigating land disputes and reaching a compromise solution among the concerned farmers. Some local associations also played a role beyond conflict resolution, introducing collective fields, establishing microcredit systems, informing farmers about their property rights, providing information on the legal framework regulating access to land and advocating at the national level for a modification of the existing land laws. Despite their dynamism and development potential, particularly in addressing the key drivers of food insecurity, these local associations and the *chambres de paix* lacked technical and financial capabilities and their potential role as building blocks for addressing some of the underlying drivers of food insecurity and conflict was seldom recognized and integrated into the action plans of intervening agencies.[50]

In Liberia, informal institutions played a critical role in the survival and food security of local people during the civil war from the late 1980s to 2003, and indigenous "development associations" were central to the reconstitution of post-conflict governance arrangements, the provision of social protection, the rehabilitation of infrastructure and promotion of food and livelihood security. For example, clan-based networks and membership organizations or "development associations", such as the Dugbe River Union in Sinoe County and the Seletorwaa development association in Yarwin-Mehnsonnoh District, emerged to cope with the drivers of the conflict and its impact on livelihoods. These organizations created safety nets for the vulnerable and food-insecure, resolved conflicts and developed social and physical infrastructure such as clinics, roads, market sheds and community halls.[51]

These observations demonstrate first and foremost the remarkable resilience of local people in the face of conflict. They also illustrate that crises not only lead to devastation: they can also result in important positive institutional and social changes, including increased political awareness and an upsurge in self-organized collective action. Provided they are identified and well-managed, such changes can become powerful drivers for sustainable post-conflict recovery and entry points for more imaginative and empowering support by agencies beyond aid distribution. However, there are risks that local elites can exploit such developments for their own self-interest and that indiscriminate funding of these activities by development agencies can create aid dependency among emerging local organizations. Engaging with such mechanisms thus will require careful situation analysis and monitoring to ensure that efforts to improve the well-being of the broad population are not misdirected.

Building and rebuilding local institutions

Experiences from several countries demonstrate how investments by government, civil society and development agencies can build on and amplify local social and institutional changes.

The farmer field school initiative in Sierra Leone is a good example of how such investments are helping to address some of the food-security-related structural drivers and impacts of the conflict. The Government and its development partners launched the initiative immediately after the end of the war in 2002. The core objectives of the programme were to rebuild trust among members of rural communities ravaged by the civil war and to train farmers, many of whom were young and inexperienced, in basic practices related to agricultural production, processing and marketing. Part of the rationale was also to increase the

accountability of service providers, whether in government or CSOs, to the farming community. This was seen as a way to strengthen and decentralize government institutions that, already weak before the war, had been further debilitated during the war.[52]

Farmer field schools also provided a unique opportunity to help young people who had never received any formal training during the war years to become viable farmers. Since the inception of the initiative approximately 75 000 farmers, from about 3 000 rural groups, have graduated from such field schools run under either Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS) or NGO extension programmes. Youths accounted for 60 percent of participants in field schools carried out by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-funded programmes between 2004 and 2007. Most graduates either returned to work for existing organizations or went on to establish new farmer-based organizations in their communities. In Sierra Leone, independent impact assessments have shown that they have increased the long-term sustainability of community-led initiatives and helped to rebuild self-sustaining farmer-based organizations.

There has been a similar experience in southern Sudan, where an innovative livestock health programme was able to build on the capabilities of local organizations and institutions to develop community-based services that helped to control livestock rinderpest.[53]

Initial efforts by Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) in 1989–92 to control rinderpest in the area were "top down", bringing in formally trained animal health workers and establishing a cold-chain to deliver vaccines. No local institutions were involved because OLS wanted to be seen to be independent of parties to the civil war. But this lack of local buy-in proved to be the downfall of the initial effort.

In 1993, the OLS programme changed its strategy towards the use of community-based approaches that built on local institutions, such as informal pastoralist associations. Traditional institutions, such as elders' groups and other kinship-based associations, were involved in the planning process and herders were trained as vaccinators and supplied with heat-stable rinderpest vaccine. These new approaches quickly achieved positive results. The OLS programme vaccinated over 1 million cattle in 1995, compared with only 140 000 in 1993. Outbreaks of rinderpest decreased from 11 in 1993 to only 1 in 1997. There have been no confirmed outbreaks of rinderpest in southern Sudan since 1998.

The experiences from both Sierra Leone and southern Sudan indicate that livelihoods-based food-security programming is possible in protracted crises. It requires commitment to livelihoods approaches, a strong but flexible coordination effort with control over resources, and support for systematic assessment of the impact of interventions on livelihoods. The involvement of local institutions and an engagement with parties in conflict are fundamental to the success of such programmes.

The Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan case studies indicate that informal socio-economic and institutional arrangements that existed prior to a protracted crisis or developed in response to it can provide a sustainable basis for addressing the drivers of the crisis and rebuilding livelihoods after the crisis is over. In contrast, the Democratic Republic of the Congo case study illustrates how assessments carried out by aid and development agencies are often narrowly focused on identifying immediate needs, while the capabilities and potential roles of local organizations in programme planning and implementation are frequently ignored.

Experiences from Liberia and Sierra Leone also illustrate the importance of addressing the social and economic exclusion of youth. Although this issue is often ignored, it is a major driver of conflict and needs to be addressed if post-conflict recovery is to be sustainable and effective.

The lesson that can be learned from this is that humanitarian and development agencies should base their actions during and after a conflict on an assessment that goes beyond immediate humanitarian needs and includes an analysis of the evolving local socio-economic and institutional contexts.