

Rethinking Food Security in Humanitarian Response

Paper Presented to the Food Security Forum

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	6
PART 1. OVERVIEW OF TODAY’S FOOD INSECURITY PROBLEMS	8
Issues and Trends in Acute and Temporal Food Crises.....	8
Chronic Food Insecurity	14
New Challenges to Global and Local Food Insecurity	16
Summary	22
PART 2. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM IN ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY ..	23
2.1. Views on Humanitarian Effectiveness: What Is the Problem?	23
Critiques of Humanitarian Action.....	23
Specific Critiques.....	24
Successes and Challenges	26
Summary	27
2.2. Overview of Food Security Crises	28
Causes	28
Slow versus Rapid Onset	29
Small versus Large Scale	31
2.3. Innovations in Food Security Analysis	31
Comparability for Impartiality in Response	32
Linking Analysis to Decision Making	32
2.4 Overview of Food Security Interventions.....	33
Constraints to Food Security Programming in Emergencies.....	35
Passing the Baton.....	38
A Focus on Agriculture? Government and Inter-governmental Action	40
2.5. Food Security Architecture	42
Coordination, Effectiveness, and Accountability	44
2.6. Change and Reform Processes.....	46
UN Reform Processes	46
Donor Reform Processes.....	49
Agency Reform Processes	51
2.7. Effectiveness of the “System:” Some Issues Arising	52
Improving Analysis.....	52
Improving the Allocation of Resources	53
Effectiveness and Coordination: Has Reform Improved the “System?”	53
Institutional Learning and Chronic Food Insecurity	54
PART 3: LINKING RESPONSES TO “CHRONIC” AND “TRANSITORY” FOOD INSECURITY	55
3.1. A Framework for Understanding the Linkages	55
Beyond the “Relief to Development” Continuum	55
Understanding Vulnerability and Risk.....	58
Situating Food Security Programmatic Responses	59
3.2. Social Protection	61
Overview.....	61
Concepts and Definitions	61
Social Protection in Practice	63
The Role of the Humanitarian Community	67

3.3. Issues and Trends in Disaster Risk Reduction.....	69
Overview.....	69
DRR Programs to Address Food Security	69
Coordination of DRR Programs.....	73
Measuring Effectiveness of DRR Programs	75
3.4. Emergencies, Social Protection and Disaster Risk Reduction.....	76
CONCLUSIONS AND QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THE PAPER	78

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper serves as a background document to help frame discussion at the Food Security Forum in Rome, April 2008. It focuses on policy and institutional reform issues centered on the links between chronic and transitory crises. The first part of the paper provides an overview of trends and future challenges. The second considers effectiveness of the “humanitarian system” in addressing food insecurity and whether the current institutional set-up is fit for service. The third part examines links between “chronic” and “transitory” food insecurity, and whether current approaches to prevention and response appropriately bridge these two forms of vulnerability. A concluding section highlights key issues, raising questions on gaps in the humanitarian system’s analytical capacity, its programmatic practices, and on food security policy more broadly.

Trends and Challenges

Humanitarian crises with food security dimensions are increasing in frequency, scope and complexity. There is a growing reservoir of vulnerable states, characterized by fragile economies and by livelihoods pursued by economically and physiologically vulnerable people. Shocks are not independent drivers of food crises—they are part of the underlying problems to be resolved in the development process. Coping capacities continue to be eroded through the combined effects of ill health, undernutrition and deep poverty which lay communities open to vagaries of climate, global market conditions, epidemics or the traumas linked with contested ownership of natural and other resources.

The drivers of future crises will not all be the same as in the past. Even if fewer people are dying in emergencies than a decade ago, a growing number are affected, and this links to chronic food insecurity and impaired development. The rising scale of impacts is linked to the concentration of poor people in vulnerable locations. In addition, new challenges arise. Climate change is likely to aggravate existing production and consumption constraints in food insecure countries. Shifts in ecosystems, increased climatic shocks, and the emergence of new or renewed crop, livestock and human diseases all pose threats to food supply, marketing (cross-border trade), and rural income streams. Current food (and fuel) prices are cause for concern, requiring attention to resource constraints for humanitarian action, appropriate policy and programmatic responses to new populations in need, and planning for a future in which many more people may have inadequate consumption.

Several dozen countries recording frequent food crises in the past continue to need external assistance today, and these same countries face multiple threats to their future stability. This begs questions about the sufficiency and/or effectiveness of humanitarian *and* development aid. But since some countries appear to be improving in their food security, with reduced emergency appeals, some things are apparently being done right; what are those things, and are they replicable? Lessons need to be shared on how to leverage and maximize such gains—which in many cases remain very fragile.

Humanitarian Effectiveness

Recent criticisms of much humanitarian action focus on analytical capacity (assessments of need, cost-effectiveness, impact); the ability to allocate resources impartially; the ability to link analysis or early warning to a timely and appropriate response; balanced responses to food security crises and the engagement of humanitarian food security actors at the policy level; and limited ability to link the short-term protection of food consumption with long-term improvements in production and access. From a humanitarian perspective, there is an additional problem around the definition of effectiveness or “success.”

There are serious on-going efforts to address these issues. However, there has been a lack of trust between humanitarian actors, donors and some national governments that has limited the capacity to link analysis to programming. What is more, despite improvements in some areas there have recently been renewed criticisms that humanitarian agencies are not very good at learning from their own mistakes.

“Food security interventions” encompass numerous approaches, including food provisioning, cash and voucher transfers, interventions that protect or restore productive assets and capacities. Constraints to the effectiveness of interventions include the level of funding, sectoral balance of resource allocation, and the ability of agencies to work across different time-frames (short-term; long-term). The “architecture” of the aid industry itself is a form of constraint in this regard. Multiple actors, with different (and multiple) mandates, and limited ability of governments (and limited willingness to agencies) to coordinate, are also a constraint to effectiveness.

Reform processes have begun to address some of these issues. UN Reform has perhaps been the most far-reaching, although to date there are only a handful of evaluations of this reform, most of which are formative in nature, with few questions about reform firmly answered. A significant question to come out of these evaluations, however, is whether a “food security” cluster would be helpful in addressing some of the issues raised above? Donors and humanitarian agencies have also had reform processes.

Linking Solutions to Chronic and Transitory Food Insecurity

There are major gaps—conceptual, policy, programmatic, and funding-related—in current approaches to tackling chronic and transitory food insecurity. The result is an overemphasis on response (often too little too late) rather than prevention, a failure to sustainably alleviate suffering, and a steady erosion of many populations’ ability to cope with the twin threats of chronic suffering and repeat shocks.

In most current approaches the starting point for action is typically the crisis itself, and debate often centers on what can be done from there forward to reduce future risk and promote improved security. An alternative model, such as one focused on longer-term social protection, relies on determining *in advance* of a crisis which segments of a population are at risk from what sources of hazard, and intervening with mechanisms that are able to avert or mitigate a crisis *before* it occurs. This implies a redirection of funding away from mechanisms and institutions that are typically engaged to deal with emergency response, and in some cases, a different role for humanitarian assistance altogether.

The principles of *stability, predictability, and timing* of an intervention may be as critical to social protection intervention effectiveness as the resource transfer itself. These qualities enable beneficiaries to make informed decisions about how to manage in the face of risk based on a realistic assessment of the timing and size of available resources. But effective protection requires a well-functioning state apparatus with capacity to assess and respond to real need. Government motivation, capacity, and longer-term funding are all critical to implementing a sustained set of targeted policies and programs, and these are lacking in many large complex emergencies. However, where chronic need coincides with government commitment, there may be opportunities for the humanitarian community to play a modified role—moving away from direct implementation and instead devoting more attention to influencing the policy process, advocacy, generating an evidence base, and social mobilization of civil society (i.e., supporting the demand side).

At the same time, more focus on disaster risk reduction can be incorporated into social protection frameworks. In practice, this implies an explicit focus on reducing exposure to *covariate* sources of risk. In practice, disaster risk reduction investments often fail to make explicit links to livelihood protection and food security. Risk reduction includes food security early warning systems, environmental protection and rehabilitation, and agricultural resilience techniques. While such activities are often promoted there is often a lack of empirical evidence to attest to their effectiveness and limited connection with other sectors necessary to social and economic growth. The *actual* value of food security early warning systems is largely unknown. While their information is often used to solicit resources from the international community, there is no understanding of the magnitude of resources warning systems attract or the links between resources raised, interventions supported, and reduced vulnerability to the processes underpinning warnings in general.

Analytical tools such as cost benefit analysis, environmental assessment, and risk-response assessment show promise for analyzing the effectiveness of risk reduction activities.

Key Questions for Discussion

A number of key questions are raised for deliberation at the Forum (not all listed here): Can the humanitarian food security community improve its analysis to reflect changing realities on the ground, enable appropriate responses, and improve timeliness of response?

Can impact measurement regarding food security be improved and incorporated routinely into emergency interventions? How important is the impartial allocation of resources to humanitarian food security response? What mechanisms are possible to hold cluster leads more accountable for inaction or ineffective coordination? Should some agencies specialize in “humanitarian” or “development” arenas, or should mandates expand to cover various forms of activity that cut across conventional funding windows? Is the “community” willing to fight (against significant political odds) for greater impartiality?

Can the humanitarian community do a better job of costing “preventive” measures? And, what are the trade-offs between improved coherence of transitory and chronic responses on the one hand, and decreased independence of humanitarian action in complex emergencies on the other.

INTRODUCTION

Only through investment in Somalia's relief, development, and peace-building...will Somalia be able to become investment-sustaining and catalyze the fragile peace effort.

UN/DHA, May 1997

More than a quarter of the population of Somalia is in humanitarian crisis.

FSAU/Somalia, January 2008

On February 14, 2008, the BBC ran a story entitled “*Somalia is ‘the forgotten crisis.’*” How can that be? In the period between 2003 and 2006, Somalia received roughly US\$1 billion in net disbursements of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), compared with only \$161 million in 1995–96.¹ It was the country in which the innovative Integrated Phase Classification tool was first developed by the Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU), aimed at enhancing objective analysis of the complex factors that link food and livelihood insecurity to humanitarian crises in ways that generate multiple agency agreement and synergistic action. It is a country that gained visibility as one of the most distantly affected by the Asian tsunami in 2005, and earned a degree of geopolitical significance in the global “war on terror” during 2006–07. Yet, in 2008, Somalia features prominently in the 2008 Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), with an estimated need for humanitarian aid amounting to \$406 billion. Apparently, neither food insecurity nor humanitarian need have been effectively resolved in Somalia to date. Why not?

On the one hand, it could be that conditions have recently deteriorated—which is partly true, given the continued absence of stable governance, competing political agendas, armed conflict, and repeated natural shocks (droughts, floods, locusts). On the other hand, it could be that resources used in recent years have been inadequate to the task of resolving or at least mitigating such shocks, or the wrong kind of assistance was given, or aid was used in the wrong ways, or resources were spent very inefficiently—all of which may also be true.

So will the response to the current CAP or future years' relief responses make any marked difference in either food security or humanitarian need? Indeed, will development aid more broadly improve the lives of people across the developing world in coming years? According to the OECD's most recent Development Co-operation Report progress is being made in improving social as well as economic conditions around the globe, but far too slowly.² Higher volumes of aid are helping some countries, but despite efforts by donor and recipient countries to “*use aid more effectively*” progress remains modest and in some cases, fragile. Again, the question is why?

This discussion paper serves as background to help frame discussion during the Food Security Forum in Rome. The content focuses primarily on policy and institutional issues relating to chronic and transitory crises (or high risk of these) and the reforms in policies and systems needed to better protect lives and livelihoods, manage the process of recovery, and reduce future

¹ DAC/OECD (Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). 2008. *Development Co-Operation Report 2007*. Volume 9, No. 1. Paris.

² Ibid.

risks and vulnerabilities that threaten food security. The paper has three separate themes, bundled together. The first part offers an overview of trends, projections and challenges in the realms of global food insecurity and humanitarian emergencies. The second part examines issues relating to effectiveness of the “humanitarian system” specifically in addressing food insecurity. The third part considers links among responses to “chronic” and “transitory” food insecurity. The purpose of the paper is not to provide a consensus statement on any of these topics, but rather to review evidence and pose a series of questions for discussion during the Food Security Forum on ways forward.

The issue of effectiveness of the humanitarian system is itself broken down into seven sections. Section 1 is an overview of the effectiveness question, and recent critiques of humanitarian action to protect food security. The second briefly reviews the kinds of crises that cause widespread food insecurity. The third covers interventions aimed at transitory and/or chronic food security. The fourth examines recent innovations and issues in food security analysis. The fifth sketches out the current “architecture” of the humanitarian response mechanisms to address food insecurity. The sixth examines on-going reform and change processes. And the final section reviews effectiveness of the “system,” drawing out questions for discussion at the Forum.

The theme dealing with linking “chronic” and “transitory” food insecurity is in four sections. The first is a framework for understanding the linkages. The second section examines approaches to social protection, while the third similarly examines approaches to disaster risk reduction. The fourth section assesses linkages—drawing out questions for discussion at the Food Security Forum.

A brief conclusions section summarizes major questions and gaps arising from the three parts of the paper. This includes gaps or questions regarding (1) analytical capacity and knowledge, (2) programmatic practice, and (3) food security policy.

PART 1. OVERVIEW OF TODAY'S FOOD INSECURITY PROBLEMS

Issues and Trends in Acute and Temporal Food Crises

According to a recent concept paper on Good Humanitarian Donorship, “humanitarian crises are on the increase in terms of frequency, scope and complexity. From 1990 to 2005, official humanitarian spending by DAC members increased fourfold—from US\$2.3 billion to \$8.2 billion. These trends will probably continue.”³ While 2005 was unusual, in that total humanitarian funding of \$13 billion was almost double that of the recent high of \$7.7 billion in 2003 (due to the Indian Ocean tsunami), funding exceeded \$7.5 billion in both 2006 and 2007, while 2008 is shaping up to at least match such levels (reaching almost \$2 billion before the end of the first quarter).⁴ Indeed, the Humanitarian Futures Programme projects a 25 percent increase in the number of people affected by crises, and requiring assistance, in South and Central Asia and East and Southern Africa alone between 2001 and 2015.⁵

Yet the drivers of future humanitarian crises will not inevitably be the same as in past years. First, there has been a decline in the number and scale of inter-state and intra-state conflicts, reflecting resolution of many post-Cold War tensions that flared up in the 1990s with the break-up of the Soviet Union. Indeed, while reporting a “decline in conflicts,” the 2008 CAP highlights four countries/regions that featured in previous CAPs but not the current one—in essence, proposing that these are humanitarian crises that have successfully “graduated” from the appeals process.⁶

That said, the number of people affected by conflicts are still high, and new drivers of crises are on the horizon.⁷ While global *battle deaths* have been decreasing over most of this period, mainly due to a decline in interstate and internationalized armed conflict, *conflict-related deaths* may not have.⁸ For example, although Figure 1 shows a significant decline in battle deaths even during the 1990s (which includes armed actions in countries like Rwanda, Afghanistan, Eritrea/Ethiopia, and the DRC), there is no systematic international assessment of civilian (or even combatant) mortality linked to the effects of disease, displacement, trauma, etc. This means

³ Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative. 2007. *Good Humanitarian Donorship and Disaster Risk Reduction: A Concept Paper*. July 2007. Mimeo.

⁴ http://ocha.unog.ch/fts2/by_sector.asp.

⁵ Humanitarian Futures Programme (HFP), King's College London. 2007. *Dimensions of Crisis Impacts: Humanitarian Needs by 2015*. Report prepared for the Department for International Development. London.

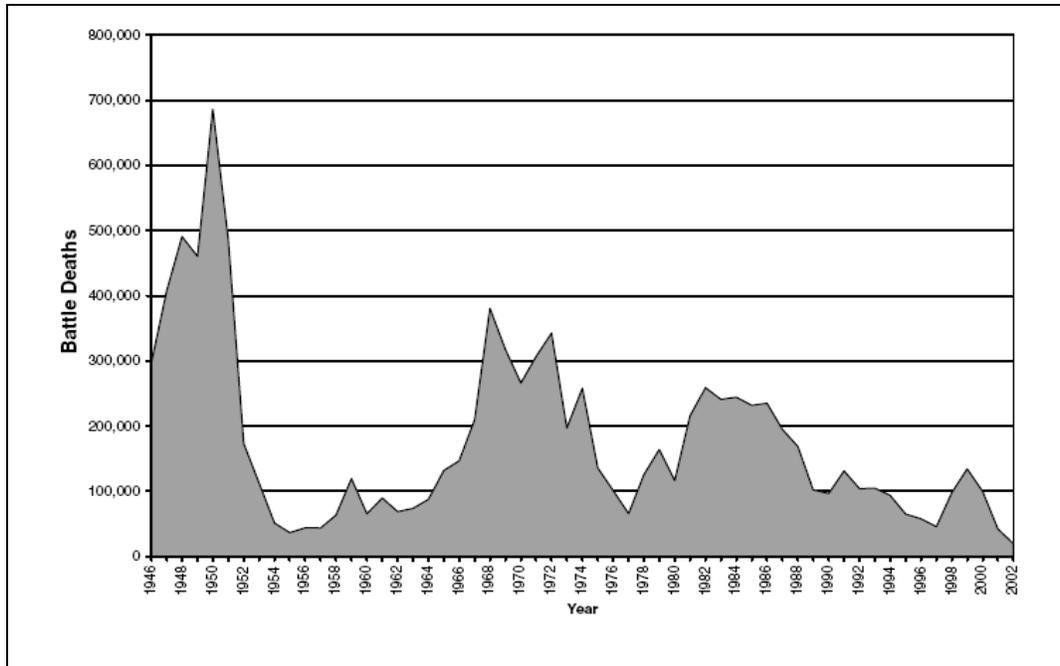
⁶ The Great Lakes Regional activity, Congo (Rep.), Liberia and Burundi. See OCHA 2008. Humanitarian Appeal 2008. <http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal/webpage.asp?Page=1637>

⁷ The 2008–2009 Global Appeal by UNHCR notes that it is already facing the uphill task of finding the resources needed to assist close to 33 million refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless people and the internally displaced. <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/3b7b87e14.html>

⁸ Lacina, B., and N. Gleditsch. 2004. Monitoring Trends in Global Combat: A New Dataset of Battle Deaths. *European Journal of Population*. 21 (2–3): 145–66.

there is currently no way to assess trends in deaths associated with complex emergencies—a gap that should be urgently filled.⁹

Figure 1: Worldwide Battle Deaths 1946–2002



Source: Reproduced from B. Lacina and N. Gleditsch. 2004. Monitoring Trends in Global Combat: A New Dataset of Battle Deaths. *European Journal of Population* 21 (2–3): 145–66.

As a result, it is likely that the decline in conflicts has yet to translate into a fall in the number of people *impacted* by conflict. The World Bank points out that today: “nearly one-third of the world’s extremely poor people—27 percent—live in countries that are fragile or conflict-affected.”¹⁰ Many populations affected by past conflicts (involving the loss of income earners, income streams or assets) are vulnerable to additional hazards, be they natural disasters or new forms of conflict such as “resource wars” (contested use of natural resources, including water, oil and even arable land), that according to some analysts will become increasingly likely.¹¹ This suggests a need for more focus on linkages between governance failures (including breakdown in delivery of services), conflicts, and humanitarian outcomes (such as epidemics of cholera or measles, life-threatening outbreaks of micronutrient deficiency diseases, and increases in prenatal mortality linked to population displacements or other traumas).

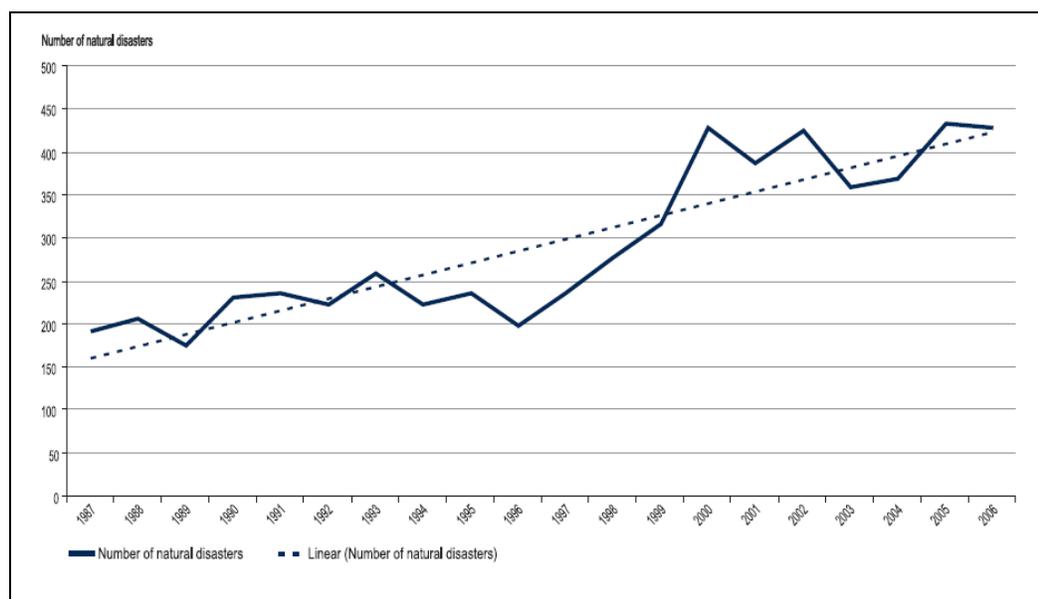
⁹ Of course, recent attempts to measure civilian mortality in DRC, Darfur and Iraq highlight the methodological difficulties and political pitfalls involved. But they also underline the urgent need for analytical clarity and objectivity in comparing rates across countries and over time. See: Murray, C., et al. 2002. Armed Conflict as a public health problem. *British Medical Journal*. 324:346–9.

¹⁰ The World Bank defines “fragile states” as countries characterized by a combination of weak governance, policies, and institutions which are often trapped in a vicious cycle of armed conflict and economic and social collapse. World Bank. 2007. *Post-Conflict Fund and Licus Trust Fund: Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2007*. Washington, DC.

¹¹ HFP, op. cit.

The second “new” driver of crises is rising frequency of disasters, some with greater intensity. The 2008 CAP reports a recent marked increase in, and record number of, Flash Appeals which reflects the rise in people affected by disasters—climbing by a third from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s.¹² On average, 200 million people were affected by natural disasters globally each year between 1992 and 2001, a period during which disasters claimed an annual average of 62,000 lives.¹³ Figure 2 illustrates the upward trend in reported events since the 1980s. If such trends continue it has been estimated that “by 2050 natural disasters could have a global cost of over US\$300 billion a year, and will be a key element in the failure to meet the Millennium Development Goals.”^{14 15}

Figure 2: Occurrence of Natural Disasters, 1987–2006



Source: Reproduced from P. Hoyois et al. 2007. *Annual Disaster Statistical Review: Numbers and Trends*. Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium.

Such large scale economic and human losses are related to two factors: on the one hand, an “increasing frequency and intensity of extreme events”, notably droughts, floods, tropical cyclones and hailstorms.”¹⁶ In 2006, there were 427 reported natural disasters compared with an annual average of 393 for the 2000–2004 period—the main increase coming in the form of large

¹² Arnold, M., et. al. (eds.) 2006. *Natural Disaster HotSpots: Case Studies*. Disaster Risk Management Series. Washington, DC.

¹³ CRED (Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters), University of Louvain, Belgium, various years. <http://www.cred.be/>

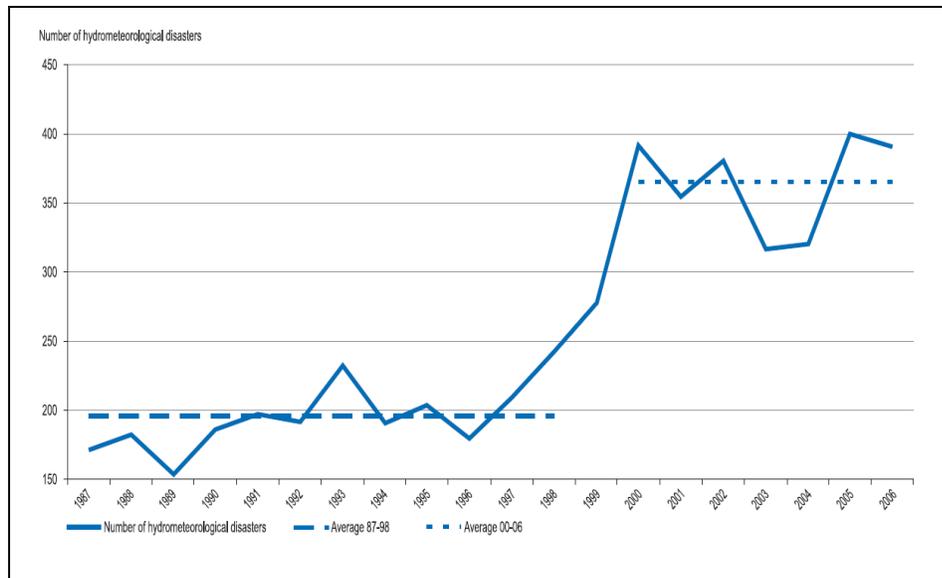
¹⁴ Atkinson, R. 2007. Editorial. *Humanitarian Exchange*. 38 (6) 1–2.

¹⁵ Yates, R. et. Al. 2002. *Development at Risk*. Briefing paper for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August–4 September 2002.

¹⁶ Bruinsma, J. (ed.) 2003. *World agriculture: towards 2015/2030*. Rome: FAO/Earthscan.

floods.¹⁷ However, if a longer time-frame it considered, it is a combination of floods, tsunamis, major droughts and cyclones/hurricanes that together account for the largest increase (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Hydro Meteorological Disasters, 1987–2006



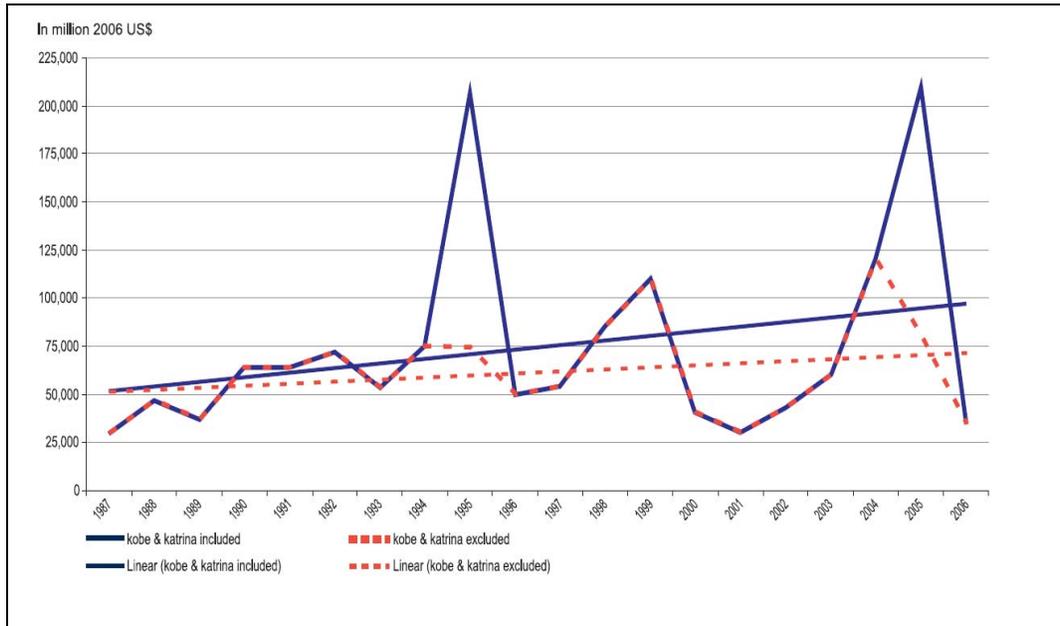
Source: Reproduced from P. Hoyois et al. 2007. *Annual Disaster Statistical Review: Numbers and Trends*. Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium.

On the other hand, the impact of natural hazards has grown because of rising concentration of people in vulnerable locations, and the growing vulnerability of people in poorest countries—particularly those exposed to eroded natural resources as well as depletion of human capital due to HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and other debilitating diseases. Figure 4 shows that even ignoring spikes caused by the Kobe earthquake and hurricane Katrina, the trend in economic damage associated with disasters is upward. But importantly, large events are not driving the trend. There has been a decrease of around 15 percent (between 1987 and 2006) in “large” disasters (causing losses of between 0.1 and 0.49 percent of GDP to affected countries), replaced by a three-fold increase in disasters causing *less than* 0.1 percent GDP losses (Figure 5).¹⁸ While this may seem like a desirable trend, the relatively smaller droughts and floods account for a greater share of the absolute increase in economic losses. This is of concern since while such apparently low-impact disasters are less visible they have the potential to cause serious aggregate damage through compounded losses in income foregone over the long run. At the same time, given their individually smaller impacts on GDP growth, these low-impact droughts and floods have less political and donor (and media) visibility than major discrete events, attracting lesser funding in terms of relief and reconstruction, which leaves affected populations still vulnerable to similar risks.

¹⁷ CRED. Op. cit.

¹⁸ For comparative purposes, the Maldives’ losses relating to the Asian tsunami amounted to 66 percent of GDP, while Hurricane Mitch caused damage equal to 41 percent of GDP in Honduras. World Bank. 2006. *Hazards of Nature, Risks to Development*. Washington DC.

Figure 4: Economic Damage Associated with Natural Disasters, 1987–2006



Source: Reproduced from P. Hoyois et al. 2007. *Annual Disaster Statistical Review: Numbers and Trends*. Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium.

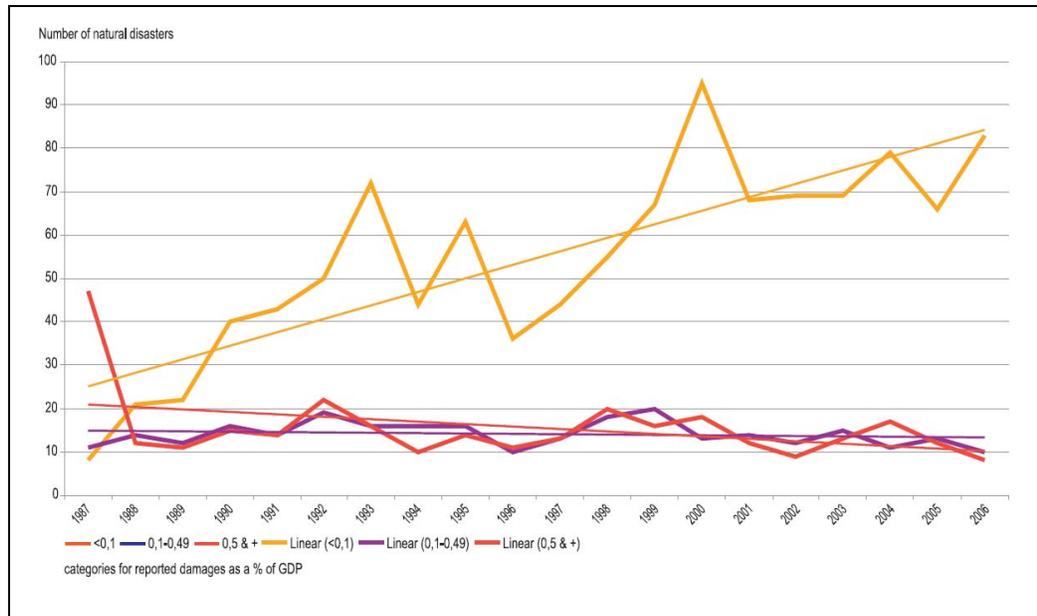
In other words, impaired development is integrally linked with the *cumulative* effects of shocks—small as well as large.¹⁹ This is understood by affected communities, but is arguably less so at the level of national governments and international donors. UNDP’s most recent *Human Development Report* argues that environmental hazards figure prominently in the lives of the poor by, “eroding long-term opportunities for human development, undermining productivity.”²⁰ That was acknowledged in Kenya’s recent national development report: “economic recovery since 2003 has provided the country with a new opportunity to reduce poverty levels. However, with the recent drought in the country, there have been some setbacks in such areas as the elimination of hunger and chronic malnutrition.”²¹ The likely re-occurrence of disasters in areas identified as disaster risk hotspots suggest that aggressive measures are needed to reduce risks of future losses.

¹⁹ M. Dilley et al. 2005. *Natural Disaster Hotspots: A Global Risk Analysis*. Washington, DC: World Bank/Columbia University.

²⁰ United Nations Development Program. 2007. *Human Development Report*. New York.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Figure 5: Trends in Economic Damage Caused by Various Categories of Natural Disasters (in 2006 US\$ million), 1987–2006



Source: Reproduced from P. Hoyois et al. 2007. *Annual Disaster Statistical Review: Numbers and Trends*. Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium.

But while more attention has been paid to risk reduction recently this has not yet translated into the large-scale investments that are called for, particularly where growth has not yet sufficiently reduced future vulnerabilities. That is, the process of development itself carries risks until growth and investments have reached a level that allows for sufficient risk-proofing not only of national economies but also of citizen’s livelihoods. Poverty reduction is certainly happening. The World Bank’s *Global Economic Prospects* report predicts that by 2030 the number of people living on less than the equivalent of \$1 per day will fall by half from current levels (1.2 billion), to about 550 million.²² The projections call for global economic growth in the 2006 to 2030 period to be faster than in 1980 to 2005, the important difference being that global growth will be increasingly driven by developing countries, where per capita incomes are expected to rise by 3.0 percent a year on average.

This is even true of Africa. According to the World Bank, “something decidedly new is on the horizon in Africa, something that began in the mid-1990s. Many African economies appear to have turned the corner and moved to a path of faster and steadier economic growth. Their performance over 1995–2005 reverses the collapses over 1975–85 and the stagnations over 1985–95. And for the first time in three decades, African economies are growing with the rest of the world.”²³ Average growth in Sub-Saharan Africa was 5.4 percent in 2005 and 2006. The consensus projection for 2008 is 5.4 percent. While this is in part supported by high world prices

²² World Bank. 2007. *Global Economic Prospects*. Washington, DC.

²³ World Bank. 2008. *African Development Indicators 2007*. Washington, DC.

for oil and minerals (therefore only benefiting exporters of natural resources), eighteen countries whose economies do not rely on mineral exports have also been doing well—countries containing more than a third of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa. The low productivity and low investment that hampered much of Africa in the 1970s and 1980s is turning around. There is evidence of improvements in output per worker and countries with higher “efficiency” (in terms of return on investment, such as Mozambique, Rwanda, and Botswana) are on par with India and Vietnam.

A key feature of such growth is a rapid, large-scale relocation of population to urban areas. Already the world’s population is more urban than rural; by 2030 the share of developing country inhabitants living in cities is projected to be 56 percent.²⁴ While there is a strong association between urbanization, income diversification, increased specialization/productivity and poverty reduction, there are also negatives: (1) UNFPA argues that the impacts of climate hazards disproportionately affect people “who live in slum and squatter settlements on steep hillsides, in poorly drained areas, or in low-lying coastal zones.”²⁵ Indeed, part of the explanation for increasing economic losses in natural disasters is the physical concentrations of people in places where shocks can cause concentrated damage. (2) Urban concentrations result in higher demand for food (as diets change), with fewer people on the farms to produce locally—exposing more consumers to the vagaries of world market prices. Economies such as Mozambique’s, Guatemala’s or Cambodia’s may be growing, but they are not doing so at a rate that sustains buffers for their poorest inhabitants, and the rural- (peri-) urban shift can put many more people in potential harm’s way without a functioning government safety net. This has implications for future humanitarian interventions; is the international community sufficiently attuned to the potential for large-scale urban catastrophes, able to assess urban needs and able to intervene to protect food insecurity in non-agrarian settings?

The World Bank acknowledges that its long-term growth projections could be impacted by many unknowns, including disasters. However, the projections are deemed “robust enough to resist periodic recessions, isolated regional conflicts, and even many of the destabilizing crises the world has experienced in the past thirty years. These threats are likely to affect particular regional or national economies more than the world economy.”²⁶ Even if true, the problem for humanitarians is that destabilizing crises are indeed localized, particularly affecting those regions and households least able to deal with them. That is, there are whole countries, regions and people “left behind.”

Chronic Food Insecurity

One of the standard measures of longer-term food insecurity is FAO’s metric of “chronic undernourishment”—one of two metrics used to measure progress in reducing “hunger” as part of the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG). MDG1’s target is to halve by 2015 the proportion of “hungry” people from the 1990 level. It was decided to measure “hunger” in this context by considering undernourished populations as a whole, on the one hand, and undernourished children (aged less than five years) on the other. According to FAO, “we are

²⁴ United Nations Population Division. 2007. *World Urbanization Prospects*. New York.

²⁵ UN Population Fund. 2007. *State of World Population 2007*. New York.

²⁶ World Bank 2007. Op. cit.

confronted with the sad reality that virtually no progress has been made towards that objective. Compared with 1990–92, the number of undernourished people in developing countries has declined by a meager three million—a number within the bounds of statistical error.”²⁷ For instance, in 2000, FAO combined estimates of both the prevalence of chronic undernourishment (energy gap at population level) and the depth of undernourishment (measured by the average dietary energy deficit of undernourished people—not of the population as a whole) into five “food deprivation” groups, the most deprived having high prevalence of undernourishment and high energy deficit. What they found was a list of twenty-three countries in the most deprived group which all faced “chronic instability and conflict, poor governance, erratic weather, endemic poverty, agricultural failure, population pressure and fragile ecosystems go hand in hand with deep, widespread and persistent hunger.”²⁸ The top ten countries were Somalia, Afghanistan, Haiti, Mozambique, Burundi, Liberia, DRC, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Niger—a list of usual suspects, all of which have appeared in CAP and/or Flash Appeals since 2000, and most of which continue to be characterized by the same problems.²⁹ These are countries with large reservoirs of problems which take little to overflow into acute crises.

The same goes for child undernutrition—the other “hunger” measure for MDG1. While progress is being made in reducing global prevalence of low weight-for-age in children under five years of age progress is slow (few low income countries will reach the MDG1 target by 2015), and uneven (large numbers of undernourished children continue to inhabit fast growth countries like Vietnam and Bangladesh, as well as low growth countries like Ethiopia, Pakistan and Haiti).³⁰ Indeed, the prevalence of wasting (acute malnutrition carrying a high mortality risk) has been *increasing* at a global level.³¹ Each sub-region of Africa has seen rising levels of wasting between 1990 and 2005, but even a high economic growth country like India has reported an increase in wasting prevalence of 3 percent between 1998–99 and 2005–06.³² This matters because the most severe human outcome associated with disasters is mortality, which in humanitarian crises tends to be mediated through acute malnutrition. That is, a large and growing reservoir of acutely malnourished children (and adults) in itself represents an underlying vulnerability to disasters, such that temporal shocks compound and aggravate pre-existing conditions.

For example, Table 1 provides lists of the “top ten” (i.e., worst ten) countries ranked according to a variety of indices, including chronic undernourishment (column 5) and child wasting (column 7). While this table includes data from a wide range of published sources, each having its own methodology for ranking and comparing diverse countries, it offers some interesting (sometimes surprising) comparisons that can be discussed. The first ten columns (Tables 1a and 1b) are rankings relating to current conditions, reflecting the recent past—where countries stand and what they have been through in the past ten to fifteen years—while columns 11–14 (Table 1c)

²⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) 2007. *State of Food Insecurity in the World*. Rome.

²⁸ FAO. 2000. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*. Rome.

²⁹ The exceptions may be Mozambique and Liberia which today appear to be pulling away from the rest of the group.

³⁰ UN Standing Committee on Nutrition. 2005. *5th Update on the World Nutrition Situation*. Geneva.

³¹ UN Standing Committee on Nutrition. 2004. *5th Report on the World Nutrition Situation*. Geneva, Switzerland; World Bank. 2006. *Repositioning Nutrition*. Washington, DC.

³² Government of India. 2007. *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3)*. New Delhi.

suggest potential threats to countries based on current status and projected near future. These lists suggest that:

1. While the elements of “insecurity” addressed in each list are not identical many countries feature on most of the rankings—in other words, while there are multiple factors at play in generating vulnerabilities to food (and other forms of) insecurity, there are certain countries with exposure to *multiple* threats. As a result, resolving one threat or set of risks in isolation of the others may not succeed in resolving or reducing underlying vulnerability.
2. A “core” set of countries that features most often in recent crises (including Afghanistan, DRC, Somalia, C.A.R, Chad, Niger, Sudan, and so on), continued to feature in lists that relate to continuing threat of future instability (Table 1c). This means that a large number of developing countries (thirty-two separate countries make the top ten lists in columns 11–14 alone) continue to warrant serious attention. Most of these appear in FAO’s March 2008 list of thirty-six “countries in crisis requiring external assistance.”³³ What should be done differently to plan for, and seek to prevent, increased humanitarian need in any one or all of those hotspots in the coming decade?
3. Several countries featuring in most lists relating to recent conditions (columns 1–10), have all but disappeared from the lists relating to projected risks in coming years (columns 11–14). Places like Mozambique and Haiti, as well as Burundi and Liberia (two of the nations that “graduated” from the CAP appeal in 2008), appear to have made some progress, suggesting that successes are possible. This is a positive development that should be more widely recognized. What can be learned from those two cases that might be transferable to other ongoing crises?

In other words, not only is global economic growth uneven (spatially) and still too slow to help even stable countries to make needed investments in social safety nets and other buffers against future shocks, current growth is itself fragile in many parts of the world. The danger of regress is all too real when serious threats to growth are not taken into account beyond the humanitarian community. A large group of countries remains food insecure despite considerable humanitarian and/or developmental resource flows.³⁴ But those countries continue to be weak if not dysfunctional, facing continued threat of conflict even in “peace.” What is more, while these well-known threats to food insecurity continue to fester new challenges are on the horizon which may in some cases constitute large scale “destabilizers” of still fragile equilibriums.

New Challenges to Global and Local Food Insecurity

There are many emerging and re-emerging that could be discussed here, including the potential for pandemic diseases (such as, but not restricted to, Avian influenza), the risk posed by growing water insecurity to world food supplies, new threats on labor productivity relating to the global obesity epidemic, and so on. But space only permits us to consider two of the current big ticket items; namely, potential impacts of a) climate change and b) global pressures on food prices.

Where *climate change* is concerned, there is an increasing convergence among global models. According to the Humanitarian Futures Programme, “global climate change is an over-arching

³³ <http://www.fao.org/giews/english/hotspots/index.htm>.

³⁴ FAO. 2007. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2006*. Rome.

factor that will directly and indirectly impact upon a range of drivers which will in turn intensify humanitarian crisis agents that expose human beings to major humanitarian crises.”³⁵ The broad messages with regard to food security impacts are that (1) climate changes will play out differently across latitudes (resulting in gainers and losers), and (2) many of today’s food insecure countries will feature among the losers, leading to deepening of production and consumption problems. One report suggests that in some forty poor developing countries with a combined current population of two billion, including 450 million undernourished people, production losses are likely to “drastically increase the number of undernourished.”³⁶ Similarly, a recent study by the World Bank suggests that “increases in seasonal temperature have negative effects for most of the African continent.”³⁷ More specifically, the share of arable land in tropical regions is expected to decrease. The World Bank’s projections are particularly worrisome for Africa, given that they suggest a loss of more than 4 percent of total arable land by 2039—faster in some regions, with eastern Africa losing up to 15 percent of its cropland area within the next thirty years.

Such projections are mirrored by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which foresees increased droughts and floods affecting “crop production negatively, especially in subsistence sectors at low latitudes.”³⁸ A new study that pools consensus views of more than 52 environmental experts suggests that a global temperature rise of more than three degrees Centigrade is likely and this would bring about more intense (higher amplitude) El Nino effects which are linked to severe droughts and cyclonic activity around the world.³⁹ This has implications for countries that already face chronic food insecurity and frequent emergencies, as well as an already eroded or fragile natural resource base, and aggravating factors like HIV/AIDS. Stige et al. argue that southern Africa will “experience notable reductions” in maize production and Lenton et al. concurs, suggesting that southern Africa risks losing 30 percent of its coarse grain output by 2030.⁴⁰ Countries such as Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi face a reduction in the growing season that may reduce yields by as much as 50 percent by 2020, and net revenue from cropping could be reduced by as much as 90 percent by 2100.⁴¹ And across Africa, “there could be hundreds of millions of additional people at risk of serious reductions in crop yields,” while across Asia “about 1 billion people would face risks from reduced agricultural production potential.”⁴²

³⁵ HFG. 2007. Op. Cit.

³⁶ G. Fischer, M. Shah, H. van Velthuisen, and F. Nachtergaele. 2001. *Global Agro-ecological Assessment for Agriculture in the 21st Century*. Laxenburg, Austria: International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis.

³⁷ A. Lotsch. 2007. *Sensitivity of Cropping Patterns in Africa to Transient Climate Change*. Policy Research Working Paper 4289. Washington, DC: World Bank.

³⁸ M. Boko et al. 2007. *Africa. Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Edited by M. Parry et al. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 433–467. These authors also suggest that wheat production is expected “to disappear from Africa by the 2080s.”

³⁹ Lenton, T. et al. 2008. Tipping elements in the Earth’s climate system. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 105 (6): 1786–93.

⁴⁰ Stige, L., J. Stave, K. Chan, L. Ciannelli, N. Pretorelli, M. Glantz, H. Herren and N. Stenseth. 2006. The effect of climate variation on agro-pastoral production in Africa. *Proc. National Academy of Sciences, USA*. 103: 3049–53.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Schneider, S. et al. 2007: Assessing key vulnerabilities and the risk from climate change. In Parry, M. et al. *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth

Table 1: “Top Ten” Country Rankings According to Different Measures of Food Insecurity and Humanitarian Need (The “worst” case at the top of each column)

(1) Global Needs Assessment Score 2007–08 ⁴⁶	(2) Poverty and Hunger Index ⁴³	(3) Deadliest Conflicts of 1990s ⁴⁷	(4) Global Hunger Index ⁴⁴	(5) Percent Undernourished ⁴⁵
Afghanistan	Sierra Leone	Rwanda	Burundi	Eritrea
Angola	CAR	Angola	DRC	DRC
Benin	Burundi	Somalia	Eritrea	Burundi
Burundi	Niger	Bosnia	Sierra Leone	Tajikistan
C.A.R	Zambia	Liberia	Ethiopia	Sierra Leone
Chad	Madagascar	Burundi	Liberia	Liberia
DRC	Uganda	Chechnya	Niger	Haiti
Cote d’Ivoire	Zimbabwe	Tajikistan	Yemen	Ethiopia
Djibouti	Nigeria	Algeria	Angola	Zimbabwe
East Timor	Rwanda	Gulf War	Comoros	C.A.R
(6) Dietary Energy Deficit ⁴⁹ late 1990s	(7) Child Wasting ⁴⁸ mid-2000s	(8) Frequency of CAP appearance 1995–2006 ⁵⁰	(9) % population affected by natural disasters 2006 ⁵¹	(10) Recipients of bilateral humanitarian aid (gross 2006) ⁵²
Somalia	Pakistan	Sudan	Malawi	Sudan
Afghanistan	Burkina Faso	Iraq	Burundi	Pakistan
Haiti	Djibouti	Afghanistan	Niger	Afghanistan
Mozambique	India	Angola	Djibouti	Iraq
Burundi	Sudan (North)	Ethiopia	Kenya	Somalia
Liberia	Laos	Serbia & Montenegro	Philippines	Indonesia
DRC	Togo	Bosnia Herzegovina	Mali	DRC
Sierra Leone	Sri Lanka	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Lebanon
Eritrea	Chad	Palestinian Territories	Mozambique	Sri Lanka
Niger	DRC	Former Yugoslavia	China	Myanmar

Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp: 779–810.

⁴³ Net progress towards MDG1 based on all 5 official measures of poverty and hunger. Source: U. Gentilini and P. Webb. 2008. How Are We Doing on Poverty and Hunger Reduction? A New Measure of Country Performance. Mimeo.

⁴⁴ An index combining children underweight, child mortality, and national chronic undernourishment). Source: International Food Policy Research Institute. 2007. *The Challenge of Hunger 2007*. Washington, DC.

⁴⁵ Source: FAO. 2007. *The State of the World’s Food Insecurity 2007*. Rome.

⁴⁶ ECHO GNA Web site (countries listed alphabetically).

⁴⁷ Murray, C et. al. 2002. Armed Conflict as a public health problem. *British Medical Journal*. 324:346–9

⁴⁸ Moderate and severe wasting in children less than 5 (mid 2000s), excluding UAE and Mauritius, both being somewhat special cases. Source: *childinfo.org*

⁴⁹ “Depth” of hunger. FAO. 2000. *The State of the World’s Food Insecurity*. Rome.

⁵⁰ DI 2007.

⁵¹ Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters. 2007. *CRED CRUNCH* 8: 1.

<http://www.emdat.be/Documents/CredCrunch/Cred%20Crunch%208.pdf>

⁵² DI 2008.

Table 1. (continued)

(11) Future risk of civil conflict and instability ⁵⁵ (2007)	(12) Global Peace Index (inverse, 2008) ⁵⁶	(13) Failed States Index (2007) ⁵³	(14) MDG1 progress ⁵⁴ (inverse)
Afghanistan	Iraq	Sudan	Venezuela
Iraq	Sudan	Iraq	Bolivia
Niger	Israel	Somalia	Yemen
Ethiopia	Russia	Zimbabwe	Colombia
Liberia	Nigeria	Chad	Niger
Sierra Leone	Colombia	Cote d'Ivoire	Burundi
Mali	Pakistan	DRC	Cote d'Ivoire
Tanzania	Lebanon	Afghanistan	Laos
C.A.R.	Cote d'Ivoire	Guinea	Madagascar
Djibouti	Angola	C.A.R	Uzbekistan

The other current preoccupation of food policy analysts is *high world prices for food* as well as fuel.

As the Executive Director of WFP recently put it, “Record level food and fuel prices, increasing climate challenges and decreasing food stocks are coming together to hit the world’s most vulnerable—the so-called bottom billion—hard at a time when food aid flows are at their lowest levels for thirty-five years, and with the food surplus disposal era clearly over.”⁵⁷

The cereal import bill for food-deficit countries in 2007–08 is forecast by FAO to rise by 35 percent, while the Economic Intelligence Unit predicts an 11 percent rise in cereal prices in the next two years and a 5 percent increase in the price of oilseeds.⁵⁸ Trying to limit the impact of rising cereal prices on domestic food consumption, many developing country governments are taking (or considering) a range of policy measures that include lowering import tariffs (Morocco, Benin), raising food subsidies (Egypt, Jordan), bringing key commodities under price control (Ukraine), and banning or imposing duties on basic food exports (Ethiopia).⁵⁹

Current high prices *could* be short lived, but some argue that the world may be facing a new era of higher and rising food prices—the jury is still out. The pressure on prices reflects a confluence of influences, including serious droughts affected output in several key producing countries in

⁵³ http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3865&page=7

⁵⁴ Negative progress toward MDG1 based on each country’s position in the base year of 1990. Source: U. Gentilini and P. Webb. 2008. Ibid.

⁵⁵ J. Hewitt et. al. 2007. Peace and Conflict 2008: Executive Summary. Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, MD.

⁵⁶ <http://www.visionofhumanity.com/rankings/>

⁵⁷ J. Sheeran. 2008. *Testimony to the European Parliament Development Committee*, March 6. Brussels, Belgium. Mimeo.

⁵⁸ Economist Intelligence Unit. 2007. *World commodity forecasts: Food feedstuffs and beverages*. Main report, 4th Quarter 2007.

www.eiu.com/index.asp?layout=displayIssueTOC&issue_id=1912762176&publication_id=440003244.

⁵⁹ FAO. 2008. Crop Prospects and Food Situation. No.1 (February). Rome.

the mid 2000s which led to two successive years of negative growth in world cereal production;⁶⁰ low world cereal year-end stocks during recent years (levels below 20 percent of consumption needs usually trigger heightened concerns about the outlook for global production); increased demand globally for meat and dairy products, in part driven by high economic growth rates in China and India;⁶¹ and increased emphasis on bio-fuels. As FAO puts it, “what distinguishes the current state of agricultural markets is rather the concurrence of the hike in world prices of, not just a selected few, but of nearly all, major food and feed commodities.”⁶² Given the multiplicity of factors involved long-term impacts remain unclear. On the one hand, it has been argued that by 2030 there will be 600 million more chronically undernourished people in the world due to continued pressure on prices, in large part due to the conversion of maize away from food uses to ethanol production.⁶³ The International Food Policy Research Institute expects further increases in cereal prices of about 10 to 20 percent up to 2015 in current US dollars, and OECD and FAO see the price of coarse grains rising by 35 percent and that of oilseeds to increase by 13 percent by 2016–17.^{64 65}

On the other hand, price spikes are not rare in agricultural markets and high prices are historically short lived. For example, the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute estimates that higher maize demand and prices will last until 2009–10, and thereafter sees production growth to be on par with consumption growth.⁶⁶ Indeed, trends since the 1960s show more food produced in absolute terms as well as in per capita terms, and declining real prices for that food (Figure 6). There have been spikes at various points (notably around 1973 and 1996), but technological change in agriculture, poverty reduction, higher labor productivity, and increased demand for food linked to urbanization and economic growth, combined to maintain downward pressure on food costs to consumers at the average global level.⁶⁷ Indeed, while current “historically high” prices are high in nominal terms (higher than in 1996), but not in real (inflation adjusted) terms (Figure 7).

⁶⁰ It is important to note that while talking of food security in a country like Nigeria, FEWSNET points out that price trends in parts of that country remain *below* average levels, on the one hand, and that high coarse grain prices were in fact expected in West Africa due to “poor production conditions”. In other words, increased prices need to be understood in relation to local market conditions, which includes taking already expected increases into account (i.e., the *net* effects of biofuels should be considered in relation to expected price rises linked to drought, pests, fuel costs and certain secular factors). USAID. 2008. *West Africa Food Security Alert*, February 4.

⁶¹ Although, annual growth in cereal imports into Africa as a whole has also reached around 3.6 percent. See Jayne, T. 2007. *Underappreciated Facts about African Agriculture*. Seminar at the African Studies Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, September 13, 2007.

⁶² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2007. *Food Outlook: Global Market Analysis*. Rome.

⁶³ Runge, F. and B. Senauer. 2007. How Biofuels Could Starve the Poor. *Foreign Affairs*. May/June.

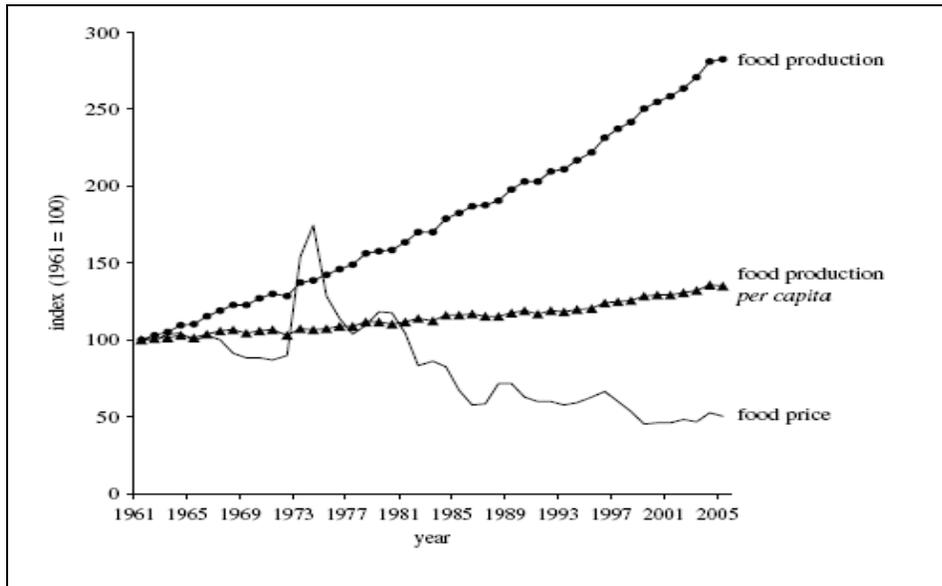
⁶⁴ OECD-FAO. 2006. *Agricultural Outlook 2006–2015*. Paris.

⁶⁵ Von Braun, J. 2007. *The World Food Situation: New Driving Forces and Required Actions*. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute.

⁶⁶ Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute. 2007. *FAPRI 2007 US and world agricultural outlook*. Ames, Iowa.

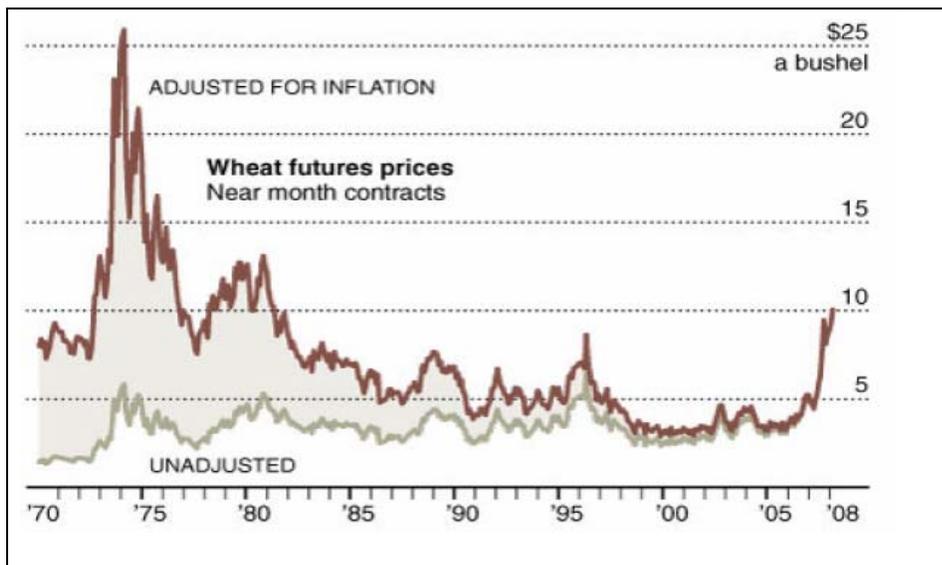
⁶⁷ Hazell, P. and S. Wood. 2008. Drivers of change in global agriculture. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. Series B, 363: 495–515.

Figure 6: Trends in Food Production and Prices, 1961–2006



Source: Reproduced from P. Hazell and S. Wood. 2008. Drivers of change in global agriculture. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society. Series B*, 363: 495–515.

Figure 7: Nominal and Adjusted Wheat Prices, 1969–2008



Source: Reproduced from D. Streitfeld. 2008. In Price and Supply, Wheat is the Unstable Staple. *New York Times*, February 13.

However, it is important to note that even in the best case (with a rapid return to the trend in declining global grain prices), first, there will still be a couple of years of hardship among net consumers in food importing low-income countries and households, and second, prices may stabilize at higher levels over the medium term. Both scenarios have implications for the immediate future since donors could respond in several different ways: they may consider that (1) given well-known counter-cycles between grain prices and food aid supplies, relatively more humanitarian aid should go to food aid (even if lower volumes will be possible), since cash transfers supporting food purchases could end up having less real value to beneficiaries in a time of rapid price increases; (2) more investment is needed for developing country agriculture; and/or (3) cash aid is a preferable form of humanitarian resource since the cost of delivering food is now untenable (due to very high fuel costs, not only the cost of commodities). Each of the above is possible, but the thrust of most donor reactions to this most recent food crisis are not yet clear.

Summary

The developing world is facing at least as many exogenous shocks as ever—in some locations more than before, and in some cases, more intense than before. While fewer people are dying in the context of humanitarian emergencies (an important, often overlooked bright spot), such success carries the corollary that many more people are *affected* if not killed. Many of those have seen their coping capacities eroded, with growing ill health, undernutrition and destitution laying many communities open to vagaries of climate, global market conditions, epidemic contagion and the traumas of contested ownership of natural and other resources. Many vulnerable people are shifting physically to urban slums where they face new health challenges despite continued, albeit different, exposure to natural disasters.

The result is a growing pool of vulnerable states, characterized by fragile economies and by livelihoods pursued by economically and physiologically vulnerable people. There are few, if any, humanitarian crises that do not have multiple causes and synchronistic, cascading impacts—what the Humanitarian Futures Programme calls: “interactive drivers, shocks and crisis agents.”⁶⁸ The recent Niger tragedy, for instance, represented a complex interaction among drought, locust invasion, market price hikes, governance failure, and pre-existing high levels severe acute malnutrition. Similarly, current threats to life in the DRC reflect a compounding of epidemic diseases, traumas associated with population displacements, pre-existing chronic undernourishment and the direct dangers posed by armed conflict among multiple interest groups. The humanitarian and development communities (donors, operational agencies and national governments), can no longer afford to treat any shocks (temporal hazards or longer-run conflicts) as quasi independent drivers of food crises. Protection of rural livelihoods in fragile environments is complex, taking account of the multiple risks that frame producer investments and consumer decision-making over the longer-run—not simply responding to the shock that just happened. Success is possible—measured in terms of lessons well-learned on how to save lives, regions becoming more stable, and whole countries gradually moving towards sustained and integrated social and economic growth. Faster and wider replication of the innovative thinking and action underpinning such successes is a priority for the coming decades.

⁶⁸ Humanitarian Future Programme, King’s College London. 2007. *Dimensions of Crisis Impacts: Humanitarian Needs by 2015*. Report prepared for the Department for International Development. London.

PART 2. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM IN ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY

2.1. Views on Humanitarian Effectiveness: What Is the Problem?

There have been numerous critiques of the humanitarian food security enterprise in recent years. To put these in perspective and address the question of the effectiveness of the humanitarian system in addressing food insecurity, this Section reviews these critiques, and quickly reviews the causes of food security crises and the analytical problems in understanding them, before analyzing contemporary food security interventions and the architecture of the food security “endeavor” to implement these interventions, and the reforms underway to improve the capacity and coordination of various actors. The section ends with a summary of issues determining how effective the collective effort has been.

Critiques of Humanitarian Action

Recent criticisms center around analytical capacity (assessments of need, cost-effectiveness, impact); the ability to allocate resources impartially; the ability to link analysis or early warning to a timely and appropriate response; balanced responses to food security crises and the engagement of humanitarian food security actors at the policy level; and limited ability to link the short-term protection of food consumption with long-term improvements in production and access.

From a humanitarian perspective, there is an additional problem—not necessarily growing out of these critiques—around the definition of effectiveness or “success.” It is quite clear what constitutes failure in humanitarian terms: the loss of human lives, the crippling impact of malnutrition, and the destruction of livelihoods. But “success” isn’t simply the opposite of failure; because failure has a clear end point, but success does not. For example, the humanitarian effort in Darfur in 2005–06 was deemed relatively successful because it managed to contain the malnutrition and mortality crisis in camps for displaced people, bringing under-five acute malnutrition for the most part down below 15 percent prevalence. Yet, in 2007 this “success” evaporated, under the splintering of opposition movements and the breakdown of humanitarian access and security. The result was continued crisis, simmering and periodically flaring to this day. Similarly, the robust response to the Ethiopian crisis of 2002–03 was generally considered “successful” in the sense of a major crisis averted, but on the back end of that crisis the number of people requiring food assistance every year—good rains or bad—jumped from 3–4 million per year to 7–8 million people per year.⁶⁹ The result is that food security in Ethiopia has not improved in vulnerable regions despite “successful” emergency response several years earlier. So how does the humanitarian food security community define “success?” It may be partial, fleeting, and disconnected—none of which are usual components of a definition of success.

⁶⁹ At the end of 2007 it was reported that “8 million people face chronic food insecurity...while an additional 1.3 million are in need of emergency food assistance.” UN/SCN. 2007. *Nutrition in Crisis Situations*. Report XV, p. 3.

Specific Critiques

Analytical Capacity. In 2004, Levine and Chastre⁷⁰ reviewed emergency food security interventions in Central Africa and pointed out that most of the emergency food security programs they reviewed:

1. Actually failed to address needs as defined in any sense by intended beneficiary population;
2. Were not based on analysis and therefore were not even designed to address needs;
3. Were not well thought through but were based on a relatively narrow range of pre-existing packages—largely food aid and agricultural inputs; and
4. In many cases, information from previous assessments or from other organizations was ignored, even when it existed.

Impartiality. The imperative for analysis to enable an appropriate, impartial, and proportional response was brought back to the food security and humanitarian communities four years ago by a landmark HPG study, *According to Need*.⁷¹ That report had three crucial points:

1. International humanitarian financing is not allocated proportional to need across crises; funding allocated does not reflect comparative levels of need.
2. There is no system-wide framework for judging the relative severity of crises and for aligning response accordingly.
3. Donors are often skeptical about individual agency assessments of need. Agencies on the other hand, doubt that objective assessment is the basis on which donors actually make allocations anyway (related to the first point above).

Donors may want random sampling used in assessments while agencies might prefer to sample purposively, and in ways that allow them not only to link nutrition info to food security information that can help in quickly tailoring and targeting responses. These reflect different ideas of what information is needed in terms of assessing “need,” rather than a clear divide between a right way and a wrong way. The HPG report included, though was not limited to, humanitarian food security responses. These criticisms had been made regarding humanitarian response previously.

Linking Analysis to Action. This is often called “linking early warning to early response.”⁷² But the analytical constraints are broader than just early warning, and the action constraints include more than just on-the-ground, programmatic responses. A recent critique of early warning and response in slow-onset disasters in the Sahel and elsewhere in Africa refers to the “institutional production of partial success.” This critique sharply criticizes the notion that better famine early warning data will, “in any simple way, translate into faster, better, more targeted and effective response.”⁷³ The point of the critique is that food security information systems exist first and

⁷⁰ Simon Levine and Claire Chastre et al. 2004. *Missing the Point: An Analysis of Food Security Interventions in the Great Lakes*. Network Paper 47, Humanitarian Practice Network. London: Overseas Development Institute.

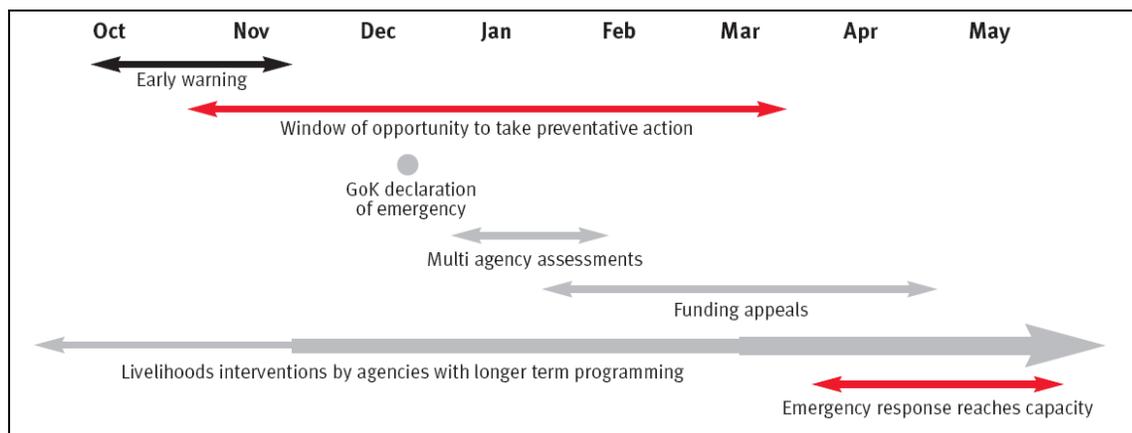
⁷¹ James Darcy and Charles-Antoine Hofmann. 2003. *According to Need? Needs Assessment and Decision-Making in the Humanitarian Sector*. Humanitarian Policy Group Report #15. London: Overseas Development Institute.

⁷² From the title of a book by the same name: Margaret Buchanan-Smith and Susanna Davies. 1995. *Famine Early Warning and Response: The Missing Link*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.

⁷³ Kent Glenzer. 2007. “We Aren’t the World: The Institutional Production of Partial Success.” In Xavier Crombé et Jean-Hervé Jézéquel (Eds.), *Niger 2005 : Une Catastrophe si Naturelle*, 117–144. Paris: Médecins Sans Frontières.

foremost to service the needs of responders (governments and humanitarian agencies), not affected communities. As a result, they *do* produce a response that does save lives and livelihoods, but can necessarily only spring into action after some lives have been lost and some livelihoods destroyed. While there is no emergent consensus around this critique, it is difficult to argue with the evidence in the two most recent, large-scale, “slow-onset” crises in Africa (Niger in 2005 and the Greater Horn “Mandera Triangle” in 2005–06).⁷⁴ Figure 8 depicts the response time frame to the latter crisis.⁷⁵ It is clear to see the lost opportunity to protect lives and livelihoods, even though in this particular case, it can only be said that good early warning analysis existed.

Figure 8: Timeline of Key Events in Greater Horn of Africa Drought Crisis, 2005–06



Food Aid-Dominated Responses. Food aid has long been the dominant response to food insecurity in emergency contexts, and looks set to continue to be the predominant resource made available by the world’s largest donor, the USA. Not only has the “food aid traditionally been the largest single category of response, it has also been proportionately among the best funded.”⁷⁶ With the rising cost of food grains and especially the rising cost of transportation, past trends are already changing—the availability of food aid in all categories (including humanitarian response) fell markedly between 2003 and June 2007 (the most recent period for which data are available).⁷⁷ While cash programming increased dramatically in the same period, much of this was driven by the unique public response to the tsunami, and may or may not represent a long-term trend.

⁷⁴ There is some controversy, in light of various recent crises including the two mentioned here—as well as the Ethiopia crisis of 2002–2003—as to whether the term “slow-onset” is very useful any longer. While true that drought (usually thought of as a slow process) was part of the causation, all these crises are clear examples of multiple hazards overlaid on chronic poverty. Unlike, for example, the Sahelian drought in the 1970s, the humanitarian crisis hit very rapidly in these cases.

⁷⁵ Humanitarian Policy Group. 2006. “Saving lives through saving livelihoods: critical gaps in the response to the drought in the Greater Horn of Africa.” HPG Briefing Note. London: ODI.

⁷⁶ See OCHA CAP Appeals for various years. Today, the food sector is no longer automatically the largest share of total humanitarian appeals or funding—being displaced by funds to multisectoral or non-allocated activities.

⁷⁷ WFP Interfais data base.

Limited Engagement at the Policy Level. Several recent studies—again, including but not limited to, food security crises—have made it clear that the voice of humanitarian actors is of limited influence in determining the nature or the scale of the response to a humanitarian crisis.⁷⁸ This is likely in part because humanitarian actors are by nature more oriented to field action than the more painstaking work of policy advocacy. But it also reflects the influence of the media and the geo-political interests of donors. Given the growing presence of private, for-profit and military actors in humanitarian response, and the increasing subordination of humanitarian interventions to strategic or security objectives, the demand for humanitarian actors of all sectors to devote more attention to the policy realm may grow.

Limited Ability to Link Short-Term to Long-Term Interventions. This is the topic of an entire later section of this paper, but in brief, the critique is that while short-term efforts have protected lives in many humanitarian operations, the necessary commitment and infrastructure has not been present to support long-term improvement, not has short-term intervention been appropriate either in many cases—based on an inadequate understanding of livelihood systems and contexts. In many cases, cycles of drought and other causal factors have shortened, offering less and less “recovery” time between major crises. Agencies, often hobbled by their reliance on differing donor rules, often have unclear exit strategies or transition strategies from humanitarian operations.⁷⁹ While defining a “boundary” is clearly not a good way to deal with this problem, some more nuanced understanding about linkages is clearly needed.

Successes and Challenges

While the list of criticisms is lengthy, some progress is being made in addressing these criticisms.

Analysis. A major effort led by WFP funded by various donors—the SENAC project⁸⁰—is working to improve assessment and analysis capacity, the credibility of findings and the transparency of recommendations. Other ongoing efforts to improve analysis include the SMART initiative and the Humanitarian Benchmarking initiative.

Impartiality. There has been considerable work done to validate individual indicators and their comparability across different contexts. The Food and Agriculture Organization is leading the development and application of the Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification—a tool specifically designed to incorporate different kinds of information into an overall analytical framework that permits the impartial comparison of different crises and different contexts. Though not yet fully operational outside the Horn of Africa, it has already been effective in unifying the language used across sectors—improving both *in situ* analysis and

⁷⁸ Gormley Olsen, Nils Carstensen, and Khristian Hoyen. 2003. “Humanitarian Crises: What Determines the Level of Emergency Assistance? Media Coverage, Donor Interests and the Aid Business.” *Disasters* 27 (2): 109–126. A. Cooper Drury, Richard Olson, and Douglas Van Belle. 2005. “The Politics of Humanitarian Aid: US Foreign Disaster Assistance, 1964–1995.” *Journal of Politic* 67(2): 454–473. Abby Stoddard. 2006. *Humanitarian Alert: NGO Information and its Impact on US Foreign Policy*. Bloomfield CT: Kumarian Press.

⁷⁹ Provention/ALNAP. 2007. “Slow-onset disasters: drought and food and livelihood insecurity: Learning from previous relief and recovery responses. London: Provention/ALNAP.

⁸⁰ Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity.

comparability. Other systemic means of putting indicator information together include the Needs Assessment Framework proposed by OCHA.

Diversifying Response. Given both the questions about the impact of food aid, and the increasing cost of procuring and shipping food, donors, governments and agencies alike are beginning to consider and offer alternatives to food aid. Several observers have noted lately that there is now the risk of recreating the same kind of “automatic” response about cash that developed around food aid, without a clear body of empirical evidence to help determine whether cash, food, or some other input is the most effective resource to enhance food security in the context of crises.⁸¹ Other kinds of response include more emphasis on the market and private sector actors, and more robust response at the policy level.

Response Analysis. In addition to improving contextual analysis, humanitarian actors are beginning to think of how to evaluate different responses to needs and their expected impact—a practice coming to be called “response analysis.” WFP, CARE and Oxfam are all working on market analysis tools aimed at honing the choice between cash and food, based not only on need, but on market impacts.

Improved Policy Engagement. Some of the inter-agency initiatives of recent years have resulted in a much stronger role for humanitarian NGOs in the whole CAP process. Major donors are talking to each other more, thanks in part to PRSP processes and the outcomes of the “Delivering as One” report, and the Good Humanitarian Donorship process (discussed in greater details below).

Summary

To summarize, humanitarian food security programs have often been based on little analysis or poor analysis. This is improving, and there are serious efforts to improve analysis, to improve the ability to compare across contexts, and to improve the link between analysis and action. But there has been a question of trust between humanitarian actors and donors. And despite improvements in various areas, there have recently been renewed criticisms that humanitarian agencies aren’t very good at learning from their own mistakes.⁸²

Several questions arise:

1. Can the humanitarian food security “community” improve its analyses to reflect changing realities on the ground, enable impartial responses, improve timeliness and measurable impact?
2. How can this analysis be better linked in practical way to better interventions, adequate and balanced resourcing, and improved engagement at the policy level?
3. Can humanitarian actors improve the linkage between their actions in the field, and the programs, policies and institutional requirements for sustainable, long-term improvements in food security?

⁸¹ John Hoddinott. 2006. “A conceptual framework for appropriate emergency response options.” FCND Discussion Paper. Washington: IFPRI. Phillip Whyte, personal communication, 2007.

⁸² See for example Thomas Weiss and Peter Hoffman. 2007. “The Fog of Humanitarianism: Collective Action Problems and Learning-Challenged Organizations.” *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 1(1): 47–65.

2.2. Overview of Food Security Crises

To effectively address the proximate, intermediate, and underlying causes of food security during an emergency, a complete understanding of the various forces at play is crucial. As chronic food insecurity often transitions to a “food crisis” or “food emergency” during/after periods of shock, both the chronic causes and immediate manifestations of the crisis must be understood and addressed simultaneously. Clearly discerning the true causes and impacts of a crisis can be difficult, though, as natural and human forces and chronic and immediate symptoms of food insecurity are often multiple and intertwined.⁸³

Despite the various causes of food crises, the hardships that individuals face can bear striking similarities even across disparate settings. The inability to afford food, sale of productive assets, migration of household members in search of work, and the lack adequate caloric intake have all been widely documented as symptoms of food crises. In areas where populations experience chronic vulnerability, the likelihood of experiencing a food security crisis is much larger.

Causes

The natural causes of acute food insecurity are numerous: drought, flood, cyclone, tsunami, and earthquake. In rural areas, these events often cripple the assets (including natural and physical assets such as land and livestock, but also social and human assets as well) of already vulnerable households. Vulnerability and food insecurity increase when purchasing power at the household level is reduced, due to either decreased income or higher food prices. Urban and peri-urban areas are similarly impacted, as natural causes can lead to increased (temporarily or sustained) higher food prices, food shortages, epidemics, and sudden settlement of those displaced by the shock. To make matters worse, natural causes of food crises are often cyclical, repeatedly affecting the same regions or agro-climatic zones.

Niger’s 2005 food crisis illustrates how the occurrence of natural hazards (drought and locust infestation) and economic shocks, *on top of* conditions of chronic food insecurity can quickly lead to large-scale loss of human life.⁸⁴ Before the drought and subsequent locust plague in 2004, the Niger was ranked 176 out of 177 countries by UNDP’s 2004 Human Development Index (HDI), with an average life expectancy of forty-six years and only 17.1 percent adult literacy rate.⁸⁵ Despite this poor outlook, Niger was making modest strides to improve its citizens’ wellbeing prior to the food crisis, reducing its “child mortality rate by more than 5 percent”⁸⁶. Any progress made prior to the crisis was quickly shattered, however, as some 800 thousand children became vulnerable as a result of the crisis, with 160 thousand and 36 thousand children suffering from moderate and severe wasting, respectively.⁸⁷ This example represents the dual hindrance that crises pose, not only do they divert limited resources away from development to relief, their impact can readily quash any progress made up to that point.

⁸³ FAO. 2005. Protecting and promoting good nutrition in crisis and recovery: Resource Guide. ISBN 92-5-105 257-3, Rome.

⁸⁴ UNICEF. 2005. Donors Alert: Niger Food Crisis—UNICEF Niger.

⁸⁵ UNDP. 2004. Human Development Index. http://hdr.undp.org/docs/statistics/indices/hdi_2004.pdf

⁸⁶ Sen, A. 2004. “How Does Culture Matter?” In Vijayendra Rao and Michael Walton, eds. *Culture and Public Action: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on Development Policy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, as cited in UNDP 2004. Human Development Report p. 40.

⁸⁷ UNICEF. 2005. Op. cit.

In addition to natural causes, food crises can also have human causes, such as conflict, climate change, market collapse, governance failures, land and natural resource degradation, population growth, and HIV/AIDS.^{88 89} The human causes can either jointly spur a food crisis with natural hazards or initiate a crisis independent of natural events. Zimbabwe offers a clear example of the coalescence of natural and human causes of a food crisis. According to FEWSNet, "...drought, hyperinflation, price controls, fuel shortages, and economic collapse underlie Zimbabwe's worsening food crisis."⁹⁰ Furthermore, Zimbabwe's ability to produce sufficient food stuffs for its population in the future is hampered by a "combination of drought, lack of irrigation, seeds and other inputs, [and] spare parts for machinery."⁹¹ Zimbabwe's 2006–07 harvest produced only 45 percent of its cereal needs, with the remainder coming from relief food aid and imports from neighboring Malawi. Between October 2007 and March 2008, FEWSNet estimates "approximately 4.1 million people in rural and urban areas are expected to need emergency assistance."⁹² Though historically Zimbabwe has been largely successful in attaining the needed food supplies, the widespread deterioration of macroeconomic conditions (largely caused by government policies and price controls) all but ensure that vulnerability and insecurity of millions of Zimbabweans will persist.

Often the most devastating—and long-lasting—crises in recent memory have been caused largely by conflict or complex emergencies. Violence and displacement was the single biggest cause of the mortality and malnutrition crisis in Darfur in 2004 and 2005 (and probably again at the present, although the data is not yet available). The destruction of markets, health infrastructure and civil institutions led to the malnutrition and disease that caused over 90 percent of the estimated 5.4 million deaths in the civil war in the Congo.⁹³ While once distinguished by neat categorizations, the causes of food security crises are becoming increasingly intertwined. Reference has already been made to the impact of climate change on land-use and ownership, and its subsequent contributions to the conflict in Darfur. The linkages between climate change, "natural" disasters, political causes, and violent conflict are now better recognized.⁹⁴

Slow versus Rapid Onset

Though the causes of food crises are of great importance, the onset (slow versus rapid) can also greatly impact the "character" of a crisis. Droughts are classically recognized as a cause of slow-onset crises, since they must occur over a growing season and since food stockpiles must be depleted before deprivation sets in. Due to their nature, slow-onset crisis can be readily monitored, predicted, and ideally prevented. But even "slow onset" crises can quickly get out of hand. Niger's 2005 food crisis clearly illustrates that identification of slow-onset crisis does not ensure that it will be prevented. The World Food Programme approached the international donor

⁸⁸ FAO. 2005. Malawi facing serious food crisis: More than 4.2 million people in need of assistance. FAO Newsroom. <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2005/107298/index.html>.

⁸⁹ FAO. 2005. Protecting and promoting good nutrition in crisis and recovery: Resource guide. ISBN 92-5-105 257-3, Rome

⁹⁰ FEWSNet. 2007. ZIMBABWE Food Security Outlook: October 2007 to March 2008. Washington, DC.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ International Rescue Committee. 2007. "Crise du Congo: 5.4 millions de morts selon une étude de l'IRC." New York: IRC.

⁹⁴ Ann Laudati. 2008. "The Natural Face of Conflict: Resources and the Politics of Identity in Africa's "New" Wars." Harvard Center for International Development. Cambridge: Harvard University.

community initially in November 2004 and again in May 2005 with minimal response, even though the WFP estimated that “3.6 million [were] in critical need of food aid”⁹⁵ Though the crisis was foreseen, the lack of response from the donor allowed Niger to slip into crisis. By July 2005, funding needs had increased exponentially as the situation had grown more severe. At this time, “UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, says it would have cost \$1 a day to prevent malnutrition among children [in Niger] if the world had responded immediately. Now it will cost \$80 to save a malnourished child’s life.”⁹⁶ This example underscores the need for governments, international institutions, and the donor community to respond accordingly to predicted crisis. Though early-warning systems succeeded in alerting the humanitarian community to the problem, these systems from did not prevent it from becoming a crisis. And whereas for example, the drought-triggered crisis in the Sahel in the 1970s developed over a period of years, recent crises (Niger 2005, Greater Horn of Africa 2005–06, or Ethiopia 2002–03) have developed quite quickly—causing the “slow onset” label to be misleading.

As its name suggests, a rapid-onset crisis has disparate characteristics to its “slow” counterpart. Common rapid-onset crisis include “cyclones, earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis...many floods [and] disease epidemics or violence.”⁹⁷ These disasters occur suddenly without warning, often causing widespread physical damage and human casualties. Rapid-onset emergencies do not always lead to protracted food crisis, especially if their impact is localized, duration short, and a comprehensive safety net system is in place. The 2005 Pakistan earthquake demonstrates how sufficient government capacity and timely response prevented a protracted crisis. According to Barrett, even in the most food insecure provinces of Northwest Frontier Province and Azad Jammu Kashmir, “food remained readily available...with minimal if any effects on local prices, production incentives or urban residents outside the immediate impact zone.”⁹⁸ When technical capacity and a timely response is missing however, the risk that such a disaster triggers a food crisis increases. The recent crisis from the disputed elections in Kenya show how rapid-onset emergencies lead to increased food insecurity and can potentially lead to longer-term food crisis. Thus far, the conflict has left more than 200 thousand people displaced. Residing primarily in IDP camps, these displaced persons have lost their land and livelihood, putting them at greatest risk if acute food security. In addition, FEWSNet notes that “food insecurity has increased significantly as the impacts of the conflict deepen across most livelihoods. The epicenter of the conflict is the Rift Valley Province, the most important agricultural area of the country [which]...account[s] for close to 50 percent of all cereal produced in the country annually.”⁹⁹ Though this conflict is still nascent and reconciliation looks optimistic, it is easy to see how a rapid-onset emergency has displaced large numbers and hampered the agricultural capacity of Kenya at the same time.

⁹⁵ Alertnet. 2005. How Niger’s food crisis unfolded. Reuters Foundation, <http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/reliefresources/112256407629.htm>.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Barrett, C. 2006. Food Aid in response to acute food insecurity. Background Paper prepared for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations State of Food and Agriculture 2006 report.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ FewNet. 2008. Kenya Food Security Update: February.

Small versus Large Scale

Though seemingly straight forward, the concept of the scale of a food crisis contains numerous nuances. First, it important to note that responses to food crises or disasters are often based less on scale of damage than political will and donor empathy. The 2004 Asian Tsunami offers a unique example, where the scale of the event (approximately 300 thousand deaths, 1.7 million people displaced, and \$10 billion in damages) was surpassed by the response (\$15.5 billion contributed globally).¹⁰⁰ This massive outpouring of support enabled both a timely and comprehensive response across numerous countries by multiple agencies. Secondly, scale (either small or large) should not necessarily be confused for *concentration of need*. Though some crises are localized, such as the recent flooding in Uganda, others, such as the 2002 Ethiopian food crisis,¹⁰¹ are more diffuse.

In addition to crises caused by exogenous shocks such as drought or conflict, the cumulative effects of idiosyncratic shocks have been recently identified as substantial contributors to widespread food crises. Though idiosyncratic shocks can take many forms, the linkage between HIV/Aids and acute food insecurity has been of particular concern due to its large impact on livelihoods and national capacity.¹⁰² The global impact of HIV/Aids is staggering. “In 2005 an estimated 2.8 million people died of AIDS, 380,000 of them children. In the same year, an estimated 2.3 million children remained living with the HIV virus, and an estimated 15 million AIDS orphans face serious threats to their food security, access to healthcare and education, greatly increasing their risk of malnutrition.”¹⁰³

2.3. Innovations in Food Security Analysis

The dearth, until recently, of scientifically validated and practical household food security measures has hampered the assessment of effectiveness in emergency food security interventions. While methods for tracking the delivery of services are relatively straightforward, conventional food security impact indicators, like caloric adequacy, are cost prohibitive or generally not feasible to collect under crisis conditions. Different analytical frameworks have been developed by different agencies—too many to elaborate here. Much of food security analysis has moved beyond just looking at availability or access, is now grounded in a solid understanding of livelihoods, and increasingly takes into the role of markets, and in some cases conflict analysis and climate change. The advancements in food security measurement over the last several years means that agencies participating in emergency food security programming can, and must, increase efforts to assess program impact for purposes of learning and accountability. That said, there are still challenges that need to be tackled to improve the confidence with which such indicators can be used, not just for impact assessment but for a range of purposes including targeting and monitoring shifts in the problem over time.

¹⁰⁰ C. Barret. 2006. Op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁰¹ By the end of 2002, the more that eleven million people (in nine out of ten administrative regions) in Ethiopia were in need of food assistance. Source: FAO/WFP. 2002. Special Report: FAO/WFP crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to Ethiopia. December 30.

¹⁰² C. Barrett. 2005. Op. cit.

¹⁰³ ACF. 2007. Hunger and HIV: From Food Crisis to Integrated Care, citing UNAIDS Global Report on HIV/AIDS, Geneva 2006.

Comparability for Impartiality in Response

A major challenge to food security analysis is the comparability from one location to another. The influential report already referred to above, *According to Need?*¹⁰⁴ highlighted for the humanitarian community how far short it was falling of the demand for impartiality in response to crises. Impartiality in response requires the capacity to make comparisons across very different contexts so as to be able to allocate resources according to real comparisons of need. In this area, some progress has been made. The Integrated Phase Classification tool¹⁰⁵ has developed a “common currency” in food security analysis. The IPC combines a number of indicators into a comparative framework to rank the status of a population in a given geographic area/livelihood zone and compare the status of different groups in crisis, to provide a situation analysis of the severity and causes of a crisis, to map out trends in an early warning analysis, and to link these to a strategic response framework. The net effect has been to systematize situation analysis and make it comparable across different crises. Despite some acknowledged shortcomings, the IPC is now recognized as the best means the food security community now has to address the issue of impartial allocation of resources.¹⁰⁶

Linking Analysis to Decision Making

However, improved analysis by itself has not always improved programming. Instruments like baseline poverty and vulnerability assessments, comprehensive early warning systems, and emergency food security assessments are designed to inform a range of program information needs. These needs include (1) baseline knowledge of the magnitude, type, and geographic dispersion of food insecurity, (2) the sources and nature of risks and the populations vulnerable to them, (3) underlying causes, (4) trend analysis (what, where and how is the problem developing?) and, in the case of a declared emergency, (5) the dimensions of the problem, (6) predictions who is most effected, (7) determination of the most appropriate response.¹⁰⁷

There have been great strides in systematizing the approach to carrying these assessments and to routinizing the type of data that are collected. A substantive contribution to this effort has been made by WFP’s Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment (SENAC) project, which has concentrated its work on (1) accountability and transparency, (2) methods and guidance, (3) pre-crisis information, and (4) assessment capacities.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ James Darcy and Charles-Antoine Hoffman. 2003. *According to Need?* London, ODI.

¹⁰⁵ FAO. 2005. *The Integrated Humanitarian and Food Security Phase Classification Tool*. Nairobi: Food Security Analysis Unit for Somalia.

¹⁰⁶ Mark Lawrence and Nick Maunder. 2007. “A Review of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.” Wahenga Brief No. 12. Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme. Johannesburg: RHVP. The two most frequently voiced shortcomings are that the initial way the phase classifications were described tended to confuse severity and temporal dimensions (a problem currently remedied), and the somewhat thornier problem that the analysis of the IPC tool is only as good as the primary data on which the analysis is built. The IPC was developed in Somalia by the FAO/Food Security Analysis Unit, which has its own information collection and primary analysis capacity. In other chronically vulnerable countries (and particularly conflict situations) the availability of good, timely primary data is more of a constraint.

¹⁰⁷ Daniel Maxwell and Ben Watkins. 2003. *Humanitarian Information Systems and Emergencies in the Greater Horn of Africa: Logical Components and Logical Linkages*. *Disasters* 27 (1): 72–90.

¹⁰⁸ Overseas Development Institute. 2007. *A review of the links between needs assessments and decision-making in response to food crises*. Rome: WFP/Emergency Needs Assessment Service

A review of WFP practice by ODI (which is symptomatic of the larger food security community) examining “Linkages between ENAs and decision-making” concluded that, while assessments are well-used to inform their own programming decisions, they are not as useful for donors or other partners in facilitating their decision-making.¹⁰⁹ In addition, they continue to be narrowly focused on an *a priori* assumption of food aid programming rather than providing a basis on which to inform the broader range of response options (ODI/SENAC 2007). On-going work by WFP undertaken as part of its Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment (SENAC) project has made some progress in broadening the range of response options considered. This issue is not unique to WFP, and as organizations recognize the need to better tailor their response to the context, improving the response analysis will be critical. A challenge is to broaden response analysis beyond the programs’ inception through careful monitoring and re-analysis throughout so that necessary programmatic adjustments can be made. This issue is exemplified by the response analysis required to make decisions about cash versus food programming. The choice requires careful assessment and then ongoing monitoring of markets to determine whether cash injections are having inflationary effects and to adjust the intervention accordingly if they are.

In summary, food security analysis has improved, both in its tools and its approaches, but some problems remain and as noted above, while improved analysis helps, on its own, it will not address the chronic problem of late or inadequate responses, or responses based on something other than the humanitarian imperative.

2.4 Overview of Food Security Interventions

Seeking to deal with underlying, multiple causes of food insecurity in the context of humanitarian action is not new. The ideal of weaving effective relief with sustained developmental outcomes, while knitting crisis-dedicated resources with long-run policy and programs, goes back many decades.¹¹⁰ It is widely understood that saving lives (through health, nutrition and other relief interventions) should be as timely and effective as possible, but also that they be complemented by interventions that seek to save livelihoods (and ideally enhance both lives and livelihoods to levels that exceeded those prior to the crisis). That is, actions undertaken in emergencies must meet current needs, but also try to tackle pre-existing problems. In this sense, humanitarian action includes a wide range of goals, including:

1. Meeting (closing the gap in) minimum current food and non-food consumption needs
2. Stabilizing consumption into the medium term
3. Laying the ground for enhanced future consumption in terms of quality, not only quantity
4. Repairing or replacing the local stock of damaged/lost productive assets
5. Enhancing the productivity of current assets
6. Repairing or enhancing impaired income streams (which may involved enhancing human capital to achieve higher labor productivity)
7. Make diversification of future income streams more feasible
8. Help buffer assets and income from a range of potential future hazards

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. See also, World Food Programme. Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment: Second Progress Report on the Implementation Plan. WFP Executive Board Second Regular Session, Rome: November 2006.

¹¹⁰ N. Jodha. 1975. Famine and famine policies. *Economic and Political Weekly* 10 (41): 1609–23.

This is a large and challenging agenda that requires many kinds of intervention to succeed. The problem is that while “relief actions that strengthen livelihoods”¹¹¹ has become a rallying cry across the humanitarian community, there remains uncertainty about what actions are appropriate, cost-effective and programmatically coherent in relation to all other potential actions. OCHA recently noted that potential donors to humanitarian appeals can be confused by a “lengthy catalogues of undifferentiated projects, with no clear prioritization.”¹¹² For example, the 2008 Flash Appeal for Southern Africa (the Preparedness and Response Plan cost \$89 million), lists activities with titles like “enhancing food and nutrition security” (\$386,403 requested by a UN agency and “early recovery for vulnerable households” (\$55 thousand appealed for by an INGO) within the *Agriculture* sector, while an international inter-governmental body requests \$730 thousand for “livelihoods revitalization for food-affected households” as part of the *Economic Recovery and Infrastructure* sector. Similarly, the 2008 CAP for DRC has projects like “reducing global acute malnutrition to less than 10 percent and severe acute malnutrition to less than 2 percent” under the heading of *Agriculture*, and identical activities listed under the *Food* sector as well as under *Health*. And the Somalia 2008 CAP calls for “integrated nutrition and food security programming” (\$98 thousand requested by a small INGO) as an activity in the lower Juba region classified as a *health* sector intervention, while another, much larger, INGO requests \$4.1 million for a “rural food security program” under the rubric of the *food* sector, and yet another requests \$625 thousand for a “household food security project” under the heading of *agriculture*.

Of course, project titles are mere place-holders for what are often complex, multifaceted activities. In many ways, it is encouraging that there is a growing attention in CAP and Flash Appeals (and beyond) to food security and livelihoods issues, that they are found in multiple sectors (not restricted to “agriculture”), that many more agencies are seeking to engage directly in food security interventions, and that there is increasing innovation apparent in the interventions concerned. For example, activities list in the 1995 CAP for Somalia listed conventional activities such as “provision of agricultural inputs” and “provision of fishing gear to fishermen.” By 2001, Somalia’s CAP still included familiar activities like “provision of cereal seeds and agricultural tools,” and “river embankment rehabilitation”, but there was evidence of novel thinking that broadened the range of activities. As of 2008, the CAP for Somalia includes funding requests for projects focused on “restocking pack camels to poor pastoral families,” “poverty eradication through chicken rearing,” and “strengthening community capacity to cope with future shocks.”

Going beyond Somalia, recent appeals have included activities like “Seed Fairs and Cash for Work for Livelihoods” in Burundi (in 2007), support for “provision of vitamins for livestock in areas affected by floods” in Bolivia, and promotion of “livelihood and food sufficiency” in conflict-affected areas of the Philippines, which involved a program of training in “gender and peace impact assessment, good environmental practices, and participatory data gathering” for 101 volunteers. Outside of CAPs, there are also interventions such the British Red Cross

¹¹¹ GHD (Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative). 2007. *Good Humanitarian Donorship and Disaster Risk Reduction: A Concept Paper*, July. Mimeo.

¹¹² OCHA. 2008. *Consolidated Appeals 2008*. New York.

Society's flat-rate distribution of cash grants to households impacted by the Tsunami,¹¹³ and even the World Bank's "Emergency Program for Poverty Reduction" initiated in Togo, which seeks to contribute to poverty reduction in poor communities by improving social services delivery.¹¹⁴

In other words, there has recently been growing recognition of need for innovation in both relief responses and food security programming in the context of emergencies. However, the innovation and the scale of such responses both continue to be hampered by (1) a lack of dedicated resources, (2) limited interface between humanitarian food security interventions and post-crisis activities, and (3) all too scarce attention to risk reduction through such interventions to protect against future shocks.

Constraints to Food Security Programming in Emergencies

Resources. There has been a strong upward trend during recent years in both the volume and the share of ODA, although total DAC fell by 4.5 percent in 2006 (the latest year for which data are available) to just over \$104 billion—the first fall in ODA real terms in over a decade.¹¹⁵ This has happened despite many commitments to higher and more sustained levels of aid made at numerous high-level political gatherings over the past five years (including the Monterrey, Gleneagles and the Millennium +5 meetings).¹¹⁶ While the decline was to some extent expected, since 2005 had seen unusually large flows due to debt relief operations (for Iraq and Nigeria) as well as humanitarian response to the Asian tsunami, it means that the annual increase in ODA from OECD countries will have to be very large indeed if they are to meet such targets two years from now (12 percent growth in ODA per annum versus the actual 5 percent yearly growth of recent years). This has important implications for the choice of countries and operations.

The Good Humanitarian Donorship concept paper of July 2007 argues that, "we should target the most vulnerable, focusing on vulnerable, high-risk groups...in the most disaster-prone and poorest regions of the world."¹¹⁷ This is not happening in terms of overall ODA. In fact, the share of ODA going to least developed countries (LDCs) in 2006 remained low at only 28 percent of all flows.¹¹⁸ The main beneficiaries of ODA during 2006 were countries with very high geopolitical significance to a few donors (Iraq and Afghanistan), and large stable economies

¹¹³ US\$1,000 per household, based on the assumption that the tsunami affected rich and poor alike. L. Adams and P. Harvey. 2006. *Livelihoods recovery: Learning from cash responses to the tsunami*. Issue Paper 5. Humanitarian Policy Group. London: Overseas Development Institute.

¹¹⁴ The latter project raises questions about the justification for certain activities under the rubric of "emergency" action. Since Togo is in arrears to the World Bank, this kind of grant was the only form of World Bank-sourced funding available to the country. Whether it truly represents an emergency-related activity versus a "quick disbursal" project to a poor country is open to debate. The question is, are donors comfortable with generic poverty alleviation activities being funded through humanitarian resource windows, when humanitarian resources are scarce? (see World Bank. 2007. *Post-Conflict Fund and Licus Trust Fund: Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2007*. Washington, DC)

¹¹⁵ Development Assistance Committee. 2007. *Final ODA Flows in 2006*. Report to the DAC senior level meeting, 11–12 December. Report DCD/DAC/RD (2007)15/RD2. Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

¹¹⁶ These meetings generated agreements to boost ODA by \$50 billion (in real terms) by 2010, including a doubling of ODA flows to Africa.

¹¹⁷ GHD. 2007, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ OECD/DAC. 2006 data.

like Nigeria China Indonesia, India and Vietnam. These seven countries alone accounted for almost one third of global ODA flows (from all donors to all recipients).

It can be argued that “special” relations between certain donors and beneficiaries play a large part in this pattern. For example, the main recipients of ODA from the United States (the single largest donor) were Iraq and Afghanistan; the UK’s principal beneficiaries were Nigeria and India (among the largest of its former colonies and important trade and political partners), and Iraq and Afghanistan.¹¹⁹ The main recipients of the European Commission’s ODA were Turkey, an aspiring entrant to the European Union, and Morocco (a key partner in the Mediterranean sphere). The top recipient of Belgium’s ODA in 2005–06 was a former colonial interest—the Democratic Republic of Congo—just as it had been in 1985–86. In 2005–06, Greece sent most of its ODA to near neighbors (the Balkans and Turkey).

Since the definition of “humanitarian aid” continues to evolve, some categories are contested, such as the amount a donor allocates to caring for and educating refugees in its own country (as much as 25 percent of total humanitarian assistance reported by OECD members in 2004), certain military expenditure spent in the name of “peace keeping,” and debt relief. For example, total ODA increased by 31 percent between 2004 and 2005, but the bulk of that (almost 22 percent) was accounted for by debt relief to just two countries—Nigeria and Iraq. There has recently been a tightening of the definition, but there is more to be done.¹²⁰

Where emergency aid (within ODA) is concerned, humanitarian assistance (HA) has increased substantially in recent years, rising from under US\$5 billion in 1995 (in constant 2005 dollars) to more than \$9 billion in 2005 (the tsunami year).¹²¹ In 2006 (the latest period for which data are available) levels were still high, at around \$8.5 billion.¹²² The growth reflects, i) an increased size of CAP appeals—the average annual CAP in the 2002 to 2007 period was \$4.9 billion, compared with an annual average of \$2.7 billion in the 5 year period before that; and ii) a growing share of ODA allocated to appeal responses—in 1984–85 support for humanitarian work accounted for less than 2 percent of total ODA but by 2005–06 it represented 7.5 percent of a (much larger) pie.

That said, humanitarian aid is similarly dominated by a small number of recipients. In 2004, just three countries/crises accounted for one third of total humanitarian assistance flows (Iraq, Sudan

¹¹⁹ The US remains the single largest national government funder of humanitarian action (33 percent of total in 2006), but the European Union (the EC plus its individual member states) has become the largest overall donor (42 percent of global humanitarian assistance). This has some implications on the kinds of aid available and ultimately on priority recipients, given the US’ reliance on food in-kind and focus on large geopolitically-significant crises, versus the EU’s relatively greater reliance on non-food resources and traditional leaning towards former colonial partners.

¹²⁰ Russia’s recent write-off of US\$12 billion of Iraqi debt will likely factor into the 2008 ODA reporting, but that was done in return for access by Russian companies (including oil giant Lukoil) to Iraqi natural resources. Should that count as ODA or instead as a form of private sector flow?

¹²¹ Only part of global humanitarian assistance is reported through the OECD/DAC process. Some organizations, such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, some NGOs and private donations by the general public are not usually included in these numbers—nor are the resources spent by national governments and affected citizens for the succor of others.

¹²² The 2006 level represents a 70 percent increase over 1995. Source: Development Initiatives (DI) data on global humanitarian assistance, various years.

and Palestine) with six countries taking more than 50 percent of the total (GHA 2006). By 2006, the situation had changed only little. Indeed, four countries have featured in the top ten of recipients of humanitarian aid *every year* since 1995; namely, Sudan, DRC and DPRK. A few other countries also make frequent appearances in that list, including Somalia and Angola. In addition, large, media-worthy events continue to dominate the funding response patterns (like the Bangladesh cyclone Sidr), accounting in 2007 for more than a quarter of the annual total of resources for natural disasters under the CAP. This is despite the fact (or because of the fact?) that only one third of defined needs were met in the five most poorly-funded emergency appeals, compared with more than three-quarters of need funded in the five best-funded emergencies in 2006.¹²³ In other words, while relatively more assistance is flowing to, for example, the African continent (Figure K), it is not necessarily going to countries needing help to pull out of, or protect against, humanitarian crisis, nor are the resources of a kind to make a dent in food insecurity—much more to Nigeria for debt relief than to Niger for drought-proofing agriculture.

Sectoral Allocation of Resources. Even the ODA that does reach to the more vulnerable countries may not be of the “right kind.” Many sectors play a role in securing food security, of course, but it is significant that while total ODA has been increasing over the past decade, ODA allocations to the agriculture sector fell from more than 12 percent of total in 1985–86 to only 3 percent in 2005–06; over the same period ODA allocated to promotion of economic infrastructure also fell from 17 percent to 11 percent.¹²⁴ Similarly, global ODA allocated to food aid (all forms) has fallen from around 11 percent in the mid-1990s to less than 3 percent in 2006. The big “gainers” in this shift in resource allocations has been debt relief, “social and administrative infrastructure,” and other investment areas that have arguably not been directly supportive of food security in poorest countries.

The same is even true for sector allocations within global humanitarian aid. Much is still made of the “bias” towards food aid in responses to CAP appeals, and even food aid agencies would agree that that more balance is needed in donor funding so that food can be appropriately and adequately complemented by critical non-food resources. So far that is not happening. In CAP and Flash Appeals the “food” sector continues to be not only large in absolute terms, but tends to be better funded in terms of met needs. For example, during 2007, donor response to CAPS by sector saw “agriculture” obtain around 42 percent of its requirements compared with 85 percent for food, but also 96 percent for mine action.¹²⁵ But things are changing—mainly due to the price pressure on commodities and fuel. In 2007, food aid represented 34 percent of global humanitarian contributions, down from almost 50 percent in 2000 (OCHA financial tracking service, as of February 8, 2008). Indeed since 2003, the food sector has accounted for less than 40 percent of humanitarian *contributions* tracked by OHCA every year. For the 2008 CAP food as a sector represents 36 percent of the total appeal. In other words, there is likely to be far less

¹²³ This led to wide discrepancies in resources available per capita, ranging from less than \$20 per capita in Niger to more than \$300 per capita in Sudan and the tsunami response. DI. 2006. Op. cit.

¹²⁴ OECD/DAC. 2008. Table 18.

¹²⁵ Taking the response to all Flash Appeals in 2007, agriculture had 89 percent of fund requests met (OCHA 2008. Op. cit.)

food aid available in 2008, and this continues a downward trend on this sector that started several years ago.¹²⁶

What is taking the place of food aid? While the volume of CAP funding to agriculture increased from \$100 million in 2001 to \$225 million in 2006, agriculture sector has only grown to represent 3 percent of donor CAP commitments as of 2007, the same as “economic recovery and infrastructure.”¹²⁷ The sectors gaining market share in CAP funding are “not yet specified” and “multi-sector” activities, which together account for 50 percent of the global humanitarian appeal of 2008. The extent to which projects under these sectors are supportive of the transition from humanitarian relief to developmental actions remains unclear—but without a clearer sector—or program-transition strategy there is a risk that relief agents will not have the partners or resources to effectively promote food security during and after crises.

Passing the Baton

The DAC’s formal definition of “humanitarian assistance” (as it currently stands) relates to action in assistance, reconstruction or rehabilitation, “during and in the aftermath of an emergency.” (GHA 2007, 9) But, how long is the length of an “aftermath”? This is not a semantic issue since we are concerned with chronic emergencies when humanitarian need can be largely invisible for long periods of time, when one emergency merges into the next with only minimal changes in conditions, or when acute humanitarian problems persist long after the formal end of emergency operations but just below defined thresholds that would allow for a new appeal.

In 2006, OCHA argued that Somalia’s CAP needed to be refocused towards a) ensuring complementarity among humanitarian activities, but also b) seeking to promote “continuity with development activities.”¹²⁸ This is often easier said than done. WFP’s draft Strategic Plan for 2008–2011 talks of promoting “relief plus”—interventions that go beyond saving and securing lives towards a sustainable recovery, because “making the first steps towards recovery and development is too urgent a task to wait for peace.” Yet WFP also identifies a serious constraint in that in such circumstances “traditional development partners are not always present.” This makes “handing the baton” of responsibility, and therefore, accountability difficult and confusing. Cuny argued some years ago that the availability of resources affects the period of involvement in any location once a crisis has passed: “agencies with limited resources normally work only in the immediate post-disaster period. Agencies with access to more funds will become involved in reconstruction.”¹²⁹ A challenge for many agencies is whether to specialize (in relief “or” development), expand mandates (to cover all forms of activity and timing, and hence broaden the skills base of personnel), or invest in more seamless partnerships based on locally-defined comparative advantage (but potentially giving up agency visibility and credit, and therefore resources).

¹²⁶ As von Braun put it, food aid flows “have reached their lowest level since 1973. In 2006, food aid was 40 percent lower than in 2000.” J. von Braun. 2007. *The World Food Situation: New Driving Forces and Required Actions*. Food Policy Report. Washington, DC: IFPRI.

¹²⁷ OCHA *Financial Tracking Service*, accessed February 29, 2008 (http://ocha.unog.ch/fts2/by_sector.asp)

¹²⁸ OCHA. 2006. *OCHA in 2006: Activities and extra-Budgetary Funding Requirements*. New York: UN.

¹²⁹ F. Cuny. 1994. *Disasters and Development*. Dallas, Texas: Intertect/OXFAM America.

Where there is no strength in agency coverage, skills or resources supporting aftermath activities there are three major challenges: the first is that relief agencies disappear, which often leads to countries dropping off the CAP radar. While a country like Burundi has transitioned out of the CAP in 2008, arguably due to efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission and relatively high donor responses to previous CAPs, that country currently carries the same “risk of future instability” as Lebanon and Chad.¹³⁰ Thus, although OCHA has argued that any continued humanitarian need in such cases, “can be handled as part of reconstruction and development planning”¹³¹, it is still widely believed not only that humanitarian needs do not always disappear at the end of a crisis, but that, “the management, administrative and accounting lines drawn between “humanitarian need” and “developmental need” tend to be pretty rigid.”¹³² There are few agencies or programs tailored to problems (and places) where the persistent nature of crises has more in common with chronic destitution than sudden-onset disasters. Tackling vulnerability in remote parts of Niger, Guatemala or Nepal requires attention to common, complex measures to simultaneously address factors precipitating crises and those that trap households in deep poverty. The lack of actors skilled in such domains means that many projects proposed in CAPs are in fact standard fare—development projects proposed for places where economic rates of return would rule them out of consideration for conventional development grants or loans; or relief interventions dressed up as “building community capacity to resist future shocks” through a few training exercises on human rights. The effectiveness of either model remains to be appropriately assessed.

The second major challenge to the process of transition (linked to the first) is the lack of analytical coherence in choice among viable options. We have already moved in the “cash versus food” debate to a point where the value and limitations of food assistance are increasingly understood, and complementarity of actions in both domains is sought.¹³³ Where only limited progress has been made is in defining “need” in actionable terms beyond the now (albeit only recently) standardized norms for humanitarian action (relating to mortality, morbidity and malnutrition). Things done in the name of livelihoods and food security “in the context of emergencies” have encompassed training girls to sew, training boat-builders in newer construction techniques, providing micro-loans, delivering vaccines for livestock and handing out cash. But as Adams and Harvey point out, the diversity of people’s livelihoods makes it difficult to decide who should be targeted with what, and how much they should be given, for how long.¹³⁴ Old questions that were posed about food aid now have to be asked about all other resource options: How is the need best defined? Is the resource on offer the optimal resource to meet defined need? What displacement effects will this intervention have on other livelihood coping options? What is the measurable impact of the final choice of resource and intervention?

¹³⁰ According to Hewitt et al. (2008)’s *Peace and Conflict Instability Ledger*, which ranks nations on multiple criteria that combine into a “risk score.” Op. cit.

¹³¹ OCHA. 2008 CAP. Op. cit.

¹³² DI 2006. GHA Op. cit., p. 28.

¹³³ This does not mean that there are no more issues to resolve, merely that work on analytical frameworks, market analysis, decision-tree models, etc., increasingly allow for more nuanced and tailored responses to “food” crises. See Barrett, C. 2006. *Food Aid as Part of a Coherent Strategy to Advance Food Security Objectives*. ESA Working Paper No. 06-09. Agricultural Development Economics Division. FAO. (www.fao.org/es/esa)

¹³⁴ Adams and Harvey. 2006. Op. cit.

The third challenge is that “rural livelihoods” are themselves changing rapidly, meaning that new opportunities as well as risks are emerging and conventional interventions need to be carefully set in a more strategic vision of directions in food security. In recent years the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other major donor institutions have increasingly recommended that governments in many vulnerable countries (including Niger, the DRC and Angola) should promote rural income diversification out of agriculture, and focus agricultural investment on enhanced productivity through irrigation and/or emphasis on crops for export.¹³⁵ In India the IMF recently stated that “there is a need, particularly in the poorly performing states, to diversify the economic production base *away from agriculture* [emphasis added].”¹³⁶

A Focus on Agriculture? Government and Inter-governmental Action

A result of stagnant or declining support to agriculture in target countries is reduced revenue from that sector, which fuels the view that resources should be focused elsewhere, which exposes those who depend on rural livelihoods to further erosion of income. Some countries have sought to reverse the decline and put more resources into agriculture; in Kenya’s case allocating 3.5 percent of government investment in 2008–09 versus only 3 percent in 2004–05, while Rwanda plans to move from 4 percent to 7 percent.¹³⁷ But most such increases go to irrigation and export crop promotion rather than smallholder agriculture or rural processing and other service livelihood promotion.

However, limited attention to smallholder agriculture is resulting in declining farm size across Africa at a time when more people are reliant on those farms. Cultivated area per person has fallen from 0.45 hectares (ha) in Ethiopia during the 1970s to 0.25 ha in the 1990s; in Mozambique from 0.37 ha to 0.25 ha over the same period, and from 1.07 ha to 0.78 ha in Zambia.¹³⁸ As a result, Jayne suggests, “farm sizes are too small for grain-based productivity growth to lift most rural households out of poverty. Hence, diversification into higher-return activities will be crucial.”¹³⁹ The caveat, of course, is that where smallholders cannot secure their minimum consumption and other needs from off the farm, they tend to resort to low-productivity subsistence agriculture or migrate. The challenge is meeting food needs of the farm based poor in the short-term while finding opportunities for rural income growth and diversification that make economic sense in risky, often remote, rural environments. What is best practice in this regard, and what empirical evidence supports one choice over another? Can activities be better prepared through contingency planning, and can analysis of likely options be carried out more swiftly in the needs assessment process?

¹³⁵ For example, see IMF. 2007. *Angola: Selected Issues and Statistical Appendix*. IMF Country Report No. 07/355. Washington, DC. 2007. *Niger: IMF Executive Board Concludes 2006 Article IV Consultation with Niger*. Public Information Notice No. 07/01, Democratic Republic of Congo. 2006. *Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy Paper*. Kinshasa, DRC. <http://www.internationalmonetaryfund.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2007/cr07330.pdf>

¹³⁶ C. Purfield. 2006. Mind the gap: is growth leaving some Indian states behind? *IMF Survey* 35 (12): 188–9.

¹³⁷ Kenya (Republic of Kenya). 2006. *Investment Programme for the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation, 2003–2007*. Ministry of Planning and National Development, Nairobi. Republic of Rwanda. 2007. *Long-term funding for agricultural growth, poverty reduction and food security*. Kigali.

¹³⁸ FAOSTAT data for various years.

¹³⁹ T. Jayne. 2007. Underappreciated Facts about African Agriculture. Presentation at African Studies Center, Michigan State University, September 13.

It can probably be safely suggested that while the linkages from the humanitarian sector to longer-term interventions are not as well developed as they might be (see Section 3), linkages the other way around are even less well developed. Several inter-governmental programs in Africa focus almost exclusively on agriculture. The US “Presidential Initiative to End Hunger in Africa” (IEHA) works in conjunction with the Africa Union’s Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). Both seek to reduce food insecurity through improving production, marketing, rural infrastructure and technology development. However, both tend to be focused on areas of relatively higher potential, and while both are addressed as the underlying causes of food insecurity, neither attempts any explicit linkages with humanitarian response. IEHA is directed mainly at non-crisis countries.¹⁴⁰

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is increasingly supporting the development of agricultural technology to address problems of hunger and food insecurity. Among other initiatives, the Gates Foundation is supporting “Harvest Plus,” which is focusing exclusively on breeding and bio-technology. Along with the Ford Foundation and other donors, the Gates Foundation is supporting the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is mainly directed at smallholder farmers—a critical link but not necessarily the most vulnerable population. Like inter-governmental initiatives, AGRA has no direct links with humanitarian action on food insecurity.¹⁴¹

The World Bank is taking a somewhat broader approach, still emphasizing agriculture as the key to addressing food insecurity, but embracing trade reform and livelihood diversification as part of the strategy, and dealing with other thorny issues such as bio-fuel production. This is laid out in the most recent World Development Report.¹⁴² Nevertheless, even this approach does not emphasize linkages with direct action to address food insecurity in crisis situations.

While the intent of foundations to improve technology is clear, the capacity of states to manage processes is less clear, and highly uneven. Coordinating mechanisms are in place in some countries, and clear governmental leadership is present in some countries. Elsewhere, donors and agencies call the shots. But it is very difficult to rate or compare state capacity. UNICEF is in the process of assessing disaster preparedness capacity across states, but such efforts are rare.

As Choularton recently argued, it is not useful to complain that most resources go to food aid when food aid actors are “more active in determining contingency plans, operational plans and appeals responses than non-food actors,” with the result that the latter stay relatively underfunded.¹⁴³ Instead, a widely agreed strategy is needed for defining what can and should be appropriately done in the name of food security under various contexts, with clearer roles for multiple actors identified in the short and long run. This is needed given the recent proliferation in the number of new actors defining roles for themselves in the large tent that is “food security.”

¹⁴⁰ African Union/NEPAD. 2006. *Implementing the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and Restoring Food Security in Africa*. “The Roadmap.” Midrand, South Africa: NEPAD. See also USAID. 2005. *Ending Hunger in Africa: Global Partnerships in Agriculture*. Washington: USAID.

¹⁴¹ HarvestPlus. 2007. Research and Implementation Plan. Washington DC: IFPRI. See AGRA at: <http://www.agra-alliance.org/>

¹⁴² World Bank. 2008. *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development*. Washington: IBRD.

¹⁴³ R. Choularton. 2007. *Contingency planning and humanitarian action: A review of practice*. Humanitarian Practice Network, Paper No. 59. London: Overseas Development Institute.

2.5. Food Security Architecture

According to one recent review of global humanitarian action, “current trends and patterns suggest the emergence of a new humanitarian architecture.”¹⁴⁴ There are potentials and challenges in the arrival of new players and new kinds of resources. The Asian tsunami generated involvement of a larger than usual range of donors and implementers, some of whom have appeared to be willing to continue their engagement in humanitarian activity. Of the ninety-nine government donors responding to the tsunami, thirteen were “first-time” donors, and by 2008, the CAP process was engaging 188 separate agencies in the process.¹⁴⁵

Part of the rising volume of ODA flowing to humanitarian action is explained by the rise in traditional donors like Greece, Luxembourg, Ireland, and New Zealand that have become important HA donors when a decade before they were not. But another part relates to non-traditional donors. It has been estimated that of the almost doubling of total humanitarian aid between 2001 and 2005, the largest share of the increase came from private sector flows.¹⁴⁶ Development Initiatives estimate that the share of private sector flows within global humanitarian assistance has grown from 14 percent in 2001 to 35 percent in 2005. Such a large share is unlikely to continue, but many analysts consider that levels will remain higher than before the tsunami.¹⁴⁷ Several multilateral agencies, like WFP and UNICEF, have been developing longer-term relations with private companies and corporations based on staff sharing, asset loaning in crisis, standby agreements and funding. Some companies have taken it upon themselves to respond to crises by rapidly shifting product lines, offering products as in-kind resources, or working through staff to reach out to local communities in which their industries are based.

On the other hand, some agencies not formerly engaged in humanitarian work in a major way have moved into the arena, and new forms of partnership and harmonization are being tried out with a view to securing more effective combined action. For example, contributions to FAO’s emergency programming increased from \$44 million in 1994–95 to roughly \$370 million in 2005–06.¹⁴⁸ Such a large increase reflects recognition of FAO’s important roles in crisis prevention (through early warning and rapid containment of threats such as locusts and avian flu), as well as in recovery of agricultural economies and rural livelihoods.¹⁴⁹ But there are now many more UN and other intergovernmental players seeking to work in the domain of livelihoods and food security. For instance UNDP, as IASC Cluster lead agency on “early recovery,” engages more extensively than before in community-level disaster-related activities, including supporting early warning systems; carrying out disaster impact assessments (as in

¹⁴⁴ Development Initiatives. 2006. *Global Humanitarian Assistance 2006*. Evercreech, UK.

¹⁴⁵ It should be pointed out that many such “first timers” were ministries of defense, offering capital assets and military personnel in the realm of logistics support, although some did also offer medical expertise and large-scale distribution of survival rations and meals-ready-to-eat.

¹⁴⁶ DI 2006, Op. cit., p. 10. Before the Tsunami, OCHA had been arguing that, “humanitarian financing is...distorted by the limited number of donors. Just 10 countries typically provide over 90 per cent of all official humanitarian aid. OECD members and the world’s top 500 corporations, for example, could do more to finance vital humanitarian aid.” It appears that their desire has at least in part been met.

¹⁴⁷ A. Thomas and L. Fritz. 2006. Disaster Relief, Inc. *Harvard Business Review* 11: 1–9.

¹⁴⁸ This is excluding contributions under the Iraq Oil-for Food programme. As a result, emergency work currently constitutes more than 40 percent of FAO’s field programme.

¹⁴⁹ F. Mousseau. 2007. *Towards a new food security architecture?* Draft Report to Oxfam GB. Mimeo.

Aceh when UNDP jointly with the World Bank took the lead on the damage and recovery needs assessment), and designing rehabilitation programs—activities which some donors and analysts have argued should be left to technical agencies rather than taken on by a coordinating institution.¹⁵⁰

Similarly, the World Bank has increased its focus on supporting low- and middle-income countries affected by either conflict or continuing fragility of state structures, recognizing that such country settings require a strategic approach that is “not business as usual”. According to its recent thinking, “fragile states are not always conflict-affected, and conflict-affected countries are not necessarily hampered by fragile institutions—but there are important commonalities, as many fragile states are affected by conflict and many conflict-affected countries are plagued by weak institutions and low capacity.”¹⁵¹ Part of the response has been raising support for work of the post-Conflict Fund (PCF), which supports planning, piloting and analysis of activities through partner organizations, with an emphasis is on speed and flexibility. Rapidly disbursed grants are focused on the restoration of the lives and livelihood of war-affected population, with a premium placed on partnerships with other donors and executing agencies and leveraging resources through a variety of funding arrangements. Since 1997, the PCF has disbursed a total amount of \$75 million through this channel.

However, UN and Bretton Woods institutions are not the only players these days. According to some analysts, “the international system for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance is a fragmented one. The lack of coordination between humanitarian response and long-term development assistance is weak, with early recovery and transition only slowly gaining momentum.”¹⁵² According to Vaux, “the system as a whole is not functioning effectively in terms of its basic purpose.”¹⁵³ Indeed, a lack of effective leadership and collaboration among so-called food agencies and their collaborating financial institutions has been posited as leaving a power vacuum that “will be filled by multinational agribusiness and the new philanthro-capitalists.”¹⁵⁴

To some extent this is already happening. New “non-governmental” bodies are taking up much of this space, such as the Gates Foundation (which is setting new agendas backed up by very large resources), renewed attention to agriculture by older foundations like Rockefeller and Ford; new commitments to food security are taking shape in the context of regional organizations, such

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, UNDP. 2005. *A Global Review: UNDP Support to Institutional and Legislative Systems for Disaster Risk Management*. New York and Geneva.

¹⁵¹ World Bank. 2007. *Toward A New Framework For Rapid Bank Response To Crises And Emergencies*. Operations Policy and Country Services. March. Washington, DC, Mimeo. The Bank’s role in such contexts is, however, contested—at least where it leads to confused (if not competing) goals. Suhrke and Buckmaster, for instance, argue that the primary purpose of humanitarian aid in an immediate post-crisis period “is not—and arguably should not be—to promote economic growth.” A. Suhrke and J. Buckmaster. 2007. *Post-war Aid: Patterns and Purposes*. In, D. Eade and T. Vaux (eds.) *Development and Humanitarianism*. Bloomfield, CT; Kumarian Press, pp. 51–64.

¹⁵² Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative. 2007. *Good Humanitarian Donorship and Disaster Risk Reduction: A Concept Paper*, July 2007. Mimeo; also GHD. 2007. *Strengthening needs-based allocation: next steps for GHD donors*. Concept note, revised July 31, 2007. Mimeo.

¹⁵³ T. Vaux. 2007. *Humanitarian Trends and Dilemmas*. In, D. Eade and T. Vaux (eds.) *Development and Humanitarianism*. Bloomfield, CT; Kumarian Press, pp. 1–26.

¹⁵⁴ ETC Group. 2008. *Food’s Failed Estates. Draft Communiqué*. Issue No. 97. Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration. London.

as ASEAN and Africa's NEPAD, the Millennium Villages initiative activities, etc. mentioned earlier. Most such activities/initiatives/institutions are directly engaged with the humanitarian endeavor, but most are at least indirectly and all represent new potential partners with whom the relief community will have to work if enhanced effectiveness is to be achieved. Building these linkages will be a challenge.

Coordination, Effectiveness, and Accountability

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, endorsed in 2005 by over 100 countries and donor organizations recognized “the imperative of managing aid more rationally.”¹⁵⁵ The five principles of the Declaration include: (1) enhanced ownership (actions driven by national development priorities), (2) better alignment of donor funding to national strategies, (3) harmonization of activities in ways that “minimize the cost of delivering aid,” (4) managing for results, and (5) mutual accountability. The focus of that declaration was the development arena, but such principles apply to humanitarian action, albeit in slightly adapted form, given that there often is no functioning national government with which to forge “ownership” and aid is usually delivered not through national accounts but close to the ground via non-governmental entities. As a result, the principles of *humanitarian* reform—also launched in 2005—provide a complementary focus on, (1) partnership (which goes beyond government-to-government interaction, (2) accountability (to those affected, not merely to donors of resources), and (3) predictability (which seeks to enhance attention to roles and responsibility).

The remaining goals of the Paris Declaration and of Humanitarian Reform relate to managing for results, and accountability for those results. Of course, the Paris Declaration was not promoting managing for results in a vacuum. Their recommendations focus on reducing the transaction costs of delivering and managing aid of all kinds, and on developing “credible monitoring mechanisms” (OECD 2007, 13), both with a view to enhanced accountability—not only by and for donors, but also for and by national governments and beneficiary communities. Frederick Cuny called for this in the 1990s, arguing that “unless mechanisms are developed to hold interveners accountable to the victims, post-disaster programs will continue to have only limited and mostly negative impact.”¹⁵⁶

It is not surprising, then, that many recent critiques of humanitarian action argue for more attention to be paid to documenting impact.¹⁵⁷ The OECD argues that managing for results requires countries and donors alike to, “use performance assessment frameworks and most cost-effective results-oriented report.”¹⁵⁸ OCHA calls for “new levels of accountability and responsibility throughout the system.”¹⁵⁹ Steps have already been taken to better define the measures, and techniques for measuring, impact in the context of humanitarian action (the seven criteria originally developed for evaluation of complex emergencies being: (1) relevance/

¹⁵⁵ OECD. 2007. Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration: Overview of Results. Paris: OECD, p. 9.

¹⁵⁶ Cuny 1994. Op. Cit., p. 129.

¹⁵⁷ B. Willets-King. 2007. Allocating humanitarian funding according to need: towards analytical frameworks for donors. Discussion Paper for workshop on resource allocation frameworks for humanitarian assistance, Brussels, March 19–20, 2007.

¹⁵⁸ OECD. 2007. Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration: Overview of Results. Paris: OECD, p. 11.

¹⁵⁹ OCHA. 2006. Op. cit., p. 124.

appropriateness of the response, (2) connectedness, (3) coherence, (4) coverage, (5) efficiency, (6) effectiveness, and (7) impact.¹⁶⁰

Yet, the international community still does not have a widely agreed, easily communicated, empirically measurable metric for “humanitarian need” that would allow for rapid assessment of the appropriate response, allow for prioritization among competing crises/resources, guide evidence-based programming, and facilitate objective measures of impact. It has been argued that, “without a consistent common denominator of need which can be applied across all emergency situations, it is very difficult to say whether needs are being met, or whether humanitarian assistance is either equitable or adequate...the fact is that measuring the response to CAP appeals remains the only way of assessing whether needs have been met on a comparable basis between emergencies.”¹⁶¹

This is a problem when dealing “just” with the life-saving aspects of humanitarian response. It becomes more complex when dealing with the food security and livelihoods aspects of “need” and measurable impact. Progress has certainly been made recently with WFP’s SENAC project, the continued evolution of the Integrated Phase Classification (first applied to Somalia but now being elaborated in several other countries), the GDAC early warning work, the conflict barometer of Uppsala University, the Risk Assessment ranking work at the University of Maryland, and so on. Additionally, some donors like ECHO’s Global Needs Assessment methodology (GNA) and Canadian CIDA’s approach to calibrating its global response (which has several features in common with the IPC in that it considers a broad range of variables).¹⁶² Nevertheless, as Venton puts it, evidence of costs and benefits “is limited and very location- and hazard-specific.”¹⁶³

Several domains of “architecture” require urgent attention. The first is the issue just discussed—measurable results and accountability. Evidence-based programming, and monitoring as well as evaluation of impact are both a *sine qua non* of humanitarian relief.¹⁶⁴ Documenting effectiveness of actions taken, including impacts (outcomes among beneficiaries rather than inputs provided) is a priority. This clearly implies dedication of more resources to implement effective evaluations in emergency contexts, as well as continued methodological development on definitions of need, and training and capacity building for effective evaluation. It also

¹⁶⁰ OECD/DAC. 1998. *Review of the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance*. Paris; ODI. 2006. *Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC criteria: An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies*. London.

¹⁶¹ DI. 2006, Op. cit., p. 29

¹⁶² B. Willets-King. 2007. Allocating humanitarian funding according to need: towards analytical frameworks for donors. Discussion paper for workshop on resource allocation in humanitarian assistance, Brussels, March 19–20.

¹⁶³ C. Venton. 2007. Justifying the cost of disaster risk reduction: a summary of cost-benefit analysis. *Humanitarian Exchange* 38: 22–3.

¹⁶⁴ The UN High Level Panel report calls for “periodic assessment and review of the performance of UN Agencies and NGOs involved in humanitarian assistance,” and well as for efforts to increase accountability (p. 16). Each requires clear evidence of effectiveness. UN. 2006. *Delivering as One: Report of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel*. New York.

involves a commitment to greater learning—and as noted above, the track record on institutional learning is not very good.¹⁶⁵

The second is the poorly coordinated response between humanitarian action undertaken to protect food security in the short term (whether in the classic form of actual provisioning, or other means of protecting assets, production, or marketing), and longer-term efforts to address underlying causes of food insecurity. Tensions arise between different agencies—or even within the same agency if it has multiple mandates, over linkages and responsibilities. But more classically, different agencies tend to act in isolation from each other, according to their mandates and capacities. Where national governments have the capacity to coordinate these efforts, decision making structures at national, levels can bring different stakeholders together to reach consensus on these issues.¹⁶⁶ These require reasonable political stability and the capacity of the host state to actually manage these processes. But even among external agencies, there is tension over who should intervene under what kinds of circumstances, with what interventions, for how long, and with what kind of exit/transition strategy? National government-led forums are probably the best way to sort these questions out, but many governments do not have the capacity. The cluster system (see next section) is intended to help in emergencies, but not necessarily in the longer term.

The third challenge is the uncertainty about where and how decisions get made, what policies and approaches are needed, and who is responsible for doing what? Many “lessons learned” over the course of the years have been formulated but not necessarily acted on, and outside the boundaries of individual organizations, there is not clear mandate of anyone to ensure institutional learning. As already noted, recent critiques of the humanitarian sector fault agencies for being “learning challenged,” but don’t give practical advice on what to do about it.¹⁶⁷ This is a challenge both to individual agencies and to the collective effort of agencies—in other words both a learning and a coordination challenge.

2.6. Change and Reform Processes

Given the nature and the severity of many of the problems outlined, a number of change or reform processes have been put in place in recent years—some of these are specifically related to food security, but most of these processes are general, and do not prioritize one sector or humanitarian outcome over another—and at least one that seems to de-prioritize food security as a cross cutting theme. These processes include UN reform, donor reforms, and agency reforms. This section briefly reviews these to address the question of whether such reform processes are leading to greater effectiveness of the system.

UN Reform Processes

UN reform processes stand on three legs: improved internal coherence, improved external coordination, and more rationalized and centralized funding. The Humanitarian Response Review in 2005 noted some progress towards improved accountability, but with some

¹⁶⁵ Weiss and Hoffman, 2007. Op. cit.

¹⁶⁶ The “New Coalition for Food Security” in Ethiopia, or the Kenya Food Security Steering Group, are examples of multi-party coordination groups. These are far from perfect, but have begun to address these issues.

¹⁶⁷ Weiss and Hoffman 2007. Op. cit.

contradictory imperatives; some improvement on the quality and timeliness of response, but still sometimes a “silo” approach implying ineffective integration, and inadequate measurement of results.¹⁶⁸ Coordination was noted as improving, but lacking a global vision and remaining very personality dependent. In general, the report found poor preparedness and HR capacity, and limited surge capacity. While there was increased awareness of protection issues, there remained poor levels of capacity in protection. And the issue of internally displaced people remained unresolved.

Unified Missions: “Delivering as One.” The first leg of UN reform is about improving internal coherence. The report of the UN High-Level Panel, “Delivering as One,” made the case for merging UN operations in human rights, economic development, security and environmental elements into a more unified approach, at the headquarter level, but especially at the country level, with one leader, one office and one budget.¹⁶⁹ Couched in the language of the Millennium Development Goals, the report calls for greater consolidation of activities, the elimination of duplication, multi-year centralized funding, greater attention to gender equity and environmental concerns, and more focus on results. Regarding humanitarian action, the report calls for better coordination through the cluster system, more investment in risk reduction and early warning, and greater emphasis on protection. The report frames the UN mission more in economic development terms than in either political or humanitarian terms, with a “sustainable development board” to oversee UN operations, and a UN Development Coordinator to lead in-country operations on a multi-year funding mechanism with a common evaluation system. The countries in which the approach was to be piloted, for the most part were facing neither major humanitarian emergencies nor intractable food insecurity—although several of them face some challenges in these areas.¹⁷⁰ Humanitarian assistance was to follow the cluster approach, with some of the initial response needs to be funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund. In theory, at least under some circumstances, this kind of approach should enable stronger programmatic linkages between humanitarian response and longer-term efforts to address food insecurity. At the same time, however, it was widely feared to have paid inadequate attention to the problem of subsuming humanitarian action under a unified agenda, hence subordinating the humanitarian mission of the UN to political or economic objectives, and thus perhaps marginalizing the humanitarian imperative—particularly in complex emergency situations where the UN/host country government partnership would be strained anyway. So far a pilot has been implemented in eight countries, most of which are not in the midst of a humanitarian emergency, so it is too soon to judge, but Maurer notes for example, that “...it is not clear how safeguards such as the principle of *non-refoulement* can continue to be guaranteed given that the process is government...driven.”¹⁷¹

The Cluster System. The second leg of UN reform has been the “cluster approach” to improving system-wide effectiveness, coordination and accountability. The idea behind the cluster approach

¹⁶⁸ United Nations. 2005. *Humanitarian Response Review*. Study commissioned by the UN Emergency Response Coordinator and Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs. New York, UN.

¹⁶⁹ United Nations. 2006. *Delivering as One*. Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment

¹⁷⁰ The pilot countries include Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uruguay, and Vietnam.

¹⁷¹ Tim Maurer. 2007. “Unity in Diversity—the One UN, UNHCR and Rwanda.” *Forced Migration Review* 29 (December): 10–11. See other articles in the same volume for further early assessment of UN reforms.

is to bring some coherence to cross-cutting programmatic areas in which there are a number of actors. These original areas included logistics; emergency telecommunications; emergency shelter; health; nutrition; water, sanitation, and hygiene; early recovery; camp coordination and camp management; and protection. Agriculture and education were subsequently added. There is no cluster for either food security or livelihoods more broadly.

Although initiated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Emergency Response in 2005, to date the cluster approach has only been piloted in a limited number of countries and emergencies, but these include a mix of chronic and short-term emergencies, and a mix of conflict situations and climatic, tectonic or environmentally triggered emergencies. There is to date one substantive evaluation of the cluster approach.¹⁷² It notes that the approach has improved efforts to identify and address gaps in the response system and has helped to foster stronger leadership, but it is too soon to make any assessment of improved accountability. Engagement of host country governments has been mixed, and the performance of individual clusters has been variable. Other, less formal early assessments of the cluster approach indicate some improvements in information systems and standards, but note that it is too soon to assess impact which in any case is still dependent on the leadership of the humanitarian coordinator.¹⁷³

Humanitarian Benchmarking. A related effort in improving response and accountability is the humanitarian benchmarking initiative, intended to develop an industry-wide consensus on mortality and malnutrition indicators to inform both the prioritization of response and the tracking of the impact of response. This initiative is independent of the cluster system led by a diverse group of agencies and the IASC.

UN Humanitarian Funding Mechanisms. The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was founded in 1991 to expedite emergency response by making at least a limited amount of funding available quickly (i.e., outside an appeals process). The CERF was increased to \$500M in 2005, but this is still only a tiny portion of total humanitarian funding. The CERF has become a well-received rapid-disbursement option for response to unforeseen disasters (a complement to the CAP process). In 2007 alone it channeled \$232 million to CAP and Flash appeals. The CERF is seen as bolstering the functions UN country teams, which is one of the main goals of UN reform more broadly. NGOs complain that funding for them through the CERF is still quite limited. So, while serving a useful and somewhat expanded role, the CERF is still a limited tool, both in scope and in terms of who can actually access funding through it.

The Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) was designed to support a more coherent strategic humanitarian response effort, and was piloted in two chronic-emergency countries in 2006—Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. By strengthening the resource allocation function of UN Humanitarian Coordinators, it improved the planning, prioritization and coordination of response, and provided better incentive to humanitarian actors for coordination. The CHF was better able to link with cluster initiatives, depending on the lead in-country. Like the CERF, NGOs reported that that the CHF is too UN-focused. While better coordination resulted, the timeliness of disbursement did not improve and the goal of predictable funding was not

¹⁷² Abby Stoddard, Adele Harmer, Katherine Haver, Dirk Salomons, and Victoria Wheeler. 2007. “Cluster Approach Evaluation Report.” OCHA Report, 21 November. New York: OCHA (mimeo).

¹⁷³ *Forced Migration Review* 29 (December). See various articles for an informal early assessment of UN reforms.

significantly enhanced. So while the CHF represents a “significant step forward,” there are many improvements still to be made.¹⁷⁴

The Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) remains as the major UN funding mechanism, including for some (but not all) of the countries implementing the cluster system. Fewer countries are, however, covered by the CAP process. All three of these UN-based funding mechanisms account for less than 10 percent of official humanitarian funding—it is hard to say proportion of total funding related to food security. The question of funding must be addressed more broadly than just in UN reforms.

Donor Reform Processes

Official funding for humanitarian assistance across the boards nearly doubled from about \$10B in 2000 to over \$18 billion in 2005 (not including the unprecedented additional \$5.5 billion in 2005 for the tsunami response alone).¹⁷⁵ However, some of the processes of reform have slowed this rate of growth. There is substantial growth in funding outside official (OECD-DAC) channels (private contributions to NGOs, funds channeled through military forces rather than aid agencies, non-DAC donors, and diaspora remittances all add to the total).

While the system clearly does not function on the basis of needs, there is still no good way to measure the impartiality of the system. That needs to be considered at both the global level and at country level. The tracking of overall funding remains insufficient—non-DAC contributions are not systematically tracked. The level of funding is still quite volatile, and not based on good predictions. It is not timely enough or flexible enough to permit response to rapidly changing conditions on the ground¹⁷⁶

The Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative. The Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative (GHD) was begun in 2003 with the objectives of improving donors ability to save lives and alleviate suffering; to provide assistance according to need: to provide adequate, predictable, flexible funding; and to improve donor accountability and learning. A recent evaluation of the GHD initiative notes that for the potential of GHD to be realized, donors need to improve their commitment to these ideals. Specifically, better tracking is required of the responsibilities and accountability of donors; a “collective performance framework” is needed that covers the principles that have been agreed and the improvements that are being sought. At the same time, agencies need to engage more with the GHD initiative to enhance implementation and hold donor accountable to the goals embraced.¹⁷⁷ Two areas of improvement were noted required in a recent evaluation: needs-based allocation of resources and strengthening the evidence base for determining needs-based decision making. A recent review of the EU’s performance under the

¹⁷⁴ Abby Stoddard, Dirk Salomons, Katherine Haver and Adele Harmer. 2006. “Common Funds for Humanitarian Action in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo: Monitoring and Evaluation Study.” New York: New York University and Humanitarian Policy Group.

¹⁷⁵ This section draws from a paper by Peter Walker and Kevin Pepper, 2007. “Follow the Money: A Review and Analysis of the State of Humanitarian Funding.” Feinstein International Center Briefing Paper. Medford: Tufts University. The paper was prepared for the meeting of the Good Humanitarian Donorship and IASC meeting, July 20, in Geneva.

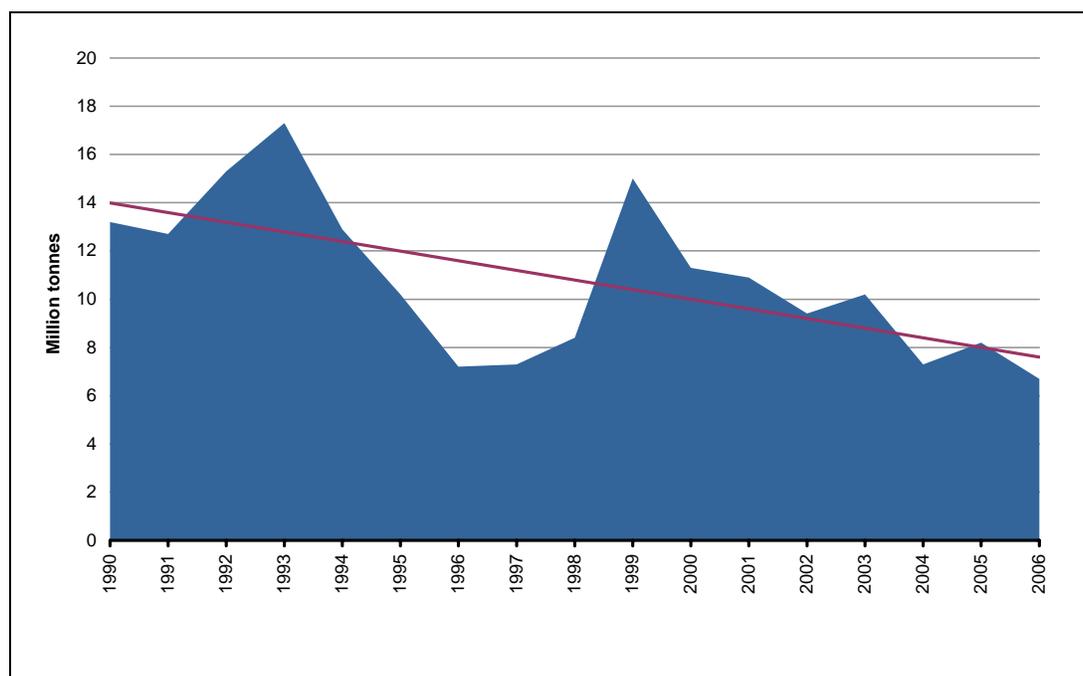
¹⁷⁶ Walker and Pepper, *ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Sue Graves and Victoria Wheeler. 2006. “Good Humanitarian Donorship: Overcoming Obstacles to Improved Collective Donor Performance.” HPG Discussion Paper. London: Overseas Development Institute.

GHD notes on-going challenges in the area of coordination with other donors, funding according to need, and limited policy transparency (oddly, it made no reference to timeliness—a frequent criticism of EU humanitarian funding).¹⁷⁸

Changes in US Funding. The US is the largest single donor. It has introduced a number of changes in funding over recent years that have an impact on humanitarian funding generally and on food security specifically. First, in a trend exemplified by—but by no means restricted to—the US, assistance is increasingly flowing through a security apparatus, not a development or humanitarian apparatus. According to an OECD report, between 2000 and 2005 the proportion of US official development assistance (including humanitarian aid) channeled through USAID dropped from 50 percent to 39 percent and the proportion channeled through the Department of Defense increased from 6 percent to 22 percent.¹⁷⁹ And much of US foreign assistance funding is now explicitly tied to security or counter-terrorism objectives, with poverty-reduction or humanitarian objectives becoming a lower priority in resource allocation.¹⁸⁰

Figure 8: Trend in Total Food Aid Volume, 1990–2006



Source: Reproduced from DI 2008 based on WFP/INTERFAIS data.

Food Aid Reform. Food aid has long been not only the predominant response to food insecurity (whether of a transitory or chronic nature), but also the biggest single category of humanitarian response. Between 2000 and 2005, food aid was not only the biggest single category of response

¹⁷⁸ Barnaby Willetts-King. 2008. “The EU: Good Humanitarian Donorship and the World’s Biggest Humanitarian Donor.” Humanitarian Practice Network. London: Overseas Development Institute.

¹⁷⁹ OECD. 2006. “United States, 2006. DAC Peer Review: Main Findings and Recommendations.” Paris: OECD.

¹⁸⁰ Andrew Wilder. 2007. “Winning Hearts and Minds? Examining the Relationship Between Aid and Security in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Horn of Africa.” Research Proposal, Feinstein International Center. Medford: Tufts University.

in CAP appeals, on average it was bigger than all other sectors combined.¹⁸¹ However, as Figure 8 depicts, levels of food aid have been steadily declining. With rapidly increasing costs of food and transportation and food aid budgets relatively flat, this decline is likely to continue. Some of the debates over food aid policy are about determining the circumstances under which food aid is the most appropriate response to food insecurity, but others are more specifically about the reform or lack of it in the broader funding of humanitarian and food security response. These have to do with the “untying” of food aid from donor country source markets, and preventing food aid from undermining trade. The emerging consensus—though none exists formally—is that food aid remains an appropriate resource where markets cannot respond to increased demand, and cash transfers would cause food price inflation; that “untied” aid (or at least the ability to purchase food locally or regionally) is both more cost-efficient and timely than trans-oceanic shipment; and that well-targeted, humanitarian food aid doesn’t significantly undermine other forms of food trade.¹⁸² But this emerging consensus hasn’t yet convinced US-based agencies and policy-makers, who have traditionally used food aid not only for response to humanitarian food crises, but also to fund development programs with food security objectives, and who have cultivated deep relations with domestic business constituencies who profit from traditional modes of food aid. The fear is that if these domestic business constituencies don’t get some share of the benefits of the program, they will no longer lobby for it, and the resources that had been made available in the form of US food aid will simply disappear. The food aid components of the “Farm Bill” legislation currently making its way through the US Congress actually represents a significant step away from the consensus outlined above, but is strongly supported by US agribusiness, shipping and NGO lobbies. Other factors are at play among non-US donors, including stronger commitments to relatively un-tied cash donations for food aid, counter-balanced by tighter cash-based budgets for development assistance among several traditional donors. Continuing debate over the future direction of the Food Aid Convention and potential disciplines on some kinds of food aid in WTO negotiations mean that many issues of global concern have yet to be resolved

Agency Reform Processes

Since the debacle of the response to the Rwanda genocide and the subsequent refugee crisis in the Congo, the humanitarian community has initiated a variety of reforms, including the Sphere Project, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP-I), the Action Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP), the implementation of “do no harm” approaches, and various efforts at inter-agency coordination. These have all been reviewed in sufficient detail elsewhere.¹⁸³

However, some analyses of the aid sector note lingering problems. The level of competition for funding that has caused private, voluntary actors to behave more like for-profit businesses; and led donors to behave in a more oligopolistic manner. In chronic crisis or chronic poverty situations this funding environment has led to shorter, not longer, planning time-frames; and a more reactive mode of operation. Coordination is a good word, but gets more lip service than

¹⁸¹ OCHA. CAP Appeals and response. Various years.

¹⁸² Christopher Barrett and Daniel Maxell. 2005. *Food Aid After Fifty Years: Recasting its Role*. London: Routledge.

¹⁸³ Peta Sandison and Pierre Robert. 2004. Evaluation of the Department of International Development’s Support to The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance, Birmingham: The Performance Assessment Resource Center,

real action: the inability to act collectively is a real constraint to effectiveness. And despite efforts on the part of agencies regarding “lessons learned,” or after-action reviews, there is a repeated failure system-wide to learn from experience.¹⁸⁴ The multiplication of actors (military, non-state, and private for-profit) in both the humanitarian sector and in food security in many ways amplifies the difficulties the agencies face. And as noted above, there is still a very blurred boundary between “emergency response” and “development programming.” Some analysis suggest that this has become such a pervasive problem that an entirely new kind of organization might be required to deal with it.

2.7. Effectiveness of the “System:” Some Issues Arising

According to the former director of USAID, “all implementation mechanisms have weaknesses and strengths. There is no “pure” or optimum method. There are inherent trade-offs.... The debate over aid effectiveness is [not] properly capturing these inherent tensions and contradictions. The problem...today is to manage complexity.”¹⁸⁵ The humanitarian system is inherently as complex as humanitarian emergencies that the system seeks to respond to, mitigate and resolve. Nevertheless, that cannot be used as an excuse for not pursuing greater effectiveness, which is key to greater accountability. Several challenges can be highlighted, and are briefly discussed.

- How to improve analysis, including needs assessments and impact evaluation, making them more evidence-based, more transparent, more rigorous, and more closely tied to decision-making on priorities?
- How to increase the level, predictability, and effective impartial disbursement of appropriate resources for responding to objectively defined needs?
- How to further enhance effectiveness, coordination and sectoral efficiency?
- How to improve institutional learning at both the individual agency level and the collective “humanitarian community” level?
- How to integrate the perennially short-term perspective of the humanitarian industry with the long-term problems of chronic food insecurity?

Improving Analysis

It is clear that several trends must be incorporated more thoroughly into the analysis of food insecurity—the causes, levels of need, appropriate responses, and impact of interventions. In terms of understanding trends, urbanization has long been factored into analysis, but the relative levels of urbanization and the different livelihood risks and opportunities faced by very poor urban residents make it a topic for renewed concern. Food security crises have, for the most part, been considered rural phenomena, but the prospect for urban and peri-urban crises in the future must be considered. Climate change is on everyone’s agenda, but its impact on food security goes far beyond just the impact on agricultural production. Increased world-wide demand for grain and other basic food stuffs has changed food prices significantly—whether this signals a

¹⁸⁴ Alexander Cooley and James Ron. 2002. “NGO Scramble. Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action.” *International Security* 27(1): 5–39. Thomas Weiss and Peter Hoffman. 2007. “The Fog of Humanitarianism: Collective Action problems and Learning-Challenged Organizations.” *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 1(1): 47–65.

¹⁸⁵ A. Natsios. 2006. Five Debates on International Development. *Development Policy Review* 24 (2): 131–9, 135.

sea-change in the medium to long term remains to be seen, but it is certainly likely to cause dramatic changes in the short term.

Analysis of food security has improved substantially in recent years, improving the transparency and comparability of analysis, and generally contributing to evidence-based programming. But much remains to be done. Though it has been thirteen years since the publication of *Early Warning and Early Response: the Missing Links*,¹⁸⁶ much of the analysis of that book remains relevant today, implying that the improvements made in analysis have yet to be translated into improved food security for poor or crisis-affected populations.

While the definition of failure is clear, the definition of “success” in humanitarian food security programming remains elusive, and linked to issues far beyond the reach of humanitarian actors—a topic picked up in the following section.

Improving the Allocation of Resources

Much emphasis has been put on improving analysis to enable the impartial allocation of response, but while analysis has arguably improved, there is scant evidence that either the impartiality of response has improved, or that programming is more evidence-based. This is in part because geo-political concerns of donors continue to trump either analysis or impartiality as the basis for resource allocation. The unified mission approach of the UN probably doesn't help this matter any—subsuming humanitarian concerns under a political and security banner. The question is whether or not humanitarian actors are willing to take these questions on—a process that might be equated with “biting the hand that feeds you.”

Centralizing funding may have improved response among UN agencies, but so far it has done little to improve the speed and predictability of funding to other agencies or to governments. Food security analysis is better attuned to multiple causal factors, but it is far from clear that improved analysis enables speedier response. And even if acted on in a timely manner, it isn't clear that the programming tool-box of humanitarian food security actors enables appropriate responses, particularly in terms of addressing all the causal factors and in what sequence. The bias towards food aid responses has been tempered both in analytical terms and by the current high prices of food and transportation, but is still significant. Reforming food aid remains an important part of the agenda of improving response.

Effectiveness and Coordination: Has Reform Improved the “System?”

A 2005 report on the status of humanitarian reform noted that the efforts in play at the time did not add up to a radical agenda for change or even a strategic overhaul of the humanitarian system.¹⁸⁷ Two years on, this conclusion remains much the same: there are useful, if somewhat piece-mail, reforms under way. Some of these address some of the shortcomings analyzed above with regard to the nature of the response to the lingering problem of hunger and food insecurity. But it is difficult to see any radical change coming out of the current mix of reforms.

¹⁸⁶ Margaret Buchanan-Smith and Susannah Davies. 1995. London: Earthscan.

¹⁸⁷ Humanitarian Policy Group. 2005. “The Currency of Humanitarian Reform.” HPG Briefing Note, November. London: Overseas Development Institute.

There is a lot of money in the humanitarian system at the moment, but it is increasing but at a slowing pace, and is failing to keep up with need. It is difficult to say conclude very much about the sector-specific or agency-specific effectiveness of this money. And according to many observers, the cumulative impact of the money itself and the institutional arrangements through which it is made available are having unintended and negative impacts of the effectiveness of the overall system.¹⁸⁸

There is no cluster for food security, but no consensus about whether there should be one. The purpose of the approach was to identify and address gaps, so it would appear that there is no consensus that food security constituted a programmatic gap—a notion difficult to reconcile with the reality on the ground in almost all chronic crises, and many if not most transitory emergencies. With increasing attention to cash programming, and livelihoods responses beyond food aid, in areas that have little to do with agriculture *per se*, there would seem to be every reason for arguing for greater coherence in food security response. The fact that the cluster approach has been only a limited success so far detracts nothing from the argument that greater coherence and leadership is required. The evaluation of the cluster approach concludes with a call to create a food cluster: Does the humanitarian food security community agree?

Institutional Learning and Chronic Food Insecurity

The question of institutional learning, especially at the collective “humanitarian community” level, is a difficult one. Countless “lessons learned” exercises have been conducted, and some agencies are building better feedback loops to incorporate this into their own information and planning base. But there is a distinct collective action problem here—getting into issues of ownership as much as learning. External critiques are harsh, but don’t necessarily offer good advice on how to improve. This clearly constitutes one area for further reflection.

The question of how to integrate the perennially short-term perspective of the humanitarian industry with the longer-term demands of dealing with chronic food insecurity is dealt with in depth in the following section.

¹⁸⁸ Walker and Pepper. Op cit.

PART 3: LINKING RESPONSES TO “CHRONIC” AND “TRANSITORY” FOOD INSECURITY

ETHIOPIA: Despite record production, eight million chronically food-insecure people require food and cash assistance. Estimates indicate that 2.4 million acutely food-insecure people will also require assistance due to security restrictions in Somali Region, inflation, and localized poor rains.

From FEWSNET *Executive Overview of Food Security*, January 2008

3.1. A Framework for Understanding the Linkages

Among the most stubborn of problems in dealing with food insecurity has been the inability to satisfactorily link chronic and transitory food insecurity and responses to these two related, but etiologically different, problems. Nowhere is this problem brought into sharper focus than in Ethiopia, where, *despite record production*, and despite billions of dollars worth of assistance devoted to alleviating chronic food security over recent years, nearly one person in eight required external “emergency” assistance to achieve adequate food consumption this year. This inability to forge the appropriate linkages occurs in several areas: the conceptual/analytical linkages, programmatic linkages, funding/donor linkages, and policy linkages. This section of the paper discusses the major gaps still facing the humanitarian food security community in building stronger linkages and notes the progress made in these different areas.

The terms, “chronic” and “transitory,” like much of the terminology of food security, are subject to various definitions, but one useful way of characterizing the differences is to say that chronic food insecurity is a persistent inability to access adequate food and nutritional intake, whereas transitory food insecurity is of a shorter (expected) duration and often involves a precipitous decline in access and consumption against baseline conditions (implying nothing about the adequacy of baseline conditions). “Transitory” should not be confused with “acute”—a term which implies a degree of severity; “transitory” and “chronic” imply mainly a temporal dimension. It is of course possible to have both chronic and transitory food insecurity in varying degrees of severity.¹⁸⁹

Beyond the “Relief to Development” Continuum

Conceptually and programmatically, the linkage between “transitory” and “chronic” was classically framed in terms of the “relief-to-development continuum.”¹⁹⁰ Originating largely with respect to the response to drought disasters and other climatically or environmentally triggered emergencies in Africa in the 1980s or early 1990s, the continuum presumed that crises have a distinct beginning and end, and that the normative direction for programming was to complete the action dealing with transitory food insecurity (“relief”) and get on to dealing with chronic problems (“development”) as quickly as possible. It soon became clear that, even in climatically or environmentally triggered crises, progression towards “development” was not such a linear

¹⁸⁹ Stephen Devereux. 2006. Distinguishing Between Chronic and Transitory Food Insecurity in Emergency Needs Assessments. Report to WFP-SENAC. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

¹⁹⁰ Margaret Buchanan-Smith and Simon Maxwell. 1994. “Linking Relief and Development—an Introduction and Overview.” *IDS Bulletin* 25(4): 1–18.

process, and that progress might be “backwards” (towards crisis rather than progressing away from it). And of course, little of this thinking applied directly in complex emergencies. By the mid- to late-1990s it was discredited analytically, and was replaced by the notion of a “contiguuum”—a variation that recognized that programming might be taking place simultaneously, or *contiguously*, at different stages of what had originally been conceived of as a linear progression from “relief” to “development. Conceptually, the literature on risk and vulnerability has moved beyond “continuum” thinking, but haven’t produced a similar programming framework.¹⁹¹

The funding problem—long recognized, but with relatively few institutional changes to date in the way donor agencies are organized—is simple: Donor agencies tend to have an “emergency” window and a “development” or “non-emergency” window.¹⁹² While there have been some attempts to capture programmatic activities such as livelihood protection or rehabilitation, these have often eventually ended up being subsumed under one or the other of the two major donor windows and are traditionally quite under-funded. Reconstruction and rehabilitation don’t turn up as an entry in official ODA figures until 2004, even though these activities were being discussed in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, it remains a fairly consistent observation over time that transitory food insecurity, clearly linked with an identified causal factor or defined “shock,” tends to draw greater attention and greater levels of resources than does chronic food insecurity that might actually be a more serious problem in terms of scale and severity, but which is not clearly defined in time or linked to a specific cause or shock.¹⁹⁴

This raises the specter that transitory food insecurity associated with a precipitous decline in the ability to access adequate food will elicit a greater response than chronic food insecurity, even if the latter is demonstrably more severe.¹⁹⁵ In terms of the numbers of people affected, chronic food insecurity far outweighs transitory.

Because the original linkages were formulated in terms of drought or “natural disasters” in Africa, political causes of food crises were often left out of the analysis. However, more recently it has become clear that many “chronic crises” are either directly as a result of conflict, or have a more explicit political causation to it than the original “continuum” thinking took into account. This makes formulating the linkages—and especially addressing the linkages programmatically—more difficult for humanitarian actors because addressing them can easily be interpreted as fundamentally contrary to humanitarian principles (especially under a classic view of neutrality

¹⁹¹ Some of the ideas in the continuum continue to be prevalent in programmatic thinking even to the present. This is in part because few programmatic frameworks have been suggested to bridge these linkages. See Nick Maunder. 2006. “Developmental Relief: Concepts, Interpretation and Implementation.” Report to CARE. Atlanta: CARE USA.

¹⁹² This isn’t entirely true of all donors, but is certainly true of the two biggest donors of food security response—USAID and the European Commission. There are notable exceptions, but mostly in the form of innovative pilot programs, not mainstreamed donor policy.

¹⁹³ OECD. 2006. “ODA by Sector.” 2006. www.oecd.org/dac.

¹⁹⁴ Stephen Devereux. Op. cit. 2006. Mark Bradbury. 2000. “Normalizing the Crisis in Africa.” *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*.

¹⁹⁵ This was observed, for example, in different responses to assessed food insecurity in Eastern and Southern Africa in 2002/03. See Devereux, Op. cit. 2006. Noreen Prendiville. 2003. “Nutrition and Food Security Information Systems in Crisis-Prone Countries.” Paper presented to the FAO workshop on Food Security in Complex Emergencies, Tivoli, Italy, September 23–25. Nairobi: FSAU.

—which forbade engagement in “political controversy”). Nevertheless, multi-mandate agencies have had to deal with this problem, and experience is accumulating that, even in conflict situations, humanitarian actors can address underlying causes of food insecurity or other humanitarian outcomes without compromising humanitarian principles.¹⁹⁶

The stronger linkage of aid of all types to political and security agendas in the post-September 11 era, has had several effects. On the one hand, it has probably increased funding for addressing chronic problems related to income and livelihoods, but the focus has shifted away from humanitarian concerns as ends in themselves and to humanitarian assistance as the means of addressing security concerns.¹⁹⁷ And it has significantly shrunk humanitarian space to address the needs of disaster affected people on a purely impartial basis—in other words security concerns, not humanitarian concerns, are driving this kind of aid. Examples include large, USAID-funded projects that simultaneously have livelihoods objectives and “winning hearts and minds” objectives in areas where Islamic extremist insurgencies are a security problem—such as Afghanistan or the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, and parts of the Greater Horn of Africa.¹⁹⁸ This “instrumentalization” of aid is intentional—not an unfortunate by-product—of contemporary policy.¹⁹⁹

Summarizing the debate about aid in protracted crises, a recent report by the Humanitarian Policy Group notes that whereas previously, “continuum” thinking and practice was led by humanitarian and multi-mandate agencies, current thinking on assistance in protracted crises is led by political and security actors. Whereas conflict was largely absent from discussions about the continuum, it dominates the current debate at least insofar as concerns about security and “failed states” have been raised (note however, that the primary driver here is not the security of the citizens of “failed states”). While the issue of compromised humanitarian principles—somewhat left out of original “continuum” thinking with its emphasis on natural disasters—is more incorporated into the debate, it has been eroded by foreign policy and security imperatives. Other elements of contemporary thinking—a human security perspective, rights-based approaches, risk reduction, and links to the Millennium Development Goals—have increased the scope for linking chronic and transitory problems, but have been somewhat subordinated to the security agenda. Funding in (at least some) protracted crises has increased and the bifurcation (or at least inflexibility) of aid donors has declined in some cases, but this has come at the cost of stronger linkage with security concerns, the use of aid to achieve security objectives and the use of force to protect aid investments. And while there is greater commitment to work in protracted crises, there has been relatively less programmatic innovation in long-term work in conflict

¹⁹⁶ For one example related to work by a consortium of humanitarian agencies on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan which grew directly out of concern for food security (the Bahr el Ghazal famine in 1998), see Leona Foley. 2005. “Sudan Advocacy Coalition Evaluation.” Sudan Advocacy Coalition, mimeo.

¹⁹⁷ Joanna Macrae and Adele Harmer. 2004. “Beyond the Continuum: Aid Policy in Protracted Crises.” *HPG Report* 18. London: Overseas Development Institute.

¹⁹⁸ Sarah Kenyon Lischer. 2007. “Military Intervention and the Humanitarian ‘Force Multiplier.’” *Global Governance* 13(1): 99–118.

¹⁹⁹ Antonio Donini. 2006. “Is Universality under Threat? Humanitarian Aid and Intervention in the 2000s.” In I. Richter, S. Berking, and R. Muller-Schmidt, (eds.) *Building a Transnational Society*. Hampshire, Palgrave-Macmillan.

situations.²⁰⁰ This has led to different understandings of risk and of programmatic linkages, but some problems remain that are discussed in the following sections.

Understanding Vulnerability and Risk

The literature on vulnerability and risk has likewise changed. The risk of food insecurity (or other negative outcome) is often suggested to be a function of some kind of hazard (an event or shock) combined with vulnerability, or the susceptibility of a given community or group to a hazard. This is noted in shorthand as: $\mathbf{R} = f(\mathbf{H}, \mathbf{V})$.

Vulnerability in this framework is understood to be internal to the livelihood system, whereas hazards are thought to be external.²⁰¹ In the context of climatically or environmentally induced food insecurity, whether of a transitory or chronic nature, this focus on risk has opened up a new and significant area of programmatic intervention, called disaster risk reduction (specifically identifying and reducing the risk of certain kinds of hazards), or disaster risk management (a more systematic means of incorporating policies, programs and administrative processes to both reduce risks and mitigate impacts). Political concerns and conflict have increasingly arisen with regard to the question of “failed” or “fragile” states, but also with greater understanding of what makes people vulnerable in complex emergencies. The latter is often quite different from what makes people vulnerable in “natural” disasters or situations of chronic poverty. Assets (such as money, possessions, or even education) may become liabilities. Identity—ethnic, religious, national—takes on greater importance in terms of both vulnerability and protection, depending on the circumstances (but was largely ignored in analyzing vulnerability in chronic poverty or natural disasters). While these concerns have been incorporated into some analyses, they are largely still missing from programmatic responses, particularly in terms of risk reduction strategies, which tend to be overwhelmingly concerned with climatic, environmental and other “non-political” risks.

There is increasing recognition in the food security literature of the difference between “covariate” and “idiosyncratic” shocks. “Covariate” shocks are events that lead to the unexpected loss of income, consumption or assets of a large group of people in a given place as a result of a single cause—the classic example being drought, flooding, conflict or displacement. “Idiosyncratic” shocks, on the other hand, lead to the losses that affect single individuals, households or small groups and are not correlated with losses by other groups—classic examples being indebtedness, illness, death or disability of a wage-earner, or other form of individual livelihood failure.²⁰² The evidence available from longitudinal studies indicates that, even though much of food security programming is in response to covariate shocks (i.e., big emergencies), over time the determinants of a given household’s food security status—even in emergency-prone areas—are to be found much more in the realm of idiosyncratic risk. There is increasing recognition of the need for programmatic responses to preventing or at least managing the effects

²⁰⁰ Joanna Macrae and Adele Harmer. Op. cit. 2004.

²⁰¹ Nick Maunder. Op. Cit. 2006.

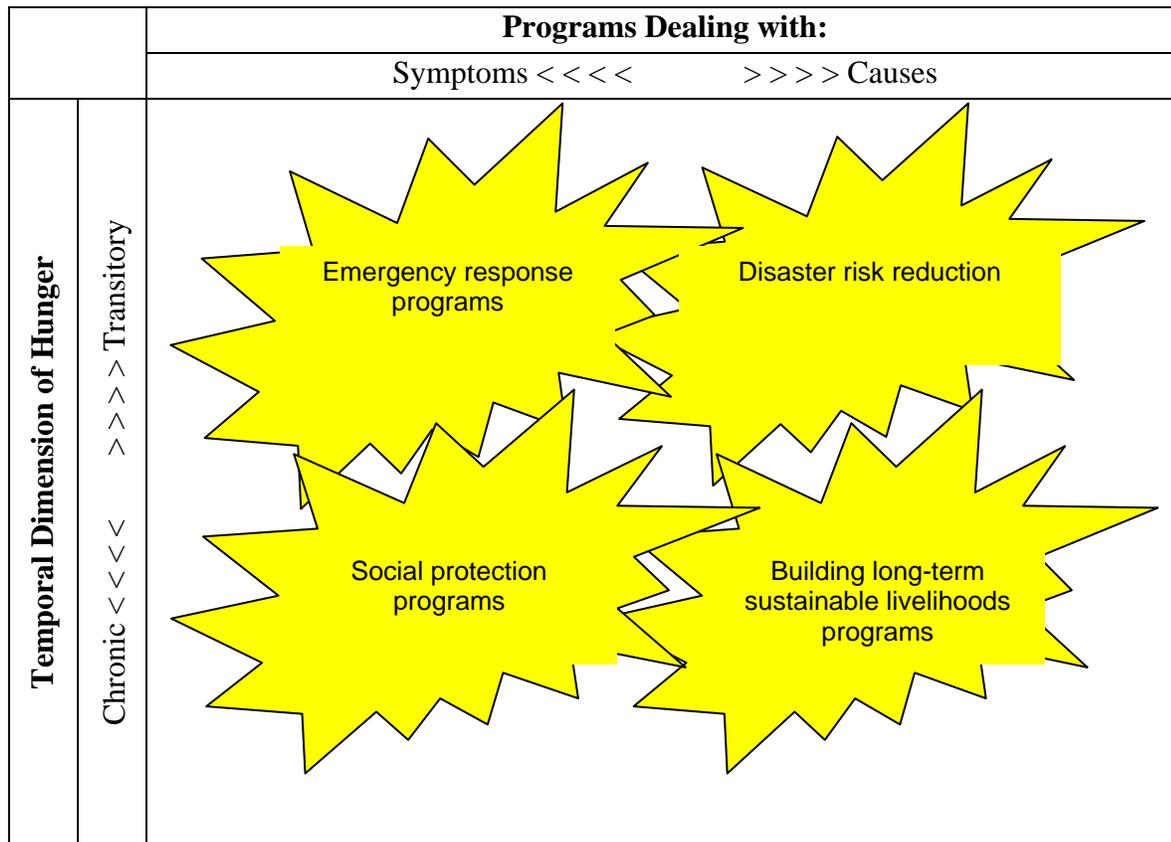
²⁰² Christopher Barrett and Daniel Maxwell. 2005. *Food Aid After Fifty Years: Recasting its Role*. London: Routledge.

of idiosyncratic shocks.²⁰³ Generally coming to be referred to as social protection, this includes programs such as the Productive Safety Net Program in Ethiopia, or national pension schemes in several Southern African countries. This understanding about responses to vulnerability and risk have led to new ways of thinking about food security responses that attempt to address the gap between “transitory” and “chronic.”²⁰⁴

Situating Food Security Programmatic Responses

From this discussion, it is clear that defining firm boundaries for what constitutes “transitory” and “chronic” food insecurity is complicated, and it is misleading to define “emergency” programming as dealing with only with transitory or immediate needs and “development” programming as dealing with chronic poverty and vulnerability. The boundaries between these two have long been blurred at best. One useful way to think about these relationships—and the kinds of programming that are appropriate to each as well as the linkages required to ensure that an explicit focus on food security is successful—is depicted in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Situating Programmatic Responses to Hunger



Source: Nick Maunder

²⁰³ Christopher B. Barrett, Ernest Aryeetey, Agnes Quisumbing, Akhter Ahmed, John Hoddinott, Felix Naschold, and Tassew Woldehanna. 2007. “Risk Management: Protecting Household Asset Building and Farm Productivity from Idiosyncratic Shocks.” BASIS Briefing Paper #3. Madison WI: University of Wisconsin.

²⁰⁴ Stephen Devereux. Op cit. 2006.

Several points are highlighted by Figure 9. The first is that while “emergency response” and “longer-term development” were classically presented as opposite ends of a single spectrum or continuum, there are at least two dimensions to understanding the programmatic linkages: one is the temporal dimension (that is captured by the transitory/chronic element of programming); the other is understanding whether and how programs are intended to exclusively address symptoms of problems or the causes of those problems. With regard to addressing food security, this latter observation is probably more important than the temporal one. Thus, while programs addressing the symptoms of transitory food insecurity may be classified as “emergency response,” and programs addressing the causes of chronic food insecurity may be labeled as “building sustainable livelihoods,” there are other possible combinations—and therefore other kinds of interventions are required. These include primarily addressing symptoms (protecting consumption) over the longer term, and addressing or preventing the causes of food insecurity in the short term. This programming framework thus helps to situate the increasing interest in disaster risk reduction and social protection programming approaches, and significantly expands the way in which the gap between responses to chronic and transitory food insecurity can be addressed. While there has been much lip service given to both social protection and disaster risk reduction as categories of programs, they are still new categories—risk prevention doesn’t show up in official ODA accounting until 2005, and then only in miniscule amount. Social protection isn’t accounted as a sector or programmatic category.²⁰⁵

Figure 9 is useful for situating and understanding the objectives of different kinds of interventions, but it is not intended to imply that there are discrete boundaries between different combinations. In fact, ideally programs would have the flexibility to operate in any of these quadrants. Many of the interventions that could be described as emergency response may come to look like long-term safety net programs if transitory food insecurity becomes chronic—as for example in many protracted refugee crises. Likewise, many contemporary programs have objectives that simultaneously attempt to protect consumption in situations of chronic food insecurity, and also to build diversified livelihoods or improve household asset holdings—as indeed the Productive Safety Net Program in Ethiopia is designed to do.²⁰⁶ And in particularly risky environments, some programs are designed to specifically reduce the risk of shocks, but can quickly shift to protecting short-term food consumption if the situation calls for it—the Pastoral Livelihoods Initiative in the Greater Horn of Africa being a good example.²⁰⁷

All of these linkages are important to intervening in food insecurity in a given context with the appropriate range of responses. The exact nature of causes and symptoms, as well as temporal dimensions, is often determined by contextual factors and should influence the choice of tailored and appropriate approaches to protecting consumption, managing risk, and supporting livelihood assets and strategies. The rest of this section is devoted to looking in greater depth at disaster risk reduction and social protection programming as programmatic elements that support this aim.

²⁰⁵ OECD. Op cit.

²⁰⁶ Stephen Devereux. 2006. “Review of Social Protection in Southern Africa.” Wahenga Brief 2. Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Program. Johannesburg: RHVP.

²⁰⁷ CARE Ethiopia. 2006. Pastoral Livelihoods Initiative (PLI). Paper presented to regional workshop.

3.2. Social Protection

Overview

Social Protection (SP) is an umbrella term used to describe a broad range of initiatives and transfers intended to reduce the economic and social vulnerability of the poor and food insecure. The concept of social protection evolved early this century from a narrow focus on food-based activities designed to smooth consumption during periodic downturns, to a more holistic framework incorporating notions of risk and instruments to reduce, manage, and cope with its effects²⁰⁸. This framework views vulnerabilities along a continuum of deprivation, recognizes that households face a multitude of risks that require a differentiated management approach, and drives home the notion that idiosyncratic shocks may be as common, and as damaging, as those shocks that affect many at the same time. An important shift has been the recognition that many social protection instruments are multi-pronged tools that can achieve a variety of objectives across this risk management spectrum—that is, a single type of intervention, if well-designed and implemented, could have effects that include both protection (of assets, livelihoods, consumption) and also promotion (of riskier, but possibly more productive, investments), contributing to a virtuous cycle of physical or human capital accumulation.

The SP paradigm offers a useful conceptual linkage between the often divided realms of “emergency” and “development” responses to “chronic” and “transitory” food insecurity and, though actualizing these linkages is challenging, there are notable examples of progress from countries like Ethiopia, Zambia, and Bangladesh. As currently defined and implemented, social protection strategies are potentially most effective in stabilizing consumption among the predictably food insecure, though disaster risk reduction and political risk management offer options for reducing the need for humanitarian response to large-scale natural disasters and complex emergencies.

Concepts and Definitions

Social Risk Management (SRM) was formalized as the guiding framework for the World Bank’s social protection strategy with the release of the WB social protection sector strategy in 2001.²⁰⁹ The intention of social risk management is to “provide instruments that allow the poor or vulnerable to minimize the impact of exposure to risk and change their behavior in a way that helps them exit poverty and lower their vulnerability.”²¹⁰ Social protection, as defined in the SRM, moves beyond the distribution of consumption safety nets to include interventions that reduce and mitigate risk while providing a “springboard” from poverty. Therefore, in order to understand how social protection links chronic and transitory food insecurity, it is necessary first to have a good grasp of concepts of risk and vulnerability.

Risk and Vulnerability in Food Security. Risk and vulnerability are not new concepts to disciplines like public health, nutrition, and disaster management. However, though the notion of risk is implicit in the term “food *insecurity*,” only in the last fifteen years has there been growing

²⁰⁸ R. Holzmann and S. Jørgensen. 2000. *Social Risk Management: A New Conceptual Framework for Social Protection and Beyond*. Social Protection Discussion Paper Series No. 0006, Washington, DC: Social Protection Unit/Human Development Network/The World Bank.

²⁰⁹ World Bank. 2001. *Social Protection Sector Strategy—From Safety Net to Springboard*, Washington, DC. The World Bank.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

recognition of its potential to close conceptual and operational gaps in food security programming. Certain advances, like the adoption of risk management as a feature of the Food for Peace Title II strategy, show progress at the policy level, however, there continues to be a disconnect between the notable improvements seen in risk and vulnerability *assessment*, and attempts to translate this understanding into *response*.

Though the terms “vulnerability” and “risk” are used differently even within the food security community,²¹¹ vulnerability is commonly viewed as a function of three principle components: (1) the risk, risky event, or shock; (2) the response to that risk; and (3) the associated outcome or welfare loss. The risk management approach is to avert this loss or transform a potential loss into a gain.²¹²

Risk and Vulnerability in Social Protection. The World Bank Social Risk Management framework and associated definitions and terminology predominates the social protection discourse, particularly among national government officials. The framework describes three types of risk management strategies: (1) risk reduction, (2) risk mitigation, and (3) risk coping. According to Holzmann and Jørgensen, risk *reduction* strategies are intended to prevent the materialization of a risk and include measures that were typically outside traditional SP frameworks, including sound macroeconomic policy, intervention in labor markets to ensure minimum standards, and investments in health and education.²¹³ Risk *mitigation* strategies are put in place to reduce the impact of a risk should it occur. These instruments include a range of interventions such as formal and informal insurance, employment guarantees, asset transfers, and assistance for the diversification of both livelihoods, crops, and other investments in order to spread risk. Risk *coping* mechanisms are engaged in response to a risk that has materialized, and are intended to alleviate suffering and to prevent the disposal of assets, the curtailing of consumption, and other harmful responses to a shock.

Using the SRM, it is tempting to map these three types of risk management approaches onto a continuum, whereby failure to reduce risk prompts the need for risk mitigation, and risk mitigation, if not handled properly, triggers the need for risk coping. This would direct us less usefully down a path of continuum thinking. Rather, a more accurate reality is one where reduction, mitigation, and coping are undertaken by a variety of actors operating concurrently in the face of a variety of different risks, both idiosyncratic and covariant. In this complexity, multi-pronged instruments to manage risk must be chosen according to their objectives and context.

²¹¹ J. Alwang, P. Siegel, and S. Jørgensen. 2001. “Vulnerability: A View From Different Disciplines, Social Protection.” Discussion Paper Series No. 0115, Washington, DC: Social Protection Unit/Human Development Network/The World Bank. See also, M. Dilley and T. E. Boudreau. 2001. “Coming to terms with vulnerability: A critique of the food security definition.” *Food Policy* 26: 229–47.

²¹² The term food insecurity becomes quite clumsy to manipulate in a risk and vulnerability framework. For instance, the usage “risk of food insecurity” is redundant since the element of risk is imbedded in the “insecurity” part of the term. A more useful approach is to conceptually decouple “food” and “insecurity.” In this way, the chance of not having enough food tomorrow or at some point in the future could be described as the “risk of food insufficiency” (rather than the “risk of food insecurity”) Current and potential food shortage can be measured separately.

²¹³ R. Holzmann and S. Jørgensen. 2000. *Social Risk Management: A New Conceptual Framework for Social Protection and Beyond*. Social Protection Discussion Paper Series No. 0006, Washington, DC: Social Protection Unit/Human Development Network/The World Bank.

Social protection, in its ideal form, ensures a minimal level of welfare to its citizens, regardless of circumstances. The principles of *stability, predictability, and timing* of an intervention may be as critical to the SP intervention's effectiveness as the resource transfer itself. These qualities enable beneficiaries to make informed decisions about how to manage in the face of risk based on a realistic assessment of the timing and size of available resources. They assist households with *advance planning*, and, the theory goes, this added *security* may enable greater risk-taking in investment that may pay-off as an eventual "springboard" from their poverty trap.²¹⁴ The theory of "poverty traps" posits that there is a poverty threshold below which households cannot accumulate assets to raise themselves from poverty, and above which households can invest their assets to create a virtuous cycle of increasing returns and growth. Using this lens, *ex ante* (before a shock) social protection interventions enable those that are already below the threshold to accumulate the necessary assets to "graduate" from it, and to make riskier and therefore more productive investments. Barrett et al. argue that households that are not below the threshold should also be targeted *ex ante* in order to prevent a slide below the threshold from which it is much more difficult to recover.²¹⁵ This discussion demonstrates that the target populations for social protection instruments may extend beyond those that experience transitory food insecurity. That is, those that are in need of transformative measures are also likely targets for preventive action and interventions to alleviate the potential of future suffering.

A limitation of the SRM, echoed by Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler²¹⁶ is that it overly emphasizes transitory poverty/food insecurity resulting from an exogenous shock. In order to maximize the potential of this and similar frameworks, it is important to recall a reality where portions of the population are chronically poor and food insecure and continuously fall beneath a minimum standard of welfare due to structural constraints. In these cases, exogenous shocks only push them further into more severe deprivation. While "risk reduction" strategies in theory address this structural and persistent deprivation, the World Bank's SRM does not usually include targeted, ongoing social support and service provision that should be aimed at the predictably, and chronically, food insecure.

Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler²¹⁷ also extend the SRM framework slightly, arguing that the WB's limited definition of vulnerability promotes attention to risks to economic well-being, but not to the socio-political structure that gives birth to and sustains these risks. As such, they propose the inclusion of a "transformative" social protection element in the framework that addresses issues of social vulnerability in addition to economic vulnerability, including measures to correct the judicial and regulatory system in favor of particular marginalized groups.

Social Protection in Practice

In struggling with how to better to link chronic and transitory food insecurity responses, in order to improve the effectiveness of emergency intervention and reduce the need for assistance in the future, the humanitarian community has experimented with a variety of approaches, including

²¹⁴ C. Barrett and J. McPeak. 2003. Poverty Traps and Safety Nets, Strategies and Analysis for Growth and Access (SAGA) Working Paper, December, revised version.

²¹⁵ Christopher Barrett, Michael Carter, and Munenobu Ikegami. 2008. "Poverty Traps and Social Protection," Social Protection Discussion Paper No. 0804, Washington DC: World Bank.

²¹⁶ S. Devereux and R. Sabates-Wheeler. 2004. Transformative social protection. IDS Working Paper 232, October.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

“building back, better,” “developmental relief,” “saving lives and livelihoods,” “post-disaster rehabilitation,” and “supporting positive coping strategies.” The starting point for formulating these approaches tends to be the crisis itself, and the debate often centers on what can be done from there forward to reduce future risk and promote improved security.²¹⁸

However, the SP approach requires determining *in advance* of a crisis which segments of a population are at risk from what sources, and intervening with mechanisms that are able to avert or mitigate a crisis *before* it occurs. This implies a redirection of funding away from mechanisms and institutions that are typically engaged to deal with emergency response, and in some cases, a different role for humanitarian assistance altogether. Because social protection refers to an array of possible interventions spanning multiple sectors with different objectives, in considering how SP can link chronic and transitory food insecurity it is helpful to organize the discussion according to the source of risk.

Chronic Food Emergencies. Social protection strategies are likely to be most effective in countries, like Ethiopia, Bangladesh, or North Korea, where sizeable portions of the population face a chronic, but predictable, inability to produce or access sufficient quality and quantity of food. In these situations, lifecycle shocks or risk stemming from the combination of regular, localized climatic shocks, ill-functioning markets, insufficient production, and/or food price destabilization can worsen an already challenged capacity to cope and can tip the balance against those that were barely managing. In these types of circumstances, instruments that provide a seasonal safety net (employment guarantee schemes, conditional cash-transfers dependent on school or health clinic attendance) coupled with “promotional” options ranging from micro-credit (to build household assets), food-for-work or cash-for-work (targeted to building community assets), asset transfers (e.g., revolving livestock funds), or production support (fertilizer subsidies) can offer a “livelihood package” that can meet immediate needs while building a buffer for the future.

The challenges to doing so, successfully, rest on a number of preconditions, which include: (1) building political support for the notion that regular, predictable resource transfers, a.k.a. social welfare or consumption support, are a more cost-effective alternative to emergency response and are as important (and complementary) to overall economic development as productive investments; (2) building social protection into legislation or at least into a comprehensive strategy that is integrated with other policy frameworks like the PRSP the MDG strategy; (3) garnering sufficient resource commitments through non-emergency channels to support the sustained implementation of key social protection interventions; (4) making the institutional transition from emergency appeal to alternative institutional home, which is particularly challenging when “social protection” interventions lack a natural institutional home and require multi-sectoral cooperation; (5) ensuring that the institutional transition does not jeopardize the resource transfer; (6) targeting the program appropriately—targeting requirements include (a) correctly identifying the chronically and transitory food insecure, including those that are short of food year-round as well as during the lean season or during localized shocks, (b) targeting the

²¹⁸ Indeed the outpouring of emergency funds for particularly spectacular crises and the upheaval that a crisis entails offers opportunities for reshaping society that are not possible in more stable situations, and can create windows for risk reducing and mitigation interventions that might not be possible outside the parameters of an emergency.

timing of the transfer so as not to provide disincentives to labor or production or to put inflationary pressure on food prices, and (c) targeting the type of transfer to the context; (7) ensuring that the transfer is, above all, delivered predictably and reliably; and (8) combining the transfer with a “livelihood package” or other asset generating intervention that can provide the eventual ladder which, in combination with the protective transfer, can be used to climb out of poverty and insecurity.

This is certainly a tall order, and very few programs have met all of these pre-conditions, however, there are a growing number of governments that are willing to try. One of the most notable of these is the Ethiopian government, whose Productive Safety Nets Program (PSNP) was introduced in 2005 as an attempt to free itself from dependence on emergency food aid appeals and to reduce household vulnerability.²¹⁹ The program targets the (up to) fourteen million Ethiopians in any given year that suffer predictable food deprivation even during periods of record harvest. The PSNP provides support, in the form of both food-for-work and cash-for-work (depending on market infrastructure), offering guaranteed labor and income/food earning opportunity to households with productive members. Labor-deficit households qualify for free transfers in the form of direct cash or food support.²²⁰

Institutionally, this program has required the re-routing of funds from the Annual Emergency Appeal managed by the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee (DPPC) to the Food Security Coordination Bureau, a new government institution charged with overseeing the PSNP. In order to reduce risks associated with the institutional shake-up, donors agreed to fund an initial phase wherein institutions were to be strengthened and prepared for the change-over. However, Haan et al. report that this change-over and “separation of roles” is causing some confusion within the DPPC over its new mandate.²²¹

A set of three initial evaluations focusing on an assessment of targeting, linkages to other food security programs, and the use of the transfer by beneficiaries, suggest that the program is well-targeted, but errors of exclusion are high due to lack of resources.²²² In addition, the transfer itself has not been entirely predictable, nor has it been timed always to coincide with the season just prior to the harvest, resulting in competition with on-farm labor requirements.²²³ The RVHP reports that linkages with other food security programs are not fully realized and, without them, the livelihood package that is needed to contribute to “graduation” from food insecurity is not being delivered to every target household. In fact, the report cautions that “graduation processes are complex and cannot simply be delivered through a safety net program alone.”²²⁴

²¹⁹ Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Program. 2007. Lessons from Ethiopia on a scaled-up national safety net program, Wahenga.brief. Number 14, August,

²²⁰ S. Devereux, R. Sabates-Wheeler, M. Tefera, and H. Taye. 2006. Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP): Trends in PSNP Transfers Within Targeted Households, Final Report, August 10.

²²¹ N. Haan, N. Majid, and J. Darcy. 2006. A Review of Emergency Food Security Assessment Practice in Ethiopia. HPG Research Report, May.

²²² Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Program. Op cit.

²²³ K. Sharp, T. Brown, and A. Teshome. 2006. Targeting Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Program. Overseas Development Institute, The IDL Group and A-Z Capacity Building Consult. London, Bristol and Addis Ababa, August.

²²⁴ RHVP. Op. cit., p. 7.

Since 2004 the Government of Ethiopia and a set of donors and UN, led by WFP, have been designing a drought shock complement to the PSNP with the goal of generating enough insurance and contingency funds to cover up to 6.7 million people in the case of a severe drought.^{225 226} The program, whereby farmers would receive cash payments in the event of a severe drought, was piloted by WFP and partner Axa Re in 2006. The next phase will involve national level scale up, improved contingency planning, capacity building and better early warning systems with built-in, guaranteed funding triggers. This is the first ever attempt of the humanitarian community to approach risk in a SP fashion, determining in advance of a crisis which segments of a population are at risk from what sources, and intervening with mechanisms that are able to avert or mitigate a crisis before it occurs.

The Ethiopia example is in its early stages, and has yet to be evaluated for impact. However, many of the issues that were surfaced in these initial evaluations appear to have more to do with implementation constraints rather than with problems of high-level political support, government institutionalization, or the conceptualization of the program and its promising role as an alternative to the need for regular emergency food aid for large portions of the population. The implementation constraints are surmountable, but should not be underestimated.

Rapid-Onset Natural Disasters. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities (discussed in more detail in the following section) can also be incorporated into a social protection framework, and offer clear links to reducing risk exposure and improving preparedness and response to large-scale natural disasters. In practice, DRR measures often focus more explicitly than SP measures on reducing exposure to *covariate* sources of risk, such as large-scale climatic and geographic hazards, though the Global Review of Disaster Risk Reduction (2007) (GRDDR) attempts to improve the distinction between these and “low-intensity asset loss and livelihood disruption over extensive areas, where people and economic activities are exposed to episodic and highly localized, principally climatic hazard events.”²²⁷ In practice, DRR interventions do not target *idiosyncratic* risks to the household or an individual’s livelihood but rather to the context in which the household is situated, through interventions like improved land use planning and building retrofitting in Asian urban metropolises, the formation of catastrophic insurance pools in Turkey, or community-based contingency planning and the fortification of safe structures like schools in Bangladesh. Greater attention to measures that would reduce the impact of climatic and environmental risks on livelihoods and food insecurity is warranted. The GRDDR claims that “only a handful of countries reported making explicit linkages between efforts to adapt to climate change, to reduce disaster risk and to manage environmental change impacts on livelihood options and poverty trends.”²²⁸ They concluded that there was “little synergy among institutions responsible for disaster reduction and those responsible for climate change, environment, and...social development.” Improving such linkages is necessary to ensure that disaster risk reduction activities (including preparedness and mitigation) are based on risk and

²²⁵ Ulrich Hess, William Wiseman, and Tim Robertson. 2006. “Ethiopia: Integrated Risk Financing To Protect Livelihoods And Foster Development,” Discussion Paper, November.

²²⁶ IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis. 2007. “Ethiopia Drought Insurance Extended to 6.7 Million People,” UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, December.
<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=75865>.

²²⁷ Review of Disaster Risk Reduction. 2007. Geneva: United Nations Secretariat.

²²⁸ Global Review of Disaster Risk Reduction. 2007. Geneva: United Nations Secretariat. p. 71.

vulnerability assessments, are targeted toward those population groups most at risk, and serve to protect and preserve livelihoods and food security in the face of covariate shocks.

Complex Political Emergencies. Like most everything, social protection strategies work best in contexts with relatively stable and functioning governments, and operate even better when there is a democratically elected government whose citizens can hold it to account for the entitlements that they are due. Built on the principles of predictability and stability, a social protection strategy is only as good as the institutions that stand behind it. In a review of social protection policies in six southern African countries, Devereux traces the unraveling of the previously comprehensive social protection system in Zimbabwe under an increasingly fragile state with predatory politics.²²⁹ This underscores the need for protection for social protection! But at the same time, it highlights the precondition for social protection programs to have a well-functioning state apparatus with certain minimal capacities and access to vulnerable citizens—conditions which are rarely present in complex emergencies like Somalia, Sudan, and DRC.

However, through involvement by multi-mandate agencies in what Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler call the “transformative” aspect of social protection²³⁰—the reduction and mitigation of social and political risks, not just economic ones—it may be possible to reduce the types of underlying risks that contribute to conflict and that later manifest themselves in “complex emergencies.” Transformative social protection, by definition, involves the uprooting, or at least the threatening, of accepted power structures and would therefore be the most highly politicized of all social protection interventions. However, in keeping with the SP spirit of strategic and advance planning, the idea of linking transformative interventions to political and social risk assessments may have the benefit, in some circumstances, of reducing the roots of conflict.

Improving conflict prevention activities is one approach to reducing this type of risk in advance, as is integrating conflict early warning into traditional disaster or famine early warning systems.

Barrs argues for improved conflict *preparedness* which focuses on feeding conflict early warning information directly back to the affected population to improve their decision-making around anticipated or actual flares in violence, triggering a set of pre-planned responses or, at minimum, offering improved access to information and predictions that could ultimately be livelihood preserving and life-saving.²³¹ Often, Barrs argues, this is the ideal direction for information to flow, given that humanitarian agencies are frequently constrained to act in conflict-induced emergencies.

The Role of the Humanitarian Community

The responsibility to act to prevent and mitigate the food insecurity of a citizenry through a comprehensive social protection strategy rests with national governments. As mentioned above, successful social protection would be evidenced by a reduced need for external humanitarian intervention. And yet, there are significant challenges to SP in practice. Countries with solid

²²⁹ S. Devereux. 2006. Social Protection Mechanisms in Southern Africa, Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Program Report, June.

²³⁰ S. Devereux and R. Sabates-Wheeler. 2004. Transformative Social Protection. IDS Working Paper 232, October.

²³¹ Caey Barrs. 2006. Conflict Early Warning: Warning Who? *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, February 12. <http://jha.ac/2006/02/12/conflict-early-warning-warning-who/>

capacity and well-functioning administrative structures are often wary of investing in social protection, particularly when SP is viewed as an expensive “hand-out” that could continue indefinitely. Though the concept of SP demands a strong role for government to correct for market failures, governments are often ill-equipped to administer comprehensive programs with intensive targeting and service delivery components. Governments also face significant budgetary constraints to carrying out these plans. In complex emergencies, where governments are not only low-capacity but possibly non-existent, there is no internal authority to administer a well-planned and targeted protection or response strategy.

These challenges suggest a continued, though in many cases, modified, role for the humanitarian community. This role is not always clear given the tension between the humanitarian imperative, on the one-hand, and the need to avoid undermining national systems or absolving governments of their responsibility to address underlying vulnerabilities and to respond to crises. And yet, across the spectrum of government capacity and motivation, international NGOs are engaging with social protection strategies in various ways. A recent Wahenga Brief describes a range of modes of INGO participation in SP, from advocacy, to evidence building, to direct implementation. For example, HelpAge International assisted in consolidating commitments to SP among 16 African governments through its co-organization of the Livingstone Conference.²³² CARE has been implementing pilot cash transfer schemes in Zambia as a pre-cursor to national scale-up.²³³ And in Bangladesh, national NGOs are responsible for implementing government conditional transfer programs like the Vulnerable Group Development Programme.

The author points to “a lack of unity around how INGOs approach social protection,” suggesting that there are several areas where INGOs need to adapt how they traditionally do business. One substantive area has to do with becoming better equipped to analyze and influence national policy, acquiring new skills and the understanding that policy processes are slow, longer-term and often largely outside the direct control of the organization. Despite the fact that NGOs and other humanitarian actors are often better positioned than governments to deliver services efficiently, their operations are generally small-scale and are driven by funding cycles with shorter time horizons than the principles of SP demand. Tibbo claims that NGO involvement in implementing SP has masked the low-capacity that many governments have to deliver SP programs, and suggests that NGO involvement should be geared toward facilitation rather than direct implementation.²³⁴ In addition to increasing their role in lobbying, advocacy, and capacity-building, there is also a role for NGOs to participate in “social mobilization,” by engaging with civil society to hold states accountable to their social contracts and monitoring the extent to which social transfers are carried out as, and to whom, they are intended.²³⁵

Of course, social protection programs cannot solve all social problems or prevent all types of crisis, and thus there will continue to be situations where even the best SP programs fail in their objectives. However, engaging with the new SP agenda, and opening a dialogue around the means by which humanitarian actors can strategically utilize their unique skill sets (or acquire

²³² Karen Tibbo. 2008. The Role of INGOs in the New Social Protection Agenda in Africa. Wahenga Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme Comment, February.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

others) to improve the likelihood of SP success, offers a promising option for reducing the need for external humanitarian intervention altogether.

3.3. Issues and Trends in Disaster Risk Reduction

Overview

The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN/ISDR) defines disaster risk reduction (DRR) as a “framework of opportunities for the prevention and mitigation of risks.”²³⁶ Through activities like the development of disaster preparedness and early warning systems, the sustainable management and restoration of the environment, the construction of safe and disaster-resistant infrastructure, and the establishment of insurance and other financial strategies needed to respond to disasters,²³⁷ DRR aims to decrease the likelihood that shocks will occur, or, if they do occur, that they will cause damage. Among the various DRR strategies that exist, the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)—accepted by 168 countries in 2005—is the most widely recognized. It aims to substantially reduce disaster losses, defined in terms of human life and social, economic, and environmental assets.²³⁸ As exemplified by the buy-in to the Hyogo Framework, DRR is increasingly considered to be fundamental to the sustainability of investments in human and economic development and can potentially serve as a link between efforts to reduce chronic food insecurity and responses to transitory food insecurity. Like social protection, DRR can, in theory, reduce the need for emergency response to food crises and, where an emergency response is needed, it can be better targeted and executed if prepared in advance.

Despite all this, DRR programs often lack a clear and explicit conceptual link to food security, and there is little useful evidence that up-front investments in risk reduction are effective in maintaining food security in the face of shocks. Analytic tools such as benefit-cost analysis and environmental impact assessment are increasingly used for determining the effectiveness of DRR programming,²³⁹ and should be refined to gauge the impact of DRR activities on household- and community-level food security.

DRR Programs to Address Food Security

DRR activities related to food security include famine early warning systems, environmental protection and management programs, community-based contingency planning, and strategies for improving the resilience of livelihoods to certain types of risks.

Early Warning Systems. Early warning systems that predict rapid-onset hazards such as floods, earthquakes, hurricanes and cyclones, are widely implemented throughout developing and industrialized countries alike. Systems that monitor risks like drought and hyper-inflation and their effects on food security status and livelihoods are recognized as an integral element of disaster preparedness efforts.²⁴⁰ Such early warning systems aim to predict food shortfalls and

²³⁶ ISDR. 2004. Terminology of disaster risk reduction.

<http://www.unisdr.org/eng/library/lib-terminologyeng%20home.htm>

²³⁷ ISDR. 2004. Living with Risk: A global review of disaster risk reduction initiatives.

²³⁸ ISDR. 2005. Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015: Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters, p. 11.

²³⁹ C. Benson and J. Twigg. 2004. “Measuring Mitigation”: Methodologies for assessing natural hazard.

²⁴⁰ United Nations. 2006. A Global Survey of Early Warning Systems.

market failures by regularly monitoring data on agricultural production, rainfall, disease incidence, food prices, and political instability. These systems provide information that can be utilized by vulnerable populations, governments, and humanitarian actors to respond in order to avert a crisis or at least to reduce its scale and severity.

Though early warning is intuitively a good thing, the *actual* value of food security early warning systems is largely unknown. Food security monitoring information is often used as evidence for soliciting resources from the international community, yet the extent to which early warning systems succeed in attracting resources is not easily measured. To do so, it would be necessary to discern what portion of aid received (e.g., from the CAP) can be attributed to the red flags raised by early warning information. Furthermore, to sufficiently test the “ounce of prevention equals a pound of cure” promise of early warning, the resources invested in early response must be assessed relative to the hypothetical cost of a “disaster averted.” Valuing the counter-factual of unknown magnitude is a challenge indeed, though from a humanitarian perspective the benefit of even a single potential life saved is worthy of these investments.

As a cautionary note, the absence of evidence should not be equated with evidence of ineffectiveness. At this stage, “early warning is [considered] one of the most cost-effective, practical and effective measures for disaster prevention.”²⁴¹ Moving forward, it is important to pair advancements in early warning systems with impact monitoring to understand and improve the systems’ overall effectiveness.

Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation. Sustainable environmental management and protection are integral to disaster risk reduction. Environmental hazards such as landslides, cyclones, and drought can be mitigated by restoring damaged ecosystems and augmenting existing environmental systems that can act as a physical barrier to such hazards. Not surprisingly, there is often a tension between the twin goals of environmental protection and food security, as long-standing ecosystems such as forests and wetlands have been altered to accommodate agricultural production or increasing population pressure.²⁴² Not surprisingly, the “over development” of forests and wetlands has been shown to make communities more susceptible and less resilient to certain disasters induced by climate change.²⁴³

Mangrove and other coastal forests offer a clear example of how natural ecosystems can reduce disaster risk while providing sources of livelihood for local communities. Mangroves have been shown to act as a bio-shield, protecting coastal communities from tsunamis, cyclones, and flooding.²⁴⁴ ²⁴⁵ Livelihoods based on mangrove forests include fishing, hunting, and wood collection. Though shown to mitigate the impact of these disasters, the preservation and restoration of mangrove forests is complicated by the politics of competing land uses, including large-scale aquaculture activities such as shrimp farming—activities that don’t factor in the long-

²⁴¹ United Nations. 2006. A Global Survey of Early Warning Systems, p. 25.

²⁴² FAO. 2007. The world’s mangroves 1980–2005, p. 6.

²⁴³ S. Borron. 2006. Building resilience for an unpredictable future: How organic agriculture can help farmers adapt to climate change. Sustainable development department, FAO.

²⁴⁴ S. Sathirathai and E. B. Barbier. 2001. Valuing Mangrove Conservation in Southern Thailand. *Contemporary Economic Policy* 19 (2): 109–122. doi:10.1111/j.1465–7287.2001.tb00054.x

²⁴⁵ The World Conservation Union. 2006. Conservation Benefits of Mangroves.

term costs of their actions to increased disaster susceptibility. According to one study, the “conversion of mangrove forest into commercial shrimp farming in southern Thailand appears to be financially attractive to investors, but this does not necessarily make conversion of mangroves to shrimp ponds economically worthwhile.”²⁴⁶ In addition, the fact that “...local communities benefit from many direct and indirect uses of mangrove ecosystems and may have a strong incentive to protect these areas...puts them into direct confrontation with shrimp farm operators and, by proxy, government authorities.”²⁴⁷ This example shows clearly that the technical or economic argument is not always sufficient to trigger action for disaster reduction when power and politics come into play.

Prevention of desertification via the large-scale planting of trees is also seen as means of disaster reduction of, in this case, droughts. For communities who reside in arid climates, the reversal of desertification can lead to improved food security by preventing asset depletion, migration, and crop failure—common responses to drought conditions. And yet, increasing population pressures and competing economic interests often impel stakeholders to reject conservation practices in favor of agricultural expansion and industrial development.

Though there is ample empirical evidence illustrating the economic value of conservation for disaster reduction, there is a large disconnect between this evidence and its translation into policy and practice. The dichotomy between short-term financial benefit and long-term economic viability, and the tension between local versus outsider control of resources illustrate certain challenges to environmental protection-related DRR and explain, in part, why numerous countries and communities continue to experience a chronic, and even worsening, vulnerability to disasters. For environmental protection to be a viable means of disaster reduction, development assistance must be prepared to play the role of mediator in order to achieve workable solutions between multiple and disparate interest groups.

Improved Agricultural/Ecosystem Resilience. Another method of reducing disaster risk is to foster agricultural and ecosystem resilience. Resilience-enhancing interventions take several forms: the introduction of improved seed varieties²⁴⁸ or specialized plant varieties to withstand shocks (e.g., droughts, floods),²⁴⁹ sustainable farming practices to mitigate the impact of disasters,²⁵⁰ the planting of trees to prevent erosion and retain soil moisture,²⁵¹ and the management of watersheds to augment water supplies.²⁵²

The introduction of improved seed varieties has been particularly widespread as a resilience-enhancing strategy both in pre- and post-disaster situations. Anecdotal evidence of the

²⁴⁶ S. Sathirathai and E. B. Barbier. 2001. Op. cit., p. 120.

²⁴⁷ S. Sathirathai and E. B. Barbier. 2001. Op. cit.

²⁴⁸ INCARDA. 2002. Seed for Afghanistan: A first step in restoring food security.

<http://www.icarda.org/Publications/Caravan/caravan16/focus/seed.htm>

²⁴⁹ U. Kelkar and S. Bhadwal. 2007. UNDP Human Development Report. Fighting climate change: Human solidarity in a divided world. Human Development Report Office Occasional Paper, p. 28.

²⁵⁰ World Neighbors. 2001. NGO Initiatives in Risk Reduction—Investigating agricultural resilience to Hurricane Mitch, Case Study No. 7.

²⁵¹ WFP. 2002. WFP’s Activities to Mitigate and Prevent Desertification in 2001. A report to the United Nations Convention to combat Desertification.

²⁵² U. Kelkar and S. Bhadwal. 2007. Op. cit., p. 30.

effectiveness of improved seeds planted pre-disaster is extensive, but little empirical evidence exists on whether they play the role that they are expected to in mitigating crop damage from drought or flood. Furthermore, many DRR interventions that utilize improved seed varieties occur at the village or sub-village level, making the generalization of findings from small-scale studies difficult. In Bangladesh, Oxfam introduced bean and papaya seed varieties that are resistant to flooding. These flood-resistant crops were harvested during the typical food gap period, and their sales “helped diversify livelihoods and created a new source of income during a critical period of the year.”²⁵³

Similar seed-focused activities occurred in the wake of Hurricane Mitch to build resilience to future shocks.²⁵⁴ Though these seed programs assisted farmers to recover from the Hurricane’s effects, it is unclear if these, frequently “one-off,” input injections will make farmers more resilient to disasters in the future, since their success depends on continued use and sustained adoption. There are potential economic disincentives to using seeds bred for flood resistance when disasters are not imminent, as crops grown from traditional varieties may be more demanded for consumption and command a higher price than the improved seed varieties. For reasons like these, the decision-making process surrounding the decision to use improved seeds as a major component of the response to Hurricane Mitch has been criticized for its failure to rely on sound evidence or sufficient analysis.²⁵⁵

One method of assessing the effectiveness of such activities has been to examine conditions post-disaster, comparing locales that were equally exposed to a shock but had different agricultural practices, in order to ascertain which had experienced the least damage and the easiest recovery. In the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, for example, a comparison between conventional farms and farms that employed agro-ecological and land management practices concluded that the latter “...suffered 58 percent less surface erosion in Honduras, 70 percent less in Nicaragua and 99 percent less in Guatemala.”²⁵⁶ Though successful at reducing erosion, these practices were not shown to reduce the severity of landslides. This study, however, does not contain an analysis of the food security situation of both farming groups after the disaster. The ambiguity of these conclusions and absence of food security analysis is common to resilience studies, and can be seen as a serious gap in research on agricultural resilience.

Though the results of the studies are promising, empirical evidence is limited, and much is still unknown about the effectiveness of employing agricultural/ecosystem resilience practices.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, whilst the examination of resilience post-disaster may support theory and help to

²⁵³ Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET), and Winrock International India (WII). 2006. *Adaptation to Climate Variability and Change*. Proceedings of the international conference on adaptation to climate variability and change. P. 167.

²⁵⁴ USAID/Nicaragua. 2001. *Hurricane Mitch Reconstruction Update*. Issue 28 (November).

²⁵⁵ S. De Barbentane. 2001. *Seeds, storms, Strategies: A Study on Decision-making Processes in Seed Supplies and Seed Distribution Interventions in Emergency Situations—Case of Honduras in the Aftermath of Hurricane Mitch*. MSc. thesis, Agricultural University of Norway, Aas, Norway

²⁵⁶ World Neighbors. 2001. *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

²⁵⁷ G. Robertson, V. G. Allen, G. Boody, E. R. Boose, N. G. Creamer, L. E. Drinkwater, J. R. Gosz, et al. 2006. *Long-Term Agricultural Research (LTAR): A Research, Education, and Extension Imperative*. White Paper Report of the LTAR-EE Workshop, USDA-CSREES, Washington, DC. p. 6.

generate hypotheses, it reveals little about the actual effectiveness of resilience enhancing programs. Though recovering from disasters is often costly, a comparison of pre- and post-disaster costs is needed to ascertain if agricultural/ecosystem resilience activities make economic sense. Indeed, such an analysis would also provide policymakers with insight into how best to encourage and promote resilience-building policies. Furthermore, it would illuminate factors that are generalizable to success, and not dependent strictly on local, idiosyncratic characteristics.

Coordination of DRR Programs

Understanding how best to coordinate DRR programs is key to their effectiveness and often underpins success. The coordination of DRR activities occurs at the international, national, and at the local level. Coordination is key to timely and accessible funding, program and policy development, and effective response.

At an international level, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), WFP, FAO, and World Meteorological Association (WMO) are involved in programs linked to DRR and food security. Most notable of these systems is FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System on food and agriculture (GIEWS), which monitors food production, food prices, climatic conditions, and food crises. By analyzing and publishing findings regularly, GIEWS "provides timely and reliable information so that appropriate actions can be taken by the governments, the international community, and other parties."²⁵⁸ Though the information GIEWS provides is an indispensable resource, great coordination is needed to translate this information into effective disaster responses. According to the UN's Global Survey on Early Warning Systems, "[r]esponse plans often do not work due to lack of coordinated reaction among the main actors. The lines of responsibility and authority need to be clear to all to ensure coordination and effective implementation of response plans."²⁵⁹

In addition to information, the international agencies are able to readily advocate for and procure funding, particularly in cases of disaster response. Quick response in the aftermath of a disaster is critical for preventing further losses of life and livelihood. Two funding mechanisms, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs), are recent developments in the disaster response community, and play slightly different roles. Managed by the UN secretariat and launched officially in 2006, the CERF is a "standby fund" available for both "sudden onset emergencies" and "chronically under-funded emergencies...[by] strengthen[ing] core elements of humanitarian response" throughout the world.²⁶⁰ In contrast, MDTFs are country specific pooled-funds financed by multiple donor countries and implemented by a singular agency or organization.²⁶¹ These funding mechanisms mark the return to a more stable and impartial funding framework, whereby funding is both more available and dispersed to meet long-term objectives. As both funds are relatively new, careful monitoring of the effectiveness of dispensed funds (at all levels) is suggested.

National level coordination efforts are managed primarily by a range of government sectors. The effectiveness of state agencies is based on governance structures, organizational and technical

²⁵⁸ GIEWS. 2008. <http://www.fao.org/giews/english/about.htm>

²⁵⁹ United Nations. 2006. A Global Survey of Early Warning Systems, p. 22.

²⁶⁰ Inter-Agency Standing Committee. 2007. Guidance Note on Early Recovery. p. 36.

²⁶¹ Ibid. p. 35.

capacities, and resources. In a recent survey of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) concludes that “legal and governance mechanisms are available but are still limiting implementation of DRR initiatives in 72 of 139 countries.”²⁶² Enhancing the abilities of pre-existing government entities is critical for disaster preparedness as well as reducing long-term risk through sustainable development practices. Cuba offers an example of a country that has repeatedly withstood natural hazards (e.g., hurricanes). By encouraging a community-based disaster preparedness approach, committing the necessary resources to prepare for and respond to shocks, and by utilizing local modes of communication, Cuba has been able to repeatedly prevent disaster.²⁶³ Though disaster rarely threatens Cuba’s food security, its geographic similarity to more food insecure countries such as the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Grenada, demonstrates that disaster losses can be prevented even in locales susceptible to recurrent shocks when the proper systems are in place and are well-coordinated.

DRR and disaster preparedness strategies are most often actualized at the local level. Community Based Disaster Management (CBDM) has been recognized as a powerful approach for promoting community resilience to disasters and fostering long-term sustainable development.²⁶⁴ Communities often have “good practices” already in place that, if identified, can be scaled up and out. Identifying and disseminating such practices has been recognized as a practical means of reducing risk without the need of high-cost external inputs and practices. In addition to empowering local communities to implement their own DRR strategies, greater awareness of local needs facilitates the delivery of disaster-response services from the outside. Information materials pre- and post-disaster must be available in local languages to be an effective as an education strategy.²⁶⁶ Community-based initiatives are also highly practical, particularly when governmental capacity is low and resources for DRR are scarce.

FAO’s regional project “Assistance to improve local agricultural emergency preparedness in Caribbean countries highly prone to hurricane related disasters” provides a current example of multiple-tiered DRR coordination that attempts to enhance food security. As previous DRR programs’ exclusion of agriculture had “significantly reduced the resilience of the sector to cope with extreme hydro-meteorological hazards,”²⁶⁷ FAO “assist governments...to support the food security of farmers in the most hazard prone areas by improving institutional frameworks and technical options for hurricane related disaster preparedness, emergency response and post emergency agricultural assistance.” Established in 2005, the project established “district disaster committees...to facilitate the involvement of communities in disaster planning.”²⁶⁸ The organizational structure of these committees fostered the flow of information from the local to

²⁶² WMO. 2007. Status of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services’ Capacities in Support of Disaster Risk Reduction. Preliminary Assessment based on WMO National and Regional DRR Surveys. <http://www.wmo.ch/pages/prog/dpm/coordination-mechanisms-2007/documents/Item5-ResultsOfSurvey-Lucio.ppt>, p. 7.

²⁶³ Oxfam. 2004. Weathering the Storm: Lessons in Risk Reduction in Cuba.

²⁶⁴ ISDR. 2007. Gender Perspective: Working Together for Disaster Risk Reduction Good Practices and Lessons Learned.

²⁶⁵ L. P. Victoria. 2003. Community Based Disaster Management in the Philippines: Making a difference in people’s lives. Center for Disaster Preparedness.

²⁶⁶ ProVention. 2006. A new generation of risk reduction actors. News, No. 6 (December): 5.

²⁶⁷ FAO. 2007. Assistance to improve local agricultural emergency preparedness in Caribbean countries highly prone to hurricane related disasters. Interim Report—Grenada. p. V.

²⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 12.

national level, ultimately informing government policy. Furthermore, each committee established a set of “good practices for hazard preparedness in agriculture” which were incorporated in regional information system. These steps are crucial as there was previously “no mechanism...that effectively facilitates comprehensive prevention and mitigation planning for hurricane related disasters at the farm level.”²⁶⁹ Though this project is still in its infancy, it offers an example of how coordination and expertise can flow both top-down and bottom-up.

Measuring Effectiveness of DRR Programs

Analytical tools such as cost benefit analysis and environmental impact assessment show particular promise for analyzing the effectiveness of DRR programs related to food security. Though these tools are widely used in “development” contexts, their application to risk-reduction strategies is nascent. To date, measurement activities related to DRR pay greater attention to measuring the costs of economic losses and lives lost than determining the benefit of preserved assets and lives saved. The difficulty required to determine a disaster’s immediate and long-term costs and benefits may explain (at least in part) why few effectiveness measurement tools have been developed and applied to DRR strategies.

Cost Benefit Analysis. The application of cost benefit analysis techniques to DRR is novel as it provides an opportunity to determine the effectiveness of disaster preparedness activities. The technique works on the assumption that investments in disaster preparedness can both benefit the community and reduce losses in the face of recurrent shocks. The study discussed below applies cost benefit analysis to a situation of recurring disasters where a hazard can be predicted and regularly monitored. This approach enables practitioners to accurately assess whether the benefits gained from disaster preparedness activities are greater than the total cost of the intervention and disaster combined. Additionally, studying DRR using cost benefit analysis enables researchers to determine if an area has become less vulnerable and to discern which interventions were most effective at reducing vulnerability.

The Khammam District in India’s Andhra Pradesh province was host to a study that examined the cost benefit ratio of a disaster mitigation and preparedness project. To reduce risk to seasonal floods and droughts, the project included both physical infrastructure and capacity building components. In regards to food security, the project included “alternative cropping” strategies, specifically the introduction of hybrid seed varieties bred to withstand diseases common during flooding and diesel powered irrigation pumps to be used during periods of drought.²⁷⁰ Unfortunately, the findings were released only after the first year of implementation, and “it [was] not possible to definitively assign benefits to the alternative cropping component.”²⁷¹ Though unable to calculate definitively the cost/benefit ratio for this component, the explicit inclusion of a livelihoods-based activity is a welcome rarity to DRR programming.

Environmental Impact Assessment. Like cost benefit analysis, environmental impact assessment (EIA) has potential to be applied to the measurement of disaster reduction and mitigation. When an environmental protection or rehabilitation is believed to reduce risk, EIA is a ready tool “to

²⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 14.

²⁷⁰ C. C. Venton and P. Venton. 2004. Disaster preparedness programs in India: A cost benefit analysis. Commissioned and published by the Humanitarian Practice Network at ODI. p. 14.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

examine the environmental consequences, both beneficial and adverse, of a proposed development project and to ensure that these consequences are taken into account in project design.”²⁷²

When considering reducing vulnerability of agricultural systems, EIA can be used to identify areas most susceptible to environmental hazards. Identification of those areas most at risk of hazards enables communities to reassess the location of their agricultural activities or utilize inputs (e.g., seeds) that can persist in harsh conditions.

In measurement terms, EIA permits the valuation of agricultural land and community ecosystems. Valuation pre-disaster subtracting for improvement and rehabilitation cost can be compared with post-disaster conditions to assess the environmental resilience to specific hazards. Furthermore, EIA can be combined with other tools such as risk and vulnerability assessment to develop a clearer picture of those areas most in need of DRR intervention.

3.4. Emergencies, Social Protection and Disaster Risk Reduction

Social protection, as a holistic framework for social risk management, includes responses typically categorized as “social safety nets” but goes far beyond to include a variety of other instruments, categorized according to whether they focus on risk reduction, mitigation, or response. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) falls within the umbrella of social protection, though it is rarely linked institutionally or in practice, given that DRR typically deals with *covariate* shocks while the intended effects of SP programs are more immediately linked to food security and livelihood outcomes, including *idiosyncratic* shock. The SP and DRR frameworks offer a number of features that hold promise as a way of linking chronic and transitory food insecurity. These features have as much to do with the principles and mode of implementation as they do with the types of interventions themselves.

Social protection policies, in their ideal form, have a number of useful “linking” features—in particular, features to reduce the need for emergency responses to transitory food insecurity: (1) They are *pre-planned and preventive*, both by bolstering a household’s ability to withstand predictable shocks and by improving the response to a shock if it occurs. An example of the former is a safety net program that regularly transfers resources to the predictably food insecure to avert the need to sell assets in order to cover a food gap. An example of the latter is a community-based disaster preparedness plan that can be put into action should the anticipated disaster strike. (2) They are *well-targeted and appropriate* to the type of risk and type of food insecurity. This implies that ideally social protection programs have identified major risks and population groups facing those risks, and developed an appropriate response, one that typically requires *disaggregating* the response to different portions of the population. For instance the Ethiopian PSNP gives either cash or food, depending on market infrastructure in the region the program is being implemented. It distinguishes between those households with productive labor and those without. It also meant to link those lacking assets to asset-promoting livelihood packages that will enable them to graduate from the regular need for cash or food assistance. It is

²⁷²OECD DAC. 1992. Guidelines on Aid and Environment, Good Practices for Environmental Impact Assessment of Development Projects, No. 1. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee. p. 7.

a program that, on paper, is disaggregated in its response according to the populations' vulnerability profile. (3) *They are predictable and timely.* The predictability of the resource transfer is a critical precondition to enabling households to effectively use resources for maximizing consumption and for investment in riskier activities with higher returns that may boost their asset base and free them from poverty traps, reducing chronic food insecurity. (4) They are typically managed and implemented by *governments*, rather than by the external humanitarian assistance community. Though SP interventions do typically require multi-sectoral collaboration, which makes the cohesive coordination of a SP strategy challenging, the fact that there is domestic institutional responsibility for social protection implies that there is a political commitment and measure of accountability to reducing transitory and chronic food insecurity by addressing chronic problems. Though SP and DRR appear promising in theory, in practice implementation breaks down or effectiveness cannot or has not been gauged. This prompts several questions for consideration of these frameworks as guides for linking chronic and transitory food insecurity.

1. Could the development of a coherent social protection program with DRR elements do away with the need for emergency response altogether? If not, what are the risks associated with reallocating funds away from humanitarian actors with the ability to respond to crisis and toward other government institutions?
2. Do social protection policies have too many preconditions for success to make them worth taking these risks? If SP is embedded in government institutions, and are only as sound as the institution that backs them, then how best should SP-related efforts focus on institution strengthening?
3. Can the principles of SP work in areas where government is not strong, and what happens if governments fail?
4. Is there a role for humanitarian agencies in carrying out social protection strategies, and if yes, what is it?

These types of questions, among others, are important considerations for determining how, and whether SP, DRR, and social risk management can serve as the link that the humanitarian assistance community has sought between problems of chronic and transitory food insecurity.

CONCLUSIONS AND QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THE PAPER

Rather than simply summarizing the discussion presented in the foregoing discussion of the Themes, this conclusion section poses some general questions for discussion at the Food Security Forum. While most of these do not have consensus answers, they summarize the debate on humanitarian food security, and the way in which the humanitarian community must respond to a changing global situation.

The first set of questions centers around analytical capacity (assessments of need, measurement of impact); the ability to allocate resources impartially; the ability to link analysis or early warning to a timely and appropriate response; balanced responses to food security crises and the engagement of humanitarian food security actors at the policy level; and limited ability to link the short-term protection of food consumption with long-term improvements in production and access.

1. How can the humanitarian food security “community” improve its analysis to reflect changing realities on the ground, enable appropriate responses, and improve timeliness of response?
2. How can impact measurement be significantly improved and incorporated routinely into program management? To what extent should resources be invested in assessing impact?
3. What are the most salient conceptual and analytical constraints to improved linkage in short-term (“transitory”) responses and longer-term (“chronic”) responses?
4. How can improved analysis be better linked in a practical way to improved engagement at the policy level? How can humanitarian actors improve the linkage between their actions in the field, and the programs, policies and institutional requirements for sustainable, long-term improvements in food security?

The second set of questions focuses on the effectiveness of response itself. The innovation and scale of food security responses continue to be hampered by the lack of dedicated resources, limited interface between humanitarian food security interventions and post-crisis activities; and scarce attention to risk reduction through such interventions to protect against future shocks.

5. What qualifies as an early recovery response? What kinds of activities coming under the rubric of “food security interventions” can be included in the earliest stages of relief operations? How much “early recovery” funding can be justified in flash appeals versus CAPs?
6. How can response analysis—weighing the costs and benefits of responding to assessed needs through different programmatic modalities—be made a regular part of the way in which humanitarian food security responses are carried out?
7. How important is the impartial allocation of resources to humanitarian food security response? Is the “community” willing to fight (against significant political odds) for greater impartiality?

8. To what extent is the lack of capacity/engagement of national governments in chronic poverty and food insecurity a major constraint to being able to address the food security problem comprehensively? What should the humanitarian community do about it?
9. How should institutional learning and processing of painful lessons from mistakes be incorporated better into humanitarian planning and action? How can the learning be made collective (i.e., inter-agency, not just within agencies)?
10. Could the development of a coherent social protection program with DRR elements do away with the need for emergency response altogether? If not, what are the risks associated with reallocating funds away from humanitarian actors with the ability to respond to crisis and toward other government institutions?
11. Within an expanded role for humanitarian actors, how should priorities for engagement be set?

The third related set of questions focuses on aid architecture.

12. What are the benefits and drawbacks of having a “food security cluster” to enhance effectiveness and coordination?
13. What mechanisms are possible to hold cluster leads more accountable for inaction or ineffective coordination?
14. How should agencies be structured—to specialize (in “humanitarian” or “development” areas) or to expand to cover various forms of activity and timing, with the skill-bases of personnel broadened accordingly? To what extent should investing in local partnerships based on comparative advantage be the way forward in responding to complex risks and their impact on the food security of vulnerable or crisis affected populations?
15. How can the humanitarian community effectively engage with the private sector (corporations, industry, foundations, etc.) in activities that go beyond saving lives; that is, into more developmental domains that require longer-term engagement? Additionally, *should* the humanitarian community engage with private sector entities in areas where accountability on ethics, market penetration, and influence over consumer behavior are all important considerations?

The fourth set of questions focuses on funding of food security responses.

16. OCHA considers the time ripe for a review and adaptation of the flash appeal mechanism because more disasters means more shocks in locations where there is no CAP in place, and no humanitarian coordinator. On the other hand, many natural disasters are manifesting as overlays on top of simmering complex emergencies (consider the complications to response options to the tsunami in parts of Aceh and Sri Lanka because of pre-existing armed struggle). This means that separate funding streams and activities for CAPs and Flash Appeals may be increasingly artificial and self-defeating. How should such a review and change to appeals mechanisms take place?
17. The innovative example of drought insurance coverage in Ethiopia suggests a promising role for private sector cooperation in insuring against disaster. What are the key issues that need to be worked through in order to expand this model to other countries and other types of disasters?

The fifth set of questions relates to policy reform. “Reform” is a mantra of the UN system and many NGOs are taking a new look at their mandates, roles and future (such as CARE’s policy decision to opt out of monetization of US food aid). But momentum can be lost, and with many new players on the scene there is potential for dispersal of policy harmonization. Maintaining momentum will require attention to capacity building. Maintaining momentum on funding is one issue, but many neglected emergencies appear to have serious absorptive capacity constraints to deliver services and activities supportive of food security (as opposed to humanitarian response).

Climate change represents both a challenge and an opportunity in this regard. The potential for more frequent and bigger shocks carries with it the danger that even more humanitarian assistance will be called for, and allocated to, relief responses to major catastrophes—with less available for, and limited traction in dialogue on, longer term interventions that go deeper into the social protection and risk reduction functions of food security interventions. The positive side is that as economic costs of large disasters continue to grow (assets damaged and lost, income streams impaired, national economic growth compromised), more attention may be paid to the potential for investing in developmental relief, effective mitigation, and disaster risk reduction. While greater integration (at least in terms of UN response) is a plus on the side of integrating short-term and longer-term responses, it presents challenges in terms of integrating humanitarian action under the aegis of political and security concerns in complex emergencies, limiting humanitarian independence and impartiality.

18. How can the humanitarian community do a better job of costing “preventive” measures (ounce of prevention versus pound of cure), arguably drawing from methodologies such as DALY calculations to better cost and compare alternative invests in relation to single (or multiple) metrics?
19. What are the trade-offs, from the perspective of humanitarian food security actors, between improved coherence of transitory and chronic responses on the one hand, and decreased independence of humanitarian action in complex emergencies on the other?
20. What is the role for humanitarian agencies in promoting improved policies and capacities in social protection and DRR?