



THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION PROJECT ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

**RETHINKING “RELIEF” AND “DEVELOPMENT”  
IN TRANSITIONS FROM CONFLICT**

**An Occasional Paper**

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**RETHINKING “RELIEF” AND “DEVELOPMENT”  
IN TRANSITIONS FROM CONFLICT**

by

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The current text has been revised and updated and focuses primarily on the development of a conceptual framework to better integrate relief and development activities during conflicts and in post-conflict transition situations. The goal of the framework is to make transitions out of conflict more successful and promote the more effective reintegration of internally displaced persons and other affected populations.

Steven Holtzman is a social scientist in the Post-Conflict Unit of the Social Development Department at the World Bank. The views expressed in this paper, however, are the author's alone and not necessarily those of the World Bank. In preparing the paper, the author gratefully acknowledges the information and ideas gleaned from discussions with his colleagues in the Post-Conflict Unit of the Bank.

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## SUMMARY

*International aid institutions tend to view "relief" and "development" as separate, sequential endeavors. But this dichotomy is artificial. There are historical reasons why the international community has separated relief and development into discrete categories in its response to conflict and post-conflict situations as well as why this separation lingers today. But the implications for conflict-ridden societies when relief and development are separated into sequential activities are considerable. A more comprehensive approach to aiding societies engaged in and emerging from conflict is the concept of "maintenance of capital" of those societies. This goes beyond the immediate goal of saving lives. It means preserving and building the human, social and physical capital of the societies concerned so as to promote transitions out of conflict and make them more successful. It could become the underlying principle driving strategies of international aid. But it will require partnerships between relief and development institutions early on in conflict situations. It will mean designing international aid to prepare populations for peace and promoting the social and economic reknitting of societies -- a precondition for sustainable peace.<sup>1</sup>*

## THE ROLE OF HUMANITARIAN AID IN TRANSITIONS FROM CONFLICT

Many countries are currently undergoing a transition from long periods of internal conflict. These transitions and the years of humanitarian aid which preceded them are expensive and absorb large amounts of the shrinking pie of overseas development assistance. Yet, despite the best efforts of international agencies, frequently these transitions fail as the societies return to open warfare. In other cases, fragile transitions go on for several years or longer, creating serious questions for both humanitarian and development aid institutions.

What is going wrong? The first answer to this question is that wars do not always end and combatants do not always enter a transition to peace with good will. Ultimately, responsibility rests with the affected societies themselves. Some transitions will inevitably fail. In addition, external assistance, whether from humanitarian or development sources, is only one of the tools at the disposal of the international community. Diplomatic and military options are not always pursued in a timely and well thought out manner. Nonetheless, it is instructive to ask whether we utilize as well as we can the assistance tools we do have, namely the resources of the UN system, the Bretton Woods institutions, donor government agencies, and other relevant organizations.

The international community tends to view conflicts in phases. A society is in conflict and the response is to provide humanitarian aid to save lives. A peace accord is prepared and a wide range of international resources is mobilized, from humanitarian and development sources, for the rapid reconstruction of the affected society. There is sensitivity to the fact that the opportunity to consolidate peace exists within a short "window of opportunity." The international community tries to react with urgency and help rebuild the physical infrastructure and institutions of governance, reintegrate refugees, internally displaced persons and ex-

combatants and create the conditions for a functioning economy while also trying to foster a climate of inclusion and reconciliation. Yet, such windows are narrow and fragile for the following reasons:

- (1) Peace accords do not mean that core problems have been resolved and that there is now a political consensus. The stoppage of open hostilities often results more from international pressure, the initiatives of individual leaders, and the exhaustion of combatants than from a consensus on a united society.
- (2) Expectations on the part of the affected societies and the international community are unattainably high so that disillusionment sets in easily. Too often it is expected that the holding of elections, the return of refugees and displaced persons, the laying down of arms, and other benchmarks will lead to the real end of the conflict so that humanitarian agencies may “exit” or transform their aid portfolio to other priorities.
- (3) Most conflict societies were low-income with minimal capacity even before the conflict. They will not become prosperous or economically stable overnight even when political crises are weathered. They will face poverty, weak institutions of governance, and weak service delivery, even without accounting for the destruction and lost opportunities associated with war.

The task of international assistance during these windows, therefore, must not only be to consolidate peace and exit but to build peace brick by brick, a challenge which will take time and require supporting both political cohesion and socio-economic rehabilitation and development. First, we need to improve our capacity to invest in societies in conflict in order to reduce the detrimental effects of conflict on populations. The more sustainable the socio-economic base of the affected society, the less complicated will be the task of rehabilitation during a transitional window of opportunity. Second, we must increase the efficiency and cohesion of our investment during the transitional period. The need for urgent response during a transition means that planning and preparation for international response must take place well in advance of a peace accord. Problems of logistics, access and security all conspire to make both of these areas of response difficult to improve. But the most fundamental blockage is the artificial division of "relief" and "development," which is woven into the structure of international aid agencies and perpetuated by the segmented funding strategies of donor countries.

Within international organizations there is a division between those groups who have been assigned the task of providing humanitarian aid (“relief”) and those whose tasks are more targeted towards the long-term needs of societies, loosely termed “development.” Emergency relief is supposed to be provided first, followed by reconstruction and development activities. But this time-line is artificial. In reality, there is no “continuum.” There is only international aid whose magnitude and nature change in the course of conflict and post-conflict situations. The citizens of affected societies live in a seamless reality and do not distinguish between “humanitarian” mandates and “development” mandates. The growing expansion of humanitarian aid operations throughout the 1980s into areas viewed traditionally as “development” stems from a recognition of this artificial divide. The more recent growth of small catalytic “transitional” units in development agencies is similarly driven by an understanding of the need to close the “gap” between humanitarianism and development.

International aid can play a major role in ameliorating some of the divisive aspects of conflict by planning interventions, even during a conflict, with an eye towards eventual peace rather than focusing exclusively on the emergency relief needs of displaced populations. The end goal is not to ignore humanitarian needs of affected populations but rather to promote a more expansive humanitarianism which seeks to sustain societies in conflicts and prepare members of such societies as well as the international community for a strategic and workable approach to transitions from conflict when opportunities to consolidate peace arrive.

Improving the response of international assistance to affected countries requires a sober analysis of what happens to societies in conflict, not just through the direct impact of arms but through war's indirect effects. Long periods of civil conflict transform societies in fundamental and far-reaching ways. They create new dynamics and social patterns which have little or nothing to do with the social structures that existed prior to the conflict. The artificial division of international responsibilities into humanitarian aid and development prevents external actors from fully analyzing and acting on this dynamic. True humanitarian aid should bring relief and development actors together, each with their own comparative advantage and expertise, to help maintain the socio-economic base of societies driven by conflict. Conflict-affected populations, whether physically displaced or not, are part of a larger society and this larger society needs to be reknitted in order for transitions out of conflict to be effective. Indeed, over the past decade, emergency aid workers have begun to develop more sustainable strategies for working with conflict-affected populations even during a period of war. Recognition that such populations need to be empowered and treated as something more than victims or targets of international charity has, in fact, become more widespread.<sup>2</sup>

However, the fiscal and administrative constraints of the relief paradigm continue to complicate sustainable strategies of response, even where aid workers on the ground recognize the most appropriate course of action. And, even in the best case, many still view individual populations, whether refugees or other displaced populations settled in concentrated areas, as a society with no past or future linked to the societies from which they emerge. To truly transform humanitarian aid strategies into strategies designed to maintain the capital of conflict societies, we must begin to plan, even at the very outset of conflict, for a society which will find itself embarked upon a path of peace. This in turn requires a more flexible response not only by international agencies themselves but also by donor governments who finance their operations and steer their strategies.

## **THE LEGACY OF THE MARSHALL PLAN**

Most international development and humanitarian organizations, including the World Bank, UNHCR and others, owe their structures and mandates to the Marshall Plan and its focus on the reconstruction of post-war Western Europe. The Marshall Plan concentrated on the repair of physical infrastructure and a flow of investment capital and was successful in reconstructing the economies of Europe. A similar strategy today aimed primarily at rebuilding economies would be unlikely to be as successful. The Marshall Plan operated in an environment where a group of highly developed countries had experienced a relatively short period of external warfare

and, at the end of that war, needed to put themselves back on a track of development and growth. True, the war's destruction was great in particular countries but overall, the West European economies were not damaged in any irredeemable way. The duration of displacement was at most several years, less than a generation, so that the effect on human capital in terms of lost educational and professional opportunities were, despite their magnitude, relatively less or at least different from what is experienced today. Finally, the war was an external war, whose end marked a distinct historical point so that it was appropriate to have post-war reconstruction follow as a clearly delineated phase. After the rebuilding of infrastructure and the injection of capital, a post-war Europe reemerged relatively quickly. And by the late 1950s, the continent became one of the centers of a vibrant post-war global economy.

This experience in Europe left in its wake a host of assumptions about the role the international community should play in conflict situations. In summary, war was viewed as a clearly defined phenomenon with a distinct endpoint. Relief would be needed during and immediately after the war, but then reconstruction would begin. Catalytic investments and a massive inflow of capital would successfully jump-start economies emerging from conflict. During conflict, societies were simply “on hold” and could resume normal life thereafter, once the right material aid was provided. These lessons became the foundation for the thinking and planning of humanitarian and development institutions that were created in the postwar period. The problem, however, is that the European experience has not proved to be instructive for other parts of the world.

## **The Changing Nature of War**

Since 1980, over 50 countries have experienced major conflicts quite different in their nature from the European conflict. To a large extent, they have been internal conflicts. Moreover, peace treaties have not necessarily ended these conflicts. In fact, many civil wars in the past two decades have moved towards peace and then returned to conflict. Liberia, for example, had at least thirteen separate peace agreements before Charles Taylor assumed power in 1998. In Angola, a return to conflict in 1992 following a failed peace treaty cost more lives than the previous decade of war combined. The Sudan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and other cases have cycled in and out of open conflict over a decade or longer. Even Uganda, viewed by many as one of the key successes in transitions from conflict, remains, a decade after the Apeace,@ engaged in civil war in its northern regions. Civil wars also leave fragmented and divided societies in their wake, whose divisions remain as key stumbling blocks for years after the signing of peace accords.

While previous wars were largely fought between formal combatants organized in conventional armies, most casualties in today's wars are civilians. Sometimes this is due to technology (the increasing use of landmines), but often the internal and fratricidal nature of modern conflict has led to the intentional targeting of civilians, such as through doctrines of “ethnic cleansing.” In internal wars, no household or community is left untouched, and the wars often last for decades. Yet, at the same time, such conflicts are of intermittent intensity with “fighting seasons” tied to weather patterns and parts of the country that are formally “at war” but

that don't experience active fighting for months or years at a time. Since, as earlier noted, most of the conflicts of the past twenty years have occurred in low-income countries, the transitions from these conflicts require strategies far different from earlier postwar international aid efforts. Strategies have to take into account these societies' poverty and weak economic and infrastructural base which predated and often fueled the conflicts.

Because internal wars do not generally end with the signing of peace accords, the accords become windows of opportunity in which combatants can take a chance on peace. When such windows do arise, a great sense of urgency is felt to promote activities in support of transition. The rehabilitation of physical infrastructure is one such activity. But the critical task is to create the conditions that will enable the population to begin to reknit itself and to shift from what could be called the "rhythms" of a society at war to the "rhythms" of a society at peace. This means, for example, that populations displaced for a generation or more must begin to reintegrate with some visible success within extremely short time periods. Obviously, the better prepared the displaced communities and other affected populations are before this window opens, the more rapidly the transition can occur. The fundamental principle of humanitarian aid should be to enhance the survival strategies of families and communities in a society at conflict both to allow them to weather the conflict period as well as to prepare them for an eventual transition to peace. Put in another way, humanitarian aid should be directed towards the maintenance of the capital of a conflict society. This means not only the "human capital" of individuals but the "social capital" of communities and groups as well as the physical and financial capital of the society of which they are part.

## **A NEW HUMANITARIANISM**

Is humanitarianism only about providing "relief?" Humanitarian aid traditionally has been about saving individual lives, and this is the lens through which humanitarian workers have historically viewed their craft and the measure by which humanitarian operations have been judged. As noted above, the humanitarian paradigm that emerged following the second world war provided for a division of responsibilities between humanitarian and development agencies with humanitarian agencies being solely responsible for aid during a crisis. Humanitarianism was also considered separate from transition periods and from long-term development goals.

The international community's response is well illustrated by the kind of data humanitarian agencies have collected in situations of displacement. Until the late 1980s, the statistics gathered on displaced populations were primarily for refugees and not for those internally displaced. Overall, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has gradually risen throughout the 1980s and early 1990s to about 25 million today, surpassing that of refugees. The combined total of refugees and IDPs is more than 40 million.<sup>3</sup> The statistics collected are generally on an annual basis and thus represent the numbers of displaced in any given year. So, for example, figures of displaced persons for 1997 include Bosnians who remain in flux as well as Congolese and Albanians who have been recently displaced, but they no longer include Mozambicans or most of the previously displaced Afghans, Central Americans, and others who have returned home during the past several years.

If the numbers of those who have experienced long periods of displacement over the past fifteen years were collected rather than simply the numbers of those displaced during a given year, the displaced would double in number. As mentioned earlier, many societies endure displacement over an entire generation or longer. In Africa, nearly half the countries have produced refugee flows in the past decade, and more than 6 percent of the continent's population has been displaced during the past ten years. Furthermore, the problems of the displaced do not end upon their return home. They are more long-term. Consider the count of those patients who come into a hospital's emergency ward with broken bones versus the total number of those patients who require continuing orthopedic care. If displacement is to be considered a development problem, then one has to take into account not just those currently displaced but all who have been displaced over a given period, say a decade. When we view displacement as a temporary problem soluble in the first instance by relief aid and then by a quick return home and a minimal transition package, we minimize what are invariably lasting effects on very significant numbers of people.

More recently, however, individual humanitarian workers, closer to the ground and coming out of diplomatic and/or development backgrounds, have begun to advocate a longer-term societal perspective. Conversely, those in the development world who have not seen the problem in all its aspects and may be supporters of relief-style responses have been changing as well -- albeit slowly. Given the constraints and dynamics of ongoing conflict, there is a growing awareness that humanitarian aid and development may share overall goals and that there is need for reflection on how they function and interact.

Humanitarianism in modern history has rarely been implemented in an equitable fashion. International refugees have been supported while often larger groups of internally displaced persons have been neglected. Often it has been argued that IDPs are less accessible to international aid than are refugees. But, there are certainly enough cases of IDPs in refugee-like situations, concentrated in camps or accessible areas of countries at war.<sup>4</sup> The two key questions to be asked in looking at displaced populations should be: 1) are they accessible to international assistance? and 2) what are the implications for the society at large and the resolution of the conflict if assistance is provided to these populations? These questions are of far more import than artificial distinctions based upon the incidental crossing of an international frontier.

The role of mass media, or the "CNN effect," has contributed to distorting aid, channeling scarce resources to the latest crisis in front of the cameras, at the expense of other situations. During the cold war, humanitarian relief was often tinged with political considerations of major donors. While the need for the support of refugee populations was undeniable, the delivery of assistance was often wrapped in the dynamics of proxy wars for the superpowers. Refugee populations frequently represented the families of combatants. Their protection and assistance facilitated the continuation of wars against regimes that were viewed as opposed to the geopolitical interests of regional or international powers. Refugee camps were, in many cases, staging grounds for cross-border guerrilla attacks. Under such circumstances, it is fair to ask whether the impact of this assistance truly served to support long-term humanitarian goals or whether, by enabling a prolonging of conflict, in the long run cost more lives than were eventually saved.

Within the short-term calculus of saving individual lives, such a question cannot even be asked. From the calculus of relief, any intervention that reduces human suffering and loss of life is appropriate. From the calculus of development, the short-term goal of saving lives must be viewed in a longer-term perspective of facilitating a transition out of conflict. Are there times when the short-term costs of stopping or limiting relief may be outweighed by the longer term goals of preventing relief aid from becoming a magnet for further displacement or helping to sustain a conflict by providing aid to the dependents of active combatants? Such a question may be incompatible with the legal tenets which underlie much of humanitarian aid. In a more practical sense, raising such questions is counterproductive to the international business of relief operations which rely heavily upon the ad hoc contributions of bilateral donors to finance emergency operations.

This relationship with donors creates a dynamic in which it is necessary to constantly refer to situations as emergencies and assure that financing of relief is a measure without which thousands or millions of innocents will die. When "emergencies" drag on for several years, it becomes harder and harder to make this case both because of the obvious dynamics of an extended situation and because of the desensitization to such appeals for the same population. In such situations, it is also difficult to argue simultaneously that aid must be provided for more sustainable activities on a multi-year basis when the same agencies are raising the specter of recurrent violence and instability to reinforce their annual requirement for emergency funds.

Due to the longer duration of conflicts, humanitarian aid has, in the past decade, gradually moved away from solely catering to the emergency needs of a displaced population to involvement in a wide range of activities which are perceived as developmental. These include micro-credit, small-scale industry and agricultural programs, preventive rather than curative health care, and family planning. There is also increasing recognition of the need to involve communities in the decisions which affect their lives. However, often in practice, the dynamics of emergency operations and the lingering procedures and structures which define humanitarian work, complicate such attempts. To some extent the gaps are less the result of the desires of the practitioners than of how the donor community views the humanitarian exercise -- as an emergency activity with little scope for long-term planning. Yet, in an increasing number of cases, "crises" extend far past initial emergencies. The strategy of developing "quick impact projects" (QIPs) is one example of forward-looking policy on the part of humanitarian agencies. These projects, even during a conflict, attempt to build the preconditions for post-war rehabilitation of communities. But, such attempts are largely the result of the vacuum created by the absence of development organizations.

To truly improve the response of the international community to societies in conflict, we must go beyond the individual needs of refugees and other particular groups and begin to view the societies in their totality. This involves examining the impacts of conflict and the transformations which conflict engenders in affected societies. It also implies far more strategic monitoring and evaluation of the impact of humanitarian assistance than presently takes place. There is still the sense that aid is a universal good, and detailed evaluations of its impact are often given less attention than are warranted.<sup>5</sup> In peacetime, there are a wide range of institutions that bear responsibility for planning aid in support of the government and people of a

given society. Consultative groups or roundtable structures exist where donors sit and plan not only the allocation of resources but also strategy. There is, however, no equivalent planning mechanism for countries in conflict. The UN's consolidated appeal process is little more, in its present form, than a shopping list and rarely reaches a level of vision akin to a country plan. We need to utilize periods of conflict to prepare the groundwork for transitions to peace through analysis of conflict societies and, where possible, maximize the potential to design and implement interventions which, in the face of instability and uncertain access, can improve the lives of those who remain behind.

## **SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATIONS DURING PERIODS OF CONFLICT**

So many countries are experiencing conflict today that we should, perhaps, speak of "conflict societies" and treat them as a separate category of social organization. In the case of the Soviet Union, attempts were made, following its breakup, to fathom the workings of socialist economies and societies in order to better appreciate the dynamics of transition in these societies. To develop effective strategies for international aid to societies in or emerging from conflict, there must be a better understanding of conflict economies and societies, which have their own rules and patterns of behavior. Given the number of countries involved in extended periods of conflict and the amount of resources invested by donors in supporting them, some effort in this direction is justified. The most widely recognized impacts of conflict -- deaths, destruction, violence, and inter-ethnic hatred -- are not extensively discussed here, not to minimize their significance but to illustrate the subtle and complex impacts which long periods of conflict create in affected societies even beyond these direct effects.

Certain recurring characteristics of internal conflict help make it possible to sketch the parameters of a conflict society:

First, the unified state apparatus has collapsed or shrunk and no longer serves uniform functions within the boundaries legally accepted by the international community.

Second, constituent populations are dispersed beyond the control of a state for significant periods of time, either across national borders or in areas politically or logistically inaccessible to a unified authority.

Third, the functions normally performed by the state are either not performed or performed in parallel by multiple proxy government authorities, NGOs and international agencies. In most cases, no one authority has access to, knowledge of, or control over all interventions in any specific area or sector of state activity.

Fourth, the normal patterns of a peacetime society, its social institutions, forms of collective action, and rhythms of life, have been disrupted by both sudden and violent shocks and by gradual extensive shifts in underlying conditions.

In many of the countries attempting to transit out of warfare, conflicts may go on for so long that they create wholesale distortions in the socio-economic fabric of the society. Although for reasons of access and need, physically displaced populations are likely to be the most common targets of international aid during a conflict, the impact of the conflict goes far beyond those who are physically displaced and may affect the human and social capital of entire societies.

One way of assessing the impacts of conflict is to separate the consequences into four categories: (a) destruction of financial capital (capital flight, loss of income); (b) destruction of physical assets and disruption of the economy; (c) destruction and deterioration of human capital; and (d) dissolution of social capital. All crises, whether natural or human-made, have impacts on the first three categories. Natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods have more focused and intense physical effects. They cause destruction in a finite geographic area -- one region or one city -- that is usually only one small part of a larger country. By contrast, internal and external wars produce more extensive damage, although this varies according to the nature and duration of the conflict. Until recently, development institutions viewed conflicts in accordance with their experience with natural disasters. Such disasters tend to be characterized by quick periods of displacement; the society at large is left intact and state and civil institutions, though overburdened, do not completely disintegrate. Furthermore, natural disasters, much like external wars, tend to cause members of the society to band together out of a humanitarian instinct and sense of self-sacrifice. Internal conflicts tend to do just the opposite: they fracture society, encouraging mistrust, divisive behavior and carefully framed suspicion.

The destruction caused by conflict goes beyond the destruction of physical infrastructure and even the cost in human lives. Since many countries emerging from conflict were poor in infrastructure and wealth to begin with, violence and civil strife "break down the underpinnings of the economy, challenge the basic assumptions of economic management, undermine predictability and confidence in the future, disrupt markets, distribution networks, banking and credit systems, and cause economic distortions." In addition, "daily civil life is replaced by widespread militarization. Displacement denies access to previous livelihoods and to basic services. Gender roles are altered. Social organization and family units break down or become adapted to the new environment. Lack of trust in most institutions often prevails." Wholesale adaptation to militarization or displacement becomes an obstacle to a smooth return to normal productive activities. Moreover, in countries which have experienced warfare lasting ten years or more, entire generations mature knowing only conflict.<sup>6</sup>

"Social capital" is a term whose currency has increased in recent years, but whose meaning has never been clearly defined. It refers to patterns of social behavior and social institutions that facilitate interactions and exchanges. It involves situational trust which minimizes the risks and costs of social transactions. It is the glue which holds society together. No society is completely free of private and public conflicts. They are part of the process of sorting out priorities regarding the distribution of resources and opportunities. Breakdown results from the inability of the institutions of a society to manage conflict and dampen or channel its manifestations. The most significant effect of violent civil conflict is the breakdown of social relationships or the unity of society. Conflict breaks down the reciprocity that holds society together. It breaks down commercial relations, links between farmers and markets, local

forms of collective action, and community organization. It also breaks down links between the state apparatus and society: revenue collection is suspended or curtailed; and state services such as education and health are no longer provided to certain regions or countries. These effects occur even before the fragmentation caused by political polarization and manifestations of ethnic hatred, genocide and “ethnic cleansing,” which greatly magnify their impact.

Conflict-induced losses in human capital, through casualties and displacement, are sometimes significant enough by themselves to cause these breakdowns. But, even where state services are available, their nature changes because the state is seen as partisan, as one-sided in a conflict rather than as an arbiter of social relations among the population as a whole. As a result, individuals lose confidence in the institutions of the wider society, and they become less willing to identify their interests with those of the society. One striking example of this dynamic can be seen in the widespread cannibalization of physical infrastructure common during a conflict, sometimes achieving absurdly low short-term profits when compared with the eventual cost of replacement. In Afghanistan in the mid-1980s, copper wire from telephone lines was being taken down, stripped and sold in Pakistani markets for perhaps a few dollars a pound. It will undoubtedly cost tens of millions of dollars to eventually replace these lines. Yet, in the short-term calculus of conflict, such activities make sense. In conflicts spanning more than a generation, they even begin to seem normal. The purpose of international investment is to break this spiral and reknit the linkages of society's groups, allowing confidence and hope to return.

Societies also change in relation to their place in the world community. When conflicts go on for many years, the relation of the society to its neighbors and the world economy alters. Sometimes this is for the better. Throughout the decades of conflict in Mozambique and Angola, South Africa was a pariah state to the world. Now, during these two countries' transition from conflict, their proximity to the giant South African economy opens up enormous opportunities. By contrast, Lebanon, once a financial center for the Middle East, now faces reconstruction in the shadow of the uncertain future of the region's Palestinians, a large number of whom still live in that country. And Afghanistan, which dissolved into war sixteen years ago, once shared a border with the Soviet Union. Now, it borders several Muslim republics of Central Asia with uncertain consequences. In other cases, societies find themselves losing out on external opportunities because of their internal conflicts. The 1994 conflict and genocide in Rwanda not only crippled its economy but prevented that country from benefiting from a coincidental boom in the international coffee market.

Conflict-induced displacement is a good lens to begin to view what happens to a society in conflict. Although perceptions are now changing, it has been widely held that conflict-induced displacement is a temporary phenomenon of war and that it will disappear as soon as the displaced return home. In any given year since the late 1980s, 20 to 30 million people have been uprooted from their homes.<sup>7</sup> Figures vary, especially for the internally displaced, partly because of the lack of access to countries in conflict and partly because it is not yet entirely clear what populations should be considered displaced. As alarming as these figures seem, the numbers viewed from a longer term perspective would probably be far higher, perhaps in the hundreds of millions.

Sometimes, the degree of displacement is so high that one can speak of whole societies

which have been displaced. Of the countries with major conflicts since 1980, thirty have had more than 10 percent of their population dislocated, and ten countries have had more than 40 percent of their population displaced. At the same time, displacement can not be understood only in terms of the specific individuals and families who have been physically displaced. It affects a much larger population.

When displacement occurs, it shatters families, communities and regional socio-economic frameworks, often, in ways which make it extremely difficult to return to previous patterns, even when the conflict has waned. Those who are left behind must continue their lives in the vacuum created by the departure of the displaced. Those who live in areas of refuge find their lives altered by the dynamics of major new population inflows into their areas. These inflows, or rather the international response to them, affects larger populations, especially when the distribution of relief aid causes distortions in local economies. To cite but one example, in the mid-1990s, in response to the displacement resulting from internal conflicts in Georgia, the international community provided food aid estimated to equal the per capita caloric requirements of the entire population of that country. This action undoubtedly affected every facet of life in Georgia's communities, in ways not immediately evident when displacement is viewed through a narrowly defined humanitarian lens.

The movements of displaced persons must be understood in terms of the effects on their home communities as well as on the areas in which they find refuge. In this sense, it is reasonable to speak of a "multiplier effect," with the true figures of the impact of displacement as high as three times the number of those who have been physically dislocated.

Population departures follow many patterns. At times, entire communities or even entire regions evacuate together leaving no one behind. This was the case in parts of Mozambique and is currently the case in Azerbaijan. At other times, portions of communities leave, as in the central plateau of Angola. Young men, combatants with their families, certain ethnic or linguistic groups, and others may depart from a region, leaving their neighbors behind. Often, the elderly and the very young remain to tend to agricultural land and retain a claim on property. The patterns may differ from region to region even within the same country or during different periods. Each of these patterns of departure has an impact on home communities, ranging from loss of skills to the emergence of new forms of social organization.

**IMPACT DURING FLIGHT.** Since the displaced seldom have the luxury of departing with prior preparation, the flight is often chaotic. Resources are squandered in the search for security. Casualties are incurred as the displaced cross war zones and inhospitable terrain, while disease and shock also create a significant number of fatalities. Families are separated. The physical constitution of the elderly and the young is often irreparably damaged in the first weeks of flight. Any accumulated family savings are likely to be quickly exhausted. Movable property is often sold. Farm animals are lost in the diaspora or sold as well. These consequences affect conflict-displaced populations even if the diaspora lasts a month or two.

**THE LOSS OF SKILLS.** If displacement lasts longer than a few years, it often results in a widespread de-skilling of the displaced population as well as those who are not displaced. Craftsmen may lose or sell their tools, or find no use for their skills and only limited markets for

their products. The children of farmers with limited or no access to land grow up without the skills or desire to take up farming upon the cessation of hostilities. Even where rural populations remain in place, the lack of access, during conflicts, and the difficulty of securing other forms of capital that facilitate cultivation (credit, fertilizer, manpower) can destroy incentive. And it becomes difficult for populations to return to rural occupations after having lived "urbanized" lifestyles in camps or on the outskirts of cities. Moreover, whatever the skill base of the displaced, the effects of long periods of conflict may prevent an easy return to previous patterns of employment.

**IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE.** The departure of the displaced from rural areas often leaves agricultural land without sufficient human resources to maintain levels of cultivation. The extent of the damage will depend on the length of the displacement, the ecosystems affected and the cultivation patterns. In Liberia, most subsistence agriculture is based on slash and burn methods of cultivation. In such cases, a long hiatus in cultivation may not have significant detrimental effects. But in ecosystems where significant ground preparation is required and irrigation works need to be maintained, even short displacement may have far-reaching and often irreversible impacts. Some impacts of displacement are the same everywhere. The displaced frequently depart with the seed crop, or those who remain eat it out of desperation. Beasts of burden die in the fighting or in the diaspora, or are soon sold or killed in areas of asylum for supplementary food. After just a few years of neglect irrigation systems can deteriorate to a point where massive efforts are required to bring them back into operation. If the diaspora lasts more than one to two years, land preparation may also become difficult: land may become too hard to break with simple plows, soil erosion may have occurred, and wild vegetation may have choked water channels and covered entire fields. Because populations develop coping strategies to enable them to survive, agriculture may revert from cash crops to subsistence patterns or cope with manpower shortages by shifting away from strategies which require communal labor. Insecurity also may have impacts on cultivation strategies. One study from Uganda found, for example, that during the civil war in that country, farmers began to plant tubers, which would not show above ground, to discourage looters.<sup>8</sup>

**EFFECTS ON HOUSING.** Conflict-induced displacement often affects housing as well. Although buildings made of concrete could be left for a decade and still be usable, houses of mud and stone, which are more common in less developed countries, are more likely to deteriorate if abandoned for extended periods. Housing stock constructed with sun-dried brick or thatch requires regular maintenance and repair. Over a period of several rainy seasons, neglect results in nearly irreversible destruction often barely indistinguishable from the impact of direct shelling.

**ECOLOGICAL PRESSURES.** The settlement of the displaced for long periods in areas of asylum has significant impact on these areas and their population. In conflict countries, the displaced often settle in marginal land in deserts, mountainous areas or jungles and subject these areas to unusual patterns of land use and ecological pressures. Most conflict-impacted populations typically have very short-sighted survival strategies. This is partly due to a lack of proprietary feeling resulting from displacement and the breakdown of community cohesion and partly due to the marginal nature of the land that inevitably falls to the lot of displaced populations. But it is also the result of their lack of options: households need fuel, and

surrounding forests and grasslands are all that is available. In times of stability and peace, they may practice ecologically sound patterns of natural resource utilization, but when normal patterns of survival are disrupted or when people are displaced to areas of asylum in unfamiliar ecosystems with limited sources of income, they almost always resort to destructive practices understandably predicated on short-term gain.

The flight of Rwandan refugees into Tanzania, even into sparsely populated areas, has had an inestimable impact on the ecosystem there. The return of Rwandan refugees from Uganda over the last few years with several hundred thousand cattle may have so damaged the Akagera National Park that it may never return to its previous condition. While this is an environmental concern of major proportion, it also will have long-term economic consequences. Perhaps 10 percent of Rwanda's foreign exchange was at one time earned from ecotourism. The temporary settlement in 1994-95 of the internally displaced in the Nyungwi and Gishweti forests in the west of the country have damaged those protected areas as well.

**PRESSURES ON URBAN CENTERS.** Displaced populations often flee to major urban centers to gain access to the state's resources when services are disrupted to the rest of the country. Luanda, a city created for and populated by a few hundred thousand Portuguese colonialists, tripled in size after 1992, when it became a haven for Angolans fleeing the effects of conflict. At that time, social services, water, and sanitation were already strained because the skilled cadre had disappeared and the development functions of the Angolan state had broken down. With the tripling of the population, facilities became overloaded, and the urban infrastructure all but collapsed.

When refugees cross borders and settle in surrounding countries, the governments concerned normally try to contain the crisis by isolating refugees from the domestic population. These efforts are intended to reduce pressure on social services and prevent competition between refugees and local inhabitants. The success of these efforts varies greatly, but as a rule the longer the refugees remain in their new surroundings, the more they find ways to interact with the populations there. Wealthy refugees and relief workers may bid up rents in available housing stock. Refugees willing to work for lower wages may undercut the labor market, particularly at its lower end. Ironically, the presence of Afghan refugees in Iran put pressure on a long-standing population of Afghan guest workers, whose niche in the economy and ability to stay in Iran were complicated by their compatriots' entry into the labor market.

**SOME POSITIVE EFFECTS OF DISPLACEMENT.** Individual refugees can bring investment capital and scarce skills which benefit the country of asylum. Likewise, those displaced within a country may bring skills with them as well as physical and financial capital. In some instances, the dynamics of displacement may create significant numbers of wage earners beyond the conflict zone, whose income is transferred back to conflict societies. Remittances that refugees send back to their home countries have been known to have powerful and often positive effects on their societies.

**IMPACT ON EDUCATION.** One of the most rapid impacts of displacement occurs in education. Only a small percentage of refugee children throughout the world attend school. The percentage of internally displaced children must be similar or even lower although statistics are

hard to come by. This gap in education has obvious implications for the formation of human capital and also for the resolution of conflict. In 1995, on the day that the Rwandan government announced the date of secondary school examinations, there was a palpable sense of frustration in the refugee camps in Tanzania. A whole cadre of teenage refugee children were in a sense being disenfranchised from the normal cycle of schooling; they were automatically being made to be at least one year behind those who stayed in Rwanda or who had recently returned. For the middle class, the leaders and the educated, this meant that the lives of their children had irrevocably been changed from that moment on.

When children of school-age whose families are displaced by a conflict miss even a few months of education, they may lose a full year of school in the educational cycle. If schooling continues in some parts of the conflict country but not in others, it becomes difficult or impossible for the affected children to catch up with their peers. When refugees flee to surrounding countries, even where education is available, differences in the educational curriculum, structures and qualifications complicate later integration. Often, neighboring countries operate under different educational systems and in different languages of instruction. The lack of educational opportunities for the displaced is related not only to a lessening human capital but to the views of opinion leaders among the displaced (rural landlords, government functionaries, professionals, urban middle class, and the like), who see the limited opportunities for their children as a serious threat to their ability to regain their status after hostilities cease. The subsequent disparity in opportunities represents a potentially significant source of tension during the post-conflict transitional period. To address this problem in Rwanda, UNESCO negotiated with the government to print and provide textbooks for schools free of charge while at the same time distributing the same books within the refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania. This assumedly contributed to the parallel development of children of all groups in Rwandan society.

**NUTRITION.** The effect of displacement on nutrition varies from situation to situation. Relief rations are rarely sufficient for personal maintenance. However, following the first few months of a conflict, the displaced, especially refugees, who end up in camp situations, find means of survival through personal effort or international largesse. In many cases, those displaced outside of camps are not so lucky. Displacement, particularly in Africa, has also been a significant factor in the spread of AIDS. An increase in the birthrates of displaced populations is also common because of the inevitable boredom, depression and close proximity of large groups of people. In many situations, producing children is considered a contribution to the war effort, in that a new generation of potential military recruits is being created. Some relief distribution systems, it could be argued, reward births by providing additional rations and supplementary feeding for pregnant mothers. But displaced populations who become dependent upon food aid during a conflict may find it difficult to break themselves of that dependency when they try to reintegrate. There are of course also cases where the process engenders an entrepreneurial spirit and leads recipients to supplement minimal relief quotas.

**FAMILY PATTERNS.** Displacement also has an impact on family patterns, changing gender roles and altering the structure and size of households. With males of productive age leaving the household to search for employment and serve as combatants, the heads of households change and families break apart. In many cases, this leads to a resurgence of

extended family settlement patterns as well as puts females at the head of the household, both among the displaced and the population in general.

**PRESSURES ON COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY.** Even when a government is occupied with warfare or has broken down completely, civil society does not disappear. But, it does go through sometimes traumatic transformations. Population flows often bifurcate communities, and if the diaspora lasts longer than a year or two, leadership patterns, dispute resolution mechanisms, and property rights in home communities are left in disarray. This encourages individuals to take advantage of the situation and encroach on the land of those who are absent. Often, combatant groups formally or informally distribute "vacant" land to supporters, creating or exacerbating a series of private conflicts in the society. In most of the conflict countries, cadastral surveys have never been taken. Government land records are sparse at best and those that do exist may be destroyed during the conflict. Traditional methods of resolving land disputes simply do not apply when the communities that practiced them have dissolved or their leaders have been delegitimized or killed. The fabric of rural society is normally integrated into agricultural cycles. When agricultural activity disappears from the lives of the displaced, for instance, patterns of cooperation, collective action and social organization become dormant or distorted. Subtle rules of behavior and checks and balances, drawn from customary usage, disappear or erode.

The longer the displaced remain outside their normal environment, the more significant these impacts. Property rights become a serious issue for both returning and remaining populations who were on different sides of a conflict. But neighbors, even from the same side, whose own property has been destroyed, may be found occupying the property of others. During an extended conflict, tenants may "rewrite" their personal terms of occupancy or develop patterns of land use that alter previous arrangements or conflict with the needs of returnees. Commercial and private debts are conveniently "forgotten." Children grow up in a period of flux and mature with an imperfect or distorted knowledge of their own society, its mores and patterns of behavior.

As the displaced gradually move away from the cycles of their previous existence, they develop a new series of activities and forms of organization appropriate to their new environment. This is particularly true in refugee camps. Like any other environment, the camps have their rhythms of life. Families need security and a sense of belonging. They also need access to services and food supplies. Conflicts and the disruption caused by displacement often lead to a separation of traditional leadership from their constituents due to death, differing patterns of dispersal, or delegitimation in a new context. New forms of organization and intermediary leaders grow up to facilitate access to international relief supplies.

The new forms of organization sometimes develop either linked to the command structure of a combatant organization or through the aggregate efforts of self-seeking entrepreneurs who manipulate the situation to their private advantage. In some cases, camps may become the location of constructive leadership, beneficial to the reintegration process. But just as often, extremist groups opposed to reconciliation, playing on the frustrations of dislocation, find refugee camps to be fertile ground for recruitment. The obvious example is Rwandan refugees in Goma but the pattern is more widespread. Whether constructive or

manipulative, the structures which grow up in camps, slums and other areas of “asylum” represent one aspect of the transformation of the social organization among displaced populations.

The distortions created in social organization are sometimes directly related to the presence of international humanitarian assistance itself. Indigenous NGOs, community organizations and other mechanisms come forward to pool resources and gain access to international aid. In fact, many camps become the location of extensive voluntary collective action and community services, sometimes stimulated by international NGOs. There also may be cases where the dissolution of a central state authority actually allows some forms of local traditional organization to reassert themselves. Particularly important is the increasing number of women's associations active among displaced populations. Furthermore, refugee camps, even if located in isolated rural areas, take on many facets of urban life owing to the concentration of their populations. The services provided there are often superior to those available in the home community.

In the private sector, many commercial enterprises adapt to conflict conditions by changing their goods, dealing for example in relief supplies distributed by international agencies or in arms or drugs, or by working in dollars instead of local currencies. The resilience of small-scale entrepreneurs is one of the most poignant illustrations of how societies adapt to conditions of conflict.

**IMPACT ON STATE STRUCTURES.** Where a conflict is protracted, a combatant organization may not only conduct warfare but also govern at least part of the territory of the pre-conflict state. That is, it may provide health and education services and perform many of the functions of a state, in a sense providing a dress rehearsal for post-conflict governance, the delivery of sectoral services and the "retraining" of social capital. In some cases, guerrilla movements attempt to govern and create parallel structures to administer territories under their control. The South West African's People's Organization (SWAPO) in Namibia and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in Eritrea both developed extensive expertise along these lines during conflict periods.

Most often, protracted conflict results in a deterioration of the state in dramatic fashions. Service delivery stops or diminishes to the point of irrelevance. Taxes are not collected. Conflict results in the irreplaceable destruction of public records such as diplomas and birth certificates, land registration records and tax rolls which form the lifeblood of peacetime bureaucracies. The trained cadre of the state are killed or flee, often never to return. But the most serious impact of conflict on the state is that conflict undermines the state's legitimacy and breaks the tenuous compact between state and society in ways that cannot easily be reknit. Loyalty, or at least accommodation with the state, is, after years of chaos, no longer an underlying condition of state-society relations. Even in peacetime societies, the legitimacy and the ambit of the state are not always secure. Of all the impacts of conflict, the dissolution of the state's legitimacy is the hardest to repair and thus represents the greatest challenge of a transition.

Four hundred years ago, large areas of the globe were not continuously under the domination of modern states. Shifting frontiers and gradually diminishing circles of control and

power were more the norm. It is only for the past two centuries that state boundaries have been taken to represent sacrosanct divisions of power and that international relations has become largely the domain of states. This form of social organization has always been open to question, particularly in areas outside of Europe. Now, the sovereignty of states is being increasingly challenged by the reach of the international economic system, which in setting comparative prices for commodities and fixing exchange rates and the costs of credit belies the concept that states and their constituent societies control the dynamics of sophisticated socio-economic activities within their geographic borders. Technological innovations, particularly in transport and communications, have similarly undermined the idea of sovereign states. In addition to these trends toward globalization, the implications of long-enduring conflict must be recognized. Conflicts put populations beyond the reach of modern states for years at a time and also result in the creation of competing forms of social organization to the state.<sup>9</sup> There are thus constraints on how much can be done. But, should such societies be left beyond the full range of international assistance? It is the division of mandates and restrictions on the use of donor funding as much as conditions on the ground that block efforts to support such societies.

## **THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL AID IN TRANSITIONS**

Forward-looking international aid policies must recognize that societies moving toward massive internal conflict have different dynamics from societies which have already broken down into conflict. Different patterns of response are therefore needed during the three different phases: prevention of conflict, during conflict, and the transition out of conflict. Although external actors will never be able to combat all the distortion and destruction that take place during a period of conflict or replace the years of productivity and growth erased by conflict, international assistance can, in many instances, play a significant role.

### **Conflict Prevention**

We don't truly understand why conflicts occur or why they emerge at a particular moment in a country's history. Some societies have survived long periods of tension and conflict. In others, the state has collapsed or "failed". The term "failed state" is in many ways a dangerous conceptualization as it implies that state structures are flawed and are the cause of the conflict. It may also lead to the categorization of states as "weak" or "strong", which may have little bearing on the situation. Fragile state institutions or "strong man" authoritarian regimes may last for decades or may collapse all at once during a succession. No one predicted the collapse of Albania, for example, and in the case of Rwanda, as late as the fall of 1993, the Arusha Accords were expected to hold. It is not that analysts are unaware of the causes of conflict. It is that rarely a single variable is at fault. A conjunction of events cause conflict. Fragile state structures, grievous inequities, long simmering ethnic fault lines, abject poverty or conversely rapidly growing economies -- all these are factors. It is the precise mix of the factors that will trigger a conflict which is unknown.

Often, tensions that might otherwise subside are frequently fanned into flames by the

actions of external actors or local political entrepreneurs. The role of the United States in Central America, the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan, South Africa in Mozambique and Angola, offer examples. But, in all cases, whether conflict is labeled as the result of ethnic warfare, "weak states," imperialist scheming or myopic development strategies, the underlying factors are usually complex and have something to do with economic, social and political relationships. Ten societies may be on the verge of collapse worldwide at any given moment. Which ones will weather the storm and which will ignite, we do not know. Nevertheless, international aid agencies can take steps to enhance their sensitivity to conflict and to integrate a concern for conflict avoidance into development operations.

The first point to remember in devising a strategy for prevention is that conflict is cyclical. Many countries return to conflict following unsuccessful attempts at reconstruction. Second, the roots of conflict often go back many years. Third, long periods of hostility create dynamics of their own (militarization, displacement, fragmentation of the state) that may provide fuel for additional conflict. Fourth, preventing conflict is far less costly than reconstruction. Post-conflict reconstruction can never hope to rebuild all that is lost during conflict. It is a long and painful process that leaves scars that can take generations to heal. Terms such as "reconstruction" and "reintegration" fail to capture the full sense of the transition out of conflict since they retain a sense of returning to the past and do not really denote the movement forward and how societies become transformed into new entities.

External actors only have limited influence over situations where conflict and its resolution lie in the hands of internal actors. Nonetheless in any given situation, there are certain times and circumstances in which external actors have an opportunity to shape events. But it is difficult to predict when these windows of opportunity will arise. And even when there is advance warning that a society is descending into cycles of violence, as in Algeria, Colombia and Burundi, this knowledge has not helped to identify a course of international action. The question of whether international peacekeeping troops can stop a conflict is beyond the scope of this paper, but obviously needs further exploration. Other kinds of efforts, such as the FEWER initiative which seeks to coordinate information from aid agencies, journalists, academics and others, may help to enhance our capacity for early warning, but it is still too early to tell.

**A ROLE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES.** Outside of diplomatic and military initiatives, there are steps that international development agencies can take to influence state actors to avoid situations that might lead to open conflict. In fact, "peace conditionalities" always have been an informal part of aid agencies' operations. In countries as diverse as Algeria, Colombia and Macedonia, various aid agencies have begun to ask how development aid can reduce violence or strike at the core of conflicts. At the same time, there is fear that the creation of a formal framework for such interventions may challenge the sovereignty of states and undermine their authority. For the time being, international aid agencies could concentrate on integrating a sensitivity to conflict into their vision of the role of international economic assistance. UNHCR has attempted to play an important role in highlighting issues of conflict in the international arena before they spiral out of control. But, international investment in conflict prevention is likely to emerge more clearly from the operations of development agencies.

The primary concern of such agencies is to promote economic growth and alleviate poverty, but increasingly they are paying attention to the need "to ensure that development interventions do not inadvertently fuel existing conflict" and that they take advantage of existing opportunities to support stability within a given society.<sup>10</sup> This suggests a close connection between stability and growth and raises questions about the relationship between economic growth and conflict. It has long been a tenet of social science that periods of growth can stimulate conflict by causing a "crisis in rising expectations" and that paradoxically, such dynamics are more volatile than frustration arising from increasing poverty. There is need for development agencies to have a better understanding of the impact of economic policies, for example, "structural adjustment" policies, on stability and growth. If the extraordinary costs to a society of debilitating conflict are integrated into a larger calculus of "cost-benefit analysis," the viability of some investments may be brought into question.

One way in which development institutions can increase their understanding of conflict in individual situations is to begin to challenge the "ahistorical" approach upon which much of development assistance has been predicated. While diplomats and military personnel are often trained in the history, culture and social dynamics of the societies in which they operate, officials of development agencies seldom undergo such training or orientation. Although more and more social scientists are being asked to provide counsel, the concept that development strategies cannot be designed without local knowledge and an understanding of the social fabric of a country, its political and administrative institutions, and its culture, is not uniformly applied in development assistance. The recent moves by the World Bank to decentralize its management structure and post more professional personnel in the field may help its personnel become more sensitive to the dynamics of individual societies.<sup>11</sup> The World Bank's policy on post-conflict reconstruction cites four ways in which development investments can contribute to the prevention of conflict. These are:

- (1) An increased use of "social assessments" which include explicit recognition of conflict and fault lines of social tension as a core part of development planning. These assessments should focus on resource distribution within a society and disparities between geographic regions and social groups;
- (2) An engagement with civil society and an incorporation of participatory approaches and the concept of social capital in development strategies, bearing in mind that social organizations can both further and frustrate development efforts. As noted in the World Bank paper, "Social capital, like any other form of capital, can be wisely or foolishly invested, used to many different ends or squandered and wasted. In other words, evaluations of development investments must take full account of the fact that institutions and social organizations matter both for good and bad and provide the filters through which investments are distributed;"<sup>12</sup>
- (3) An increased attention to governance, with an emphasis on accountability and transparency. It is essential to recognize the role government institutions can play in selectively allocating and extracting resources and in providing the predominant legal framework for resolving disputes and managing conflict within the territorial bounds of a given state;
- (4) A frank exploration of the costs of both random and organized violence in undermining

socio-economic activity. Violence and the dissolution of bonds of trust and confidence in a society conflict with the underpinning assumptions of development and alter strategies of household accumulation and investment yet are little understood.

This last point is another reminder that the “side effects” of conflict can be as damaging to transitions to peace as are the direct impacts of warfare (casualties, destruction of physical infrastructure, militarization). The question then that needs to be addressed is how can conflict societies sustain capital during a long-term displacement. How can manifestations of conflict be managed and their impact on a society dampened? Can development programs contribute to reducing urban violence? Can an investment in street lights reduce the opportunity for random violence? Early attempts at such strategies have been tried in Macedonia with the support of UNDP and in Colombia under the auspices of the World Bank. Their emphasis is on community organization and the massive generation of grassroots employment as a means of heading off major crises. In cases where the displaced tend to leave home not because of the direct impact of violence but because of dislocations in social and economic life, development investments targeted towards keeping them in place could become a component of a strategy of international response.

### **International Response During Conflicts**

International aid policy in conflict situations should be based upon two goals: the maintenance of the capital of conflict societies; and the building of a base for planning for transitional investments.

To take again the example of the response of assistance agencies to the issue of conflict-induced displacement, the area where the majority of humanitarian assistance is targeted, until very recently, there was a tendency to focus exclusively on displaced populations and to view them as the objects of charity and humanitarian response. Even camps which endured for a decade or longer during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s focused on maintaining people's health and nutrition standards. They were guided little, if at all, by the view that displacement could be a period in which preparations could be made for an eventual return home. At the same time, recognition did begin to grow that those displaced for several years or more needed schools, a stronger focus on preventive health care, and income generation opportunities; in short, there was need for development-style interventions in relief.

As a result, development-oriented programs increasingly have become a part of refugee camp management strategies. Income generation projects, preventive health campaigns, and training programs have been initiated with significant success in a number of locations. In areas such as southern Sudan, Afghanistan and Somalia, where conflict has endured for long periods at a relatively low intensity, there has been increasing recognition that some interventions are possible which invest in stable pockets of societies and integrate a long-term vision of development. However, these instances do not represent a shift in perspective, but rather are localized responses to situations. For a new type of humanitarianism to take hold, such efforts need to be integrated more broadly into aid programs.

In cases where states have collapsed, such as Somalia or Afghanistan, or where sovereignty is contested, as in the southern Sudan, international response raises the issue of the legitimacy of providing aid to populations in areas where states are incapable of acting as intermediaries. Indeed, the structure of international aid, which focuses on sovereign states, fosters an underlying suspicion that attempting sustainable development in societies where states have broken down is somehow “illegitimate.”

Certainly, there are real risks in investing in stateless areas or in areas controlled by erstwhile rebel groups. There is the lack of counterparts to provide institutional accountability as well as the risk of inadvertently prolonging a conflict by aiding particular combatants or reinforcing parties opposed to peaceful resolution of differences. But countering these risks is the undeniable reality that there are significant populations in low-income societies struggling with the realities of daily life. In northern Somalia, the breakaway unrecognized government of Somaliland taxes trade and undertakes the functions of a state. There are 20 million people living in Afghanistan and as refugees and guest workers in surrounding countries who have been, over the past twenty years, creating a life for themselves in the midst of conflict and state collapse. International aid has dropped to a fraction of what it was during the Soviet occupation and the country is considered too unstable for investment. Yet an economy is functioning. Private transport networks ply their trade. Money lenders operate. Many of the major cities function almost normally. There is an enormous amount of trade emerging from Afghanistan. While most of this is transit trade in consumer goods, it suggests at a minimum the existence of sophisticated and intricate networks of trade, transport and financing.

Yet the political situation in both Somalia and Afghanistan has made the international community react ambivalently. While relief aid is provided and some NGOs and UN agencies attempt to do more, there is little in the way of an international consensus as to how the world community should relate to societies without a recognized government. For eighteen years, Afghanistan has been referred to as a “complex emergency” by the international community. To be sure, since the mid-1980s, specific interventions, such as veterinary extension services and immunization, have been designed for sustainability. And more recently, the UN system's pilot attempt to institute "common programming" in Afghanistan has offered some hope for a cohesive response although it is too early to evaluate. But there is no uniform countrywide strategy similar to that for a country at peace. Yet much of the country is at peace and even where intermittent conflict breaks out, there is still scope to expand support to the society. Sadly and somewhat perversely, it is only when new crises arise -- in particular, natural disasters such as floods in Somalia or an earthquake in northern Afghanistan -- that international attention returns in force to these areas. But what is missing is a sense that sustainable strategies of development are the goal rather than makeshift interventions.

Part of the problem, to return to one of the main themes of this discussion, is that humanitarian response has long been viewed as separate from development. And development-focused programs in humanitarian situations often have "reinvented the wheel" and made the same mistakes that development practitioners made a decade earlier -- forgetting to involve people in their own futures and neglecting the importance of community structures. To some extent short-sighted goals in relief are an institutional problem, due in part to the character of personnel. However, humanitarian relief professionals with experience in development have

been increasing in number, and over the past decade, a kind of “hybrid” professional background has emerged with experience in both “conflict societies” and “normal” development situations. Strategies are needed to reinforce and reward individuals and institutions moving toward this new brand of thinking.

Another reason for slow response lies in the budgetary cycle of relief-oriented donors. The money provided is often significant in amount, but has only a limited time horizon. Long-term relief is available for twelve to eighteen months at best, and budgetary allocations are often made on cycles as short as six months. Such strategies make it institutionally difficult to hire staff on longer-term contracts or to plan interventions that take a year or more to implement. The strategies of fund-raising for humanitarian aid reinforce this dynamic. In a universe of diminishing resources, humanitarian agencies must constantly frighten the governments and populations of donor countries into believing that their aid is urgently required in a situation of instability and crisis. At the same time, they are becoming more and more aware that their task requires long-term planning and initiatives which may take several years to bear fruit. It is difficult to request multi-year funding from donors and yet simultaneously convince them that they are funding a temporary crisis. Yet, donor governments force humanitarian agencies into this situation.

Donor governments are faced with a similar problem. Allocations for development funds are often suspect and subject to debate and reductions in national parliament budget discussions. Purse strings open more readily for “humanitarian emergencies” and yet, by the nature of the bifurcation of institutional responsibilities which accompanies this dynamic, are virtually never fungible for more long-term activities. Discussions in the European Commission of “humanitarian plus” grants with longer budget windows could become a critical contribution to improving international response. While there is no simple way forward, at a minimum, donor governments need to pay greater attention to the need for creative, situational thinking rather than maintaining the present funding division between humanitarian aid and development.

Conceptually, displaced communities need to be viewed as “partial communities” in need of support to reinforce their membership in a society that will only truly emerge following the cessation of hostilities. International aid should not only provide immediate relief, but also provide sustainable strategies for displaced populations. Investments made to maintain and enhance human and social capital during a diaspora or in a stateless society are in the long run more economical than attempts during reconstruction to retrain a deskilled society and develop confidence within a population which has been weakened and demoralized by long years of dependence on international relief.

The positive impact of displacement on some kinds of entrepreneurial activity provides some potential for investment, as does the frequent phenomenon of the growth of women’s associations and the overall significant level of spontaneous indigenous NGO activities in many displacement situations. Starting from this base, the questions that need to be asked are not only related to what response will support a population for the time being, but rather what will these people be doing in five years? What will happen when they come home and what can be done to enhance the preparation process? Again, even where humanitarian agencies wish to move towards long-term thinking, it is the division of donor financing that restricts them.

**DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENTS.** Traditionally, displacement during a conflict has not been of immediate concern to development institutions. To the extent that the dominant perspective on displacement has been relief-oriented, i.e., saving lives, development organizations have had little comparative advantage and a minor role in the issue. However, if, as suggested, the disposition of displaced populations is in fact a critical foundation for later transitions out of conflict and development investments, then development institutions do have a role to play. As long as the international community preserves the division between humanitarian aid and development, then humanitarian organizations will invariably be the dominant international actors in dealing with displacement during conflict. Nevertheless, a development focus can be adopted by humanitarian agencies provided that the actions of such agencies are designed to take advantage of opportunities for development investments. A whole range of skills and acquired experience in development can be focused on the problem. Achieving this focus requires intimate partnerships between humanitarian and development agencies.

A long-term humanitarian perspective means that interventions during a period of active conflict should be designed to prepare societies for the most rapid and efficient transition out of conflict. Interventions may be limited in extreme circumstances to the emergency requirement of saving lives but should be undertaken with a view towards maintaining the raw material of societies for the day when conflict subsides. The speed with which countries emerge from conflict is not only an issue of reconstruction. Transitions occur during windows of opportunity. The costs of a failed transition extend beyond the destruction caused by the renewed conflict. Failed transitions make later transitions all the more difficult.

In a society at peace, long-range planning and analysis are undertaken by ministries of the concerned state with support from local universities, bilateral and multilateral donors, the World Bank, UNDP and other agencies. In a society in conflict, the state can no longer play this role and there is a strong argument in favor of international aid agencies creating temporary “proxy” institutions supported by all donors to function as a sort of “shadow” planning ministry. Such “proxy” institutions would develop sectoral plans and collect and analyze data for the country as a whole to guide emergency interventions and prepare sustainable development strategies. Such planning must include the collection of data and the preparation of information for eventual peace even while war is raging.<sup>13</sup>

Too often, transitional investments following a peace accord are implemented in the absence of real information regarding the country in question. Where a society has been in conflict for extended periods of time, pre-war data may be of little relevance since conflicts radically transform societies. Where pre-war information is still of use, collecting such information marks only the beginning. Sectoral studies, economic analyses and other examinations of conflict societies are needed. They can help agencies identify opportunities for investment during conflict and, if properly designed, can improve the sustainability of the operations of humanitarian agencies. Much data exists but it tends to be divided among a wide variety of NGOs focused on short-term goals so that the information is collected under incompatible methodologies and does not give a clear picture of a macro-situation or easily allow for comparison and learning. Where areas are not accessible, remote-sensing, for example

in sketching agricultural cropping patterns, could be used to prepare for transitional investments following peace accords, well before these accords are activated.

Pilot projects are important, yet are underutilized in humanitarian operations. Even where large-scale sustainable activities are impossible, small-scale pilot programs can develop valuable information regarding sectoral priorities, structures and patterns of community organization, and cultivation patterns. To take one small example, credit facilities, although minimal, often develop and adapt to allow commercial activity during conflict situations. There may also be opportunities to explore the regional implications of the conflict, reinforce the stability of neighboring countries and begin to envision potential investments that could help “relink” the society with its neighbors, create employment and promote economic growth in the regional economy.

Data collection should also cover the international response. Humanitarian assistance is both a tool for contributing to the sustainability of survival strategies and a part of the environment in which those strategies take place. Unfortunately, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian programs have often been limited to the narrowly defined measurements of delivery of goods and services rather than encompass the social and economic impacts of the operations on the intended beneficiaries. Humanitarian operations frequently have unintended negative effects or, conversely, do not maximize their potential for good. Although monitoring programs in conflict zones are difficult and tricky and may be impossible in short-term emergencies, the monitoring of humanitarian aid over several years is essential to adequate planning.

Analysis of a conflict society must take into account that members of that society may have migrated beyond the territorial borders of the country. In particular, attention should be paid to the growing phenomenon of remittance-based investments in conflict societies. During years of war in many countries, a significant portion of human capital is exported to other countries. One way to enhance the human capital and economic potential of a society in conflict is to reach out to groups who took flight in the years leading up to conflict or in the first days of warfare and who settled, not as refugees in camps, but within developed countries where they established themselves and represent important banks of talent and financing. Remittances from expatriates have fueled reconstruction in Bosnia, Lebanon, Armenia and other areas. They contributed greatly to the survival strategies of families in Liberia and Sierra Leone, although in Rwanda in the mid-1990s, investments by exiles probably helped fund the conflict itself. But the potential for channeling these exile resources, both financial and human capital, into development activities seems enormous. While some effort has been made to bring such individuals back to their home societies in the post-conflict period, much more can be done to collect information about these groups and develop their links to their home societies during conflict, both to prepare for eventual transitions to peace and to support networks of return and remittance-channeling toward the war-affected populations in the country.

The idea of investing in development interventions even while a conflict is ongoing has considerable merit. Conflicts seldom affect countries in a uniform fashion. Some geographic zones are in active conflict whereas others remain relatively peaceful. To the extent that the latter are affected by conflict, it is more due to the shattering or distortion of economic links with

surrounding areas, the dissolution of state regulatory frameworks or the breaking of trade ties. When investments are used to support the normal lives of inhabitants in such areas and to work in a development context, there is always the risk of creating economic imbalances in a country at war. Peaceful zones will move forward while those embroiled in conflict will see their economic base continue to deteriorate as a result of the direct and indirect consequences of war. Such imbalances will invariably have implications for the domestic balance of power in any post-war scenario. However, this caveat aside, a whole range of interventions seem to be potentially constructive.

Combatants themselves (Eritrea, southern Sudan, Somaliland) have in many cases tried to develop peacetime development activities during the course of a conflict. While support of such activities has broad political implications, it is important to understand the potential of these activities. It is possible to begin developing social infrastructure, support empowerment and build social capital in refugee and displaced persons camps. But here as well as in zones of peace in a country, the potential for development work is likely to vary. Development activities which require the building of large-scale infrastructure, centralized organizational frameworks or consistent access to affected communities may be less successful because of the ever-present threat of renewed conflict in the area concerned or unpredictable disruptions of supply networks. Similarly, activities which require a target population to “think long-term” and make investments which require years to bear fruit, or that require significant up-front investment in human and financial capital, would probably fail. The planting of fruit trees in conflict zones, when such crops require five to seven years to bear fruit, is not, under most circumstances a promising strategy. Regrettably, populations of conflict countries have often found that drug-related crops (opium, hashish, coca) are uniquely suited to situations of instability. They often flourish in poor soil without need of fertilizer. There is a ready international market, and the product requires little processing, doesn’t spoil and transports easily in areas where roads are damaged or non-existent. Though drug crops were cultivated in Afghanistan even before the war, the area under poppy cultivation has increased dramatically in the past two decades. Proper development strategies could, to some extent, help make this option less attractive.

Communities that have been able to survive conflict represent a resource, a source of social capital, which can, in principle, be built upon and maintained. And many investments do not require large-scale infrastructure or consistent access by outside agents. Immunization, for example, an activity frequently undertaken during a conflict, requires sustained access to a population for a specific period, but once completed needs no other long-term contact. Education and health can be supported in a highly decentralized manner by working directly with communities, and their tasks are easily compartmentalized so that disruption in one area does not affect work in other communities nearby. The provision of carefully chosen seeds or pesticide at a time when crops are threatened, such as occurred in northern Afghanistan in the late 1980s during a locust plague, can help communities survive and build an economic base even within the constraints of a wartime situation. When, as noted earlier, UNESCO distributed textbooks in Rwanda, it tried to treat various populations equally or with similar types of interventions. Such a strategy can bear fruit following the emergence out of conflict by minimizing the amount of disruption and lack of “fit” between education and health standards when the disparate parts of a society eventually come together again.

Decreasing the rate of displacement during a conflict may be possible through targeted interventions to enhance the survival strategies of communities in conflict zones. The importance of trying to invest in communities in conflict areas is not only in supporting these communities in a way which allows them to continue to function and thus reduces the pressure for them to leave, but also because the stronger the socio-economic fabric of these areas during conflict, the easier it will be for displaced populations to return when the situation allows. This being said, there are certain caveats. Investing in home areas of the displaced, while they are absent, may risk creating conditions that will not facilitate and may even prevent a smooth return of populations. As mentioned earlier, those who remain in their home territory during a conflict may alter existing land tenure patterns or take over the housing or other assets of the displaced. If these patterns are reinforced, they make it that much harder for displaced populations to return.

Another way to help maintain communities during conflict is to invest in protecting the environment and natural resources of a country so that when the war ends the country can emerge with a resource base to begin economic activity anew. To this end, outside experts should monitor poaching, unsustainable grazing, and the rape of forests, mineral resources or fishing stocks by combatants or opportunistic outsiders. The problem could be addressed in part if the international community were to police the middlemen and entrepreneurs outside conflict societies who take advantage of the combatants' need for cash and exploit the lack of state regulatory agencies to operate with impunity. To cite examples of such outside partnerships, Thais joined in the cutting down of teak forests in Burma and Cambodia, European firms and traders purchased tropical woods from combatants in Liberia in the mid- 1990s, and various fishing fleets have been involved in unsustainable strategies for exploiting fish stocks off the coasts of Somalia and Liberia in recent years.

Humanitarian agencies alone are ill-equipped to evaluate these issues and opportunities and act upon them. In partnership with development agencies, however, they could make vast contributions to transition, even during the period of conflict both in terms of sustainable strategies of assistance and in building a solid base for planning of later transitional investments. The partnership between UNHCR and the World Bank in Bosnia is an important example of such collaboration. UNHCR helped develop an NGO during the conflict period to collect data and prepare a strategy that later formed the basis for a reconstruction plan following the Dayton Accords. The planning, which proceeded on a sector by sector basis, began two years before the accords were implemented. Since windows of opportunity are short in post-conflict transitions, the more comprehensive the planning and data collection process during the conflict, the more likely that interventions in these windows of opportunity will be implemented rapidly with a sense of the true dynamics of the situation.

### **The Transition From Conflict**

Institutional frameworks developed in the course of relief operations influence patterns of investment in the post-conflict transitional period. In the absence of government capacity, foreign and local NGOs often provide a significant portion of development services during the transitional phase. NGOs provide services quickly and flexibly. At the same time, they help to

create a *de facto* decentralization of authority which can undermine the design of national sectoral strategies and complicate efforts by post-conflict state leaders to consolidate power.

Several UN agencies, bilateral donors and a host of NGOs typically enter a conflict before its resolution to provide humanitarian aid to those displaced by the war and to provide services to the general population. In the health sector, NGOs often begin offering services almost immediately following the onset of violent conflict. But other sectors are covered to varying degrees as well. Indeed, the number of NGOs involved in the provision of services within conflict countries, and in the countries nearby that offer refugees asylum, can be substantial. More than 100 foreign and local NGOs are active in Angola, 160 mostly foreign NGOs operate in and around Rwanda, and more than 200 NGOs were in Afghanistan and on the Pakistani border at one point. The situation is similar in Cambodia, Bosnia, Somalia and elsewhere. Where conflicts are brief, these operations pose few complications for later transitional investments. However, where conflicts endure, many of these agencies expand services past food aid and emergency medicine into agriculture, preventive health and other sectors.

UNHCR and UNICEF often act as a conduit for funds from donors to various NGOs; and because the programs involved tend to be humanitarian and are viewed by donors as charity, they receive ample funds from a variety of sources. The NGOs come from all over the world and enter the crisis with a variety of motives and operating standards and policies. No one donor or agency has complete control over standards of service or strategies of intervention. The governments of the countries in question rarely have much control over the activities of international NGOs involved in relief either. Because of the conflict, they have limited capacity to provide services to their constituent population and so in many cases are obliged to welcome such aid almost unconditionally. Often, there is no functioning government at all, and the country's territory is split between combatants, with the result that international agencies are the only actors that can provide food and other services to the population.

When hostilities cease, a peace treaty is signed and a new government or state is formed, a whole range of development organizations -- UNDP, the World Bank, and different bilateral donors -- begin their operations. Organizations active in both relief and development, such as UNICEF and various international NGOs and bilateral donors, gradually bring in new teams of development-oriented personnel to replace those who had worked on relief operations. Although some relief agencies leave, many stay behind and begin to restructure their programs to meet more long-term development needs. Their long experience with the country and their links with communities often give them a comparative advantage in implementation of programs.

What is important to emphasize is the impact of the international response on the post-conflict government. During a post-conflict transition before the economy begins expanding and the state has capacity to generate revenue, international donor funds represent the majority of resources available to new governments both for recurrent expenditures and for development investment. Such aid counted for at least 75 percent of the GNP of Mozambique. At the same time, this magnitude of aid is small and ephemeral compared to the entire weight of a battered economy and remittances from the displaced (for example, those who left Lebanon, Liberia, and Armenia).

In recent years, development agencies have created different institutional configurations in an attempt to deal with the “gap” between relief and developmental institutional mandates. Their goal has been to devise “transitional” approaches that will permit rapid response to the challenge of designing, implementing and financing interventions in the window of opportunity following a peace accord. To this end, UNDP has expanded the work of its Division of Emergency Response. UNICEF has established its own emergency unit as has USAID (the Office of Transitional Initiatives) and many of the NGOs that work in both relief and development. UNICEF represents perhaps the most important exception to the division between relief and development in that more than any other institution, it has tried to create a transcendental role encompassing the broad spectrum of country situations in which it operates. The World Bank has recently set up a Post-Conflict Unit staffed with a wide variety of new personnel from NGOs, bilateral donors and post-conflict governments. While it is possible in the next few years that individual bilateral donors may develop their own unified response to conflict, without a reshaping of the United Nations system, a completely uniform and cohesive international approach is unlikely to develop to deal with the various phases of conflict and thus by association, conflict-induced displacement. Such a reshaping has enormous budgetary and structural implications and, it is probably fair to say, is unlikely to be achieved in the near future.

Nonetheless, the degree of coordination among international agencies during a transition from conflict has improved over the past ten years. This is due in large part to the creation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) within the UN Secretariat -- now named the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). However, OCHA coordinates largely through its access to the Secretary-General. Furthermore, its future structure and agenda are not yet clear. It has had little funding of its own and minimal authority to direct the activities of UN specialized agencies, let alone bilateral donors and NGOs. In principle, it was established to facilitate the coordination of international aid and enhance the transitional and forward-looking nature of the international response. As of this writing, however, it is undergoing major reorganization and the direction of change is unclear. Still, international response to individual situations may achieve some unity. Recently, the Administrative Coordination Committee of the United Nations endorsed a framework to more efficiently integrate the work of disparate organizations within the context of establishing pilot countries for trying out new approaches. Afghanistan was selected as a pilot country. This process deserves some attention and will hopefully provide a new unified approach to transitions. Even so, the current institutional division is likely to remain to a significant degree, and the following discussion is predicated on that assumption.

The presence of so many NGOs and individual donor organizations, each with their own programs and priorities, causes a serious drain on the limited resources of post-conflict states. Where trained state administrators are in short supply, catering to the demands of so many implementing agencies and donors simultaneously makes such states all the more fragile. Administrators with minimal experience working under difficult conditions must satisfy multiple project formats and accounting requirements. Meeting visiting delegations, donor fact-finding tours and maintaining a day-to-day operating relationship with multiple donors and NGOs dominate the agenda of post-conflict governments, and leave little time to work out strategies for

ensuring a stable transition.

The chaotic structure of international response in such circumstances can have an adverse effect on the structure of nascent post-conflict states. When development funds are channeled through a decentralized, international coalition of donors, this arrangement tends to support the creation of a similarly chaotic hierarchical post-conflict government, which in turn creates the seeds of further competition for resources within the central state. Sectorally-targeted donor funds may become the property of specific ministries within the government. In a state with a coalition government, whose ministries have been distributed among former combatants, the provision of development funds to a particular sector may increase the power of one former combatant or another and thus upset any hoped-for political balance. Conversely, decentralized development funds targeted directly at communities and subnational bodies could weaken the power of the central ministries of a post-conflict government and give rise to a decentralized state structure, with power devolving to local community groups. Needless to say, a chaotic, disorganized provision of development funds can undermine the unity of a post-conflict government, overload its capacity to respond and consequently strengthen the chances of having a chaotic, disorganized transitional government.

**DONOR INVESTMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.** Donor funds, as already mentioned, represent a predominant share of most post-conflict state revenues. Similarly, the presence of donors and international NGOs represents a significant stimulus to the economies of some of the smaller post-conflict economies. Development and relief agencies combined may account for thousands of jobs in the local economy. Cambodia at one point was host to more than 20,000 expatriates involved in international aid, peacekeeping and other functions of the UN transition team. Where countries are small or where the economy, particularly the formal sector, has shrunk during the course of the conflict, one of the most vibrant areas of economic growth may ironically be in sectors that cater to foreign agencies and NGOs. The presence of hundreds or even thousands of professionals paid at Western salaries can inflate prices, particularly in high end real estate for offices and housing. Entrepreneurial talent and domestic capital hoarded during the war is likely to be drawn into providing goods and services for high paying UN agencies and NGOs, both for their individual administrative and field operations and for the personal needs of their expatriate employees. Often NGOs and UN agencies have conducted bidding wars for the limited pool of skilled manpower available. Ironically, these operations can draw away qualified national staff from the very governments they are supposed to be supporting, thus weakening these governments even further. In a small enough economy, the incentives attached to catering to the international development juggernaut has the potential to crowd out other forms of investment.

**THE AMBIGUITY OF SOVEREIGNTY.** One of the most significant characteristics of a conflict is the impact it has on sovereignty and state control and access to its constituent population. The fact is that this dynamic may be somewhat of a fiction even in societies which have not broken down in conflict. Even so, the notion that states have a paramount responsibility for the welfare of their constituent populations is the backbone of the international system and remains the foundation of the international regime. Internal conflict, virtually by definition, implies that the state apparatus no longer has unambiguous and continuous access to all members of its constituent society. Either the state has broken down completely or multiple

sovereignty develops where more than one set of leaders claims and exerts control over the population. The issue is further complicated when significant portions of the society have crossed state borders and have settled as refugees beyond the geographic boundaries and the reach of the pre-conflict state. The international community takes on certain responsibilities for societies in conflict and begins making decisions on their behalf.

During the transition from conflict to peace, when combatants have begun to form a post-conflict government, the responsibility of international actors begins to come into question. In some cases such as Cambodia or Eastern Slavonia, international actors have taken on formal responsibilities for societies or portions of societies even during this transitional period. But with the beginning of the formation of a post-conflict government, this responsibility usually shifts to indigenous actors. This shift is neither easy nor rapid and the ambiguity accompanying it has greatly complicated the role of international development aid during what is often viewed as the post-conflict transitional period.

International recognition of a post-conflict regime is often the easiest path but such recognition in and of itself hardly creates the reality that a state has emerged on a par with other states in the world. There are exceptions where a conflict has ended with a clear victor (Eritrea, Uganda), but the majority of transitional situations represent basically unresolved conflicts that have concluded with peace agreements out of sheer exhaustion and international pressure that have not resolved the basic issues underlying the conflict. The parties have merely agreed to continue their discussion through nonviolent means and often only vaguely fleshed out compromises.

Beyond the issue of legitimacy, there is the practical matter of real state capacity to function, deliver services and interact in a uniform way with a post-conflict society. The dissolution of the state apparatus during conflict and the buildup of international capacity for the delivery of services represented by often hundreds of international NGOs, disperses the functions normally assumed by the state and other indigenous social institutions among external actors. No vocabulary is available for dealing with such situations. Barring the development of a practice of formally recognizing a form of "political receivership" or a return of concepts such as trusteeship, this ambiguity is likely to remain.

The ambiguity of sovereignty during a transition from conflict underlies the tension between the strategies of international assistance and the efforts of indigenous actors to form post-conflict regimes and build up a stable foundation for a return to peace. This being said, it is without a doubt that the key to a sustainable transition lies in the political realm. Ideally, political solutions require reconciliation between warring parties. At a minimum, they demand the formation of a widely accepted and legitimate mesh of formal and informal political institutions which manage conflict by non-violent means. International actors can support this process in a variety of ways. Institutional frameworks, methods of conflict resolution, electoral systems, and other mechanisms that have achieved success in other societies can be proposed to leaders to encourage them to develop the appropriate patterns for their own society. In the end, however, the development of a political regime for reconciliation and conflict management lies with the members of the society emerging from conflict. External actors can promote the development of such a framework but they cannot erect it themselves.

What then is the most productive role for the often gigantic juggernaut of relief and development agencies poised and ready to act? An assumption underlying this process is that the dominant actors in a conflict society (the combatants, leaders of civil society, and other members of the population) wish in good faith to achieve a sustainable and equitable transition. But this is not always true. And international actors need to be fully aware that ulterior motives may be at play and although they may be subverted or redirected through a rapid transitional process, despite all external efforts they may undermine a transition.

A distinction between political processes and economic and social dynamics is understandably an artificial one. Politics is about controlling resources and mediating disputes that arise in the course of the functioning of any society. But, it is important to make this distinction to underline a strategy for international assistance during transitions. Political issues underlie every transition and these core political problems are tightly interwoven with a set of logistical and economic dynamics that make it difficult to unravel and resolve them. Post-conflict leaders must get to these political issues, but their efforts at doing so are complicated by the impact of the conflict itself and the challenge not only of political reconciliation but also of rebuilding a functioning socio-economic framework for their society.

Internal conflicts are about political disputes. But conflicts, particularly those which have endured for generations or which have been particularly violent or destructive, leave in their wake a series of dynamics that are only indirectly linked to core political issues but that represent significant obstacles to achieving sustainable transitions out of conflict. The most obvious of these is physical destruction of infrastructure. More insidiously, conflicts break down the entire socio-economic framework of a society and replace it with a dynamic set of interactions that arise, initially, as a means of coping with the conflict environment, but that may develop into a new “normalcy” for conflict societies. The impact is far-reaching. Patterns of agricultural production change. Frameworks for collective action and the very structure of families and gender roles are altered, as pointed out at the outset of this discussion.

**INTERNATIONAL AID.** The predominant role of international aid during a transition is to facilitate the reformation of these socio-economic building blocks. Post-conflict societies are forced to face the dual challenges of making peace and building a sustainable framework for the development of their societies. The challenge is not only to repair the damage done by years of conflict but to address the problems of development that beset a society before conflict erupted. Countries such as Rwanda and Afghanistan were among the poorest in the world even before their societies were pushed into open conflict. Angola went almost directly from a decade of anticolonial war to civil war. The flight of hundreds of thousands of Portuguese in the succession to independence broke down the structures of state administration and economic management which made a return to the past impossible and left gaps which must be addressed now within a transition to peace. Similarly, inequities in land distribution in Central America predated and fueled conflicts. In Zaire, the recent open conflict emerged after thirty years or more of neglect of infrastructure and regional development which will require urgent attention. In all of these situations, the emerging society faces a paradox: successful transitions clearly require a response which recognizes and acts upon dynamics of development which have been unsuccessfully dealt with over decades, and yet some glimmer of progress needs to be achieved

within the limited temporal window in which transitions must occur to avoid an impetus to a return to war.

It is essential to focus on development within the transition. The consolidation of peace requires a realistic program for the rehabilitation of the economic structure and framework for governance within affected societies. If the programs which are put in motion to reconstruct a war-torn society are based on unrealistic premises regarding the magnitude of external aid flows or the rate at which the economy of a country can be brought to a level of production and self-sufficiency to fuel a successful transition, then the transition may be doomed to further deterioration following the initial flush of optimism and temporary injection of humanitarian aid flows. For this reason, the Bretton Woods institutions and other international financial institutions (IFIs) must be intimately involved not only with the implementation of post-peace accord programs but also in the planning leading up to them. The World Bank played a significant role in the preparation of the Dayton Accords. More recently, the Bank and the IMF were important actors in helping to formulate and negotiate the peace accords in Guatemala. Recognition of the role of the IFIs in the process of negotiating peace accords and designing early transitional initiatives is now hopefully a pattern that will be perpetuated, both to instill a note of pragmatism into the economic consequences of post-conflict transitional programs and to help ensure that the policies of the IFIs support the goals of transitions rather than proceed on a parallel, and sometimes contradictory, track.

This link between institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF and the peace process has another important dimension. The economic analyses of the Bank and the IMF, and their inclusion in the development of a framework for transitional investments, acts as a stamp of approval for strategies that can serve to catalyze the investments by bilateral donors and others in supporting the international aid effort.

Another reason for focusing on development objectives, economic management and an increased role for development institutions in transitional programs lies in a more subtle but equally critical goal that must be achieved to facilitate successful transitions out of conflict. As has been noted elsewhere, conflicts are transformational phenomena. They not only result in the destruction of infrastructure but also alter the dynamics of societies. Successful transitions require a commitment by combatants and members of conflict societies to shift to peacetime activities. This shift in turn requires that combatants, as groups and as individuals, recognize that a sustainable peace is in their best interest. A jumpstarting of a post-conflict economy, the provision of jobs and the rapid development of the patterns of the normal functioning of a peacetime society help to ensure that combatants will share in the fruits of peace.

Two conditions are essential to this process. First, economic development must be achieved nationally to recreate a peacetime economy at all levels. Industries must be recreated and begin operations. A market economy must ensure that basic goods are readily available at predictable prices. Rural household economies at the local level must be able to develop during this period so that individual families, within the economic fluctuations of a transition, are nonetheless able to achieve and maintain a subsistence level income and grow the food they need to survive.

Second, importance must be attached not only to rehabilitating the economy but to recreating the routine lifestyle of a peacetime economy. Peacetime "routinization" makes it possible not only to create household incomes and a functioning economy but also to complete the social transformation of a society which has operated for a long period under conflict conditions. Dealing with hyperinflation in a transition, for example, is not just a matter of economic management. It also is about trying to make sure that day-to-day dynamics are stable and that each time a former soldier or a refugee comes to a store to buy a loaf of bread that the price doesn't skyrocket from one day to the next and undermine the sense of stability so important to sustaining a transition. Similarly, job creation and the jumpstarting of the economy are not only about providing income but also about providing a peacetime context to life. In conflict countries, the postman, the tax collector, the government health worker or extension agent has not come for several years, if not decades. The rehabilitation of the state structure is about more than functional processes; it is about reknitting societal relations. The financing of demining programs frees up productive assets, but it also removes a reminder of violent conflict and opens up social communication between rural communities which may have been blocked off from one another for long periods of time. Members of a transitional society who wake up and frame their day by going to a 9 to 5 job or following the agricultural cycle of a farmer's work program are more likely to sense a transition to a stable peace than those who are unemployed or existing on international relief handouts. This is the logic of demobilization and reintegration programs for former combatants, to take one illustration where the World Bank has been involved in transitional programs. It is the "re-routinization" of an entire society that needs to be a core goal of transitional investments.

**REINTEGRATION OF THE DISPLACED.** The rapid and sustainable reintegration of displaced populations is a key aspect of this routinization process. It is often these populations with depleted personal assets and lifestyles revolving for long periods around refugee camps or urban slums who have the most difficult time in adjusting to a transition of peace. To some extent, the problem of reintegration of those displaced by conflict mirrors that of the transitional society at large. The macro-framework of the society itself has been dislocated and thus the general conditions that will enable the populations of conflict societies to resume normal life are to a great extent not present. For this reason, investments in recreating, or creating anew, this framework are important components for achieving the successful reintegration of those who are physically displaced as well.

But the response to displacement, given the intensive transformation in such populations, must go further and, simultaneous to the larger societal investments in a transition, needs to proceed on a parallel, although coordinated, track. It is too often assumed that facilitating the return of a displaced population gives them the foundation to begin life again; indeed, relief agencies stop their work upon the arrival of the displaced in their home communities. Development agencies then begin the process of "development" working on the assumption that people are prepared to participate in the process as if a decade or more of disruption had not occurred. Development agencies and post-conflict governments must recognize that long periods of displacement do not simply evaporate but leave behind strains and distortions that will have to be factored into strategies of investment.

Another assumption that needs to be put to rest is that the displaced wish to and can

easily return to their home areas. In many cases, conflict has seen private property change hands, with no hope of reversal. In other cases, private property has been destroyed, usufruct rights have been usurped by those left without assets, irrigation channels have been destroyed, and the soil has lost its fertility. What were once viable home areas no longer exist. Changes in the use of land may also not be viable for the economy at large. The lingering enmity and scars of conflict may also lead to a shifting in population, as in the case of planned Tutsi villages in eastern Rwanda, or may develop out of localized disputes and perceptions on the part of the displaced that they would be at risk or unwelcome if they returned to their previous homes. And years of displacement may so alter the lifestyles and social organization of the displaced that they may not be able to function in their previous patterns of occupation and in their previous home areas. This is often the case when displaced persons move to urban areas. The emphasis, therefore, in the transitional phase should be on recognizing that transition does not necessarily mean a return to previous patterns of existence and requires a flexible outlook as to how best to facilitate a sustainable integration of displaced populations without expecting them to return to a pre-conflict status quo.

Dedicated programs to reintegrate displaced populations are important components of post-conflict investment activities. Relatedly, programs to demobilize, retrain and reintegrate former combatants is another fundamental activity in the transitional phase. Investments in combatants are important not only in their own right but also because significant numbers of displaced families tend to be relatives and dependents of combatants. Such targeted investments, therefore, provide a double benefit. Relief agencies have had wide experience in the preparation and distribution of “re-entry” packages, including cash, tools, seeds, and other items, and in the provision of transitional food allotments -- often six months of grain or a similar quantity -- particularly to rural populations. Such packages will help sustain them during the period before the harvesting of a first crop. Although these programs are expensive, they remain a valuable method to inject resources in a decentralized way to the grassroots level. They have their own procedures for identifying beneficiaries, reducing fraud, and the like, and if handled carefully, can help promote a resurgence of local economies. Such programs, however, are often unavailable for the internally displaced or for refugee populations settled in scattered areas. The difficulty of targeting dispersed populations and verifying their identities makes them an unlikely tool for many of these populations. In such cases, investments can focus on “easy wins” or programs that have favorable impacts on reintegration. Clearing major access routes and secondary and tertiary roads of mines, for example, can be done as a technical program, but it will also clear access routes and land for reintegration across a wide range of territory. Jumpstarting the economy of a post-conflict society by using manpower-intensive techniques to generate employment can also help the displaced reintegrate successfully.

There are still other ways in which investment programs can facilitate the reintegration of displaced populations. There is need for sensitivity in the sequencing of transitional investment strategies. This concept is relevant both to the planning of sectoral investments and reintegration activities. Development and relief agencies ought to cooperate closely to ensure that their reintegration programs take account of the timing of organized returns. It is by now well recognized that reintegration in rural areas should proceed in a fashion that allows returning farmers to make the most efficient use of planting and harvesting periods. But coordination needs to go further. For example, regional demining programs should be planned so as to permit

the reintegration of local populations. And UNHCR and others should be encouraged not to plan in isolation so that they do not make unrealistic assumptions about the pace of demining and other transitional programs that prepare the ground for sustainable reintegration.

Similarly, development agencies must take care not to invest too rapidly in urban infrastructure and urban-based economic expansion in the early days of a transition, lest such investments serve to solidify the position of those internally displaced who flocked to the relative safety of urban and peri-urban areas during a conflict. Such a strategy may undermine attempts at rural reintegration and at the same time result in a new overloading of urban infrastructure. By the same token, if transitional strategies focus on "economically productive" sectors and regions of the economy while ignoring or giving lower priority to regions with high displacement, there may be an increase in inequality as areas less affected by the conflict reemerge as vibrant economic centers leaving the more difficult war-affected regions behind. Such action will sow the seeds for further conflict.

Decentralization of investments, as earlier mentioned, is a useful way of reducing transitional tensions resulting from competition by factions for state resources. Decentralization can also support a more rapid and efficient reintegration process. In most post-conflict situations, the state is so weak that the central government cannot readily rebuild a nation-wide capacity for delivery of key social services and development investment. NGOs then become an important institutional instrument for the decentralized delivery of localized resources and programs. Since conflict and displacement have different impacts on different regions of a country and the needs of reintegrating populations vary from one region to the next, decentralization provides an avenue to take account of these differences. It ensures that greater emphasis is placed on community-oriented strategies which may be the best way to reform fragmented and divided communities.

Paradoxically, some displaced populations may be best assisted by not reintegrating them but rather by helping certain segments continue to reside outside their homes areas. As earlier pointed out, the remittances of those displaced and working outside their countries represent an important source of grass-roots investment financing. Investments outside the country might in some instances promote employment among the displaced, especially if the competition for resources in a low-income transitional country is preventing the displaced from readily finding a niche in their own country's economy.

Investments in affected populations during a conflict can help maintain human and social capital and play an important role in reintegration. If the displaced return home with a skill base suitable for the post-conflict economy, if their family structures have remained intact, if they are able to maintain some level of investment in capital and in the tools of their trade and the inputs necessary to resume their occupations, then the reintegration process will be enhanced. If they have maintained some cohesive social organization, the facility with which intermediaries, donors and others can efficiently treat them as communities will be improved. Within home communities, if the foundation for economic activity has been maintained -- for example, if the conditions for agricultural production (undegenerated seed stocks, sufficient sources for animal traction) are there, irrigation canals have not been badly damaged and if market links are kept intact -- the environment for reintegration in rural areas will be more favorable.

Reintegration, however, cannot only concern itself with the pattern of physical resources or capital. Equally essential is the degree to which social organization and leadership patterns in home communities can make room for returning populations. As earlier noted, the area of property ownership and land titling is critical. In both urban and rural areas, returnees may come back to find that others have occupied their land and houses. Property owners may find that old tenants, after a long hiatus, refuse to return to previous tenancy arrangements. Previous tenants may come back to find that landlords have developed new uses for land or have given the properties over to others. This can often be the case where communities were divided during a war and where this division has broken down previous understandings or customary patterns of usufruct rights. In such circumstances, previously existing private disputes may be renewed. The paucity of land records and the destruction of old systems for resolving conflicts complicate these disputes and can even put a political transition at risk. The work of NGOs and others in developing techniques for dispute resolution are at best experimental. Yet they have achieved significant success in designing focused small-scale interventions in matters such as land disputes and water rights. Broader issues such as the role of external actors in investing proactively in reconciliation are still surrounded by controversy but bear more exploration and experimentation.

## **CONCLUSION**

Given the nature of today's conflicts -- internal, chronic and extending over long periods of time -- outmoded concepts of humanitarian aid and development need to be replaced by new concepts that view the entire society as the focus of international aid. The purpose of this discussion was to introduce a new perspective for viewing the process of transition from conflict and promote an expanded, flexible definition of humanitarian action. Since this paper was first prepared, a million Rwandans have gone home, and Zaire has collapsed, re-formed with a new government and new identity, and fallen once again into turmoil. Albania has imploded in a fashion far different from any conflict recently experienced yet has just as quickly disappeared from the world radar screen. The Taliban in Afghanistan seem on the verge of consolidating the base for a national government. Angola has returned to war. Many of these developments may pass or change in ways that are impossible to predict. It can only be hoped that from these events a better understanding will be gained of the seemingly impossible task of aiding countries emerging from conflict and that the international response will be transformed for the better.

## ENDNOTES

1. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (Oxford University Press, 1989).
2. Perhaps, the best discussion to date of this recognition and how to operationalize it can be found in Mary B. Anderson and Peter J. Woodrow, *Rising from the Ashes, Development Strategies in Times of Disaster* (Westview Press, Boulder, Co., 1989). See also Randolph Kent, *The Anatomy of Disaster Relief, The International Network in Action* (Pinter, London, 1987), and Judith Mayotte, *Disposable People, The Plight of Refugees* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1992).
3. Ibid.
4. The 500,000 IDPs within Azerbaijan represent a good example of IDPs who are accessible and, in fact, also much less susceptible to problems of protection than is the case elsewhere. Many of the urban IDPs in Angola are similarly accessible and concentrated in far greater numbers than, say, Angolan refugees, dispersed throughout southwestern Zaire.
5. UNHCR, for example, is viewed largely as an operational agency and, due to budgetary constraints and staff profiles, has only a very limited capacity to analyze individual sectoral interventions or to engage in long-range planning. The ICRC, perhaps the international institution with the most up-to-date and extensive knowledge of societies in conflict, has, through its mandate, less than complete contact with the other actors in the international community and so its information and the lessons which it has learned about societies in conflict is rarely disseminated in usable form.
6. World Bank, "A Framework for World Bank Involvement in Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 1998, p.2. The World Bank in 1997 completed a two-year process of reviewing its own experience in dealing with situations of conflict which resulted in this policy document endorsed by its Board of Directors.
7. See Steven Holtzman, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," Environment Department papers, World Bank, 1995; UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees*; and U.S. Committee for Refugees, *The World Refugee Survey*.
8. See Paul Collier, ed., *Economic Consequences of Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 1988).
9. See Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama* (Pantheon, New York, 1968), and his characterization of the "soft state." For a more recent analysis, see Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States, State Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton University Press, 1988) or Thomas Callaghy, *The State Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective* (Columbia University Press, 1985).

10. World Bank, *Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Role of the World Bank*, April 1998, p.4.
11. UNDP and bilateral donors such as USAID, for example, have had large presences in most countries for many years. But the World Bank's role in dealing with conflict has been limited by its minimal field presence.
12. World Bank, "A Framework," p.5.
13. The World Bank's new framework defines a new phase for Bank activity which is targeted towards preparatory planning during a conflict. The phase is referred to as a watching brief. "The purpose of a watching brief," the framework notes, "is to keep track of developments in countries where no active portfolio is possible and to provide knowledge that will be useful in preparing effective and timely Bank assisted operations once post-conflict reconstruction activities are possible", see World Bank, "A Framework," p.20. Of course, the World Bank, whose interventions are normally tied to preparing loans to governments, is in a particularly difficult position in regard to actions in countries still in conflict. The watching brief concept is designed to allow the Bank to participate in such activities both to rationalize its own later interventions and to provide intellectual support to humanitarian agencies in their strategies during a conflict period. See World Bank, *Post-Conflict Reconstruction*.