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LIVELIHOODS AND MARKETS IN PROTRACTED CONFLICT

A review of evidence and practice

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Abbreviations

AFAR	Malian NGO
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
AHW	Animal health workers
AM	Accompanying measures
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
CAHW	Community animal health workers
CCPP	Contagious caprine pleuropneumonia
CFW	Cash For Work
CT	Cash transfer
DFID	Department for International Development
DR, DRC	Democratic Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo
ECT	Emergency cash transfers
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, UK Government
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FNS	Food and nutrition security
FoM	Freedom of movement
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross domestic product

GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation
HDD	Household dietary diversity
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally displaced person
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IPC	Integrated Phase Classification
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
IRD	Institut de recherché pour le développement
LDC	Least Developed Country
LIC	Low-income country
LMIC	Lower-middle-income country
MEDEP	Micro Enterprise Development Programme, Nepal
MENA	Middle Eastern and North African
MIC	Middle-income country
MISFA	Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGCA	Non-government controlled areas
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
PDIA	Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation
PoC	Protection of Civilian
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
RCT	Randomised Control Trial
RER	Rapid Evidence Review
RNFE	Rural non-farm economy
SASPP	Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation
SNSDP	Safety Net and Skills Development Project
TCTR	Total cost to transfer ratio
UMZA	Nigerian agro-industry company
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAC	Vulnerability Assessment Committee
VSLA	Village savings and loans associations
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Protracted conflicts are immensely costly in lives and livelihoods, a grave threat to development. This review addresses two questions:

- How has protracted conflict **affected the livelihoods** and food security of individuals and households, and local and national economies? And,
- What **responses** to economic and social harm caused by protracted conflict have been undertaken? What evidence exists for their effectiveness, and in what circumstances?

Eleven cases of protracted conflict were chosen, most of them current in 2021: Afghanistan; Darfur, Sudan; eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); Mali; Nepal (ended 2006); north-east Nigeria; Somalia; South Sudan; Syria; northern Uganda (ended 2006); and Yemen. This report is based on literature reviews of the eleven cases and interviews with key informants, with data and insights synthesised by comparing across the cases.

Impacts of protracted conflict on livelihoods

Even before conflict, large numbers of people lived in chronic poverty in all cases except Syria. Conflict added to existing vulnerabilities, so even minor economic losses were liable to push people into food and livelihood insecurity.

Conflict led to destruction or theft of household assets; to death, injury and flight of working members; and to mass displacement of people to towns, camps and across borders. Affected populations were less able to move to farms, to markets or to migrate for work. Much rural activity was thus curtailed.

Markets usually continued to function, albeit much affected by conflict. Business was disrupted by looting of warehouses and attacks on lorries. Transport costs rose as drivers took longer routes to avoid dangers, as warring parties imposed informal taxes at check points, and as less road maintenance raised operating costs. Prices of goods brought into conflict zones rose, those of produce shipped out fell.

Knock-on effects multiplied initial economic loss. With less production and trade, informal services lost business. Looting of warehouses or lorries could decapitalise traders, in some cases then breaking supply chains that operated on credit.

Some local economies suffered from macroeconomic problems linked to conflict: inflation in Syria and South Sudan, currency depreciations in Syria and Yemen, freezing of Syrian assets in Lebanese banks, national currency not being recognised in parts of Yemen.

War economies were created as belligerents directed trade along specific routes, allowed elites to monopolise foreign exchange or border traffic, or seized control of lucrative supply chains such as minerals. Conflicts could bring new business, such as supplying aid agencies – although such opportunities were usually monopolised by wealthy and powerful persons, at the expenses of small, local businesses.

Services were reduced or ended under conflict: banks closed, electricity grids were cut, schools and health posts functioned less, local administration was greatly diminished.

Conflict bred conflict: lawlessness tended to increase under conflict, as social bonds, community norms, and functioning law and order institutions weakened. The strong typically had more chance to take advantage of the weak, manifested in land grabbing, cattle rustling and robbery –including attacks on business rivals. Warring parties in some cases actively stole cattle, illegally logged forests, grabbed land and monopolised lucrative trade.

Impacts were gendered, very often to the further disadvantage of women and girls. Men and boys were likely to be forcibly recruited to armed groups, to be killed or injured. When males were lost, households headed by women were more likely to have their land seized. Women and girls typically ran the risk of sexual violence, including rape as a weapon of war – leading to injury, pregnancy, end of schooling and social rejection.

With restricted economic activity, women often intensified petty activities to try to earn more – with little or no reduction in their domestic responsibilities. Women might then gain status within the household as breadwinners. In other circumstances, it could lead to commercial sex work, sometimes in return for relief allocations. Men with less work typically lost self-esteem and were more prone to addictions and to domestic violence.

Differing risks faced by men and women could lead to changes in roles, as for example with visits to markets where men were likely to be abducted or maltreated at checkpoints, so women would instead visit markets.

Families split up to try to diversify income. Families might marry off daughters very young, before the age of consent.

Conflict sometimes led directly to changes in gender norms, for and against women. In Afghanistan, the fall of the Taliban greatly increased girls' education. In Maoist-controlled rural Nepal, forms of subjugation of women to men were (strongly) discouraged or banned.

Responses

Public responses – by governments, NGOs, aid partners – to the effects of protracted conflict divided into three elements.

One, **humanitarian relief** was given to enable those affected by conflict and other shocks, such as droughts, to survive. **Food assistance** made up most relief, given either as food aid in-kind, vouchers to buy food redeemable for a restricted list of goods at specified retailers, and cash transfers. Food in kind dominated but vouchers and cash have been increasingly deployed. Cash was usually preferred by recipients, was cheaper to deliver and was timelier than vouchers and food itself. Fears that cash would be misspent, that cash would push up local prices, that food would not be available in local markets were rarely realised.

When food assistance was delivered on time, famine was averted. Which is not to say that without assistance, people would have died: more probably they would have endured hardship. Food assistance rarely reached all affected by conflict, targeting was never perfect. Those missed out from relief did not seem to experience higher mortality than those

reached. Emergency relief may not have saved lives, but probably protected recipients from unacceptable hardship.

Two, **social protection** – as regular, reliable, and potentially indefinite support to vulnerable persons – to alleviate hardship and reduce vulnerability to shocks was rarely seen – only in Mali, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen. Most schemes were pilots rather than institutionalised systems. Results were promising, although evidence was thin.

Social protection schemes could, however, be vulnerable to conflict, as has been seen in Tigray, Ethiopia in 2020 where the Productive Safety Net Programme that delivered assistance to around one million persons in Tigray was severely interrupted by recent conflict.

Three, to help people earn incomes and meet their basic needs, **livelihoods were supported**. This took three main forms:

First, reconstructing, restoring and improving physical infrastructure, mainly by repair or construction of roads, irrigation works, and power supplies. Construction by labour in programmes designed to transfer cash or create employment were reported time and again to create low quality works, sometimes without planned maintenance so they subsequently fell into disrepair. Schemes focused on the works themselves did better;

Second, reviving supply chains to connect rural populations to markets, through infusions of capital and information. Such measures were not common but could be effective. They included linking farmers to buyers and processors which could work well. Some of the links concerned niche products, so the potential to scale them up was limited. In other cases, the aim was to relieve bottlenecks in supply chains. Such efforts, however, were neither cheap, nor simple, nor short-term. Sustained support over five to ten years was often needed, by staff with technical knowledge and skills, with the time, funds and scope to resolve unexpected obstacles that often arose as such initiatives developed.

In just a few cases, inventory credit was offered to traders to revive their services. Given the potential impact of revived trading, support to decapitalised traders may well have considerable potential in many conflicts.

Third, helping individual and households to earn incomes either by restoring their previous livelihoods or by undertaking new ones, through provision of working and investment capital, training and technical assistance. Assistance was sometimes layered in combinations of cash transfers, goods, training and technical advice.

Capitalising enterprises worked when there was demand for what was produced, which often meant growing for markets rather than subsistence. Agencies tended to give seeds, tools and other physical inputs, despite evidence that vouchers or cash would be simpler and allow producers to obtain what they needed, not what agencies imagined they needed.

Training in technical and vocational skills was often costly, could only be offered to small numbers of trainees, and sometimes was not conferring skills for which there was demand. Training in more generic business and financial skills had better reports. Adding some psycho-social support, even if only a small amount, enhanced training, especially for displaced persons and women.

Technical assistance largely concerned crop extension and animal health. The former worked better using more participatory means, such as Farmer Field Schools, rather than by top-down transmission of standard messages. For herders, some success was seen with community animal health workers, who lived among herders and provided simple services that did not require a skilled veterinarian. A frequent challenge, however, was how to sustain these services commercially.

Improving **rural financial systems** was undertaken with village savings and loans associations and with microfinance agencies. Experiences were more often positive than negative. No interventions, however, were seen to facilitate remittances — a gap given that conflict led to some household members fleeing to find work in cities, and the difficulties of getting funds home in conflict areas.

Most reports of **inclusion** concerned women and youth. Very little was found on older people and people with disabilities. **Youth** were commonly targeted for employment, being provided with inputs to start their own enterprises, or being trained. In Somalia, some youth training included conflict awareness to try to prevent young men joining armed groups and becoming radicalised.

Women were largely assisted by targeting them as participants, or supporting activities open to women. This did not necessarily require deliberate gender programming: a concern for small-scale farming or business might in practice favour women.

Some interventions, however, were inimical to most women. For example, transfers were sometimes conditional on labouring, despite women in need having very little spare time. Livelihoods programmes tended to promote small-scale, labour-intensive activities demanding more time than most women have. Some projects assumed specific activities were for women: training in tailoring was one example, whether the services or products were demanded or not.

Very few reports seen mentioned the circumstances of seniors or people with disabilities, despite both groups making up a substantial fraction of those affected by conflict.

Conclusions: key lessons

Most people survive conflict largely down to their own ability, together with family and community, to support themselves — if only because in most conflicts, the aid sent is so much less than potential need. Aid should be provided to affected populations as another resource they can use in difficult circumstances. This implies allowing people to use aid as they see fit.

When providing relief, cash almost always is better than aid in kind. It is usually cheaper and quicker to deliver than transporting in food. Cash usually has more positive and fewer negative effects on the local economy than food in kind. Where conflicts disrupt trade, food in kind may be needed, but only when traders cannot transport foods to markets. Cash transfers may thus become a default response, but not the only response, and not to be applied blindly without regard to circumstances.

Relief should not necessarily nor always be prior to livelihoods support. Conflict can rapidly erode assets, break up social networks, and undermine livelihoods. Early responses, as soon

as possible after fighting breaks out, may protect some livelihoods, or at least mitigate the effects of conflict. If support is delayed, those options may be lost.

Because protracted conflict affects populations where many suffer chronic poverty, and because conflict tends to be drawn out over years, **social protection – a dependable transfer to those facing hardship – should be part of the response.** That said, in conflicts, humanitarian agencies may need to assess how far social protection is genuinely impartial and if affected populations feel safe in trusting their data to the state.

In most conflicts, it was possible to support livelihoods. Opportunities sometimes existed to produce for growing markets, some of them export markets, but more often domestic urban markets in cities where demand for higher-value foods was burgeoning – premium rice, vegetables, sheep for festivals, and olive oil are amongst the examples found.

To make a difference for livelihoods, **programmes need sufficient funds and should engage with the people supported over several years** – probably at least five years in most cases. This means committing funds for extended periods. Because both economic circumstances and conflict evolve in ways that can be hard to foresee, **management must be adaptive.** That requires not only flexible funding, but also flexible procedures – with monitoring and learning.

Because the success of farms, herds and enterprises often depends in part on external factors, for example roads and getting to market, agencies need to **see the economy more broadly than the farm, herd or enterprise.**

Many households affected by conflict do not get any support directly. But they can benefit from interventions at community, district and national levels – for example, improving roads to market, supplying better technical and market information to producers, and providing public services such as schools and health posts.

Agencies sometimes appear to struggle to programme with respect both to conflict and to inclusion. In part that may result from seeing the tools of inclusion as too demanding. Not all analysis has to be comprehensive and precise to inform practice. Provisional understandings, to be refined in the light of further evidence, can allow progress.

Lessons are largely about how to go about things, rather than about what to do. Process usually matters as much or more than content. Because process can trump content, **trying to identify specific interventions as ‘best buys’ may divert attention from more important questions of process.**

Because processes matter, agencies and their sub-units need to have **leadership, systems and procedures that facilitate flexible and adaptive management.**

Local people should be given freedom to choose how best to use support to address obstacles and options they face. Cash payments are often a good option: they can smooth household consumption, while providing extra capital to farms and enterprises can raise productivity and create jobs. But not all livelihood constraints can be removed with a household transfer. Cash often needs complementing with other measures, some targeted at the same households – for example technical training, psycho-social support in ‘Cash Plus’ programmes. Measures at community and district scale can be as or more important than direct support to enterprises.

Evidence on what is effective and why is almost always lacking. Programme reviews typically report immediate outputs, but less is usually said about outcomes, while (enduring) impacts are rarely examined. Hence **calls for more and better evidence are commonplace.**

Intermediate analysis to understand the causal chain from the interventions to their outcomes, effects and impacts – but without having to satisfy the demanding and costly criteria of experimental methods – **would be valuable.** Options exist.

If response needs to proceed – at least in the short run – with little evidence, **the case for adaptive management of interventions becomes even stronger.** Planning must then draw on local knowledge, especially local knowledge of causal links. Implementation must be flexible and adaptive – using learning processes and problem-driven iterative adaptation.

Introduction

Protracted conflicts are immensely costly in lives and livelihoods, a grave threat to development. Lasting typically a decade or longer, most such conflicts involve armed groups within countries fighting either the state or other armed groups or both.

This review addresses two broad questions:

- How has protracted conflict affected the livelihoods and food security of individuals and households, and local and national economies? And,
- What **responses** to economic and social harm caused by protracted conflict have been undertaken? What is the evidence for their effectiveness, and in what circumstances?

Eleven cases of protracted conflict were chosen, most of them current in 2021: Afghanistan; Darfur, Sudan; eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); Mali; Nepal (ended 2006); north-east Nigeria; Somalia; South Sudan; Syria; northern Uganda (ended 2006); and Yemen.

In almost all cases, people affected by conflict typically live on (very) low incomes, leaving them vulnerable to shocks for lack of physical, financial, and social capital. In some, but not all cases, additional shocks arise quite frequently – once or twice a decade – in natural disasters such as drought. The combination of conflict with natural disaster creates severe threats to the very existence of those affected.

This report is based largely on literature reviews of the eleven cases and interviews with key informants, with data and insights synthesised by comparing across the cases. [Annex A contains short accounts of each conflict; Annex B summarises the interventions seen in the different cases.]

A challenge was to find evidence of impact of interventions during protracted conflict. While agency reports of what they delivered can usually be found, sometimes with assessments of the immediate outputs, impacts were much less commonly assessed.

One evidence gap stood out: the lack of detailed analysis of impacts of conflict on women and disadvantaged groups such as the elderly and people with disabilities. Less can be said about how inclusive responses were than should be the case.

Impacts of protracted conflict on livelihoods

Even before conflict, large numbers of people lived in chronic poverty in all cases other than Syria. Conflict added to existing vulnerabilities, so even minor economic losses were liable to push people into food and livelihood insecurity. A corollary is that because conflict rarely mitigates prior causes of poverty, when conflict abates and peace is restored, poverty is likely to persist.

Effects on households

Loss of assets, personal and community

Violence usually led to destruction or theft of assets — crops, fruit trees, livestock, irrigation works, tools, stores of goods and food, housing and contents. In some cases, this was intended to destroy the economy and way of life of ethnic groups (Sudan, Uganda, South Sudan, Nigeria). The threat of looting could be used to demand political allegiance (Uganda) or to extort protection money (Sudan).

For want of lost assets, much economic activity was greatly reduced or stopped entirely. Fear of losing livestock could provoke herders into selling off their stock at low prices.

The scale of such losses can hardly be understated. It could take years for households to restore their assets after conflict ends. The value of lost assets was commonly much larger than emergency relief.

Households lost labour to death, injury, forced recruitment into armed groups, and to migration. Most of those killed or injured were men, leading to more households headed by females. Loss of labour led not only to less activity and lower incomes, but also it became harder for female-headed households to defend their rights to land when men were lost or had fled.

In all cases, people were displaced by conflict. They fled rural areas for the relative safety of towns within the conflict area or to camps; the more able or those with better social connections would migrate to towns or the capital city, and those with the most possibilities might be able to emigrate without ending up in a refugee camp.

Some populations were deliberately displaced as part of war, with enforced detainment to clear the field for battles, to isolate rebels from civilian support, to protect civilians — but also to punish those seen as disloyal [Sudan, Uganda, Burundi and Myanmar].

Most conflict displacement lasted for years, cutting people off from farms and other means of livelihood. People in camps often had no access to land to farm, were often not close to jobs in towns, and were not always free to move. All that was on offer were a few unskilled jobs within the camps themselves or gathering firewood or poles from close-at-hand commons. Where camp residents could rent land to farm, rents were often high, sometimes for plots that required much work to open up, with restrictions on crops planted.

Displacement could mean losing contact with family and friends, leaving those dependent on their support bereft. Movement could mean contact was lost with relatives trying to send remittances.

Some moves were intermittent and temporary, in reaction to sporadic insecurity. Temporary displacement could lead to looting of farms and homes while absent, and to farmers missing planting and harvesting.

When returning from protracted displacement, people sometimes found it hard to re-claim their land rights because others, sometimes themselves displaced, had already occupied their land. Because women's land rights were usually ready less secure than men's rights, widows, divorcees or separated women were particularly vulnerable to losing their rights to land.

Conflict usually severely curtailed movement, either out of fear of violence or owing to restrictions imposed by warring parties. Distant fields might then become inaccessible, forests and other commons too risky to go gathering, markets harder to reach, and migration for work impossible.

Not well documented was the mental trauma of conflict – affecting, for example, as many as two-thirds of the population in Darfur. For those affected, this could lead to loss of motivation, feelings of helplessness and to addiction to drugs and alcohol – all detracting from the ability to work.

Effects on markets

Markets usually continued to function, albeit much affected by conflict and with differentiated impacts on specific products and supply chains. Normal business was disrupted by looting of warehouses and attacks on lorries. Losses to one business could then undermine other businesses, and even farmers and herders, when actors were linked by supplier credits that then could not be repaid. Simpler supply chains where all transactions were cash-in-hand – often the case for livestock – were more resilient to conflict.

Transport was disrupted variously by the need to take longer routes to avoid dangerous areas, by checkpoints installed by warring parties that might demand informal taxes – estimated on one route in DRC at almost one quarter the value of goods in transit, by roads not being maintained, and by border closures. Costs thus rose, raising prices of good brought in and depressing prices paid for goods going out.

Farmers were typically left worse off, although some were able to switch crops to those more easily transported or less subject to control. For example, Syrian farmers swapped cumin and coriander for wheat.

In some cases, warring parties imposed rules on markets, directing trade along specific routes, allowing elites to monopolise foreign exchange or border traffic, or seizing control of a supply chain such as valuable minerals in DRC.

Conflicts could bring new business, such as supplying aid agencies. All too often, however, the agencies only contracted large-scale, formal enterprises, thereby cutting local and informal business out of these deals. In Mali, for example, lucrative aid contracts to supply food bypassed ordinary grain traders, in favour of dealers whose only qualifications were their capital, social connections and familiarity in dealing with UN agencies.

Telecommunications and electricity were often disrupted either by destruction of facilities or inability to maintain them. Power cuts either stopped local industry or forced them to rely on more expensive generators. Banks and other financial agencies were sometimes looted, and their services lost. In Somalia, legislation to prevent finances reaching terrorist groups in 2011 meant the suspension of international transfers to a country where many people depended on remittances from the Somali diaspora.

First round curtailing of local economies led to second-round multipliers. Economic downturns could cause the decline and closure of businesses that depended on footfall in market places and on traffic along roads – tea shops, sellers of cooked food, charcoal, and farm produce.

Some local economies suffered from macroeconomic problems linked to conflict: inflation in

Syria and South Sudan, currency depreciations in Syria and Yemen, freezing of Syrian assets in Lebanese banks, national currency not being recognised in parts of Yemen.

Effects on services

Education and health services were often interrupted by conflict. Personnel fled conflict zones and new recruits were unwilling to take their places. Some warring parties deliberately shut down schools, especially in Afghanistan and north-east Nigeria. When populations were displaced, services in arrival zones were not often funded to reflect this.

On the other hand, some camps provided better education and health services than the people had previously experienced, and some people later benefited from their education and skills – including languages and familiarity with aid procedures – when they left the camp.

Loss of agricultural services was most notable when control of crop and animal disease was suspended, leading to avoidably losses of harvests and stock.

Local administration often closed down in conflict, with less control of crime, less registration of persons and rights to land. Such effects were more felt in areas that previously had reasonably good administration, which was far from usually the case in remote areas of low-income countries.

Social impacts

Conflict bred conflict: lawlessness tended to increase under conflict, as social bonds, community norms, and functioning justice, law and order institutions weakened. The strong typically had more chance to take advantage of the weak, manifested in land grabbing, cattle rustling and robbery –including attacks on business rivals. Warring parties in some cases actively stole cattle, illegally logged forests, grabbed land and monopolised lucrative trade.

Widespread corruption was often a significant feature of the conflicts, resulting from weakened authority, but also a grievance driving conflict itself. Corruption commonly accompanied aid, including locally when aid was distributed.

Gendered impacts

Gender is just one of the lines along which conflict affected persons differently, but a prominent one. Gender norms, and often statutory laws, shaped livelihood opportunities and vulnerabilities differently for men, women, boys and girls: very often to disadvantage women and girls.

Violence in conflict was gendered. Men and boys were often more likely to be forcibly recruited to armed groups, to be killed or injured. When males were lost, households then headed by women were more likely to have their land seized. Women and girls typically ran the risk of sexual violence, including rape as a weapon of war. Being raped, apart from injury, could lead to pregnancy, end of schooling and social rejection.

Gendered norms on activity had consequences. Gathering from commons, collecting water or visiting markets exposed women or men normally expected to do these things to new risks. In some cases, roles were reversed: for example, where men were likely to be abducted or maltreated at checkpoints, women would instead visit markets. Sometimes men's activities,

such as herding were heavily hit by conflict, leading to women intensifying their activities to make good the deficit – with little or no reduction in their domestic responsibilities. That could lead to women gaining status within the household as breadwinners. In other circumstances, it could lead to commercial sex work, sometimes in return for relief allocations. Men with less work typically lost self-esteem and were more prone to addiction and domestic violence.

Where conflicts led to deeper poverty, families might marry off daughters very young, before the age of consent.

Families split either deliberately to reduce risk or to access different income sources, or because they were displaced. That could leave the parts headed by women more vulnerable to violence and loss of land rights.

In some cases, the conflict led directly to changes in gender norms, for and against women. In Afghanistan, the fall of the Taliban greatly increased girls' education. In Maoist-controlled rural Nepal, forms of subjugation of women to men were (strongly) discouraged or banned. In other cases, conflict disrupted social practice, so that women gained more voice and agency, as for example in South Sudan.

Responses

Public responses – by governments, NGOs, aid partners – to the effects of protracted conflict divided into:

- **Relief** to enable those affected by conflict (and other shocks) to survive, including humanitarian protection to protect rights crucial to pursue a livelihood (freedom of movement, land rights, right to work, etc.);
- **Social protection** – regular, reliable, and potentially indefinite support to vulnerable persons – to alleviate hardship and reduce vulnerability to shocks; and,
- **Livelihoods support** to help people earn incomes and meet their basic needs.

These distinctions, however, often blurred in protracted conflicts. Because conflicts were drawn out, relief units or agencies could find themselves providing relief as well as supporting livelihoods. This applied especially when regular development agencies had shut down owing to insecurity.

Requirements for different kinds of assistance differed significantly. Even when all three kinds were given as cash transfers, their different purposes implied different amounts, frequencies, delivery mode, targeting and perhaps most significantly, different complementary measures.

Humanitarian relief

Humanitarian or relief aid for food security was given in all cases except Nepal; provided to people, both resident and displaced, continuously through conflict, or given in response to other shocks such as drought and floods. Food assistance was the single largest relief response, given either as food aid in-kind, vouchers to buy food, redeemable for a restricted list of goods at specified retailers, and cash transfers. Food in kind dominated – as much as 90% in DRC and South Sudan, but vouchers and cash have been increasingly deployed.

Cash was preferred by recipients [DRC, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen]. It was almost always timelier and cheaper to deliver than food aid or vouchers. Cash could transfer two-thirds of its cost to recipients: food in kind rarely achieved more than half the cost. Most cash was spent on food, allowing people to improve the diversity of their diet, more so than food in kind which tended to raise calorie consumption.

Fears that cash might be misspent have been allayed by evidence. Cash was spent mainly on food, then on school fees and health care, on water [in Somalia] and sometimes to repay household debts or to invest. Cash was moreover spent locally, stimulating the local economy. Vouchers and food in kind undermined demand in local markets and tended to favour larger traders who could partner with aid agencies. Even when food was sourced domestically, it tended to come from distant peaceful areas rather than local conflict zones.

The fear that cash transfers might inflate the local cost of food proved unfounded. Most agencies monitored food supplies and revised transfer values to reflect changes in the cost of food.

Experience with emergency cash has led agencies to plan how the transfers might support future state social protection.

Some agencies preferred vouchers and food since it gave them some control over use of the transfer. Some portion of food distributed, however, was sold to fund other needs, including the cost of milling grain. Few cases, if any, were seen where food had to be transported in because it was not locally available.

Evidence on the way that different forms of assistance affected different people is scant. Some cases reported women to be empowered if they received cash, but in Syria women with cash were suspected of having been paid for sex.

Overall, when food assistance was delivered on time, famine was averted. The few exceptions, such as Somalia in 2011, arose when aid was not delivered. Which is not to say that without assistance, people would have died: more probably they would have endured hardship. Food assistance rarely reached all affected by conflict, targeting was never perfect. Among those excluded, it was not clear they suffered higher mortality than those reached. Emergency relief may not have saved lives, but it may well have been a safety net protecting recipients from unacceptable hardship.

Social protection

Only a few social protection programmes were seen – in Mali, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen – and most were pilots rather than institutionalised systems. Results were promising, even if the evidence was thin. The cost-effectiveness of these schemes needs to be compared to other measures.

Most interventions are examples of cash plus: cash plus education and training, and cash with some conditionality such as local public works. Cash plus can work well, so long as the complements provide something that money cannot buy. The prime example is child nutrition: cash helps mothers buy food, while guidance on child feeding and health helps the mother get the full benefit of the food.

While social protection can be given in conflict, that perhaps depends on its intensity. Ethiopia's long-established Productive Safety Net Programme that delivered assistance to around one million persons in Tigray has been severely interrupted by the recent outbreak of conflict. Staff have fled, banks and shops that helped channel assistance have closed. A safety net designed to work in peace was vulnerable to hostilities.

Support to livelihoods

Support to livelihoods took three main forms:

- Reconstructing, restoring and improving physical infrastructure to facilitate individual and household enterprises, mainly by repair or construction of roads, irrigation works, and power supplies;
- Reviving supply chains to connect rural populations to markets, through infusions of capital and information; and,
- Helping individual and households to earn incomes either by restoring their previous livelihoods or by undertaking new ones, through provision of working and investment capital, training and technical assistance. Assistance was sometimes layered in combinations of cash transfers, goods, training and technical advice.

Physical infrastructure

Construction of physical infrastructure by labour in programmes designed to transfer cash or create employment were reported time and again to create low quality works, sometimes without any planned maintenance so that they subsequently fell into disrepair (for example, northern Nigeria).

Projects designed specifically to create or repair physical infrastructure seemed more effective, although most reports concern outputs, rather than the consequent impacts on local economies.

Reviving and stimulating supply chains and markets

Interventions to revive, stimulate and improve the functioning of supply chains came largely from Mali, northern Nigeria and South Sudan. Typically, farmers were introduced to buyers who needed to source produce for growing urban and sometimes export markets. Links might entail formal contracting, with buyers providing inputs on credit and technical assistance to farmers. In just a few cases, including South Sudan, private traders were helped with inventory credit. In Somalia USAID and other agencies have programmes to alleviate bottlenecks in value chains, often in high-value export items such as livestock and canned fish.

Such measures were often successful in raising returns to production and creating jobs. That said, supply chain interventions were neither cheap, nor simple, nor short-term. Sustained support over five to ten years was often needed, by staff with technical knowledge and skills, and the time, funds and scope to resolve unexpected obstacles that often arose as such initiatives developed.

Some initiatives took advantage of niche activities so they could not go to great scale. Contracting farmers has long been vaunted to provide small farmers in Africa with inputs and technical assistance, but conditions for successful contracting — above all that farmers cannot sell on the side — probably apply to no more than one tenth of farm output.

That limit does not apply, however, to supporting private traders. Successful support to traders operating in difficult and risky circumstances has potential application across large areas affected by conflict in Africa. Experienced and valued traders all too frequently lost their capital to conflict and other problems, such as interruptions to exports of livestock in the Horn of Africa. Private traders often made great efforts themselves to re-establish themselves, sometimes with support from local herders and farmers, but it took time. Public support could accelerate recovery, with economic benefits greater than costs.

Such support was not always needed. In some cases, private traders were already connecting farmers to markets. In Syria traders managed to move wheat and other produce across the shifting boundaries of areas under the control of different warring parties, working through informal trader networks. Government controlled areas did not include the bread baskets of Syria, so it was a boon to the government that wheat could be brought in from the north-east and north-west of the country, from farms in territory controlled by rebels.

Promoting individual and household enterprises

The commonest interventions to promote livelihoods focused on farms and other enterprises. They typically supported activities that people already undertook before conflict: crop farming, livestock rearing, fishing, artisan trades such as carpentry and tailoring, and small-scale trading. Support mostly consisted of one or more of the following:

- **Capitalising or recapitalising enterprises** through provision of inputs in kind – seeds, tools, smallstock, etc. – or through grants either as cash or vouchers to be spent with agricultural input dealers or at seed fairs;
- **Training** either in specific trade skills such as carpentry or in general skills of managing businesses and finances;
- **Technical assistance** and agricultural extension usually associated with new crops, new varieties, animal health and new markets; and
- **Provision of credit** through technical assistance and channelling funds to village savings and loans associations (VSLA) and microfinance agencies.

Capitalising household enterprises succeeded when farmers were helped to produce what was demanded in markets. Time and again, relief agencies focused on staple food crops to unknown or slight effect. Development agencies that assessed markets (especially local markets), sometimes by asking farmers what they thought they could sell, did better by helping them grow olives (Syria), vegetables, and to rear poultry and goats (for example, north-west and north-east Nigeria). Catching and rearing fish can be added to the list: fishing kits were provided in South Sudan and Nigeria. All these could be grown and raised at small scale, often by women farmers: produce that could readily be sold in local and more distant markets.

Some agencies preferred to provide support in kind, rather than giving farmers vouchers or just cash. They assumed that supplies were not available in markets, or that cash would be misspent, or that they knew better than the farmers. Seed was the exemplar. It was far from clear in most cases that seed was unavailable to farmers; that they could not buy seed from dealers, in markets or from other farmers. For agencies to procure the seed ran the risks of getting seeds not suited to farmers' needs or preferences, of delivering seeds too late to plant, and of doing so at high cost.

Some agencies learned this and instead provided either cash grants, or vouchers to be spent on inputs with dealers or in markets. A variant was convening **seed fairs**, at which farmers from across a district could meet to buy – through vouchers – and sell whatever seed they had. Such fairs also facilitated farmer-to-farmer exchange of knowledge about crops and varieties. Successful seed fairs were run in Nigeria, Uganda and South Sudan – although in the last case vouchers entailed long-winded processes for redemption leaving dealers out of pocket who had to take out high-interest loans to tide them over.

Even when cash was given to buy assets, it could not resolve all obstacles. Additional interventions were often required such as technical training; psycho-social, nutrition and healthcare support; information and facilitation of market opportunities; and support to access land and public services ('cash plus' programming). Despite general positive perceptions of the value of complements to cash transfers with livelihoods support (with some evidence of positive impact from FAO's livelihood programming in rural Yemen, north-east Nigeria and Somalia) and from research by the Cash Consortium in Iraq), widespread evidence of impact remains patchy.

Training intuitively makes sense when so many people in conflict zones have only the skills they developed for farming or whatever else they did before violence broke out. Vocational training, however, too often overlooked matching skills to needs in the job market. Furthermore, vocational training was costly and time-consuming. Given costs, programmes were often small, training a very small fraction of those seeking jobs. To succeed in creating jobs, training often needed linking to finance to get the trainee started as an independent trader, or else trainees needed apprenticeships to put skills learned to work.

Training in business and finance skills was less liable to such shortcomings because it could be imparted in shorter and cheaper courses. It could be given to people already in business who could put new competences to work straight away.

Evidence from Iraq and Syria showed that adding some psycho-social support, even if only a small component, enhanced training, especially for displaced persons and women.

Technical assistance largely concerned crop extension and animal health. Reports on the former were mixed: extension that transferred messages top-down to farmers was often ineffective, but using more participatory means, such as Farmer Field Schools, was better received. For herders, some success was seen with community animal health workers, living with herders and providing simple services that did not require a skilled veterinarian. A frequent challenge, however, was how to provide and sustain these services commercially.

Done well, technical assistance could be effective. It worked best when a clear and pressing need was evident: replacing cassava vulnerable to mosaic with more resistant tubers; helping herders with sick animals; and making sure that farmers grew the right variety and quality of crop when contracted at premium prices.¹

The dangers with technical assistance lie in assuming farmers know little, that outsiders know better. Working with farmers, building on their knowledge and skills, and paying attention to their priorities pays off. Such processes, however, took time and committed field staff.

Improving **rural financial systems** is a major challenge in rural development: a field in which numerous initiatives have been tried by governments, aid partners and NGOs with varying results. Despite promising initiatives, the road to better practice is elusive.

In the cases registered, experiences seem to have been more often positive than negative – perhaps because when conflict breaks out and livelihoods are under threat, the need to save and borrow becomes more pressing.

No interventions were seen for one important financial service, that of facilitating remittances. Not only does conflict tend to increase the numbers seeking work far from their home communities – notably in Nepal and Somalia; but conflict could also interrupt the delivery of remittances. When people were displaced the problem was compounded by the difficulty of trying to find the intended recipient.

Inclusion and livelihoods support

Most reports of inclusion concerned women and youth. Very little was found on older people and people with disabilities. Youth were commonly targeted for employment. Sometimes they were provided with inputs to undertake their own enterprises, such as the canoes and fishing kits given them in South Sudan. Youth were targeted in training, although often trainees were not subsequently able to find work. In Somalia, several initiatives trained youth for jobs, sometimes with conflict awareness included in the training, to try to prevent them joining armed groups and becoming radicalised.

Women were largely assisted by targeting women as participants, or supporting activities open to women. This did not necessarily require deliberate gender programming: a concern for small-scale farming or business might in practice favour women. Such activities included (very) small-scale agriculture such as irrigated vegetable gardens, backyard livestock especially poultry, fish farming in small ponds, processing (for example, olives and shea butter) and trading in farm produce – this last being dominated by women in some societies, while frowned upon in others.

While reports routinely reported numbers of women participating and some recorded that the women were satisfied with the support received, they did not usually consider why some activities suited women or ponder the barriers to women's participation. Few looked at changes in status and empowerment of women.

Given the apparent limited analysis, it was not surprising to see measures inimical to women. For example, some transfers were conditional on showing up for labour projects, despite women in need having very little spare time. Livelihoods programmes tended to promote small-scale, labour-intensive activities demanding more time than most women have. Some projects assumed specific activities were for women: training in tailoring was one example, whether the services or products were demanded or not.

Very few reports seen mentioned the circumstances of seniors or people with disabilities, despite both groups making up a substantial fraction of those affected by conflict. An exception was Humanity and Inclusion in north-east Syria that provided counselling and other socio-psychological assistance to victims of violence and conflict trauma: especially disabled combatants. Counselling was offered alongside inputs and livestock feed for farming. Synergies applied: participants with disabilities benefitted most from integrated activities. Adding psycho-social support cost little and took little time – three weeks; although staff needed to be trained to provide these services.

Conclusions

Humanitarian relief

Most people survive conflict largely down to their own ability, together with family and community, to support themselves – if only because in most conflicts, the aid sent is so much less than potential need. Aid should be provided to affected populations as another resource they can use in difficult circumstances. This implies allowing people to use aid as they see fit. Those affected by conflict are usually far better informed of their options than an outside agency. Aid should reinforce self-help institutions including local networks – such as groups for savings and burials– and norms – looking, for example, to train and mentor through peers thereby reinforcing mutual obligations.

The need for urgent relief can be overstated, by assuming people affected have few means and little agency. While people may face hardship, relief sent by international agencies is not always critical to survival.

Food security analysis that can be used to assess support needed to prevent insecurity, has in some agencies given ground to estimating measures of distress such as food consumption score and coping indices that do not address the drivers of those measures.

When providing relief, cash almost always is better than aid in kind. It is usually cheaper and quicker to deliver than transporting in food. Cash usually has more positive and fewer negative effects on the local economy than food in kind. Where conflicts disrupt trade, food in kind may be needed, but only when traders cannot transport foods to markets.² Cash transfers may thus become a default response, but not the only response, and not to be applied blindly without regard to circumstances.

Relief should not necessarily nor always be prior to livelihoods support. Conflict can rapidly erode assets, break up social networks, and undermine livelihoods. Early responses, as soon as possible after fighting breaks out, may protect some livelihoods, or at least mitigate the effects of conflict. If support is delayed, those options may be lost.

Social protection

Because protracted conflict affects populations where many suffer chronic poverty, and because conflict tends to be drawn out over years, **social protection – a dependable transfer to those facing hardship – should be part of the response.** That said, in conflicts, humanitarian agencies may need to assess how far social protection is genuinely impartial and if affected populations feel safe in trusting their data to the state.

Few examples were seen of social protection in the cases reviewed, but those few instances reported it to be valuable. That prompts the question of how well social protection compares in costs and effects compared to other measures. No such analysis has yet been seen.

Livelihoods support

In most cases, it was possible to support livelihoods. Opportunities may exist to produce for growing markets, some of them export markets, but more often domestic urban markets in cities where demand for higher-value foods is burgeoning – premium rice, vegetables, sheep for festivals, and olive oil are amongst the examples found.

To make a difference for livelihoods, **programmes need sufficient funds and have to engage with the people supported over several years** – probably at least five years in most cases. This means committing funds for extended periods. Because both economic circumstances and conflict evolve in ways that can be hard to foresee, **management must be adaptive**. That requires not only flexible funding, but also flexible procedures – with monitoring and learning.

Because the success of farms, herds and enterprises often depends in part on external factors, for example roads and getting to market, agencies need to **see the economy more broadly than the farm, herd or enterprise**.

Moreover, attending to matters at community, district and national level may benefit more people than supporting individual farms, herds and businesses. **Many households affected by conflict do not get any support directly**. But they can benefit from interventions at community, district and national levels – for example, improving roads to market, supplying better technical and market information to producers, and providing public services such as schools and health posts.

Agencies sometimes seem to struggle to programme with respect to conflict and to inclusion. In part that may result from seeing the tools of inclusion as too demanding. Not all analysis has to be comprehensive and precise to inform practice. Provisional understandings, to be refined in the light of further evidence, can allow progress. For example, considering what women producers can do – given their means and preferences – can identify opportunities that favour women. Insisting on gender quotas can help tackle imbalances. Much the same applies to working with people with disabilities: a little consideration of their abilities, circumstances and limitations can make a difference.

Lessons are largely about how to go about things, rather than about what to do. Process usually matters as much or more than content. Livelihood support where outside agencies second-guess what those affected need or should do, support that ignores what can be sold on markets local and more distant, rarely succeeds. Programmes that work with people affected to allow them to develop options have done much better. This is largely a matter of process.

Because process can trump content, **trying to identify specific interventions as ‘best buys’ may divert attention from more important questions of process**.

Because processes matter, **the distinctive competence and culture of agencies, or their sub-units, matters**. Relief agencies focused on the logistics of shipping in aid, premised on the need for urgent and short-lived assistance – may well have procedures and systems ill-suited to livelihoods support. Development agencies or departments are usually better set to work with people over the medium to long term. In some humanitarian units, individual leaders and field staff may see what is needed and make the difference by adapting programmes – sometimes working against the grain and the operating manual of the agency.

That said, it seems this lesson is increasingly appreciated in some, perhaps many agencies. Leastways, the opening paragraphs of the operating manual may pay homage to adaptive management. Working through how to practice this, and to make it compatible with an organisation’s systems may take time.

A key lesson from is to give local people the freedom to choose how best to use support to address obstacles and options they face. **Does this then mean that offering cash is the best way to support livelihoods?** To some extent, yes; regular cash payments can smooth household consumption, while providing extra capital to farms and enterprises can raise productivity and create jobs. But not all livelihood constraints can be removed with a household transfer. Cash often needs complementing with other measures, some targeted at the same households – for example technical training, psycho-social support in ‘Cash Plus’ programmes. Moreover, the point about working to improve not the enterprise but community or district circumstances has already been made. Not all livelihoods support can be commuted to transfers.

Evidence

Evidence on what is effective and why it is effective is almost always lacking. Programme reviews typically report immediate outputs, but less is usually said about outcomes, while (enduring) impacts are rarely examined. Hence **calls for more and better evidence are commonplace.**

That prompts the question of what data might reasonably be collected, and how? In conflict, analyses with high internal validity usually prove costly and difficult – circumstances can change rapidly undermining the ability to infer from randomised trials. At the other extreme, gathering some beneficiaries under the shade of a tree and asking them if they appreciate what they have been given, with agency staff present, is worth little.

Two implications follow. **One, intermediate analysis** to understand the causal chain from the interventions to their outcomes, effects and impacts – but without having to satisfy the demanding and costly criteria of experimental methods – **would be valuable.** Many proposals have been made by evaluation specialists on how this can be done effectively and with economy.³ Might one or other be feasible to evaluate interventions to mitigate effects of conflict?

Two, if responses need to proceed – at least in the short run – with little evidence, **the case for adaptive management of interventions becomes even stronger.** Planning must then draw on local knowledge, especially local knowledge of causal links. Implementation must be flexible and adaptive – using learning processes (the 1980s term), or problem-driven iterative adaptation (2010s term).

SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION



1.1 PURPOSE OF REVIEW AND CONFLICT

This Rapid Evidence Review, produced at the request of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), examines the impacts of protracted conflict on livelihoods and food security of affected populations, and assesses evidence of the effectiveness of measures to mitigate harmful impacts on livelihoods.

Conflict in this review implies physical violence, where groups of people deliberately injure, maim and kill others to achieve (largely) political ends. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) defines conflict as follows:

An armed conflict is a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year.

(https://pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#tocjump_4162694100334543_2, accessed April 2021)

Conflicts can be long-lasting, drawn out over years. No agreed definition exists of how long a conflict needs to be to be considered 'protracted', but some such conflicts may be measured in decades. As the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) notes:

[In 2019] the average length of time that the ICRC has been present in each of its ten largest operations is forty-two years.

(Policinski & Kuzmanovic, 2019)

Most protracted conflicts in the last fifty or so years have not been between states, but rather between armed groups within countries fighting either the state or other armed groups, or both. Conflicts differ primarily by the motivations of the warring parties, their number and character, and the means available to them to fight. Once conflict breaks out, in many cases⁴ the disorder creates opportunities for lesser violence and crime.

Protracted conflicts are immensely costly in lives, livelihoods and to entire economies, arguably the greatest threats to development.

Civil wars and conflicts arguably inflict more suffering on humanity than any other social phenomenon. Now they are emerging as central to many countries' political evolution and possibly as key impediments to global development.

(Blattman & Miguel, 2010)

For this study, eleven cases of protracted conflict were chosen, most of them current in 2021: Afghanistan; Darfur, Sudan; eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); Mali; Nepal (ended in 2006); north-east Nigeria; Somalia; South Sudan; Syria; northern Uganda (ended in 2006); and Yemen.

In most cases, the people affected by conflict typically live on low incomes, below the national average, leaving them vulnerable to shocks for lack of physical, financial, and social capital. In some, but not all cases,⁵ additional shocks arise quite frequently – once or twice a decade – in natural disasters such as drought. The combination of conflict with natural disaster creates severe threats to the very existence of those affected.

1.2 QUESTIONS ADDRESSED

Two overall questions have been addressed.

One, how has protracted conflict affected the livelihoods and food security of individuals and households, and local and national economies?

- How does protracted conflict affect the functioning of local and national markets?
- How does protracted conflict potentially affect the livelihoods security, including food security, of those directly and indirectly affected by conflict?
- How do these impacts vary by gender?

Two, what **responses** to economic and social harm caused by protracted conflict have been used? What is the evidence for their effectiveness in building resilience, mitigating loss, or enhancing, the welfare – incomes and food security – of those affected, and in what circumstances?

1.3 METHODS

The review has been produced in three steps, namely:

- 1. Provisional frameworks** were created to identify critical evidence to address the questions. A causal chain of hypothesised links from protracted conflict to livelihoods and food security was drawn up. An inventory of measures used to mitigate the effects of conflict on livelihoods and food security was compiled. The different kinds of protracted conflict seen in low- and middle-income countries was also considered – although ultimately not used in the analysis.

2. Eleven cases – see above for list – of protracted conflict were studied in detail focusing on the impacts of conflict on livelihoods, the responses from government, NGOs and aid partners to these impacts, and what was known about the effectiveness of those impacts. Two of the cases chosen concern conflicts that have ended; included for retrospective appreciation of conflict: other cases remain live conflicts in early 2021.

For each case, we reviewed the literature, including grey literature of agency reports, and interviewed key informants.

3. Results from the cases were summarised in short narratives (Annex A), and grids were prepared to record each intervention found with notes on outcomes and effectiveness (Annex B). Material was synthesised by comparing the information gathered across the cases.

Originally equal emphasis was given to examining the impacts of conflict on livelihoods and food security, but it soon became apparent that impacts were so broad the emphasis moved to livelihoods. This reflects that in almost all cases economic access was the prime factor affecting food security – narrowly defined, rather than food availability. We have not, however, examined in detail impacts on nutrition.

The main challenge was finding evidence of impact of interventions during protracted conflict. While agency reports of what they delivered can usually be found, sometimes with assessments of the immediate outputs, impacts were much less commonly assessed.

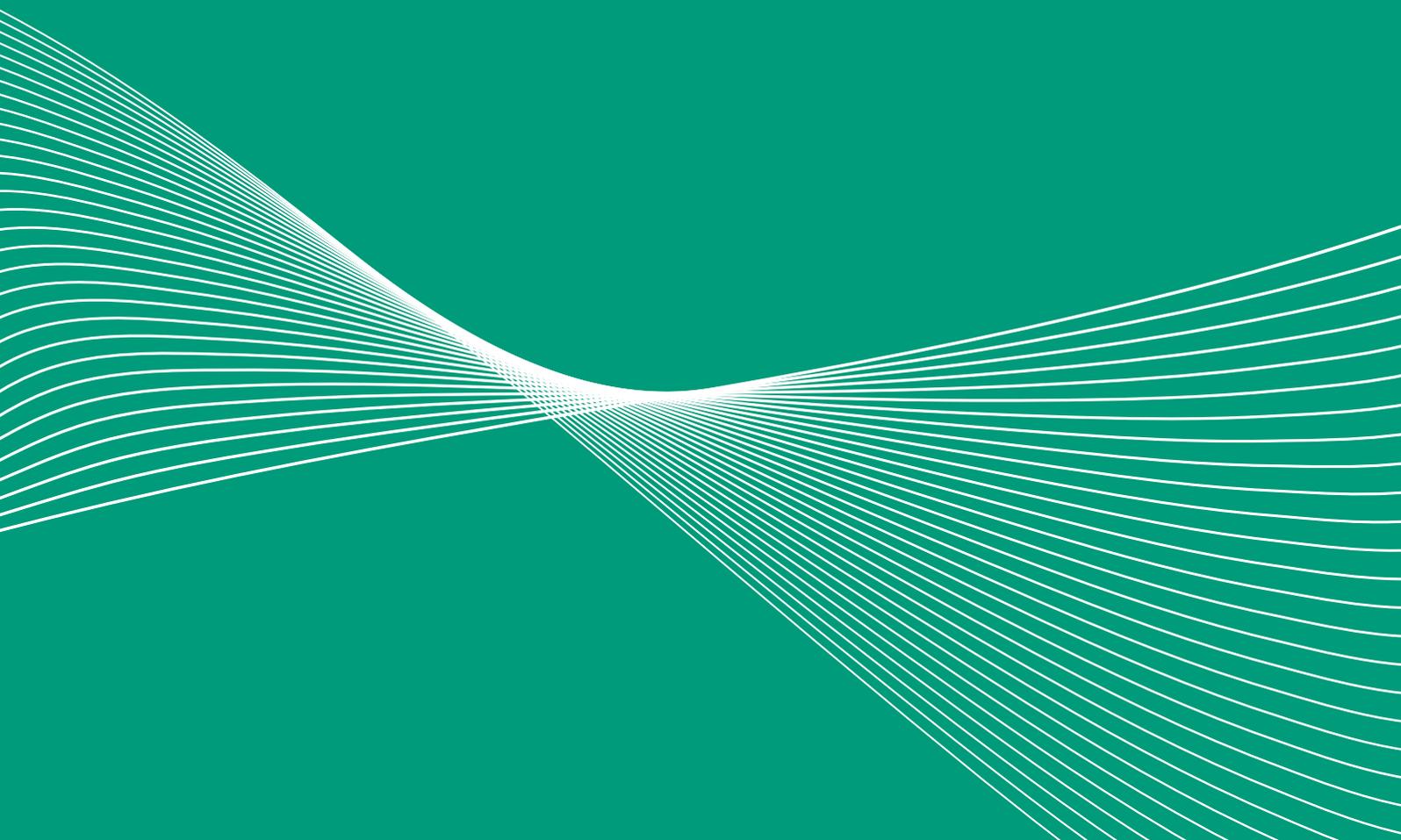
One evidence gap stood out: the lack of detailed analysis of impacts of conflict on women and disadvantaged groups such as the elderly and people with disabilities. Hence much less can be said about how inclusive responses were than should be the case.

The report is laid out as follows. Chapter 2 considers the impacts of protracted conflict on livelihoods. Chapter 3 sets out the responses seen, divided by relief, social protection and support to livelihoods. Chapter 4 concludes by summarising key points and discussing their implications.

Evidence for findings from the eleven cases has not been referenced in the main text. To see what literature informed the cases, see Annex A. More information on specific interventions can be found in the grids in Annex B.

SECTION 2

**PROTRACTED
CONFLICT AND
ITS EFFECTS ON
LIVELIHOODS AND
FOOD SECURITY**



Even before the conflicts, large numbers of people lived in chronic poverty in the cases, except for Syria. (Syria was a middle-income country before the war, although still with pockets of deep rural poverty.) Conflict added to existing vulnerabilities, so that even minor economic losses were liable to push people into food and livelihood insecurity.⁶ A corollary is that because conflict rarely mitigates prior causes of poverty, when conflict abates and peace is restored, poverty is likely to persist.

The extent to which poverty and vulnerability make conflict more likely, and to which impoverishing impacts of conflict create a vicious circle, are beyond this discussion.

The different ways by which conflicts have affected people's livelihoods is presented here in some detail to enable an analysis of the various interventions used to support livelihoods, and to see how many of the problems raised by conflict have been addressed – and which have not. Most impacts affect people differently, depending on their age, wealth, gender, disability and possibly their identity (religion, ethnic group, clan, etc.). The section ends with some comments on the gendered impacts of conflict. Generally, the social norms which create different opportunities and vulnerabilities for different people usually do so to the disadvantage of women and girls – but in different ways in different societies.

Throughout this section it will be seen that many of the ways in which conflicts affect livelihoods is through issues which, in the humanitarian sector, would be seen as falling under the Protection Cluster (www.globalprotectioncluster.org) rather than the domain of agencies working on livelihoods and food security: and many of the consequences of livelihoods problems are problems that are classed as in the domain of humanitarian protection. The close inter-connections between threats and opportunities around livelihoods and those around personal security are unfortunately lost because of the organisation of aid into sectoral silos.⁷

2.1 HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

2.1.1 Loss of assets, personal and community

Violence directly harmed people's livelihoods in almost all the case studies with some degree of widespread looting of personal assets. Livestock are a frequent target for looting or slaughter in conflicts. Although some degree of armed cattle theft is common in livestock keeping areas, it has little in common with the scale of what takes place in conflicts. This often goes beyond opportunistic stealing and is deliberately intended to destroy the economy and way of life of particular ethnic groups (Sudan, Uganda, South Sudan, Nigeria). The threat of violent looting was also used for extortion, to demand political allegiance [for example, Uganda] or protection money [for example, Sudan].

Over 90% of livestock were looted from the agro-pastoral economy of northern Uganda, destroying people's ability to plough, curtailing the areas they were able to farm to this day, and disrupting the systems by which farmers managed soil fertility. In parts of South Sudan, 40%

of households lost all their livestock during the 1990s (a major contributing factor to the 1998 famine) and livestock production is even now estimated at 80% below its potential.⁸

The livelihood implications go beyond the assets directly stolen. Insecurity shapes people's investment decisions and many in conflicts would sell off their larger animals before they were looted – in a buyers' market, for a fraction of the value – to invest in safer assets, for example, in urban areas, further decapitalising the rural economy [Uganda].

Both opportunistic looting and the deliberate destruction of people's livelihoods as a tactic of war have also involved the extensive destruction of crops in fields and of fruit trees (clearly a deliberate destruction of long-term livelihoods as a tactic of war); and violence aimed at community assets such as irrigation infrastructure and of trading infrastructure. Again, this usually goes beyond the opportunistic looting of stocks, to include deliberate destruction of warehouses. [Some or all of these have been conducted by all warring parties in Syria; in Sudan, Mali, Yemen, Uganda – and at the time of writing in early 2021, in Tigray, Ethiopia.] In Sudan, after the most brutal first years of attacks, the deliberate creation of food insecurity and hunger was a larger driver of displacement than fears of violence against persons.

Asset loss and destruction has long-term livelihood and food security consequences. The agro-pastoral economy in northern Uganda has not recovered from the systematic destruction of cattle holdings, 14 years after the end of the conflict, and partial recovery in parts of South Sudan has not restored the *status quo ante*, because ownership patterns are much less equal. The loss of irrigation infrastructure, whether from deliberate destruction or simply because it could no longer be maintained in conflict, can curtail crop production for many years. [Nepal, Afghanistan, Sudan and Syria, where half of all irrigation schemes covering 1.5M ha of land fell into disuse.]

The scale of such asset losses and their effect on economic activity, and hence food security, may be several times higher than the resources made available through aid, leaving economic impacts from conflict that last many years. The estimated lost livestock in just one District in Uganda (Gulu, pop. c. 300,000) was worth about US\$300M – a sum that is alone several times greater than the main World Bank financed recovery programme that targeted over 1 million households across several Districts over 5 years. (This figure represents the loss of just one type of personal/family asset; see below for estimated costs of the infrastructure destroyed and other losses in some of the case studies.)

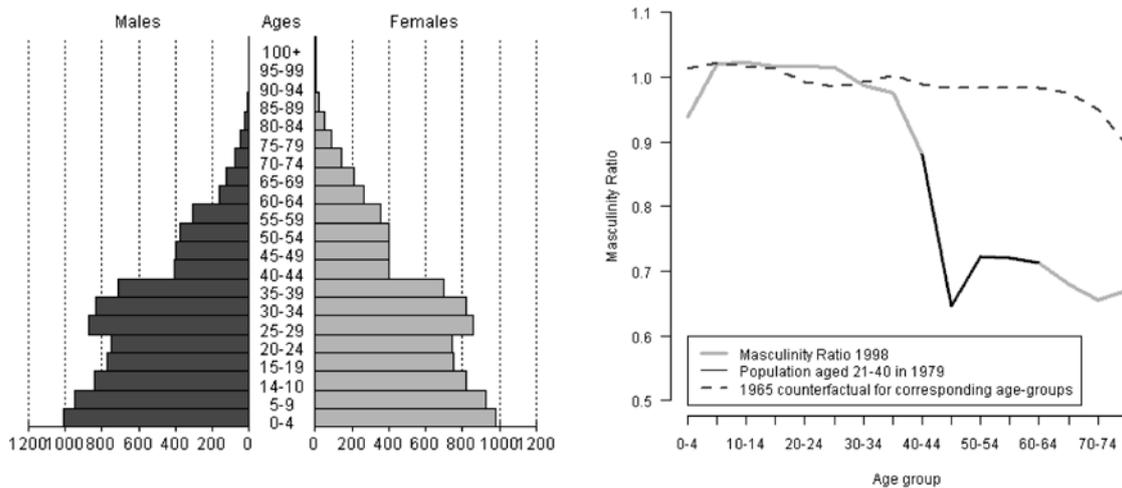
2.1.2 Household economic capacity

For many, **household productivity** was also hit by loss of labour power, caused variously by death or injury, by forced recruitment into state or non-state armed groups and by migration – sometimes to avoid forced recruitment by one or other party to the conflict [Syria, Nepal, DRC]. In many conflicts, male labour has been more affected, and the majority of those killed are usually men; for example, in Syria, around 85% of civilian adult deaths are men. (The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights 2020).

Figures from the aid sector on the number of female-headed households are often high in conflict areas (for example, around a third in Syria).⁹ Although this may not be an entirely reliable indicator, other data show the extent to which men of productive age are often missing – which has a continuing impact for decades after a conflict. Figure 2.11 shows the population

pyramid for greater Darfur, revealing an imbalance in the 25–40 age range, and data from 1998 for Cambodia – nearly twenty years after the end of the conflict – revealing that around 30% of males above 45 were ‘missing’.

FIGURE 2.1 POPULATION PYRAMID FOR GREATER DARFUR, 2005 AND MALE/FEMALE RATIO BY AGE IN CAMBODIA, 1998



Source: figures from Guha-Sapir and d'Aoust (2010)

This pattern is not generalisable. Demographic data show that high mortality from conflict in DR Congo has not led to imbalance between the sexes, because more mortality is due to illness and other poverty-related causes rather than from targeted killings, i.e. affects the sexes more equally.

Loss of males has consequences for the rest of the household, including wives and widows, that go beyond the economic cost of lost labour – which in purely income terms may typically be worth 50–100% more than female labour in rural areas.¹⁰ On both formally titled land and land held on customary tenure, tenure security on family land is often more at risk if the male household head is missing or if there are no grown up sons to protect the family rights. The need for a man to be present and actively engaged in farming a plot to protect land rights is one reason why many run risks to avoid displacement or to return occasionally to farm their land in some way. Widows especially faced threats of land grabbing from their brothers-in-law in many countries.

2.1.3 Forced displacement

There was some degree of forced displacement in all eleven case studies. In many cases, people were gradually pushed to leave by a deterioration in personal security and/or fleeing forced recruitment [Nepal, DR Congo (DRC)], but, apart from Nepal, in the other case studies there was significant movement of population forced out of their homes by violent attacks or threats. In most cases people fled rural areas for the relative safety of towns within the conflict area or to camps; the more able or those with better social connections would migrate to towns or the capital city, and those with the most possibilities might be able to leave the country without ending up in a refugee camp. In Syria, there was also a degree of movement from urban to rural areas driven by economic need caused by industrial collapse in the towns in the early years of the conflict.

Some armed non-state groups have deliberately driven populations from their homes, but governments and armies have also used displacement as a weapon of war, with the enforced detainment in camps of entire rural populations as a deliberate policy [Sudan, Uganda, and, from conflicts outside our case studies, Burundi and Myanmar (Rohingya)]. This may be presented as a military strategy to facilitate operations against armed groups, as a way to deprive armed groups of possible support from a civilian population ('a fish can't swim without water') or more benignly as a way of protecting civilians. The manner in which displacement has been enforced by the state or its allies in these examples, and the lack of attention which they paid to the welfare (and livelihoods) of the displaced, has encouraged the belief by many of those affected that their governments and/or armies saw them as hostile based on their ethnic identity and that the destruction of their livelihoods was at least in part deliberate.

Most displacement in conflicts is protracted (that is, it lasts for several years), though some conflicts have also seen a pattern of sporadic short-term displacements at a more local level [DRC, Afghanistan].¹¹ In protracted displacement, people usually lost all connection with their previous livelihoods, most notably with their farms. (Where displacement was only a short distance, some people would risk occasional visits to harvest, for example, from tree crops or cassava [Uganda, northern Nigeria].)

In DRC and Afghanistan, there has also been a pattern of short-term displacement of smaller population groups (for example, one or two villages for weeks or months) as a spontaneous reaction to local insecurity. This was always disruptive, especially because it was accompanied by small-scale looting of livestock and household possessions or property; where it occurred at planting or harvest time, it could entail the loss of a whole season's harvest.

2.1.4 Livelihoods in displacement camps

Most actors in the aid sector, including governments, tended only to apply the label IDP to those who fled to camps, where aid was targeted, and excluding those who managed to migrate to the relative safety of towns. Those in camps usually had very limited livelihood opportunities for a number of reasons: there was typically a lack of farmland available for camp residents, camps were rarely sited to make work opportunities in towns accessible, and freedom of movement was usually restricted to some degree, particularly where people had fled outside their country. The internal camp economies provided only limited opportunities, because of generalised poverty and because the skills and experience of most of the camp residents did not have high demand in the camp economy. Most depended on unskilled labour or on access to the exploitation of natural resources (firewood, poles for construction, making charcoal etc.) where this was possible – and often at some risk.

Some were able to rent small plots of land, but at a cost of up to half the value of the harvest, and usually with other limiting conditions: landowners offer land which requires the most labour for opening up, the range of crops allowed is often limited.

2.1.5 Loss of social connections in displacement

Some people lost the social connections on which they depended for support because of displacement, for example, because they were physically separated from family members who had cared for them or contributed to their upkeep or because telephone contacts were lost and as a result, the possibility to receive remittances from relatives in towns or abroad

[Sudan]. Remittances have played a very important role in sustaining households in many poor areas, including those in displacement and people sending money from exile or from economic migration¹² [Nepal, Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia].

2.1.6 Threats to land rights from displacement

Those returning from protracted displacement sometimes found it hard to re-claim their land rights because others, sometimes themselves displaced, had already occupied their land [Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Uganda, DRC]. The Government of Syria confiscates the land of people who do not wish to return to government controlled areas, to force them into allegiance-through-residence. Because women's land rights were already less secure in all cases documented, widows, divorcees or separated women were particularly vulnerable to loss of land rights – and in rural areas, loss of agricultural land can be a huge impoverishing factor. (See also below, *Gendered impacts of conflicts on livelihoods*.)

2.1.7 Curtailed freedom of movement

In all the case studies, people's freedom of movement (FoM) was massively curtailed even for those not displaced, either by fear for their personal security or because of restrictions placed on movement by state or non-state armed actors. Because farmland is generally spread out across several fields over some distance, it was more difficult or impossible to farm some of their fields, more difficult to travel to markets and more difficult to move to town or further afield to find work – a normal and vital seasonal practice in many rural areas. (See also Markets below for impacts of FoM restrictions on trade.) It also limited their access to areas they relied on for natural resource exploitation (firewood, other forest and bush products, wild foods, fishing and hunting, etc.): an important part of their coping mechanisms in countries such as South Sudan, Uganda, DRC, Somalia, Nigeria and Sudan.

In some cases restrictions were enforced with threats or violence (by state or non-state armed actors), but movement was also made more difficult through 'informal taxation' or extortion at checkpoints [in all the case studies], sometimes accompanied by formal restrictions on what could be carried through checkpoints [Syria; Sudan, where people had to pay for daily permits].

2.1.8 Non-state governance

Some non-state actors imposed a rule of law in the areas that they controlled. This could mean that lawlessness was avoided (see below) and it could come with its own set of economic rules, for example, forbidding certain economic activities (for example, alcohol sales in Nepal) or enforced payment of taxes to the non-state armed group [Nepal]. In Afghanistan, non-state governance placed harsh restrictions on women's ability to travel and engage in economic activities.

With the effective splitting of the economy into two in Yemen, some people had to pay taxes twice, to both the Houthis and the formal government. Conflict could bring in a new government which also imposed restrictions on lucrative economic activities, for example, the Government of Afghanistan which imposed bans on the cultivation of poppy. (Other restrictions on trade imposed by non-state governance are discussed below, under *Markets*.)

2.1.9 Livelihood impacts of psychological harm

The impacts on livelihoods from the psychological harm of conflicts have not been much discussed in the livelihoods aid sector, although mental health problems have been documented in all case studies except for Mali and Nigeria.¹³ For example, it has been estimated that almost two-thirds of people in South Darfur and one in three Somalis are suffering from mental health problems. Psychological problems are increasingly recognised in humanitarian relief, but their implications for livelihoods have not been widely appreciated, even though the connection between mental health and decision making has been studied in other contexts – for example, it is known that PTSD reduces people’s ability to prioritise longer term over immediate benefits, and hopelessness and depression cause reduced motivation and impair decision making (for example, Ousdal et al. 2018, Park et al. 2016, Bishop and Gagne 2018). There may be significant long-term impacts on livelihoods investment and decision making. Some cases are particularly stark: high rates of alcoholism have been seen in displacement camps where men live in enforced idleness (though the problem may be undiagnosed and described simply as ‘drinking’). Higher rates of khat consumption have also been found because of conflict in Somalia and Yemen. Again, the impacts of conflict-induced hopelessness and drug use will likely have long-term impacts after the conflict is over.

2.2 MARKETS

As emergency cash transfer programming (ECT) has become more widespread, market studies have been needed, showing prices and availability of common goods to support a decision to provide assistance through cash rather than in-kind. However, though such studies have become standard information tools for humanitarian organisations in crises, detailed studies of *how* markets functioned were rare in the case studies. (At a global level, this makes it harder to build up an understanding of different patterns by which market activity is affected; at national level, it makes it difficult to identify context-specific interventions.) Three general conclusions can be derived from all the case studies though:

1. markets continued to function, despite conflict
2. how market activity continued was greatly affected by conflict
3. different market sectors (or value chains) were affected very differently by the same conflict.

2.2.1 Direct and indirect consequences of looting on businesses

Conflicts often brought looting of warehouses and armed attacks on lorries, whether as a direct result of the main conflict or as a by-product, as discussed above [Nigeria, Uganda, South Sudan, Sudan]. The business person affected directly may be driven out of business entirely, depending on the size of their operation, but there were often much wider consequences for other traders. Many value chains are financed internally, with each trader buying from their suppliers on credit (rather than borrowing from a bank), and tied by a relationship of trust to return always to the same supplier. If a trader was unable to repay credit

because the goods had been stolen or destroyed, the consequences could ripple all along the market chain as each trader in the chain was unable to repay their supplier. This problem could even be felt by agricultural producers where these are partly financed by grain traders [for example, Mali].

2.2.2 Resilience varies across different value chains

One study in Mali illustrated how the resilience of the value chain depended on the details of how transactions were made (Barbelet and Diallo Goita 2015). Sorghum trade was disrupted when supplies were looted because credit could not be repaid and trust in the chain was broken, preventing new credit being supplied. By contrast, livestock buyers always chose specific animals and thus bought from different livestock owners/traders each time rather than always returning to the same suppliers. This meant that livestock were always paid for in cash. Animals were looted in the conflict and markets attacked, but trade was less disrupted because there was no collapse of internal finance and because traders found it easier to move to new markets when old markets closed. This one study of livestock and sorghum market chains in the same conflict shows the importance of a detailed understanding of how each market sector or value chain functions in each conflict. (Since there are almost always gender differences in how people engage in and are affected by markets, understanding the gendered impact of conflict on livelihoods will also require detailed understanding of different markets.)

2.2.3 Loss of wider market and economic infrastructure

Telecommunications services and electricity supplies were often disrupted by conflict. Sometimes there were deliberate attacks on the transmission infrastructure [Yemen, Nepal and from outside the case studies, Mozambique], and in other cases there were problems with maintenance or lack of fuel. Investment in electricity was limited in conflict-affected areas. This limited the productivity of local industry and artisanal production, which had to rely on much more expensive electricity from small generators, if available. It directly caused shortages of bread from bakeries [Syria] and increased costs even for simple services such as grain mills.

2.2.4 Disruption to financial services

In many poorer countries banks are not a main source of credit (see comments on internally financed value chains), but they did represent a secure way of transferring money from where goods were sold to where they were bought. Where cash had instead to be transported by lorry drivers, this added to the risks – and thus the costs – of trade [Mali].

Formal financial services were often harder to obtain when bank branches closed [Syria, Mali; Nepal, where they were targeted for looting and farmers were ordered not to repay loans] or where banks did not open branches in conflict-affected areas.

De-risking behaviour by banks because of conflict also caused loss of access to financial services. International banks cut off international transfers to Somalia in 2011 because of fears of counter-terrorism legislation. This badly disrupted the indigenous *hawala* system of money transfers. Transfers to Yemen were also slowed down or restricted when the government moved the Central Bank to Aden, and disrupted lines of communication. Problems with the central financial system caused depreciation of the currency, and because of Yemen's high

dependency on food imports, a doubling in the price of food from 2015-19. The financial crisis in Lebanon brought estimated losses of US\$30 billion to business people and others in Syria.

2.2.5 Economic disruption

At a local level, the increase in poverty because of conflicts caused a general slow-down in economic activity (and for the various reasons already mentioned). Reduced market demand for many goods caused profits to fall and undermined the viability of many small businesses. Economic downturns could cause the decline and closure of a myriad of secondary businesses that depended on footfall in market places and on market traffic along roads – tea shops, food sellers, charcoal sellers, farmers selling produce on the roadside etc., an impact that is also seen in non-conflict disasters.

Markets were sometimes affected by national inflation, particularly where a conflict affected a country as a whole (for example, Syria, South Sudan where inflation reached 550% p.a., Yemen). Rampant inflation was not so common among the case studies, though, and even in Afghanistan (where the conflict has also affected the whole country) inflation has only once been just above 10% since 2006, except during the global food price crisis in 2008 (World Bank. <https://www.macrotrends.net>).

Trade was also affected by currency devaluation, particularly where there were great differences between official and market forex rates. For example, the use of USD was prohibited in Syria and remittances had to be converted at the official rate, i.e. at a loss of more than half of the market value of the money sent.

2.2.6 Difficulties in free movement of trade

Trade is disrupted in conflict both by design and neglect. Road maintenance is among the state services often run down because of conflict including from the loss of revenue to local and central government. Long journey times on poor roads, sometimes exacerbated by having to take circuitous journeys to avoid trouble spots, added further to the costs of transport and trade.

Checkpoints are common in conflict areas. Many are created variously by local authorities, the military or non-state armed groups, both for organised control of movement and in simple response to general lawlessness and insecurity. These delayed traffic, increasing the costs of trade, and could usually only be passed with bribes (sometimes euphemistically referred to as informal taxes). These have rarely been quantified, but one study in eastern DR Congo found that various payments added up to 23% of the value of the cargo to transport goods from Bukavu to Hombo, a distance of 106 km, and that payments to the police or military at checkpoints alone cost 12% of the value of the cargo on the journey from Bukavu to Ngalula (380 km). Those costs are paid without receiving any services in return and are ultimately paid either in lower costs to producers or higher costs to customers.

Checkpoints are also an opportunity for parties to the conflict to restrict *who* can engage in trade. Some ethnic groups may face more difficulty in passing; Ugandan traders found lucrative markets in South Sudan in the short period of peace between the end of the Ugandan civil war and an increase in conflict in South Sudan, which brought heightened risks for Ugandan traders from those keen to see trade monopolised in the hands of their own people.

Some more particular impacts have been felt where conflicts have led to border closures (for example, between Sudan and Libya at various times, and between South Sudan and Sudan, and between NE Nigeria and Niger, Chad and Cameroon). Conflicts often take place in areas distant from the capital and main economic centres, where trade may be higher with neighbouring countries than internally within the country, which may not always be appreciated by those in the capital city.

This has sometimes made some goods – including productive inputs such as fertilisers and veterinary drugs – unavailable, raised the prices of staples or reduced the prices of staple goods.

2.2.7 Market governance and war economies

It would be incorrect to think of markets in non-government controlled areas (NGCAs) as necessarily lacking all regulation. Non-state groups sometimes imposed their own rules on trade and economic life [Mali, Nepal, Afghanistan, Somalia]. In Mali, trade was taxed or prohibited in goods which competed with trade controlled by the armed groups from across the Sahara.

Conflicts are often arenas where different forms of power (political, military) and close connection to power are used to gain economic power by taking control of markets. Different examples have been seen in the case studies, ranging from the use of violence to control trade in precious minerals [DR Congo] or the use of access to privileged forex rates to profit from food imports [South Sudan], to larger scale traders with better connections and more capital able to monopolise cross-border trade at the expense of the smaller traders who used to predominate in the sector [Syria]. The detailed study of war economies is, though, beyond the scope of this paper.

2.2.8 Conflicts and opportunity

Conflicts do also bring new opportunities for business, most notably from the aid industry, by providing aid agencies with goods for in-kind distribution (mainly food, but also a variety of household goods, water and sanitation equipment, mosquito nets, seeds and tools, etc.), from employment with aid organisations and by supplying well-paid aid workers with housing, food and other goods and services. Needless to say, these business opportunities are not equally accessible to all, and not always accessible to those who have normally traded in those same goods and services. Contracts for large aid agencies typically only go to very large suppliers for a variety of reasons: the contracts often demand an ability to pre-finance contracts and to wait a relatively long time for payment; contracts are of much higher values than are normal in the sector; contracts are formal and in a foreign language; the normal traders in the value chain may not be based in the capital city with easy access to the offices, and may not be well networked in to the information channels by which the tenders are published. As a result, in Mali, normal grain traders were completely by-passed by highly lucrative aid contracts which were taken up by people whose qualification was their ability to access capital, their connections and their familiarity with dealing with UN organisations. The longer term impacts on trade, and those who depend on the normal trade relationships, are not clear.

2.2.9 Consequences of trade disruption for livelihoods

There were knock-on effects on farming from trade disruption. It was sometimes harder to acquire productive inputs (for example, fertilisers, vegetable seeds), either because of lower availability or higher prices [Syria, Uganda]; it usually increased the costs of food and other necessities; and it made it harder to sell produce, for example, by lowering the price.

Some discussion in aid sectors is in terms of market access, but it is unclear whether thinking about *whether* or not people have access to markets is useful. Most people had access to a market whether to buy or sell: the issue was generally around the kinds of markets which they could access (for example, prices, how much is available, the reliability of trade) and the conditions of access, for example, risks involved, checkpoints to cross etc. (See Freedom of movement, above).

Farmers responded to changed market conditions in different ways, for example, changing the crops they grew to those that were more easily transportable or in sectors that were less subject to control (for example, in Syria, moving from wheat to cumin and coriander).

2.3 SERVICES

2.3.1 Health and education

Basic services are often eroded during conflicts, affecting people's livelihoods in the short and long term. In some conflicts there was targeted destruction by armed groups of education and health facilities, sometimes because they are manifestations of the state and/or to scare a population. In Afghanistan, education was specifically targeted by the Taliban, with over 770 attacks on schools in just one year (2008) and 5 million children (particularly girls) prevented from attending school because of fear of violence. Schools are similarly targeted in northern Nigeria.

Civil servants and those working in service delivery (including teachers and health personnel) often simply fled, and recruitment became much harder in difficult areas [Mali, Nepal, South Sudan, Yemen]. Where there was significant displacement, services were not generally sufficiently supported in areas with additional populations.

The economic costs of poor healthcare can be felt immediately: higher morbidity leads to lost labour (for the sick and their carers), the costs of travelling to access health care (where that was possible) and other costs. However, although countries with a history of conflict tend to have among the highest under-five mortality figures, national level statistics do not necessarily show a clear relationship to conflict. For example, U5M has shown steady *declines* during the conflicts in countries such as Sierra Leone (1991-2002), Nepal (1996-2006), Somalia (2005-2019), Burundi (1993-2005), etc., though the declines may have been steeper had there been no conflict.

The costs of lost education have some fairly short-term impacts for families and even entire ethnic groups generally excluded from better paid employment opportunities and the remittance economy that these largely urban opportunities bring for rural areas. However, these losses will continue to play out over a lifetime as lost individual and national income/ productivity and potentially contribute to widespread inter-generational ('hereditary') poverty in conflict-affected parts of a country.

There have been some protracted refugee situations where education and/or health services have been provided in camps to standards that were higher than those of non-displaced communities. These were in situations where refugees had limited opportunity to take advantage of education to improve their livelihoods, though they may have been advantaged on return from displacement [for example, Cambodia, from outside our case studies]. However, protracted refugee situations were outside the terms of reference of this study.

2.3.2 Livelihood support services

The loss or erosion of livelihood support services was also evidenced in some countries. Support for agriculture (research, extension services, veterinary health care services) was seen to be compromised. The consequences were particularly felt where as a result, animal or plant diseases went uncontrolled, for example with the huge losses of yields of staple crops in DRC from cassava virus (that had been adequately controlled in neighbouring countries) or from the failure to control the most serious goat disease, pleuropneumonia (CCPP) in Somalia when vaccination services were absent. Loss of state support was a significant problem in Syria, where agriculture was much more reliant on highly developed state services (for example, for plant pest control) and subsidies on inputs. It is difficult to know how serious the loss of some extension services is, because they have not always had a clear impact on productivity in agriculture, even when available.¹⁴

2.3.3 Other services

It is harder to assess any direct causal link from the loss of other local government services to economic productivity or poverty. In addition to the loss of professional staff because of insecurity (see above), an overall decline of local administration often occurred because of the loss of local government revenue (for example, state revenues in South Sudan fell by almost two-thirds just from the reduction in oil sales since 2011, and local government revenue fell by an estimated 75% in Plateau State Nigeria as a result of conflict). How far the loss of these services matter depends on how well they were performing without the conflict. (For example, DRC has always been a predatory state with very few benefits for most people from state administration. On the other hand, the loss of subsidies in Syria has been keenly felt.)

It is also difficult to assess how far livelihoods have been affected by lost business investment, where investment is instead diverted to more secure places. Local investment may be geared instead to facilities to serve an aid community, whose benefits may be concentrated on a selected elite, but with some wider spill-over in employment. Any longer term economic impacts of this skewed investment are unclear.

2.4 SOCIAL

Conflicts breed conflict: the various wars and mass violent conflicts represented by the case studies have often been accompanied by an increase in low-density violence, i.e. recognisable as crime rather than as part of a civil war. General lawlessness tended to increase as the various kinds of glue that held society together (including family structures of authority, social and community norms and a functioning justice, law and order sector) were collectively weakened. The exceptions were where a warring party imposed its own rule of law [to some extent in Nepal, Mali, Somalia, Afghanistan]. Usually, though, conflicts provided an environment where the strong were less constrained in their ability to take advantage of the weak, and in many of the case studies we saw increases in land disputes/land grabbing (where those with less power may lose their main source of livelihood to those with more power), crime and cattle rustling and armed robbery – sometimes related to businesses attacking rivals under the convenient cover of armed group activity. This is part of the war economy and one of the reasons why some may prefer to see the continuation of conflict.

Parties to the conflict (including state actors such as armed forces) could also be involved in activities such as cattle rustling, theft of natural resources (for example, illegal logging) and the maintenance of business monopolies through actual or threatened violence, and individuals associated with those actors were also involved in land grabbing [Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, Syria].¹⁵ In some conflicts (for example, South Sudan, DR Congo, north-western Nigeria), the explosion of generalised crime and violence could be a greater threat to personal security and livelihoods than the more formal conflict between warring parties.

Widespread corruption was often a significant feature of the conflicts: both a grievance driving conflict as well as resulting from systems of authority. Corruption was a common accompaniment of aid flows, including locally when aid was distributed.

2.5 GENDERED IMPACTS OF CONFLICTS ON LIVELIHOODS

There is a great diversity in how individuals are affected by the economic impacts of conflicts: social connections, wealth, disability, gender, age, education and identity all shape people's outcomes, just as they did for the same people pre-conflict. Gender is consistently one of the most pervasive factors in determining resilience, but it operates in different ways in each society, and thus its interaction with conflict is also context specific. It is beyond the scope of this rapid study to engage in a full analysis of how gender – let alone the combination of gender and education, age, wealth – shaped people's livelihood opportunities and constraints in each country or society. Here we can only discuss some of the initial links in the pathways from conflict to individual outcome, because these are more consistent.

Examples of gendered impacts presented here should be understood as illustrations of how the impacts of conflict can vary from person to person: patterns can be quite different from situation to situation, and gender is only one of the factors contributing to these patterns.

The starting point for an analysis of gendered impacts of each particular conflict is the way in which social norms, and often statutory laws, shape livelihood opportunities and vulnerabilities differently for men, women, boys and girls. In the majority of cases, they disadvantage women and girls. These pre-existing norms and inequalities shape how conflicts affect people, and gender will play a role in this at two levels: in the way conflict affects an individual's own opportunities, risks and constraints; and in the way that conflict shapes how any impacts on households are felt by different individuals in the household. Sometimes, and in some ways, what affects the livelihood of one member of the household affects others; in other respects, and on other occasions, it does not. Generalisations have to be advanced with caution. In all societies, individual relationships vary from household to household.

2.5.1 Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) and within that, specifically sexual violence, are almost always features of conflicts, with serious consequences for livelihoods.

GBV means that how violence and the risk of violence affect an individual depends at least in part on their gender.¹⁶ Much of the violence associated with conflict is thus GBV. Men, women, boys and girls will experience different types of GBV with different consequences for their livelihoods. In most conflicts men and boys are more likely to be killed and injured (see above). The gendered nature of killing and injury against men and boys tend to receive much less recognition as GBV than sexual violence to which women are more vulnerable, even though these have livelihoods consequences for women and girls.

Some of the worst forms of sexual violence¹⁷ are particularly prevalent against women. Their non-economic consequences lie outside the scope of this paper (but see 2.1.9 on psychological harm), though the stigma often attached to rape may result in them being divorced/rejected by their husbands, difficulties in finding husbands or other forms of rejection by their communities, which can lead to loss of access to assets (for example, land) and reduced social networks. This has also been seen with young women returning after abduction by armed groups [for example, Uganda, DRC, etc.] (see also Holloway et al.2019). Pregnancy often leads to girls ending their education and the duties of childcare can affect their ability to engage in economic activities.

Forced recruitment or abduction into state and non-state armed groups can affect both sexes [Nigeria, Uganda, DRC, etc.], but even in such conflicts, young men and boys remain more vulnerable to abduction/recruitment. The economic impacts of the death, disappearance or injury of individuals as a result of this direct violence are often felt keenly by all the other household members. All family members may feel the loss of a main income earner, but where this leaves a household without an adult male, women and elderly dependants may become more vulnerable to other risks, such as loss of land rights or sexual predation, because of underlying gender inequalities for example, in land tenure (see, for example, Adoko and Levine 2004).

Many GBV risks are activity related, and so they depend on the particular gender division of activities in each society. The increased dependency on natural resource exploitation in conflicts has been discussed (see above). Firewood collection, charcoal making, and the harvesting of other natural resources in forest land are each frequently gender specific tasks, whose division differs from place to place. Charcoal making is almost always a male activity; collecting water is more often a female activity; firewood collection and harvesting poles for construction may be the activity of men, of women or of both. In many, but not all, countries, more men than women travelled to town to find work or long distances to farms where travel was dangerous. Whether men or women travel more on roads to markets varies from country to country, but risks will never be confined solely to men or women, because distinctions are never total or consistent. At the very least, widows or single mothers may have to run risks undertaking activities more often associated with men.

Tasks may be reallocated by gender and/or by age in response to gender-related conflict risk. In some cases, risks to women are less tolerated than risks to men, so for example, fears for women's safety in the forest may lead to firewood collection becoming more of a male activity. Where men are greater targets of violence (for example, abduction or arrest), women may take on their normal roles. For example, in Syria, women were felt to be safer in crossing checkpoints, so they took on more shopping responsibilities than before. Evidence from outside our case studies (Kenya, and Karamoja in Uganda) showed that households made a conscious decision in light of the different types of GBV that men and women risked during firewood collection. While men were more at risk of being killed, women's risks were of being raped. Men and women both often felt that the risk of rape was less detrimental to the overall household well-being than the killing of men, and so the responsibility for firewood collection – and the risk involved – shifted totally towards women. On the other hand, the prevalence of sexual violence against women limited their movement in Sudan, DRC and South Sudan. (Broader changes in the gender division of roles for other reasons beyond risk of GBV are discussed below.)

Conflicts can also increase GBV through their impact on poverty. There is some evidence that extreme poverty caused by conflicts has led households to marry off their daughters at a very young age (for example, to reduce the number of mouths to feed, because they need the bride price that will be paid or because they fear sexual violence against their unmarried daughters) [Syria, Uganda, etc.].¹⁸ Early marriage reduces the likelihood that girls and women are educated, with livelihood implications for themselves and their families. Such early marriage involves children marrying before an age at which they can give consent, and so it should be considered as GBV even though it would not typically be seen as GBV by most of those involved.

2.5.2 Family splitting

Families may be split as a deliberate strategy (to spread risk, to diversify opportunities, to maintain a presence on land, to maintain a presence where aid is delivered, for schooling, etc.); as a consequence of violence (above); or unintentionally in the chaos of displacement. In some places, some men have abandoned family responsibilities, at least partly because of hopelessness and losing their livelihood and/or status.

People see important advantages in splitting their families, which is why it is a frequent deliberate strategy. However, where support cannot flow freely between the family members, there are economic implications especially for those who are less able to earn their own living,

which is frequently shaped by gender. (Most typically, men would be thought to be better able to find a living for a variety of reasons.¹⁹) The ability to send money from town or even abroad may be limited because of conflict, especially where people lose contact and phones [for example, Darfur]. Where family splitting gives rise to female-headed households, it may result in less secure claims on land and property, since in many countries in conflict, women already had less secure land rights for other reasons which may have roots in state law, the functioning of state administration and/or broader social norms.

Family splitting may also have immediate economic impacts for wives, children and elderly dependents, and leave women and children more vulnerable to violence.

2.5.3 Intra-household relations

The typical or acceptable gender division of tasks and responsibilities often changes in conflicts, and for reasons beyond those already discussed related to risks of GBV.

Conflicts may completely disrupt typical male livelihood strategies, for example, with the loss of livestock keeping in agro-pastoral economies (see above). Poverty forced all family members to take on more economic responsibilities [all case studies]. In most countries women were already highly engaged in economic activities, but where women had been more devoted to domestic responsibilities, there were considerable implications for household relations and for societies where women became more visibly economic agents. Women's additional economic burden was on top of their domestic responsibilities.

Men have tended to be vulnerable to a different risk, when the loss of their livelihood and ability to assume the economic responsibility for their families has caused psychological harm (loss of self-esteem, enforced idleness, depression, addiction to drugs and alcohol). This can create a vicious cycle where mental health and loss of hope leads to further economic harm, which can affect all family members, including intensifying the woman's economic responsibilities.²⁰

Conflict often causes shifts in cropping patterns. This may involve a move from crops that were considered more in the male domain (for example, cotton) to crops in the woman's domain (for example, cassava, sweet potatoes), with a change in work-load division. There could also be changes in how particular tasks were divided in the household. For example, where ploughing animals were lost and where ploughing was a man's responsibility, women may take on more field preparation with hand-hoes.

Conflict may cause the loss of formal employment and of higher-status and higher-reward agriculture (for example, livestock keeping, specialised cash crop farming) especially as a result of displacement, and a move towards a household economy based on making-do. It is generally believed that social norms which cast men as breadwinners often make it harder for them to adjust to micro-earning activities. Women find it easier to adapt to finding opportunities for small earnings (for example, Holloway et al. 2020, pp 10–12), which has led to many women becoming main income earners, and as a result, even to taking on the title of household heads [Somalia].

Women and girls may be pushed into engaging in transactional or commercial sex, including having to engage in sex to be included in humanitarian assistance. The consequences of this (including personal distress, social stigma and risk of sexually transmitted diseases) lie largely

beyond the scope of this paper (though, again, it is recognised that psychological factors have consequences in all domains, see 2.1.9 above).

Women generally maintain all their original domestic and other responsibilities in addition to these additional responsibilities.²¹ However, in some conflicts, women have gained status or voice in their families as a result of acquiring new skills and/or of bringing cash income into the household. In some cases, this seems to lead to a longer term change towards less imbalance in gender power relations [Somalia, South Sudan, and from outside our case studies, Chad, Sierra Leone and Pakistan – for example, Horn et al. 2014, Grabska 2013, Yadav 2016, Levine 2019 and 2020.]

2.5.4 Social disruption

Gender roles could also change because conflicts brought significant social disruption and weakening of social structures.

In some cases, rupture with social norms was a deliberate political shift related to the conflict itself. Two striking examples of this are in Nepal, where there was a policy of greater gender equality among Maoist insurgents (Luna 2019); and in Afghanistan, where two sides in the conflict had very different visions of gender roles and norms in society, and where women and girls have seen gains and losses in accordance with changes in risks related to the shifting balance of power. In Afghanistan, girls' access to primary, secondary and University education all improved after the fall of the Taliban government, though the pace of improvement in girls' education has slowed in the past decade and may even have retreated recently (HRW, 2017).

In some cases, weakening of social structures caused difficulties, especially for those who depended on certain social structures or practices for support; for example, mutual solidarity groups that had a savings function, institutions such as clan elders that had a protection function. However, where the agency of women and girls had been constrained by social institutions, their weakening sometimes opened up space for greater freedom and agency for women and girls. Women returning from displacement in South Sudan had greater voice in public debates, including challenging practices around levirate marriage and were more able to divorce from abusive husbands (Grabska 2013). Changes may or may not last long after the conflict; some studies at least suggest that transformations during displacement can continue on return (for example, Levine 2020, Grabska 2013).

2.6 SUMMARY OF EFFECTS OF CONFLICT ON LIVELIHOODS

Table 1 summarises evidence found of specific impacts of conflicts on livelihoods. Blank cells may indicate lack of evidence rather than evidence of absence.

The scale and degree of these impacts varies greatly. That more causal pathways were seen in some conflicts than others neither implies that conflict nor its impact on livelihoods was worse than other cases.

TABLE 2.1 EFFECTS OF CONFLICT ON LIVELIHOODS IN SUMMARY

	Afghanistan	DRC	Mali	Nepal	Nigeria	Somalia	South Sudan	Sudan	Syria	Uganda	Yemen
Impacts on households											
Looting (personal)		+	+				+	+		+	
Looting / decapitalisation business		+	+	(+)			+			+	
Displacement	+	+	+	(+)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Less freedom to move (fields, forests, work)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Loss of labour					+			+			
Displacement/emigration	+	+	+	+	+	+		+		+	
Wounded/killed					+	+		+	+	+	
Recruitment		+		+		(+)					
Loss of employment											
Change in cropping patterns	+								+	+	
Loss of tourism			+							+	
Crime		+					+			+	
Land disputes		+					+			+	
Impacts on markets											
Market disruption	+	+	+	(+)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Negative impact on market from in-kind aid		+	+		+					+	
Unfriendly business climate, including informal taxes		+		(+)	+	+	+			+	
Loss of investment				?	+	+				+	
General lawlessness					+						

	Afghanistan	DRC	Mali	Nepal	Nigeria	Somalia	South Sudan	Sudan	Syria	Uganda	Yemen
Loss of financial infrastructure			+	+	+			+		+	
Inflation and/or devaluation, lack of forex					?		+	+	+		+
Loss of revenue (local, national)	+				?				+	+	
War economy/market capture	+	+	+		?		+			+	
Border closures					+			+		+	
Lack of development investment		+		?	+					+	
Impacts on services											
Loss of infrastructure	+	+		+	+		+			+	
Mental health problems	+	+		+		+	+	+	+	+	+
Increased vulnerability to other shocks	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	?	?	?
Loss of social support	(general with displacement?)										

SECTION 3
RESPONSES



3.1 INTRODUCTION: RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

Public responses – by governments, NGOs, aid partners – to the effects of protracted conflict can be divided into:

- **Relief** to enable those affected by conflict (and other shocks) to survive, including humanitarian protection to protect rights crucial to pursue a livelihood (freedom of movement, land rights, right to work, etc.);
- **Social protection** – regular, reliable, and potentially indefinite support to vulnerable persons – to alleviate hardship and reduce vulnerability to shocks; and,
- **Livelihoods support** to help people earn incomes and meet their basic needs.

Table 3.1 summarises the effects and consequences of conflict on livelihoods and responses to these. Some responses listed are partial: they do not completely address the problem.

TABLE 3.1 RESPONSES BY GOVERNMENTS, NON-GOVERNMENTAL AND AID AGENCIES TO THE IMPACTS OF PROTRACTED CONFLICT ON POPULATIONS OBSERVED IN ELEVEN CASES

Responses in **bold** indicate more commonly seen interventions.

Sections that report on specific interventions appear in brackets.

Immediate effect of conflict	Consequences	Responses
Individuals, households and their enterprises		
Loss of physical and financial capital: destruction, looting	Less farming, end of herding	Grants in kind or cash or vouchers to restore productive assets. Tools, seeds, livestock [3.4.3] Grants of material or cash to rebuild homes Support VSLA, microfinance agencies: grants, training, advice [3.4.3] Link farmers to buyers [3.4.2]
Loss of labour owing to death, injury, flight	Less income, farming and herding	Relief food or cash (often prioritised for female-headed households) Training of individuals in specific skills – carpentry, tailoring, etc., or in business or financial management [3.4.3]
Restricted freedom of movement	Restricts farming if fields not accessible Herding and gathering difficult or impossible May prevent reaching markets to sell produce, buy inputs	Advocacy with warring parties; including with Government around restrictions of people confined in camps— rare as formal response
Remittances	May be lost, esp. if people displaced May increase if those fleeing get jobs	Identify and register displaced, connect to relatives (very rare)

Displacement: flight or forced, towns or camps or rural haven	<p>Much reduced access to land and livestock</p> <p>Less demand for non-farm goods and services, affects artisans, service providers</p> <p>Informal and petty jobs only</p>	<p>Protect from violence. Provide shelter, food, water, sanitation, health, other basic services [3.2]</p> <p>Advocacy for access to land (rare)</p> <p>Train individuals in specific skills – carpentry, tailoring, etc., or in business or financial management [3.4.3]</p> <p>Grants usually in kind: tools, seeds, etc. [3.4.3]</p>
Rupture to social networks from less movement, displacement	<p>Loss economic, social, psychological support</p>	<p>Emergency material relief to substitute for entitlements from social capital</p> <p>Psycho-social support, [occasionally] incorporated into training</p>
Loss of public goods and services		
State services & aid: staff flee, programmes close down	<p>Loss of public goods and services</p> <p>Less spending in local economy on public services</p>	<p>Reconstruct, repair broken buildings, other installations</p> <p>Assign staff, operating funds</p> <p>Emergency relief for health and nutrition: not remit of this review</p> <p>Emergency provision of or support for education and health care (limited)</p>
Loss of public services: health, education	<p>Worse health – including disease malnutrition of young children.</p> <p>Children lose schooling – long-term disadvantage</p>	
Breakdown of physical infrastructure: roads, irrigation, water, power	<p>Roads: higher transport cost; irrigation: less productive farming; Drinking water: water-borne disease, more work to collect water: Power: small enterprises disabled, less artisan work in evenings, children unable to study</p>	<p>Repair and construct roads, irrigation, water, power supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash/food for work [3.2.1] • Local employment intensive [3.4.1] • Contracted [3.4.1]
Administration and justice suspended	<p>Contributes to crime.</p> <p>Unresolved trade and land disputes</p>	<p>Support local leadership and administration to register rights to land, support for mediation of land disputes (rare)</p> <p>Legal services for returnees and displaced</p>
Disruption to economy, markets – First round: less investment, less activity. Second round: knock-on effects, inverse multipliers, as economy spirals down		
Restrictions on movement	<p>Less produce marketed, fewer inputs: less economic activity, fewer jobs, etc.</p>	
Informal and predatory taxes	<p>Less investment</p> <p>Decreased competition; very small traders excluded from market activity</p> <p>Higher prices for consumers; lower prices for producers</p>	
Looting, crime	<p>Loss of property, stores, inventories. Less investment</p>	<p>Grants or credit to traders to recapitalise [3.4.2]</p> <p>Training in business and finance skills [3.4.3]</p>

Inflation, currency crises	Less certainty, less investment. Switch to international currencies High prices for food, other essentials	Give food assistance in kind Adjust cash transfers to counter effects of inflation [3.2.3] (quite rare)
Effects of humanitarian assistance on demand for goods and services	Food aid may reduce food prices in local markets with loss of income to farmers and delaying resumption of normal trade Seeds and tools distributions may undermine input dealers Aid worker demand for housing, food, services may create jobs; may inject cash into local economy (especially to elites) Procurement may favour war economy	Replacement of in kind aid by cash (surprisingly, still rare) Support to seed systems instead of distribution of seeds (very rare)

Emergency **relief** is targeted at addressing present, acute needs. It is thus usually programmed in short cycles (6 or 12 months), although in the past few years occasionally for 2–4 years. A tension arises between the mandate of humanitarian assistance to meet present, acute needs and that conflicts are usually protracted lasting ten or more years, often dying down then flaring up, with repeated emergencies that require relief. This tension is exacerbated because other forms of assistance which are intended to provide longer term support, including for livelihood development or improvement of services, are often absent in conflict areas — where they are most needed. Some degree of emergency need persists throughout conflict, although conflicts can vary in intensity and location, making it hard to predict either the scale or location of needs even in the short term.

Social protection has been defined as:

all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups.”
(Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler 2004)

The line between social protection and emergency relief is not always clear: almost every kind of emergency aid would fit under the above description. Often, social protection is used to refer particularly to state action; and to permanent provision, often as a right, making it dependable for recipients so long as the persons and households assisted meet criteria of need.²²

In protracted conflict, distinctions become even more blurred because emergency relief may be offered repeatedly over years, so that in practice it may take the same form as some social protection — a repeated cash transfer, for example.

Conflict affects **livelihoods support**. In short-lived natural disasters, once the shock has passed recovery takes place as conditions return to normal. Lost assets need to be restored, repaired and rebuilt, but otherwise recovery proceeds under normality. With protracted conflicts, livelihoods need to be supported at the same time as conflict undermines those livelihoods. Those living with conflict must find a way a live under difficult and dangerous conditions. Indeed, they may be undertaking new livelihoods: in Syria, one in three had started new livelihoods in the middle of war (Howe & Stites 2019).

Three things follow from these considerations. One, because conflicts can be drawn out, relief agencies (or, more commonly, the distinct emergency departments of 'dual-mandate' agencies that provide both relief and development assistance) can find themselves providing relief as well as supporting livelihoods. This applies especially if development agencies (including government ministries and aid agencies) usually operating in zones now in conflict have shut down owing to insecurity. Agencies or units of agencies specialised in emergency relief may have little experience of livelihoods support, lack competence in this, and may not be funded and staffed to do so.

Two, the dividing lines between relief, social protection and livelihoods support become blurred: in protracted conflicts, interventions from each of the three need to run in parallel.

Three, requirements for different forms of assistance differ significantly. Even when all three forms are given through as cash (Box 3A), their different purposes may imply different amounts, frequencies, delivery, targeting and perhaps most significantly, different complementary measures.

BOX 3A GIVING CASH: DIFFERENT ENDS, DIFFERENT REQUIREMENTS

Giving cash to support people in need has become increasingly popular. Fears that cash might be misspent have abated in the light of experience, while agencies increasingly recognise those assisted are best placed to determine priority uses of cash. Cash avoids the costs of procuring physical goods and second-guessing what people need.

Cash can be given for several purposes. Transfers may:

- prevent hunger and suffering, as immediate relief following a disaster or the outbreak of conflict;
- form part of social protection, where targeted households on low incomes are provided with regular cash transfers to support the household to meet its most basic needs; or
- may support livelihoods through larger grants to replace assets – tools, livestock, seed, etc. – lost to disaster or conflict, or to start-up small enterprises, where a grant can fund the initial inventory for a shop, equip a workshop, buy a lorry, taxi or motorbike, etc.

For each of the uses, different considerations apply:

- **Amount given** – small amounts can protect against hunger, much more is usually needed to start an enterprise;
- **Timing and frequency** – relief cash needs to be paid promptly, social protection may best be given frequently, capital grants are one-offs;
- **Criteria to target recipients** – for relief it may be blanket payments to all affected by conflict, social protection may be means-tested or tied to life-cycles as with pensions for seniors, for small enterprises criteria of skills and experience may apply; and,
- **Potential complements to cash** – for relief, the cash alone may prevent death and destitution. Social protection may be accompanied by advice – behavioural change communications, or conditions such as that infants and mothers attend health clinics, and children go to school. To support livelihoods, training and technical assistance, links to financing agencies would be direct complements, while less directly, maintaining rural roads might be necessary.

3.2 HUMANITARIAN RELIEF

Since the focus of this report is on livelihoods, we mainly consider assistance for meeting immediate basic needs of food security in this section. Interventions in other sectors are also important for livelihoods. For example, ill-health has a profound economic cost, education creates economic opportunities. These sectors, however, were outside the scope of this paper and no studies were found to document their impacts on livelihoods.

Although, the importance of humanitarian protection for livelihoods has been noted, few documented examples were found of interventions from protection supporting livelihoods.

3.2.1 Food assistance

Humanitarian or relief aid for food security was given in all cases except for Nepal²³, where ICRC was only involved in protection programming. Otherwise, development assistance continued to be offered throughout the conflict, though with some limitations. IFRC took over some state development programming in areas of conflict because of its ability to work across lines.

In the other conflicts, food security assistance was offered in three situations, though the lines between them are not clear cut. One, where conflicts caused mass displacement, these populations received continuous support throughout displacement [Uganda, Mali, Syria, Sudan, North-East Nigeria]. Two, humanitarian food assistance was also offered throughout the conflict to some non-displaced populations in conflict areas [Somalia, DRC, Syria, North-

East Nigeria]. Three, in other conflicts, humanitarian food security relief was mainly offered in response to other shocks such as droughts and floods. (In Somalia and South Sudan, numbers receiving relief varied year on year largely according to harvests.) In other words, food assistance was given both *in* conflicts and *to* conflicts.

Food assistance was the single largest sector in humanitarian appeals in the ten cases where humanitarian relief was given. Three main modalities have been used across almost all cases: food aid in-kind [in all ten case studies]; vouchers to buy food, redeemable for a restricted list of goods and a restricted number of retail outlets; and cash transfers (Box 3A).

In the earlier conflicts among the cases (for example, Uganda, Sudan, Somalia before 2011, DRC before 2011), food aid was the main modality for food assistance. In recent years, cash and voucher assistance have increased, for example being trialled in DRC progressively over the past decade, though food aid still remains prominent. It is still the dominant modality for food assistance in conflicts, except possibly for food assistance to people in protracted displacement. Food aid constituted around 90% of the value of food assistance transfers in South Sudan and in DRC (even in 2020) and 80% in Syria.

Evidence is not available to make definite conclusions about the relative impacts of different food assistance modalities (Tappis and Doocy 2017). Cash assistance was generally preferred by recipients [assessed and documented in DRC, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen]. It was almost always cheaper than food aid or voucher assistance. It is rarely easy to find details of relative costs of in-kind assistance, vouchers and cash, even for basic data such as the total cost to transfer ratio (TCTR). TCTR will vary from country to country. It may be lower where economies of scale apply, where targeting is easier, and for less remote populations. The ratio can never be the only indicator of value for money. However, from the data available (for example, overall budgets in project proposals) it appears that the value of food would typically make up around half of the cost of food aid distribution and the value of cash around two-thirds of the cost of ECT.²⁴ ECT also proved more timely than either vouchers or cash [DRC, South Sudan] (Murray and Hove 2014).

Although every study available showed most cash received was spent on food, impacts of cash, vouchers and food in-kind varied slightly and for understandable reasons. For example, cash allowed people to buy different foods and so tended to improve household dietary diversity (HDD) more than food aid [assessed in South Sudan and Yemen]. Vouchers were also successful in improving HDD. Food aid increased calorie consumption by slightly more than cash or vouchers – by 4% in a study in Yemen (Schwab et al. 2013). (See Bailey 2013 for more details of food-voucher-cash comparisons.)

The little evidence on impact of cash showed that cash was spent locally, stimulating the local economy [South Sudan and Nigeria]. Vouchers and food in kind undermined demand in local markets [north-east Nigeria, Syria, Yemen] and tended to favour larger traders who could partner the aid agencies.²⁵ Even when food was sourced domestically, it tended to come from peaceful areas rather than conflict zones.

In South Sudan, there was a preference for vouchers by aid agencies specifically in IDP camps known as 'Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites' because of security concerns and to ensure that the *agencies'* objectives (for example, child nutrition or shelter) were met. In Yemen, key informants believed that women preferred vouchers because men controlled spending of cash, although this is not what the women themselves thought.

It appears that some portion of food rations has been sold in every conflict situation by those households who do not have sufficient cash from other sources to meet other needs; in Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda, there was a specific need for cash to mill the grain in food rations, for which IDPs in Uganda had to sell around 15% of their food ration at prices lower than those prevailing outside the food aid distribution area. In South Sudan, ACF provided milling vouchers worth up to US\$8 per month to cover this cost.)

3.2.2 Cash, gender, age and social exclusion

Beyond the generally limited data available on impact of food assistance programming, it is even harder to understand how impact may depend on gender or age. At best, programmes report on the sex of recipients – but rarely on age: disaggregation of impact is almost impossible to find. For example, almost the only studies available that disaggregated by age to understand the impacts on adolescents were from Syrian refugees, outside the scope of this study. (WRC and Plan International 2020)

It is easier to find evidence of the impact of cash transfers on gender relations than gender-disaggregated evidence of their impact on food security. Studies from humanitarian situations in general (i.e. not necessarily conflict and beyond our cases) show that cash has tended to have positive impacts on gender relations. There is evidence that it has increased women's participation in household decision making. Impacts on domestic violence (or intimate partner violence) have been small and ambiguous. (Cross et al. 2018)

Differences may be due to different cultures and experiences in each country. For example, women in Syria reported that cash led to greater domestic disputes, which has been linked to allegations of aid workers demanding sex for humanitarian assistance. Although such allegations are not uncommon, in Syria this seems to have created widespread suspicion against women receiving money, whereas it has not had the same effect in most other places.

There are broad fears that humanitarian assistance in general can replicate existing patterns of social exclusion, for example by sex, age, caste, ethnic group, sexuality, etc. (International Dalit Solidarity Network 2013, UN Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities 2017; Barbelet and Wake 2020). Evidence, however, is lacking because there is little systematic collection of information that disaggregates by any of these factors except (sometimes) for gender.

3.2.3 Transfer values

Across cases, practice varied as to how regularly transfer values were updated to reflect changes in the cost of a minimum expenditure basket. However, in all countries where ECT were used, markets were monitored to ensure food supplies would be available in the market. Despite repeated fears being raised, there were no examples in our cases where ECT had caused inflation. (There was one case in Uganda where larger cash grants to support return caused a short-lived increase in the price of small livestock, a favoured purchase for investment.)

3.2.4 ECT and social protection

There is now a significant bureaucratic infrastructure for coordinating cash and voucher programming in each country (the Cash Working Group), although this often only offers coordination (and shared learning) within the humanitarian sector. State systems offering safety net transfers did not exist in most of the cases – except for nascent systems in Mali and Yemen. Where they existed at national level, they were not targeted to conflict-affected areas (for example, north-east Nigeria). However, increasingly donors are looking to see how cash transfer programmes run by humanitarian agencies can be designed to support nascent or future state social protection [South Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, Mali].

3.2.5 Commentary

The overall importance of food assistance

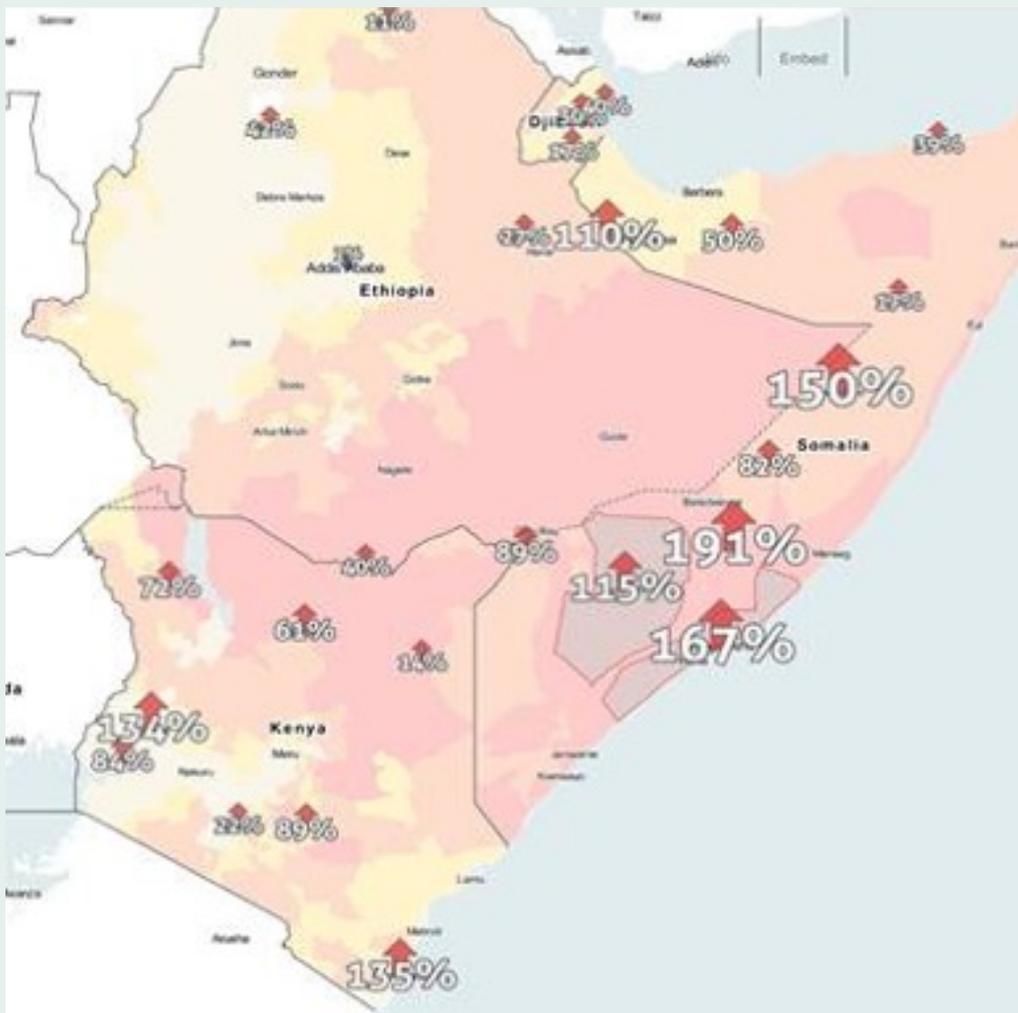
It is hard to draw general conclusions about food assistance. Where food assistance has reached those in need on time, conflicts (or the combinations of conflict-and-disaster) have not led to mass mortality or famine. Famine or mass mortality have only resulted where aid was not able to be delivered adequately [for example, Somalia in 2011 – see Box 3B; parts of southern Sudan/South Sudan in 1998, 2017 and 2021; and quite possibly Borno State in Nigeria in 2016, where famine was never formally recognised].

BOX 3B FAMINE IN SOMALIA

The Somalia 2011/12 famine illustrates why famines are relatively rare, even in conflicts. There were several causes of the famine: had any on them been absent, famine would probably have been averted – even if serious food insecurity and mass suffering would still have occurred.

1. The famine followed a major drought, regarded as the worst since the 1950s, causing catastrophic loss of harvest and significant animal mortality, reducing local food supply and incomes. At the time, this was generally seen as the cause of the famine.

FIGURE 3B MAP OF FOOD PRICE INFLATION IN SOMALIA. 2011



2. A major surge in conflict between Al Shabab and the government/AMISOM in 2011/12 disrupted flows of imported food. A food price map (Figure 3B) shows significant differences in food inflation in neighbouring areas, evidence the market was not able to function properly. Food prices rose 2–3 times in some locations.

3. Aid arrived very late. There are several explanations for this: the usual delays of months between early warnings from food security monitoring and humanitarian appeals; insecurity and an Al Shabab ban preventing international agencies from reaching people on the ground – but (allegedly) unwilling to be open about this; donor countries unwilling to see aid reach Al Shabab (including counter-terrorism legislation that risked criminalising aid operations unless they were 100% diversion-proof); and hesitation to adopt cash transfers when food could not be delivered in-kind.
4. Despite everything, most people still survived somehow, especially pastoralists. Mass mortality was largely confined either to those who tried to escape and who arrived in Ethiopia in terrible condition, but where support was inadequate to save them (Sida et al. 2012); and to riverine low-caste communities. These communities had poor social connections outside their own communities and fewer resources to call on (Maxwell and Majid 2016). Even in a conflict and with a drought, it still matters who you are, what power you have and what social connections you can call on.

However, this is not evidence that famine would have occurred in other cases without food assistance. It is likely that many cases would have resulted in great hardship; it is perhaps unlikely that all or even many would have resulted in mass mortality. Food assistance coverage is rarely total, and targeting is never perfect, but there is no clear evidence of high mortality among those excluded from assistance.

It is likely that food assistance has often been given to people who could have survived without it, but in the absence of better evidence, it is safest to argue that emergency relief has generally provided an important safety net. Efforts should be to improve its delivery – including how to improve targeting, especially where resources are limited. There is much evidence in evaluations, including from the case countries, about what needs to improve and how to improve it (including lessons on accountability, feedback mechanisms, dignity for women, timeliness, value for money, transparency of targeting, etc.). Such recommendations are not the focus of this paper.

Cash, vouchers, food in-kind

The advantages of cash over both vouchers and food aid in *most* circumstances now seem to be beyond doubt. There could be circumstances where conflict has prevented flows of food through trade and where aid agencies may be able to transport to areas where traders cannot, but this was not so in any country studied. Indeed, evidence that trade continued in all of our cases would suggest that this is rare.

Arguments that cash may be misspent are now rarely heard because of the volume of evidence on how ECT are spent – predominantly on food, partly on accessing basic services (school fees, health care), on water [in Somalia] and partly on the household economy (including debt repayments, investment).

The remaining argument in defence of food aid is that it might be more effective at meeting particular nutrition or food consumption objectives, for example, to provide more calories. This argument rests on the assumption disputed by those proposing the use of ECT, namely that the relief organisation has the right to set the specific objectives of the transfer, rather than people having the right to meet their most pressing needs with their cash.

There are possible situations where aid in-kind may be most appropriate, for example, where markets do not function (but see above); in situations of hyperinflation, where government manipulation of exchange rates may make cash transfers either inadequate or prohibitively expensive (Sudan in 2020/21); or, as may have been the case in Syria, for reasons of social sensitivity (see above). However, it is disturbing that in most of our cases food aid still makes up the bulk of food assistance [Figures were not always easy to obtain, but at least in South Sudan; DRC; Nigeria, Yemen, Syria].²⁶

Beyond targeting: the politics of inclusion and exclusion

In situations of displacement, aid has often been given only to those in camps – and even only to those in officially demarcated camps. It has generally been found that the displaced have better opportunities if they stay out of camps, which are usually a restriction placed on the displaced by governments, and not their free choice. Yet the restriction of aid to those in camps, often done simply because those populations are so much easier and cheaper to reach, encourages people to go to camps. Although it may be that many in camps have greater needs, humanitarian aims would be better served if people assisted were allowed out of camps rather than by limiting assistance to those in camps.

International aid agencies have sometimes been directed by governments where to give assistance, including insisting that part of humanitarian assistance goes to a host community, rather than only to the displaced [now a normal situation particularly with refugees]; preventing agencies from delivering food assistance to IDPs not in government authorised/controlled camps [northern Uganda]; or favouring areas loyal to the government rather than newly retaken areas previously not under government control [Syria]. Such situations represent a serious breach of humanitarian principles, which agencies need to defend. Ultimately, aid agencies may have to follow instructions from government or other de facto power, but it is not clear that the defence of humanitarian principles is always as strong as it could be. (The provision of *development* assistance to host communities is not here in question: only the use of those resources earmarked for urgent relief in accordance with humanitarian need. Discussion on the use of resources other than for humanitarian relief is dealt with in following sections.)

Advocacy as a critical food assistance modality

The links between the humanitarian domain of protection and food and livelihood security have repeatedly been stressed: threats to personal security, rights and freedom of movement were hugely significant constraints to livelihood security. Assessments of the household economy of people in crises, even those confined in camps, show that people have an active if limited economic life. Freedom of movement to increase that economic life is the most important guarantee of people's food security, not aid. Humanitarian agencies could advocate for measures to support people's own independence: not all needs must be met by aid agencies, except as a last resort. Humanitarian advocacy is more generally seen as the domain of the Global Protection Cluster. Evidence from the previous section on how conflicts affect livelihoods have repeatedly shown that the domains of livelihoods and of protection are intimately connected in many ways. Land rights and access to land were critical, though they rarely received attention. People in camps needed support to access land in displacement; everyone needed support to prevent land disputes and land grabbing during or after the conflict.

The response by states to conflict has often been worrying. Accepting that the states in our cases have limited resources and capacity, governments have sometimes not prioritised those

in most need, for example, where additional budgets for health or education were not targeted at areas disrupted by conflict [Uganda]. Resources were not made available to incentivise teachers, health workers and other civil servants to work in more difficult places.

These matters suggest important advocacy roles for international organisations supporting states affected by conflict, often with direct budgetary support.

Tolerance of diversion

Fraud is an inevitable companion of large resource flows. Despite agencies' best efforts recipients of food assistance have sometimes had to pay to be registered, and those in charge of lists have created ghost recipients. Agencies do their best to discover and prevent this. In some cases, collusion with agency staff has been at the heart of diversions so staff in Somalia have been sacked – and yet

“[m]ultiple examples were provided of sacked staff soon finding employment in other agencies”.

(Majid and Harmer 2016)

No examples of agencies pushing for legal action to be taken against (suspected) criminals were found. This means there is no deterrence; it lets states avoid responsibility for diversion of aid, a loss of welfare of their citizens most in need; and it reinforces a mentality that aid resources are free, not part of the rules that govern normal society. All these consequences are unfortunate and could be addressed.

3.3 SOCIAL PROTECTION

As explained in 3.1, the difference between relief and social protection is blurred. This section considers those interventions primarily intended to protect persons and households on low incomes from hardship and shocks²⁷, with regular and reliable assistance given for as long as the household remains in need.

Mali has a safety net programme (Jigisé m̀jiri: Tree of Hope in Bambara) that was extended to north Mali during conflict (2014), starting with Gao then Mopti and Tombouctou. It provided cash transfers, income-generating activities, or labour-intensive public works – such as the rehabilitation of Konna port.

This is a rare case where impacts were formally tested during conflict. The Institut de Recherché pour le Développement (IRD) with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) randomly assigned communes in five regions to cash transfer and accompanying measures – communications on child and maternal health and nutrition – either in 2014–2015 (early treatment) or in 2016–2017 (late treatment), for three years. Within a subset of early treatment communes deemed nutritionally vulnerable, villages were randomly assigned to either receive a preventive nutrition package of fortified flours for under-fives, pregnant

and lactating mothers for one year or not to receive it. The study found that cash transfer and accompanying measures led to significant improvements in household welfare. More households were classified as food secure or having little to no hunger, and both diversity and quality of diet rose. It helped households become more resilient by increasing household savings and assets. Both women and men reported being happier as a result of the cash transfers and had learned from the accompanying measures. Little effect, however was seen on child nutrition.

IFPRI also investigated the impacts of Jigisémèjiri on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) which primarily targets men where nearly 40% of households are polygamous. Cash transfers caused significant decreases in IPV in polygamous households: physical violence down 7 percentage points, emotional violence down 12 percentage points, and controlling behaviours down 16 percentage points. The cause seemed to be that men were significantly less stressed and anxious, leading to fewer disputes. It had limited effects in monogamous households. Women's welfare, it seemed, could improve even if they did not get the transfer, decide on how it was spent or be in any other way empowered.

The World Bank Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program (SASPP) tests safety nets in four Sahel countries including Mali, to evaluate how different productive packages affect the well-being and economic stability of beneficiaries. Mali has recorded 10,000 direct beneficiaries of these pilots' productive inclusion and income-generating activities that include some coaching and facilitation; community sensitization on aspirations and social norms; facilitation of savings groups; micro entrepreneurship training; behavioural skills training; and a one-time lump-sum cash grant for individuals to start a business. The Mali test had, however, still to be evaluated by early 2021.

Some programmes have provided temporary assistance to date but intend to become more regular social protection in the future. In **South Sudan**, the Safety Net and Skills Development Project (SNSDP) funded by the World Bank offered work at US\$3 per day per beneficiary for 10 days a month for three months in a year in rural counties and four months in urban counties. Evaluation of recipients in Juba showed it led to more frequent and better quality meals for beneficiaries, allowed them to pay school fees, and to engage in small enterprises. The project targeted female-headed households and facilitated women's participation by siting work close to their homes, setting work hours to take account of household work and child care, and included a gender-based violence referral scheme. That said, the very nature of public employment does not fit with the lack of time of women on low incomes and heading up households.

The project is intended to be scaled up, to provide grants to those including people with disabilities, the elderly and pregnant or breastfeeding women, among others.

In **Somalia**, pilots have been funded by the World Bank to provide cash transfers to targeted poor and vulnerable households. The Baxnaano project is expected to target 200,000 poor and vulnerable households (approximately 1.2 million individuals) across the Federal Member States with nutrition-linked cash transfers.

The EU has also established a pilot safety net as part of the Inclusive Local Economic Development Programme.

In **Yemen**²⁸, a consortium of NGOs including CARE, Oxfam and Save, offered cash transfers, cash plus training in agriculture and health, and cash for work to rehabilitate local public works.

CARE found cash to increase food security of households and reduce the burden (on women especially) of finding water and firewood. Some households saved or invested the money for future use, particularly where recipients also received savings and loans training. Rehabilitation of community assets improved access to water and food markets, and helped increase sales on markets and stabilise prices. Save recorded large improvements in the coping indices and food consumption scores of recipients.

The Yemen Fund for Social Development's Cash for Nutrition, supported by UNICEF, gave cash transfers to households along with complementary monthly health and nutrition education sessions for mothers of infants and young children for two years. This proved largely effective. Child malnutrition diagnoses decreased by 10% over the past two years —while the counterfactual context saw a rise of 13 percentage points. Child diet diversity improved. Better child nutrition was especially marked among the poorest third of households. Cash allowed half of households to repay debts and pay for healthcare.

3.3.1 Assessing social protection

Three points stand out.

One, it is perhaps **not surprising to see few social protection programmes in the eleven cases**. Relief is usually the priority in conflict areas, not rolling out nascent social protection. Funds are usually scarce relative to widespread need — social protection would often have to cover most of the population if entitlement were defined by need. That said, given reports of the effectiveness of social protection, the cost-effectiveness of social protection compared to other measures should be assessed.

Two, most if not all of the interventions recorded here are examples of **cash plus**: cash plus education and training, and cash with some conditionality such as local public works. Cash plus can work well, so long as the complements provide something that money cannot buy. The prime example is child nutrition: cash helps mothers buy food, while guidance of child feeding and health helps the mother get the full benefit of the food. [It would be even better if conditions of attending local clinics were added, but that depends on those services being in place and working well — which is not always the case in low income countries.] The wider literature shows other examples of the beneficial synergies from linking cash to nutrition training (IFPRI 2021).

Three, while the examples here show that social protection can be given in conflict, that perhaps depends on its intensity. Ethiopia's long-established Productive Safety Net Programme that delivered assistance to around one million persons in Tigray has been severely interrupted by the recent outbreak of conflict. Staff have fled, banks and shops that helped channel assistance have closed. A safety net designed to work in peace was vulnerable to hostilities.

This is not surprising: ideally the suspended safety net would be replaced by humanitarian relief until peace returns.

3.4 SUPPORT TO LIVELIHOODS

Agency support to livelihoods lay in three main domains:

- Reconstructing, restoring and improving physical infrastructure to facilitate individual and household enterprises, mainly by repair or construction of roads, irrigation works, and power supplies;
- Reviving supply chains to connect rural populations to markets, through infusions of capital and information; and,
- Helping individual and households to earn incomes either by restoring their previous livelihoods or by undertaking new ones, through provision of working and investment capital, training and technical assistance. Assistance was sometimes layered in combinations of cash transfers, goods, training and technical advice.

3.4.1 Repair and constructions of roads, irrigation, power supplies

Road repair and construction was reported in five cases. A distinction can be drawn between interventions that were designed first and foremost to improve roads, and those where road building was a condition of a public employment programme where those put to work would be paid cash or given food in return for their labour.

More success was seen when road building was the prime aim of the project. In **Nepal**, the Rural Access Programme worked with more than 1,700 local road building groups across the country to construct access roads using local labour, thereby generating much-needed local jobs during conflict. DFID funded this, but the agency was frustrated by delays in implementation²⁹, overspending, and ad hoc promises made to expand the programme to build more roads. While this made DFID's life harder, the roads and jobs were so popular in the communities, that programme field staff were threatened that if they did not complete the promised roads, then no other development projects would be allowed locally – a threat made primarily by Maoist insurgents who had the power to obstruct most projects in the (considerable) rural areas where they operated.

South Sudan after the peace agreement saw large-scale road works, coupled with demining. It helped open up the country and increase trade flows; but did not do as much to help farmers as it might have because the programme focused on primary routes, neglecting feeder roads to villages.

Time and again, roads constructed by public employment gangs were reported to be poor quality, often not maintained, and having little or no impact on the local economy. For example, in **Afghanistan** one food for work programme built a road that was only ever used by the relief agency vehicles. In the same country, community grants to build rural roads were seen to have no impact. In northern **Uganda**, access roads were built by those receiving relief cash, food or vouchers. No record was found of the condition of the roads having been assessed. In **South Sudan**, feeder roads built by labour gangs were of doubtful quality. Not all such schemes failed to show a useful impact: in **Yemen**, rehabilitation of roads was found to improve access to markets and health facilities.

In **Nepal**, labour-intensive road construction was welcomed by local communities for creating jobs. In **South Sudan**, however, some communities wanted to take the food provided for work on roads, sell it, then hire a grader to get the road improved. Agency rules, however, did not allow food aid to be so used.

Irrigation works³⁰ were less often reported. In **Afghanistan**, the National Solidarity Programme repaired irrigation works, but this made little difference to access to irrigation for most people. Furthermore, the programme probably favoured elite farmers: villages with irrigation were those with the greatest inequalities in land holding. In **Nepal**, the many village and district development programmes implemented by local NGOs often included repairs and improvements to small-scale irrigation works. In **Syria**, FAO restored field irrigation at the community level, engaged in light rehabilitation of field equipment, and under community ownership. Larger scale work with ministries was not possible given donor states' embargoes on working with the government. USAID's stabilisation funds to connect electricity grids enabled many more farmers to revive their irrigation.

Repair or construction of grid **electricity** supply was seen in some cases. In **Afghanistan** the National Solidarity Programme had installed village electricity, reportedly to good effect. In **Syria**, USAID stabilisation funds supported local authorities in the northeast (politically backed by the US) to restore electricity grids and connect irrigation pumps, water pumping stations and industrial shops to the grid. Some 150,000 people gained power for most hours of the day, streetlights functioned, and irrigation was revived. In **Yemen** the Enhanced Rural Resilience Project, funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP helped provide solar energy. This was used, among other things to pump irrigation water, but that depleted groundwater. Provision of solar panels was common: covered in section 3.2.3.

Assessing physical infrastructure

Construction of physical infrastructure by labour in programmes designed to transfer cash or create employment time and again were reported to create low quality works, sometimes without any planned maintenance so that they subsequently fell into disrepair (for example, northern Nigeria).

Projects designed specifically to create or repair physical infrastructure seemed more effective, although most reports concern outputs, rather than the consequent impacts on local economies. That is understandable: estimating the returns to physical infrastructure requires skilled economists, and plenty of data collection – hardly priorities during a protracted conflict.

3.4.2 Reviving and stimulating supply chains and markets

Reports of interventions to revive, stimulate and improve the functioning of supply chains came largely from Mali, northern Nigeria and South Sudan.

In **Mali**, SDC funded Helvetas and local partner AFAR to work with farmer associations on market systems, advocacy and conflict reduction (Box 3C). The **Programme de Soutien aux Economies Locales dans le Delta Intérieur du Niger** [Support to local economies in the inland delta of the Niger] focused on rice, beef cattle and fish grown in ponds. In Mali, all these products are higher-value foods with a market in the towns and cities. Production took advantage of the rich resources of the inland delta of the Niger.

BOX 3C DEALING WITH CONFLICT BUILDS ON LONGSTANDING EFFORTS TO RESOLVE LOCAL DISPUTES OVER LAND AND WATER IN MALI

Helvetas-Swiss Intercooperation and AFAR had worked in the Inland Delta) for decades, so that their approach to conflict was a less a response to a new conflict that broke out in 2013, more a continuation and adaptation of longstanding practice.

They had long tried to calm disputes, typically low level but occasionally deadly, over use of land, water, fisheries, bourgou and other grazing in the Inland Delta. To add to this, the State did not transfer authority for management of these resources to local government, as promised in decentralisation: creating local grievance, aggravated by corruption of officials (forestry agents, judiciary, administrators, etc.) and their support for traditional elites – key reasons why Katiba Macina, an Islamist rebel group, was able to gain local support.

So, Helvetas continued to support local government (communes) and producer organisations to push for a greater role for local people and local institutions in managing natural resources. They funded training, meetings (prevention- mediation), drafting of local bylaws: working with village institutions, traditional authorities, local government helping establish Land Tenure Commissions (COFO-Commissions Foncières).

Katiba Macina allowed them to carry on working because they were seen to support local people against the state. A member of AFAR commented:

Dialogue has in practice started with the jihadists. They are in village meetings; they are in the Clubs Dimitra. They follow closely what happens in the communities. We act as if we are unaware. We speak of the project in meetings, in front of these armed people. If we had taken sides, they would certainly have intervened.

This approach has inspired a new Mercy Corps initiative, Breakwater, funded by SDC and perhaps also FCDO for other parts of Mali. This may be conflict-sensitive programming, but it is not new: it draws on many years of practice.

In **Nigeria**, the Propcom programme to facilitate the functioning of agricultural and food supply chains extended its remit into the conflict-affected northeast. Although it took the programme time to adapt to the circumstances of the northeast, it succeeded in linking smallholders to agro-industries serving Nigeria's large cities to supply them with raw material. For example, in its Babban Gona initiative, Propcom linked farmers to a multinational company buying maize to process at premium prices to reflect both quality and corporate social responsibility. Propcom brokered meetings between company buyers and groups of farmers. Maize productivity rose, farmers earned more.

Propcom also set up electronic warehouse receipts,³¹ allowing farmers to store maize after harvest until prices were better shortly before the next planting season.

In Nigeria's northwest, USAID's MARKETS II linked UMZA International to rice farmers who supplied paddy to UMZA's mills. Similar supply deals were arranged between smallholders, many of them women farmers, to Labana Mills in Kebbi state, Popular Mills in Kano state, and Olam Nigeria in Nassarawa state. Farmers growing sorghum in Kano and Kaduna were connected to Nigeria Breweries.

Nigeria, with its considerable towns and cities, populated in part by a middle class with the buying power to demand higher-value foods, is a very different context to that of **South Sudan** where towns are few and far between, weakly connected by poor roads. Agencies working in South Sudan spotted that farmers knew little about markets more distant than their nearest rural centre, while few urban buyers knew of the potential of domestic farmers to grow what they needed. Outgrower schemes – where a large-scale buyer, processor, retailer, or exporter contracts farmers to grow a specific crop thereby guaranteeing a market and price³² – were thus developed to connect farmers to buyers.³³

SNV Netherlands formed groups of 50 smallholders growing 2–10 acres of seed, trained them in seed production, and contracted them to a private seed company. Farmer's profits from seed production tripled. Agroplan Oils and Fats Processors in Kajo Keji contracted more than 200 women farmers to grow sunflower which it then crushed into oil, sold through women retailers.

Similarly, USAID funded the Lulu Livelihoods Programme to promote manufacture of shea butter – lulu in Arabic – by women for local and export markets. Support was provided along the whole of the value chain – and for extended periods.³⁴

Some agencies supported traders. Mercy Corps in Ganyiel, Unity State promised to work across the ethnic divide between Dinka and Nuer, providing traders with 3 months of inventory finance. This led to more food being available in markets and to more sales for the supported traders. Subsequently Mercy Corps continued cash support to the traders, hosted and shared the costs of training in business skills with the local traders' association, then supported the association to negotiate reduced transit fees for members. Plans were underway to provide affordable loans to buy boats for river trade. Not only did this stimulate trade, but also by crossing ethnic divides, helped develop trust between the two groups, embedding a peacebuilding lens.

In **Somalia**, considerable effort has gone into programmes to develop value chains in activities such as irrigated vegetables and sesame, dairying, livestock exporting, and marine fisheries. Activities were diverse, ranging from repairing irrigation canals, to installing cold chains for fish, to ensuring livestock could pass veterinary scrutiny when exported. Much of this effort was working with the commercial grain: good returns could be made from these activities for producers and traders once bottlenecks in the supply chains were relieved. They also showed that even in a fragile state, beset by conflict, substantial export industries can be created – the prime case being livestock exports to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf.

Assessing supply chain interventions

Supply chain interventions are neither cheap, nor simple, nor short-term. Sustained support over five to ten years is often needed, by staff who have technical knowledge and skills, and who have the time, funds and scope to resolve unexpected obstacles that often arise as such initiatives develop.

Some of these initiatives take advantage of niche activities so they cannot go to any great scale. Contracting farmers has long been vaunted as an ideal way to provide small farmers in Africa with inputs and technical assistance, but the conditions for successful contracting – above all that farmers cannot sell on the side – probably apply to no more than one tenth of farm produce (see, for example, Bellemare 2015).

That limit does not apply, however, to supporting private traders. Successful support to traders operating in difficult and risky circumstances may have potential application across large areas affected by conflict in Africa. Experienced and valued traders all too frequently lose their capital to conflict and other problems, such as interruptions to exports of livestock in the Horn of Africa. Private traders make great efforts themselves to re-establish themselves, sometimes with support from local herders and farmers, but it takes time. Public support could accelerate recovery, with potential to recoup costs.³⁵

Relatively few supply chain activities were recorded in these eleven cases. That may be because some were not documented. But it may also be they were not always needed, because private traders were connecting farmers to markets. In Syria traders managed to move wheat and other produce across the shifting boundaries of areas under the control of different warring parties, working through both informal networks of traders, in addition to public deals between authorities in different parts of the country to trade key commodities such as wheat flour, fuel and vegetables. Government controlled areas did not include the bread baskets of Syria, so it was a boon to the government that wheat could be brought in from the north-east and north-west of the country, from farms in territory controlled by rebel groups.

Does working to support supply chains require more **analysis of markets**? Yes, if the aim is to support a specific activity such as the shea butter chain. Perhaps less so if support is given to traders. They know their markets, know their supply chains: their business depends on this knowledge. Analysis of markets need not be sophisticated or detailed. Understanding the critical features of supply chains – what producers can offer, what customers want, and at what price, plus transport costs – is sufficient in most cases. Interviews with traders can be highly revealing.³⁶

3.4.3 Promoting individual and household enterprises

The commonest interventions to promote livelihoods focused on farms and other enterprises. They typically supported activities that people already undertook before conflict: crop farming, livestock rearing, fishing, artisan trades such as carpentry and tailoring, and trading. Support mostly consisted of one or more of the following measures:

- **Capitalising or recapitalising enterprises** through provision of inputs in kind – seeds, tools, smallstock, etc. – or through grants either as cash or vouchers to be spent with agricultural input dealers or at seed fairs;
- **Training** either in specific trade skills such as carpentry or in general skills of managing businesses and finances;
- **Technical assistance** and agricultural extension usually associated with new crops, new varieties, animal health and new markets; and

- **Provision of credit** through capitalising village savings and loans associations (VSLA) and microfinance agencies.

Programmes typically combined some of these elements.

Capitalising enterprises

When farmers, herders and business operators had lost assets owing to conflict, agencies tried to restore them – at least in part – through grants to those who could not replace them. This was sometimes also seen as a chance to upgrade the technology used: farmers, for example, would be given seeds of improved varieties rather than those they previously sowed.

In areas of **Syria** not under government control – the north-west and north-east – aid partners provided wheat, olive and vegetable farmers with vouchers or cash to obtain agricultural inputs – seeds, tools, irrigation drip kits – in local markets. Input dealers apparently stocked what was needed, in some items replacing previous state distribution of inputs. The agencies also gave farmers cash to pay for harvest labour. This proved effective: most farmers were able to grow these crops and sell them – the olive oil even being bought by Turkish traders who exported it. It helped that private dealers substituted for previous state provision of farm inputs.

Market assessments were made to ensure that wheat, olives and vegetables would find a market. Furthermore, harvesting, processing and selling olives and vegetables created jobs for women. Agricultural wages had risen in the absence of men. Farmers were selected by skill and capacity, with preference to small- and medium-scale farmers and to tenant farmers.

In **South Sudan**, emergency distributions of seeds and tools on a large scale by FAO and others have long been a concern to observers. Farmers, studies show, rarely lack seed. Even if they did, it was not clear that physical supplies were needed in areas where markets function. Lengthy procurement meant seeds often arrived too late to be of use.

When seeds were given out, vegetable seeds were more appreciated than those for cereals, especially by women. Women could grow vegetables on small plots close to their homes, and the produce was valuable.

Many projects supported farmers and their organisations by providing seeds, tools, ox ploughs, etc. to strengthen seed production and quality. Some localised successes on a small scale were reported, but often continuing problems with pests, insecurity and erratic rainfall did not allow for higher yields.

In the same country, FAO targeted smallholders to grow seed, but they lacked capacity to make a business out of seed growing. Projects supported by the ministry of agriculture and by Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) promoted seed growing on contract, schemes that survived during conflict. Private seed companies, however, focused on maize and sorghum leaving a gap in quality seed and planting material for other crops such as groundnuts, cassava, sesame, etc.

GIZ supported lead farmers, expected to train other smallholders, giving them training and inputs. They also gave vouchers to small-scale, food-insecure farmers for quality seeds and agricultural services (bush clearing, ox ploughing, etc.) to increase their purchasing power and support local markets. This worked: in Equatoria in 2015–16, they distributed around 10,000 vouchers with a total value of €400,000 to 420 farmers who grew primarily for

their own subsistence, with the result that more land was planted and an estimated extra 600–700 metric tons of cereals were harvested.³⁷

In **Uganda**, it was common for IDPs to get inputs as seeds and tools from humanitarian agencies and FAO. The exception was an agri-business programme that gave vouchers for inputs. Impacts of these distributions had not been assessed. Tensions arose between agencies giving inputs and those giving vouchers as part of a project to build up agro-input supply through the private sector.

In **Nigeria**, inputs given were in some cases directed to enterprises where high value produce could be generated – and for women farmers. For example, poultry were vaccinated allowing women to collect more eggs that had a ready market. Drip irrigation kits were provided to women farmers to grow vegetables in the dry season. In north-west Nigeria, under USAID's MARKET II, these kits were appraised, finding that cost and time collecting water had been cut, while household nutrition and income had been boosted.

One form of recapitalisation deserves its own section: **restocking livestock keepers** who have lost stock to conflict, by granting them chickens, sheep or goats as starter flocks and herds – expecting that smallstock will rapidly multiply so the keepers can then exchange some of their smallstock for cattle or camels. Restocking was reported in Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria and Yemen – but little has been reported on its effectiveness. In Nigeria, goats and bulls provided to women and youth were well received, especially by returnees and in households impacted though not displaced by the conflict. In Uganda, on the other hand, many smallstock given to IDPs in camps were looted, others died, and grazing was lacking. Those smallstock given on return did better. (Sometimes they were used to pay bride price debts.) In Somalia, the question of the purpose of restocking after drought surfaced: was the intention to set up a small enterprise for people on very low incomes, with sheep or goats grazed close to home; or was the intention to re-establish former pastoralists as mobile herders?

In **Darfur**, UNDP's Honey Value Chain Project provided a start-up grant of 1,000 traditional beehives to beekeepers' associations, which were then distributed to groups of beekeepers who took collective responsibility of hives through to harvest. The project also organised regular fairs in Kubum, South Darfur to introduce new farmers to beekeeping, providing them with opportunities to exchange ideas and experiences. From 2011 to 2015, households in beekeeping associations rose from 52 to 3,327.

Commentary

Three issues stand out. One, most important, concerns profits and incomes: **farmers should be supported to produce what is in demand in markets**, to make a decent return on their farming and livestock rearing. Time and again, relief agencies focused on staple food crops to unknown or slight effect. Development agencies that assessed markets (especially local markets), sometimes by asking farmers what they thought they could sell, did better by helping them grow olives (Syria), vegetables, and to rear poultry and goats (for example, north-west and north-east Nigeria). Catching and rearing fish can be added to the list: fishing kits were provided in South Sudan and Nigeria. All these could be grown and raised at small scale, often by women farmers, providing produce that could readily be sold in local and more distant markets.

Two, should **capital be given in kind, as a voucher or as cash**? Grants in kind assume either that recipients could not obtain inputs in the market, or that cash or vouchers would be

misspent. After failed harvests it is commonly assumed that seed has been lost and must be replenished in kind. When farm stores were burned or destroyed in conflict, seed could indeed be lost. When farmers were displaced, they did not always carry seed with them.³⁸

That said, it is far from clear in many cases that seed was unavailable to farmers; that they could not buy seed from dealers, in markets or from other farmers. For agencies to procure the seed runs the risk of procuring seed of crops or varieties not suited to farmers' needs or preferences, of delivering seeds too late to plant, and of raising costs.

Some agencies learned this and instead provided either cash grants, or vouchers to be spent on inputs with dealers or in markets.

A variant on this was convening **seed fairs**, at which farmers from across a district could meet to buy and sell whatever seed they had. Those who had lost seed to conflict or any other shock were given vouchers to enable them to replenish their supplies. Such fairs also offer the intriguing prospect of some farmer-to-farmer exchange of knowledge about crops and varieties. Successful seed fairs were run in Nigeria, Uganda and South Sudan – although in the last case vouchers entailed long-winded processes for redemption leaving dealers out of pocket who had to take out high-interest loans to tide them over.

Even where household cash payments are used to support the purchasing of assets; they cannot resolve all livelihoods barriers. Additional interventions are often required such as technical training; psycho-social, nutrition and healthcare support; information and facilitation of market opportunities; support in accessing land and public services (often referred to as 'cash plus' programming). Despite general positive perceptions of the value of complements to cash transfers with livelihoods support (with some evidence of positive impact emerging from FAO's livelihood programming in rural Yemen, North-East Nigeria and Somalia) and from research by the Cash Consortium in Iraq), widespread evidence of impact remains patchy.

Three, the importance of supporting livelihoods in parallel to relief, acting early from the outset of conflict, and not only through the lens of 'recovery'. This is important as it can help to reduce or even prevent the long-term and irreparable damage conflict can have upon people's livelihoods, and build resilience to shocks.

It also means that programmes designed to support livelihoods in conflict, where households face multiple threats to meeting consumption needs, should prioritise basic needs as a necessary starting point for engaging in livelihoods. This may mean livelihoods programmes operating in conflict should embed a regular household cash transfer – in addition to capital provided through 'lumpy' cash or in-kind assistance – to smooth consumption of the most vulnerable households; or else work closely with other agencies, such as relief agencies, providing cash programming targeting the same populations.

Training

Training took three main forms: to give people new skills in artisan trades; to transfer more general competences in managing business or finance; and, to transfer agricultural knowledge and skills. This last category is dealt with in the next section because it is more akin to technical assistance.

In **South Sudan** vocational training was given by several agencies, especially for youth and returnees who did not want to go to rural areas and farm. Often the training was not matched

to demand for skills in the job market. It was common to see, for example, the assumption that tailoring would be appropriate for women, overlooking that most people bought second-hand clothes from Uganda. Similarly, young men were trained as electricians or plumbers for urban employment, despite there being too few houses with power or running water to justify those trades.

Women were reported to make up as few as 10% of trainees – as seen in northern Bahr El Ghazal – where half of the few women dropped out. Cultural obstacles were blamed for this imbalance.

Trained returnees, without apprenticeships that were rare, without any finance, found it hard to establish themselves as self-employed trades persons.

Skills training, however, was needed. Food processing – canning, preserving fish, crushing oilseeds, for example – presented opportunities for training up staff. General and life skills were in demand: numeracy, literacy, languages, and basic business management (see later in this section).

Vocational training was provided to returnees and others in **Afghanistan**, under the UNDP SALAM project. Run by the labour ministry, it tried to help young people be ready for employment, at a cost of around US\$5,000 per trainee. But it is not clear how many got jobs. The ministry had apparently not considered either demands for skills, or how people got jobs through personal contacts.

Vocational training tended to be small-scale. In 2019 in Darfur, the UNDP with a local NGO ran a 45- day vocational training in carpentry, welding, handicraft and food processing for 200 youths, including 80 females in Tawila locality, North Darfur. They were provided with tools on successfully completing their training. Outcomes and impacts were not known, but the numbers trained were small compared to those looking for work.

Potentially better was vocational training in **Nigeria** under the EU-funded Integrated Community Recovery and Resilience in Borno State (IC2RB). Training was linked to a start-up grant to each qualified graduate based on a business plan – although this was apparently to people who were struggling to buy food, so whether the grants enabled them to start businesses is a moot point.

MARKETS II provided training to IDPs in camps, where training was a condition for getting access to business finance. Assessments of needs in the market and field resulted in modifying existing training to target IDPs by including nutrition, hygiene, and homestead gardening included in curricula. MARKETS II used its team of local master trainers to extend the IDP-adapted training-of-trainers programme to staff and project partners supporting orphans and vulnerable children. MARKETS II's training continues to be replicated by other organisations across Nigeria targeting IDPs (Box 3D).

Anecdotal evidence suggested this helped IDPs, especially women because they made up the majority of IDPs having lost men to fighting, develop business and life skills to diversify their livelihoods, or to re-establish livelihoods disrupted or destroyed by displacement.

BOX 3D TARGETING WOMEN AND YOUTH IN NIGERIA

MARKETS II targeted women and youth specifically, facilitating women's and youths' integration into commercial farming. For example, all service providers in MARKETS II's networking and training had to target 50% participation by women and 30% participation by youth (age 29 or under) as project-networked farmers. To make this possible, recognising that women and youth often had only small plots, the programme reduced the one-hectare threshold for participation to one-half hectare for women and youth.

The project also identified non-farming opportunities along the value chain for women and youth without land. To ensure they had capital, MARKETS II partnered with women-focused microfinance agencies and lending institutions offering credit for women in farming services and processing.

The project also identified or created women-only farmer groups for networking into its activities, and urged community leaders to lease land to women's farmer groups. In addition, MARKETS II collaborated with State-run Women in Agriculture Units to provide training on farming, managing enterprises and finance, and nutrition, including cooking demonstrations and hygiene.

Vocational training was reported to be valuable in **Somalia**. One programme had trained youth for skills in roads and renewable energy, activities where skills were in demand. Other programmes were training young adults to create businesses and jobs, reduce unemployment, and thereby prevent unemployed youth from being tempted to fight with radical groups. Programmes included small group work to defuse conflict. Individuals across clans reportedly communicated, in some cases for the first time.

Training in general skills seems to have a better record than training focused on specific vocations. Instruction and guidance on core skills for managing businesses and finances were favourably mentioned for Nigeria and South Sudan.

Similarly, training that was focused on a very specific blockage could be useful. In Nigeria the Standard Microfinance Bank was keen to work in the northeast given potential clients, but the bank's field staff lacked necessary skills. Propcom thus trained business extension workers to be hired by the bank.

Commentary

Training intuitively makes sense when so many people in conflict zones have only the skills they developed for farming or whatever else they did before violence broke out. Vocational training, however, too often seems to overlook the key point of matching skills to needs in the job market. Furthermore, it can be time-consuming and costly to carry out. Given costs, programmes are often small, training a very small fraction of those who may be seeking jobs. To be a success, training often needs linking to finance so the trainee can get started as an independent trader, or else trainees need the chance to become an apprentice to put the skills learned to work.

Business and finance skills are less liable to such shortcomings, since they can be imparted in shorter and cheaper courses, perhaps in sequenced modules. They can be given to people who are already in business who can put new competences to work straight away.

Much depends with any form of training on what is conveyed, how and by whom. In northwest Syria, agricultural engineers were trained through an on-line course – by exiled Syrians.

Some additional evidence from Iraq and Syria shows that adding some psycho-social support, even if only a small component, enhances outcomes, especially for displaced persons and women. This echoes broader findings that including socio-emotional skills in training women for business in sub-Saharan Africa pays off in sales and profits (World Bank 2020).

Technical assistance

Livelihood support programmes often include some technical assistance to enable farmers and business operators either to undertake new activities or to improve their existing ones.

In **Syria**, an IFAD loan allowed the government to promote biogas for home cooking; solar cookers; mushroom growing for sale; conservation irrigation; and egg incubators – largely in north-east Syria. Started in 2007 before the war broke out, it continued under conflict to 2015. A 2018 evaluation reported some effectiveness – two-thirds of production projects were able to continue, and given the war that disrupted supplies of kerosene, alternative energy such as biogas and solar were welcome. Participants reported, however, that they could not save any money. They also struggled to sell mushrooms, a novel crop for them.

In **South Sudan**, GIZ found that using poorly trained agricultural extension workers was ineffective because farmers did not trust them. Hence GIZ switched to Lead Farmer Field Schools. A lead farmer from each community was trained, then expected to transfer their learning to others in the village. It coupled extension to the provision of input vouchers as described above.

Other agencies in South Sudan helped set up Farmer Field Schools, some of them with agro-pastoralists. Evaluation of an FAO scheme found this effective in promoting row planting, animal traction, and milk hygiene. They also used the Schools to address access of livestock to water and feed given reduced seasonal movement of livestock due to the conflict. Field Schools, however, needed continued support: they could not just be set up and left to the farmers alone.

In **Somalia**, Farmer Field Schools and related trainings on new varieties of crops and vegetables, integrated plant and pest management and marketing were well received by communities. In Dolow, Schools included marketing committees which accessed information on prices in markets and negotiated contracts with new buyers. This benefited female traders because they did most of the marketing of agricultural produce.

Given the importance of livestock in South Sudan, the use of community animal health workers (CAHW) was promoted. Provision seems to have been better during Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) that ran between 1989 and the peace agreement of 2015. The OLS Livestock Programme began as an alternative approach to rinderpest eradication in South Sudan, then expanded into a large-scale community-based animal health worker system. It was able to introduce participatory approaches to bring about impressive results in rinderpest

eradication and the provision of primary animal health care. Success came from recognising and building local knowledge and skills, supporting local institutions – despite the emergency; making services sustainable by payments for clinical services; using donor agencies funds in innovative and unconventional ways; establishing strong links to global programmes; and through participatory impact assessments.

A VSF-B programme in Tonj, Bahr El Ghazal, included technical assistance and drugs provided at subsidised prices. Designed to provide medicines to herders at an affordable price, it trained qualified and certified animal health workers to supervise CAHW, who distributed the medicines and provided advice to livestock herders for a fee. After the peace agreement, VSF-B wanted to privatise the system to make it sustainable but ran into market realities. Tiered pricing created incentives for AHWs to sell directly to herders, thus circumventing CAHWs. The agency had to adapt by also opening pharmacies to CAHWs to create a more competitive environment. A further difficulty was that most AHWs wanted to be employed – rather than work as veterinary dealers.

In **Somalia**, veterinary programmes dated back until at least the 1980s, working with qualified veterinary surgeons, with mixed results. During the 2010s, the focus switched to Community-based Animal Health Workers (CAHW) to provide veterinary care – within programmes concerned with livestock nutrition, water access, and marketing.

Impact assessments showed good result when CAHWs treated animals: they were accessible to herders and trusted by them. Community members interviewed felt livestock support, specifically CAHWs and vaccinations, had contributed to improved livestock health and reduced mortality. CAHWs in particular were mentioned as providing services that, unlike before, could now be easily accessed at the village level. The CAHWs were charging for drugs and services, so it seemed their services would be sustained.

In **Darfur**, 2013, ICRC with the state ministry for livestock vaccinated nearly 820,000 animals from 16,400 households in remote areas. They also trained over 200 people to provide basic animal health services. The programme started up again 2019, demonstrating its success.

In **Uganda**, agricultural extension was provided on a small scale only to IDPs in camps, mainly advice about and provision of higher-yielding varieties – new cassava varieties resistant to mosaic virus, high-yielding early maturing groundnuts, sometimes sweet potatoes – that could be a real benefit to most farmers. Extension, however, went first to better-off farmers, expecting that others would access seeds in the following seasons. This seemingly ignored the existing digging groups (informal groups who convene to help out on each other's fields). Given how many IDPs were farming small areas, it was strange not to use mass messaging and make new varieties available at scale.

Not all technical assistance went to farmers and herders. In **Nepal** a Micro Enterprise Development Programme (MEDEP) had by 2007 worked with 14,000 entrepreneurs, spread throughout 20 districts. Some 70% of entrepreneurs were drawn from the hard-core poor, from Dalits ('untouchable' caste) or ethnic minorities. Almost all businesses supported were continuing with their enterprises: on average family incomes had risen by 50%. MEDEP. Evaluators praised the programme:

'[MEDEP]... demonstrates an extraordinary ability, during an insurgency, in reaching the difficult cases with an enterprise development opportunity, rather than humanitarian welfare'. [Chapman et al. 2007]

Commentary

Done well, technical assistance can be effective. It works best when a clear and pressing need is evident; such as getting the variety and quality of crop right when growing under contract to get premium prices; replacing cassava vulnerable to mosaic with more resistant tubers; and when herders have sick animals.

At its best, technical assistance can be deployed to great effect. The Pan-African Rinderpest Campaign began in 1987 vaccinating cattle and surveying disease incidence. By 2011 or earlier, rinderpest had been eradicated across Africa, including conflict-hit Sudan and Somalia — as well as across the rest of the world (Roeder & Rich 2009, Roeder et al. 2013). No-one should imagine that given political cooperation, technical expertise and a concerted campaign, it is not possible to make significant progress in conflict-affected low-income countries.

The dangers with technical assistance lie in assuming farmers know little, that outsiders know better. Working with farmers, building on their knowledge and skills, and paying attention to their priorities pays off. Such processes, however, take time and committed field staff.

Providing credit and other financial services

Two main ways to develop financial systems were seen: village savings and loans associations (VSLA); and microfinance agencies.

In **South Sudan**, agencies reported that support to VSLAs had proved effective, well suited to local circumstances. They were a major success of the IRISS/BRACED programme. They even proved resilient to hyperinflation because savings could rapidly be invested in income-earning activities. Members of these VSLAs were able to increase their savings by more than a third during the programme.

In South **Darfur**, CARE reported that working with VSLA had allowed households to deal with some shocks, through creating more diversified income sources.

In the IDP camps of northern **Uganda**, VSLA were also promoted. The associations were familiar to some IDPs since they were already established in their home communities. Small sums of money were reported as saved, with members feeling more confident as a result. Evidence of their economic impact, or their survival when people left the camps, is, however, scant.

In Borno State, northeast **Nigeria**, UNDP built the capacity of VSLA as part of their Community-Based Social Safety Nets. Loans had helped the members to develop their own businesses or help their households subsist.

In **Somalia** self-help groups, typically 10–20 women, often provided savings and loans. One study found that members had high food security and well-being. Participants said the groups built social capital, self-esteem and empowerment. Members could access emergency assistance, finance and collective support making it easier for them to handle shocks.

Microfinance initiatives were less commonly reported. Agencies in **South Sudan** only existed in urban areas, where they may have helped women start micro-enterprises, but when conflict broke out in 2013, most microfinance schemes collapsed.

Afghanistan saw a very large programme to promote microfinance, the Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan (MISFA) funded by the World Bank. Some fifteen agencies were financed, using models taken from other countries. The agencies focused on lending by mutual guarantee to members of groups. Within five years, more than 350,000 borrowers were enrolled, with a US\$10M loan portfolio. The agencies tended to work in urban areas, with 40% of the portfolio based in Kabul. The programme focused on creating viable agencies. Repayments were high, but some borrowers were borrowing to repay their credit. Not much attention was paid to assessing the returns to investment.

With such a large programme, interactions with existing informal credit become pertinent. Some of the microfinance loans may have helped borrowers escape more onerous terms of moneylenders.

Microfinance agencies were active in rural **Nepal** and became increasingly important when the Maoists closed down the state banks in areas they controlled or almost controlled. Maoists took a keen interest in rural finance. They controlled the rates charged by village moneylenders, and they did the same to microfinance agencies, as well as insisting that credit be offered to disadvantaged groups. Some agencies could not comply and shut their doors; but others improved their operations, using lean procedures to cut costs and interest rates, and working with the disadvantaged.

Commentary

Improving rural financial systems is a major challenge in rural development: a field in which numerous initiatives have been tried by governments, aid partners and NGOs with varying results. It is now more than 30 years since the Grameen Bank created the hope that a general model for rural finance had been found, but the results of replication of that model have been mixed. The same applies to other initiatives. The road to better practice is elusive (Meyer 2015).

In the cases registered in these accounts, experiences seem to have been more often positive than negative. Perhaps that is because when conflict breaks out and livelihoods are under threat, the ability to save and borrow becomes all the more pressing.

This section should perhaps not include VSLAs and microfinance under the same heading. Most associations deal in finance to manage households and to finance some very small-scale economic activities. Not surprisingly, some agencies treat the VSLAs as a form of social protection.

The microfinance agencies, on the other hand, focus more on credit for enterprises which, while they may be small, are much larger and more formal than those financed by VSLA. [And when working in urban areas, microfinance managers often have a keen eye on the easy pickings of providing consumer credit to middle-class employees where payroll deductions minimises lender risk.]

One potentially important financial service, that of facilitating remittances, did not seem to be the subject of any recorded interventions. Not only does conflict tend to increase the

numbers seeking work far from their home communities –notably in Nepal and Somalia; but also conflict can interrupt the delivery of remittances. When people have been displaced the problem is compounded by simply trying to find the intended recipient.

3.4.4 Inclusion and livelihoods support

Most reports of inclusion concerned women and youth. Very little was found on older people and people with disabilities. It suggests that programmes did not much concern themselves with providing for the specific needs of these two groups.

Livelihoods support and youth

Youth were commonly targeted for employment. Sometimes they were provided with inputs to undertake their own enterprises, such as the canoes and fishing kits given them in South Sudan. It could also be through training, although often trainees were not able to find work.

In some cases, youth were employed within programmes for jobs that took advantage of youthful physical prowess, such as guarding boreholes in Nigeria.

In Somalia, creating jobs for youth was prioritised owing to the belief that unemployed youth were prone to being recruited into armed gangs and radicalised. Among other similar initiatives, UNIDO with AMISOM trained some 250 youth in technical trades and vocational skills in Kismayo. Training included conflict awareness. The programme reported success, with more work and income. The trainees said they were better able to integrate into the community and handle conflict: indeed, some said they were talking across clans for the first time.

Livelihoods support and women

Livelihoods support focused on women through two approaches. One was by targeting women for participation in activities. For example, MARKETS II in north-west Nigeria insisted that half of the participating farmers be women (Box 3D). Only a few programmes reported having such targets for participation, but that may well be for lack of documentation³⁹ rather than lack of gender targets.

The other approach was to support activities that either were open to women, or in which women already made up most of the participants. This did not necessarily require deliberate gender programming: a concern for small-scale farming or business might in practice prove to favour women. Such activities included (very) small-scale agriculture such as irrigated vegetable gardens, backyard livestock (especially poultry), fish farming in small ponds, processing (for example, olives and shea butter) and trading in farm produce – this last being dominated by women in some societies, while frowned upon in others.

While reports routinely reported numbers of women participating and some recorded that the women were satisfied with the support received, they did not usually consider why some activities suited women or ponder the barriers to women's participation. Few looked at changes in status and empowerment of women.

Given the apparent limited analysis, it was not surprising to see measures that were inimical to women. For example, some transfers were made conditional on showing up for labour projects, despite women in need having very little spare time. Often livelihoods programmes

focused on small-scale, labour-intensive activities demanding more time than most women have. Some programming assumed that particular activities are for women: training in tailoring is one example, whether the services or products are demanded or not.

Livelihoods support and age and disability

Very few reports seen mention the circumstances of seniors or people with disabilities, despite both groups making up a substantial fraction of those affected by conflict.

An exception was the work of Humanity and Inclusion in north-east Syria that provided counselling and other socio-psychological assistance to victims of violence and conflict trauma: especially disabled combatants. Counselling was offered alongside inputs and livestock feed for farming. Synergies applied: participants with disabilities benefited most from integrated activities. [Women also benefited more than men.] Adding psycho-social support cost little and took little time – three weeks; although staff needed to be trained to provide these services.

3.4.5 Assessment of livelihoods support

Five messages stand out. **One, good business relies on things beyond the control of the entrepreneur.** Making an income from a farm, from a household enterprise or a small business requires labour, capital, skills, and, for farming, land and water – resources the operator can command. But it also depends on context and circumstances: demand in markets, physical and social access to those markets, a means of exchange (which may not be the national currency), and enough peace locally to produce and trade in local markets.

Livelihood support usually provided elements internal to the enterprise, typically inputs, capital, training and technical assistance: necessary, but not always sufficient. Commonly farmers, herders, and entrepreneurs faced obstacles in external conditions. Finding a market for outputs promoted and getting access to that market often turned out to be critical.

Not all interventions overlooked this: far from it. Examples of programmes to facilitate access to markets and to relieve blockages in supply chains have been noted. It would be instructive to compare costs and benefits of supporting individual enterprises versus those of action in markets and supply chains.

Two, efforts to support livelihoods need to be sufficient, adaptable and sustained. An agency may broadly do the right things, and in the right way – but only for a fraction of the amount and time needed to make a difference. Some enterprises can be kick-started by a small grant of capital delivered once. But for many others, more funds are needed – and more time – especially when developing new businesses. Farming and herding, for example, generate outputs quite slowly compared to manufacturing: if it takes three cycles to get a farm business right, three years of learning – with some support during that time.

Relief and development differ in these respects. Humanitarian relief concerns first and foremost helping people survive a short-lived crisis: a failed harvest, the impacts of typhoon. When people have lost assets and incomes and face hunger, small amounts of cash and other resources can make a significant difference. But development work typically involves longer-term engagement, and larger public investments.

It is not just time that is necessary, but also flexibility. Because obstacles often reveal themselves only when enterprises are up and running, programmes need both contingency funds and flexible procedures to address unexpected problems — as applied in scaling-up MARKETS II in northern Nigeria when responding to unanticipated livelihood needs of displaced persons.

This has implications for modalities such as ‘cash plus’ and layered responses to which we will return in the conclusions.

Three, livelihoods support was never going to be easy. What is needed in a crisis to allow people to survive is often clear. If people are hungry, provide food or cash, if they have lost their homes, offer tents or building materials, and so on. What works for livelihoods support may be less obvious and may only be found by some trial and error.

Conflicts often break out where livelihoods are already hard work — in remote areas, of low natural resource potential, sometimes with high population compared to resources. Even in peace economic prospects may be limited. Livelihoods support under conflict takes place in conditions even less promising — as conflict destroys assets, thins out labour, breaks social ties, impedes movement, and so on. Conflict may remove some options entirely: gathering wild foods in the forest, herding on a now dangerous rangeland.

No wonder livelihoods interventions often struggle to make a difference. This underlines the previous point about making measures sufficient, adaptable and sustained.

Four, while difficulties are real, opportunities exist. Some areas in conflict are rich in natural resources with high potential. South Sudan, for example, has the resources to export farm produce on a similar scale to Ukraine, rather than importing. Some promising options were being taken up in the cases. Wadi gardening for off-season vegetables in Darfur, for example; high value crops in Syria — cumin, coriander, fresh vegetables, olives, etc; irrigation in the Niger valley in Mali; and livestock exports from Somalia and Sudan —all are examples of new incomes, new employment being created at times of conflict.

All these opportunities depend on markets, some of which could not be accessed or did not even exist twenty years ago. Increasing urbanisation and (probably) falling logistics costs over the medium term mean more such opportunities may well arise in the future.

Five, opportunities for women producers can be created before social norms and power imbalances change. Straightforward consideration of what women producers can do — with limited time, land and capital — and would like to do, then focusing livelihood support on those activities, can make a difference. Backyard poultry, small fish ponds, vegetable gardens and so on are examples; although returns to labour need estimating before condemning women to hard work for little reward. Setting equal quotas for women and men to participate in programmes can equally make a difference. Institutions such as savings and loan groups may already have more women than men in them: work with those groups to improve rural finances, rather than setting up a new microfinance agency that may well be dominated by men.

SECTION 4
CONCLUSIONS



4.1 EFFECTS OF CONFLICT

Even in conflicts, people go about their livelihoods, although they usually face more difficulties and have fewer opportunities – conflicts add another layer of difficulty to development challenges. Hence responding is a double challenge: applying principles that apply in peace, supplemented by considering the specifics of conflict that modify those principles.

Protracted conflicts can be very different from one to another. While some impacts are seen across the cases, many and diverse pathways from conflict to impact on livelihoods and food security can be seen.

The economic costs of conflict often are huge and easy to underestimate. Assets losses to households are large – usually much larger than the value of relief and other external support in response – to which made be added costs of damage to physical infrastructure and reduced public services.

Some consequences of conflict are under-appreciated. Conflict can exacerbate poor physical health; the traumas of conflict can create widespread mental ill-health. Those can affect labour availability and the quality of decision making, respectively. Further impacts may arise in increased addiction to alcohol, khat and other drugs. Breakdowns in social support and solidarity can also be costly: petty crime can fall hard on people with few assets or savings in the first place.

Hence support to livelihoods should not just concern economic measures, but also include physical and mental health, nutrition and justice.

Conflicts do not affect people equally. Conflict can widen existing inequalities between people, including gender imbalances.

Conflict, power and livelihoods can become entangled. Some (novel) economic activity depends on warfare – creating parties with a vested interest in protracting conflict. In conflict, agency staff need to be highly aware of social processes, of power and politics. That takes time and reflection: seeking the insights of those who understand the local situation, often locals themselves, is usually critical.

4.2 ON RELIEF

Most people survive conflict largely down to their own ability, together with family and community, to support themselves if only because in most conflicts, the aid sent is so much less than the potential need. Aid should be provided to affected populations as one element of the various resources on which they draw for their livelihoods in difficult circumstances. The operational implication is that if in doubt, provide aid that allows people to use it as they see fit. (That may mean that cash transfers become a default response, but not the only response,

and not to be applied blindly without regard to circumstances.) Those affected are usually far better informed of their options than an outside agency can hope to be. Aid should also reinforce the foundations of self-help, including local networks – such as existing groups for savings and burials— and norms – looking, for example, to provide training and mentoring through peers, thereby reinforcing mutual obligations.

When providing relief, cash almost always is better than aid in kind. The evidence clearly supports arguments long made that cash is *usually* cheaper and quicker to deliver than transporting in food. Cash usually has more positive and fewer negative effects on the local economy than food in kind. And, as noted in previous point, it gives people the freedom to use it to meet their needs. Where conflicts disrupt trade, food in kind may be needed, but only when traders cannot transport foods to markets.⁴⁰

The need for urgent relief can be overstated, assuming that people affected have few means and little agency. While people may be facing hardship, while they may thus deserve relief, we should not imagine that relief sent by international agencies is always critical to survival. The demise of analysis based on food security – as opposed to considering difficulties with current food access or other characteristics of notional vulnerability – makes judging the size of future needs less transparent, and harder to link to potential income and food streams from other sources, including other aid sources. (Vulnerability analysis may nevertheless help in targeting, but not in assessing food or cash transfer values.)

Relief should not necessarily nor always be prior to livelihoods support. Conflict can rapidly erode assets, break up social networks, and undermine livelihoods. Early responses, as soon as possible after fighting breaks out, may protect some livelihoods, or at least mitigate the effects of conflict. If support is delayed, then those options may be lost. We should not see relief first, then development as a sequence. It may even be better sometimes to deliver enhanced livelihood support before relief is needed: they may sometimes start in parallel, at the same time.

4.3 ON SOCIAL PROTECTION

Because protracted conflict affects populations where many suffer chronic poverty, and because conflict tends to be drawn out over years, **social protection – a dependable transfer to those facing hardship – should be part of the response.** That said, in conflicts, humanitarian agencies may need to assess how far social protection is genuinely impartial and if affected populations feel safe in trusting their data to the state.

Few examples were seen of social protection in the cases reviewed, but those few instances reported it to be valuable. That prompts the question of how well social protection compares in costs and effects compared to other measures. No such analysis has yet been seen.

4.4 ON LIVELIHOODS SUPPORT

In every case, it was possible to support livelihoods. Opportunities sometimes exist to produce more for growing markets, some of them export markets, but more often for cities where demand for higher-value foods is burgeoning – with examples as diverse of middle-class urbanites who shop for rice and vegetables, Hajj pilgrims who want a sheep to sacrifice, and Turkish consumers who appreciate Syrian olive oil.

For agencies to have impact on livelihoods, **programmes need sufficient funds and should engage with the people supported over several years** – probably at least five years in most cases. This means committing funds for extended periods. Because both economic circumstances and conflict evolve in ways that can be hard to foresee, **management has to be adaptive**. That requires not only flexible funding, but also flexible procedures. It also helps if programmes can monitor their impact and learn lessons while in progress.

Agencies need to **see the economic picture more broadly than the needs of the farm, herd or enterprise**. In some cases, success depends most on factors beyond the enterprise, notably in finding a market for goods and services that people affected by conflict can produce and getting to that market.

Attending to matters at district and national level may benefit more people than supporting individual farms, herds and businesses. **Many households affected by conflict do not get any support directly**. That is partly because with limited resources, agencies target the most vulnerable people rather than trying to reach the whole population. The support that many then get is indirect, through interventions that work at community, district and national levels – for example, improving market functioning through better roads, better information, and providing broad-based public services such as schools and health posts. It is a moot, but important point, as to what the relative cost-effectiveness is of working to improve context and circumstances, versus assisting individual household enterprises.

Agencies seem to struggle to programme with respect to conflict and to inclusion at the same time. In part that may result from seeing the tools of inclusion as too demanding. Not all analysis has to be comprehensive and precise to inform practice. Provisional understandings, to be refined in the light of further evidence, can allow progress. For example, considering what women producers can do – given their means and preferences – can identify opportunities that favour women. Insisting on gender quotas can help tackle imbalances. Much the same applies to working with people with disabilities: a little consideration of their abilities, circumstances and limitations can make a difference.

Lessons are largely about how to go about things, rather than about what to do (Box 4A). Process usually matters as much or more than content. Livelihood support where outside agencies second-guess what those affected need or should do, support that ignores what can be sold on markets local and more distant, rarely succeeds. Programmes that work with people affected to allow them to develop options have done much better. This is largely a matter of process.

Because process can trump content, identifying **interventions as 'best buys' can mislead**, unless conditions and circumstances are specified, and **may divert attention from questions of process**.

Because processes matter, **the distinctive competence and culture of agencies, or their sub-units,⁴¹ matters**. Relief agencies that focus on the logistics of shipping in aid, premised on the need for urgent and short-lived assistance – may well have procedures and systems that are ill-suited to livelihoods support. Development agencies, or departments of large agencies, are usually better set up to work with people over the medium to long term. In some humanitarian units, individual leaders and field staff may see what is needed and make the difference by adapting programmes – sometimes working against the grain and the operating manual of the agency.

That said, it seems this lesson is increasingly appreciated in some, perhaps many agencies. Leastways, the opening paragraphs of the operating manual may pay homage to adaptive management. Working through how to practice this, and to make it compatible with an organisation's systems may take time.

A key lesson from livelihoods support is to give local people the freedom to choose how best to use support to address the obstacles and options they face. **Does this then mean that offering cash is the best way to support livelihoods?** To some extent, yes; regular cash payments play a crucial role in smoothing household consumption, providing additional capital for farms and enterprises can make a difference. But not all livelihood constraints can be removed with a household transfer. Often, it will be useful to provide cash with other interventions, some targeted at the same households (for example, 'Cash Plus') – for example technical training, psycho-social support. Moreover, activities that improve the circumstances of communities and districts by, for example, providing more information about markets and technical options, making more inputs available in the market, repairing roads, and by providing public services. Not all livelihoods support can be commuted to transfers.

4.5 ON EVIDENCE

Evidence on what is effective and why it is effective is always lacking. When programmes are reviewed – and almost all formal aid agencies produce reports on the completion of their programmes and projects – immediate outputs get reported, but less is usually said about outcomes, while (enduring) impacts are rarely examined.

To some extent this is understandable. In the difficult circumstances of conflict, careful reviews and evaluations are not an immediate priority – and as conflict abates, the attention of leaders and agencies turns elsewhere, so that once again, evaluation is likely to be neglected.

Calls for more and better evidence are commonplace. That prompts the question of what data might reasonably be collected, and how? In conflict, analyses with high internal validity will often prove difficult and costly. Randomised trials that aim to control as much of the context as possible, the better to see the effectiveness of what is on trial, will be difficult in conflicts where circumstances change rapidly. At the other end of the spectrum, gathering some beneficiaries

under the shade of a tree and asking them if they appreciate what they have been given, with agency staff present, is usually worthless.

Two implications follow. One, some intermediate analysis to understand the causal chain from the interventions to their outcomes, effects and impacts – but without having to satisfy the demanding and costly criteria of experimental methods – would be valuable. A generation ago, rapid rural assessments were proposed to generate insights for planning agricultural and rural development. [See, for example, Thomas et al. 1998.] Those ideas were somewhat eclipsed in the 2000s when more rigorous methods, above all randomised trials, were proposed as the way to find out, once and for all, what works for development. That did not stop some academics and practitioners continuing to develop methods intended to be feasible, relatively rapid and comparatively inexpensive, usually involving some mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, and often with participatory methods to combine insights from external specialists with those from affected local populations. Meanwhile, from what we have read, it seems neither highly rigorous nor intermediate methods are being applied sufficiently to learn lessons from interventions during conflict. Scope for trying proposed innovations in evaluations – see, for example, <https://www.betterevaluation.org/> – may well exist.

Two, if responses need to proceed – at least in the short run – with little evidence, then this strengthens the case for adaptive management of interventions. Planning must then draw on local knowledge, especially local knowledge of causal links. Implementation must be flexible and adaptive – using learning processes (in the language of the 1980s), or problem-driven iterative adaptation (in the wordier language of the 2010s) [Korten 1980, Chambers 1983; Andrews et al. 2012].

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ENDNOTES

- 1 At its best, technical assistance could be deployed to great effect. The Pan-African Rinderpest Campaign began in 1987 vaccinating cattle and surveying disease incidence. By 2011 if not earlier, rinderpest had been eradicated across Africa, including conflict-hit Sudan and Somalia. Cooperation across the region, technical expertise and a concerted campaign made the difference despite working in remote areas some affected by conflict.
- 2 Those purchasing food in conflict-affected countries should assess how far normal contracting procedures (including the size of contracts) may further undermine normal trade, or worse, contribute to a war economy.
- 3 See, for example, <https://www.betterevaluation.org/>
- 4 But not all. For example, in areas they controlled, Maoist insurgents in Nepal imposed strict rules with hard punishment for those infringing them.
- 5 Glancing at the eleven cases it is easy to conflate erratic climates in areas of low natural potential for crops and livestock with conflict – with Darfur, northern Mali and Somalia as good examples. But conflict equally arises in areas of stable climate with rich natural resources, such as eastern DR Congo and much of South Sudan.
- 6 A note on terminology. Much of this report deals with the economic difficulties people have in accessing food because of conflicts. We therefore prefer to talk of livelihood security rather than food security, because food is one of a number of competing livelihood priorities that also include health care, physical security, investment in the future etc. The distinct concept of *food* security arose when the concern was around potential shortfalls in food production or availability. We reserve the term food and nutrition security (FNS) for where we are specifically referring to food and nutrition, and not people’s general economic ability to meet their basic needs.
- 7 See Jaspars and O’Callaghan (2010) for a rare study on the connections from an aid perspective.
- 8 For sources in this and subsequent cases see the country narratives in Annex A.
- 9 Some parts of Somalia had figures of over 50% of households as female-headed, but this was subsequently found to be due to those women being the primary bread-winners rather than because of missing men.
- 10 Because of their caring and domestic responsibilities, women tend to undertake paid/economic work for fewer days a year and for fewer hours on the days they work.
- 11 Protracted displacement has been defined variously as displacement lasting more than three years (Crawford et al. 2015) or five years (UNHCR).
- 12 When conditions of life progressively become harder because of conflict, the distinction between escape through economic migration and forced displacement can be hard to make, though it is of huge consequence to those concerned.
- 13 The lack of documentation to date in Mali and Nigeria does not imply that mental health problems are not also a consequence of conflicts there.
- 14 For example, agricultural extension was available in some areas affected by conflict in Uganda. LeBlanc et al. 2009 found no increase in yields between areas receiving extension and those without.
- 15 Such behaviour may predate the conflict (for example, Syria) and be one of the causes of resentment against elites, but conflicts make such behaviour much easier – war as the continuation of business by other means.
- 16 This is because of various underlying social norms which lead people being treated by others and by society as whole depending on their gender, and which thus lead people themselves to behave differently depending on their gender.
- 17 Including both the use of rape as a weapon of war [for example, Tigray, Ethiopia; DRC] and the abduction of girls for use as sex slaves (“wives”) for fighters [DRC, Uganda, Nigeria].

- 18 Generalisations are always hard to maintain. Neal et al., 2016 found an increase in early marriage in some conflicts and a decrease in others. Levine et al., 2019 found that conflict-related displacement in NW Pakistan led to a reduction in forced early marriage for social, religious and economic reasons, together with exposure to host community practices.
- 19 This is probably not contentious but is not based on specific documented evidence from the cases.
- 20 It has also been associated with increased risk of violence towards women in the household.
- 21 Several studies have found a rise in domestic violence has accompanied these changes in roles and responsibilities (for example, Stark and Ager, 2011 Horn et al., 2014 Dolan, 2002; Okello and Hovil, 2007, Holloway et al.2019). These are beyond the scope of this paper but are noted here as yet another example of the link between what the aid industry has divided into the separate sectors of livelihoods and of protection.
- 22 Social protection defined broadly refers to three sets of measures: protection of employees from unfair treatment, workplace hazards, etc.; social insurance against injuries, accidents, medical bills, disability and old age – usually with state provision funded by a tax on earnings; and social assistance to those on very low incomes and vulnerable to shocks. In low-income countries, social protection is usually concerned with this last category, as in this text.
- 23 Prior to 2006, WFP was giving food assistance only to Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. Its other programming was for resilience (FFA), not in conflict areas.
- 24 TCTR is the total cost of the programme divided by the total transfer value as received by recipients. See Gentillini 2016, Aker 2013.
- 25 This was not the case for vouchers to spend at seed fairs: see below.
- 26 Data are harder to interpret because WFP includes vouchers as part of cash-based programming!
- 27 Two things distinguish social protection from humanitarian protection: aims and duration. Humanitarian largely concerns protecting people from threats to their very survival from violence, disease, hunger and exposure. Since such extreme threats are often short-lived, protection may only be needed for short periods. Social protection shields people from significant but not necessarily mortal threats: deep poverty, destitution and hardship. Because some people live on very low incomes with few assets, such threats may persist for years on end, and hence social protection may have to be given indefinitely.
- 28 Are these two cases from Yemen social protection, as specifically defined here? They might be seen as extended relief, but they seem programmes that could become institutionalised safety nets when Yemen becomes peaceful.
- 29 If the aim was to build roads quickly, the works would have been better contracted out and built using machinery.
- 30 These were not the only experiences of irrigation: in some enterprise projects, individuals or groups were introduced to drip irrigation pipes and small pumps. These farm-level investments are covered in section 3.2.3.
- 31 Warehouse receipts involve a company operating storage, usually high quality stores where crop losses are minimal. The operator receives produce – commonly a cereal crop – from farmers and stores it for them. The advantage for the farmer is that they can store their harvest beyond the post-harvest dip in prices until some later point when prices are more attractive, when they retrieve their produce and sell it. A receipt is issued to the farmer for produce stored. This may then be used as collateral for a bank loan, or against credit from a shop; thereby meeting immediate needs for cash or supplies.

Although the concept is relatively simple, making it work can be challenging. Storage losses have to be small. Banks and traders have to learn about the receipts and to trust them (Joffe & Jones 2003).

- 32 At their simplest, outgrower schemes simply contract farmers to grow crops. Many schemes, however, go a step further, providing farmers with seeds, fertiliser, chemicals on credit, their cost later deducted from payments when produce is delivered. Contracts may also provide technical assistance, with company agents visiting contracted farmers both to offer advice as well as to check that crops are being cultivated to standards. In some cases, the contract even covers the cost of labour gangs or machine services for major activities such as harvesting.

- 33 Not all outgrower schemes were formal, or licit: in Afghanistan, farmers were contracted to grow opium poppies by drug gangs.
- 34 Set up in 2000, Lululife was exporting shea cosmetics to the US among other places in 2021: <https://www.etsy.com/shop/lululife>
- 35 Sheep traders in Sudan were periodically hit hard by outbreaks of epizootics, above all Rift Valley Fever, upon which exports to Saudi Arabia were halted until the outbreak was under control. Traders could find themselves holding stock that had to be sold locally at discounted prices. They went bankrupt: it took them years of working for other traders to re-establish themselves as independent traders (Humphrey et al. 2020).
- 36 With dismay one sees that several university economists in Sudan spend time analysing the spatial and temporal integration of prices in markets using advanced quantitative techniques taught in graduate schools. Are such analyses a priority for working with traders, herders and government to improve livestock marketing in Sudan? Such studies examine only one aspect of markets and soak up time disproportionately to the insights gained. The results of more practical enquiries, unfortunately, cannot usually be published academically.
- 37 The numbers reported by GIZ are puzzling. They distributed two vouchers a season to each farmer, making four vouchers a year given two planting seasons. The vouchers should have covered many more than 420 farmers.
- 38 Emergency seed distributions can thus become an enduring feature of humanitarian relief. Seed distribution has taken place in Ethiopia for the previous 42 years, in Burundi for the last 30 seasons, and in Eastern DR Congo in every season since 1995, according to SeedSystem (2020).
- 39 Not all project and programme documents could be checked.
- 40 Those purchasing food in conflict-affected countries should assess how far normal contracting procedures (including the size of contracts) may further undermine normal trade, or worse, contribute to a war economy.
- 41 Most large development agencies, official aid partners, multi-lateral and international NGOs undertake both humanitarian and development work, only carried out by different departments. Those departments may well, and ideally should, have rather different ways of working – in their procedures and cultures – since they usually address different and distinct challenges.

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