Relief and Rehabilitation Network

Network Paper 9

Development in Conflict: The Experience of ACORD in Uganda, Sudan, Mali and Angola

Agency for Cooperation and
Research in Development

April 1995

Please send comments on this paper to:

Relief and Rehabilitation Network
Overseas Development Institute
Regent's College
Inner Circle
Regent's Park
London NW1 4NS
United Kingdom

A copy will be sent to the author.

Comments received may be used in future Newsletters.

ISSN: 1353-8691

Development in Conflict:
The Experience of ACORD
in Uganda, Sudan, Mali and Angola

ACORD and the RRN gratefully acknowledge the support of Novib in the production of this Network paper

Development in Conflict: The Experience of ACORD in Uganda, Sudan, Mali and Angola

Contents

Executive Summary

Conflict has had a devastating impact in Africa, and demands new ways of working from development agencies. ACORD has come to see development as an essentially **turbulent** process, in which crises and conflicts are likely.

This paper examines the impact of conflict on the development process in four African countries: Uganda, Sudan, Mali and Angola, and its implications for NGO policy and practice. The paper is divided into two main parts. The first reports on the case studies, while the second highlights themes common to these four conflict-affected countries and in terms of ACORD's response.

In turbulent situations, distinctions between `relief' and `development' have little meaning. Flexible approaches, which can adapt to the changing needs of populations, are vital. Long-term programmes need to be judged against their ability to give people the resilience to deal with crises; short-term activities, while ensuring survival, should also pave the way for the achievement of long-term objectives.

ACORD has attempted to provide `emergency support in a developmental manner', emphasising support for local coping strategies and local institutions. Some forms of programming have proved more resilient than others. Investing in the development of people and organisations which have the skills, capacities and confidence to cope with change, as well as to resolve conflicts themselves, has proved most successful in times of crisis and conflict.

Conflict tends to magnify any weak points in a programme. Staff are isolated, communications are poor, and distance management is difficult. Consequently, the quality of programming depends to a large extent on the capacities and cohesiveness of programme teams. Having teams that are able to analyse the changing situation around them, and respond flexibly and appropriately, is vital. Equally important has been the development of relationships with communities before, during and after prolonged conflict. Where these have been strong, programmes have often been able to retain their relevance by adjusting to changing needs. The presence of staff local to the area, with links and a commitment to the communities, has been important in this.

Improving the response of NGOs such as ACORD to conflict therefore implies strengthening programme quality, and the capacities and cohesiveness of teams, in times of stability. Achieving this vision of well-trained and well-supported `frontline staff' will require the investment of time and money prior to the outbreak of conflict and the appropriate commitment from donor organisations.

This should be matched by greater preparedness. This means operational measures to maximise the safety of staff and communities. Procedures for programme suspension and closure must be developed which ensure the maximum level of consultation between field staff and headquarters, and minimise the differential treatment of expatriate and local staff, for example in terms of UN evacuation procedures.

Greater preparedness also requires greater political analysis of conflicts. Like development, conflict is a political process and should be treated as a strategic issue to be analysed at all levels of programming. Such analysis should include an assessment not only of the likelihood of conflict and its impact, but also of how NGO activities will affect local and wider conflicts (latent or otherwise). Furthermore, conflicts produce both winners and losers, and offer considerable opportunities for effecting social change, for example in gender relations. NGOs must therefore ensure that they are able to analyse and identify such opportunities.

Development in Conflict: The Experience of ACORD in Uganda, Sudan, Mali and Angola

1. Introduction

The starting point for this paper is the concept of `turbulence' (ACORD, 1992). The prevailing (modernist) view of conflict as an unusual event in the smooth progress of states and communities towards `development' has proved to be of little value in understanding and responding to the growing number of protracted conflicts in Africa. While the distinctions between relief and development which this approach has encouraged have little meaning `on the ground', the division of donors' budget lines between relief and development has hindered ACORD's ability to help the poor cope with, and promote, change on a sustainable basis. Clearly, more flexible approaches to emergencies on the part of donors are crucial. Furthermore the prevailing view has obscured the role that conflict plays in the process of development, and the nature of conflict as a process in itself.

In contrast, ACORD understands development to be a turbulent process, in which crises and conflicts are likely. Long-term programmes should be tested against their ability to give people the resilience to deal with crises. Short-term activities, on the other hand, while ensuring survival, should also pave the way for the achievement of long-term objectives.

This network paper reports on work that ACORD has been carrying out over a number of years on issues relating to `turbulence', conflict, and the links between relief and development. The case studies were originally prepared for a workshop held in Birmingham in November 1994, entitled Development in Conflict. They have since been further edited for the format of the RRN mailing.

They were written by Mark Adams, except for the Mali case study, which was co-written with Sylvia Capezuolli and based on her research. In addition, the Gulu case study has drawn heavily on the thinking of the programme team, and particularly the Programme Development Officer, Rosalba Oywa. The Gulu and Mali case studies benefitted from field visits and discussions with the programme staff, while the Angola and Sudan case studies have relied on documents held in

London, and discussions with Secretariat staff, particularly the Gender Officer, Judy el-Bushra, and Chris Roche. All have benefitted from wide-ranging discussions both within and outside ACORD. The authors acknowledge the contributions of ACORD programme staff in London and Africa and hope that they have accurately captured their views and experience. This document does not represent ACORD's official policies, and should be regarded as `work in progress'.

An understanding of ACORD's structure will clarify some of the later text. ACORD is an international consortium of international NGOs. The Secretariat is based in London and there are programmes in 16 African countries. In 1989, ACORD began a decentralisation process, establishing 4 Regional Support Structures (RSS). In 1994, the RSSs were dissolved, their functions reverting to the Secretariat.

2. The Case of Gulu, Uganda

2.1 An overview of ACORD's programme

ACORD began its programmes in Gulu district in the north of Uganda in 1981, pursuing an integrated health, water and agricultural programme. The need for assistance in the district was clear after ten years of political repression and the collapse of the local economy, and marketing and distribution networks. Local community-based organisations (CBOs) and government structures appeared to have survived remarkably well, and there were local structures with which ACORD could work. In addition, considerable optimism prevailed in Gulu about the future, and many educated Acholi were returning home.

A lack of tools was identified as the main constraint to agricultural productivity, and the programme began to distribute implements to farmers through the Western Acholi Cooperative Union (WACU). This was expected to boost production in

the short term. In the long term, support for the WACUs' engineering workshop was to develop a local capacity to produce agricultural equipment.

Technical assistance, training and the promotion of oxenisation were to be carried out jointly with the government extension services. In addition, ACORD planned to work with the local authorities to encourage primary health care programmes in Kitgum and Gulu districts, and to recruit volunteers to improve the quality of the local water sources. A close working relationship with the local authorities and the Cooperative Union would strengthen these institutions.

A major evaluation of the Gulu programme in 1985 concluded that there were serious problems with the programme. There had been some successes: the workshop had raised production and turnover, and increased capacity and sales; ACORD had provided valuable support to the District Medical Officer (notably an immunisation programme and training of PHC workers and TBAs), while a child-to-child health programme had got off to an encouraging start. In addition, a number of wells had been dug and springs protected. However, there had been a number of disappointments, largely because of a lack of receptivity and interest among the local population and government structures. This was due to a number of flawed assumptions in the original programme proposal, a lack of local knowledge and participation, and practical problems with the programme.

2.2 Conflict hits the programme

This evaluation coincided with a deterioration in the security situation in northern Uganda. After 1979 Gulu district had been relatively peaceful, being spared the violence experienced in the Luwero Triangle to the south. However, the hopes raised in 1979 were not fulfilled. Despite the relative predominance of northerners in the Obote government, virtually no productive investment took place in the district. Attempts to boost cotton production foundered on the Cooperative Union's inability to process, transport or market the cotton, or pay for it in cash. Under pressure from structural adjustment policies, declining terms of trade, and the government's need to fund the bush war, the local economy was unable to

recover. Civil service employment fell, and those jobs that did exist no longer paid a living wage. Corruption and `Magendo' trade in parallel markets had become the norm. Frustrated by the lack of jobs, Acholi men once again sought employment in the security forces, and the predominance of Acholi and Langi in the Ugandan National Liberation Army reinforced north/south antagonisms, as they fought the NRA in the south.

In July 1985 the Obote II government was deposed by an army coup. The ACORD programme was briefly suspended, and expatriate staff were evacuated temporarily to Nairobi, returning in August, when attempts were made to restart the programme. ACORD Gulu was internally re-organised. The Community Development component became the core of the overall programme, with the water and health components being integrated into it. The emphasis on youth and women's groups continued, as did preparatory work on the oxenisation programme, which still had to be implemented. From 1985 onwards ACORD reduced its support for local government departments, and a number of Rural Development Workers (RDWs) were recruited to implement the programme and address the low levels of participation.

Support for the engineering workshop continued, but with the intention of phasing it out by the end of 1988. The nature of the support changed to reflect this. A management consultant drew up a medium-term strategy for self-reliance, and ACORD's provision of a foreign-exchange facility was altered so that the workshop had to pay in advance.

However, the collapse of the Okello government, and the NRA's victory in January 1986, prompted another evacuation of all expatriate staff. The programme offices, stores and senior staff houses were looted by the retreating government army. There was widespread panic in Gulu district; many feared retribution from the NRA because of the prominence of Acholi in the government army. However, the NRA took Gulu town on 8 March without bloodshed, and for several months the situation remained uneasily calm.

ACORD expatriate staff returned in April. The oxenisation programme restarted with a distribution of ploughs and plough-shares, and the workshop resumed production. Health promotion activities began in May, and during June and July TBAs and PHC workers received training. However, the water and community development components ceased all activity. Instead, 20 RDWs (10 men and 10 women) were selected for training, in the expectation that they would begin implementation of the Community Development component.

However, the situation quickly deteriorated. In August Acholi rebels invaded from southern Sudan, marking the beginning of several years of conflict. They were initially quite successful, seizing effective control of large parts of Gulu and Kitgum districts, and surrounding and attacking Gulu town. The NRA were restricted to the towns and main roads. With access to rural areas being extremely dangerous, all programme activities were suspended.

2.3 The `Change-Agent' methodology

Despite the deteriorating security situation, the programme was not abandoned, however. It was again revised, to become more firmly based on ideas of self-reliance and participatory development, with locally recruited `change agents' working with groups at their own pace. The programme's previous methodologies and partners were seen to have been inappropriate. For example, the Cooperative Union was essentially a parastatal organisation, out of touch with local interests, while the women's and youth groups were mobilised by the Ministry of Community Development. Furthermore, ACORD's reliance on expatriate staff and non-Acholi Ugandans, who spoke no Acholi and did not understand Acholi culture, had further hindered attempts at real participation.

Instead, the programme was to be implemented by a locally recruited team of RDWs. The existing group of trainers were to be the core of the programme, and were to be deployed in the field in teams of two (one man and one woman) in order to encourage communities to organise into groups to access support. These partners were to participate at every level of the programme from the identification

of needs to programme evaluation. As a result, it was not possible to outline the future programme in detail, as the priority issues were to emerge after discussions with communities and groups.

However, the worsening security situation did prevent immediate implementation of this new approach. Despite some success by the NRA in curbing the worst excesses of its troops, and in persuading some rebel groups to accept an amnesty, levels of violence continued to be high in 1987. An amnesty for rebels who gave themselves up was announced in May, and there were successful negotiations with the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA), the best organised rebel force with a clear political agenda. But negotiations were unsuccessful with a number of emerging extremist religious groups. The largest of these, the Holy Spirit Movement, led by Alice Lakwena, a traditional spiritual medium and healer, launched a series of assaults on Gulu town during 1986 and 1987. The Holy Spirit Movement was defeated in eastern Uganda, and Lakwena was captured in Kenya in late 1987. However, a number of splinter groups continued to cause havoc in Gulu district.

The RDWs were deployed briefly in February 1987, but the Programme coordinator felt obliged to suspend all activities in view of the deteriorating security situation. All the RDWs were made redundant, as it became clear that an early end to the fighting was unlikely. A programme presence was maintained in Gulu Town, the office being staffed by an administrative assistant, and the PC made regular visits from Kampala.

The health component did, however, continue to provide some level of health services in the rural communities during the war. The TBA training programme had restarted in January 1987, and residential courses continued throughout the year. Great emphasis was placed on local participation in the health component in the mid-1980s, with community selection of CHWs and village health committees. This enabled the health programme to withstand the effects of the continued insecurity remarkably well. Despite often finding themselves working on their own and with little financial support from ACORD, these health workers and committees

continued to minister to the sick, to refer patients to hospital and to maintain some level of drug supply to the rural areas, which were largely cut off.

The workshop continued to operate, the engineer making regular trips to Gulu town to supervise its renovation. ACORD continued to participate in the Joint Management Committee and to provide the cooperative with access to foreign exchange. However, attempts to improve the workshop's viability were stifled by the deteriorating relationship with the Cooperative Union. The workshop had become the Union's only source of revenue following the destruction of its cotton gins and the looting of its vehicles. As a result, there was little or no re-investment of profits back into the workshop or replacement of materials.

The oxenisation programme was abandoned. Programme staff were unable to enter Kitgum district, which had been sealed off by the NRA, and cattle herds had declined dramatically through widespread looting. (In Kitgum cattle numbers fell from 158,000 to 2,000 in just two years.) In addition, local government structures had been severely weakened, and it was doubted that they could implement the programme effectively.

2.4 The rural development promotion programme

By April 1988, the violence appeared to be over and there seemed to be opportunities for work to restart. Twelve RDWs resumed their posts. However, the rural areas remained too insecure for them to live and work in. Although the ultimate aim remained to take up residence in the original focus areas of Pabbo, Awach and Kock Goma, they began work with those communities situated within 15km of the centre of Gulu town, whose population had swollen to an estimated 45,000 by 1988 (from 15,000 in 1980). Nevertheless, there was still land available for cultivation and other income-generating activities.

A nine-year three-phase programme was proposed. The rest of 1988 was taken up with research into needs, identifying possible partners and building links with other organisations. The programme proper was due to start in 1989.

However, during 1988, while the fighting diminished in scale, it became increasingly indiscriminate. For a while movement on the major roads was possible without military escort, and life in Gulu town gradually returned to normal. The rural population, however, was in a precarious situation, caught between the two sides. In August 1988 the rebels forced the NRA to withdraw into Gulu town after a series of defeats. In October the NRA launched a major offensive in order to re-establish control over the district. The population were warned of the offensive in advance, and were instructed to congregate in Gulu town. However, many people ignored the instructions, owing to the harsh conditions in Gulu town and because harvest time was approaching. The NRA used scorched-earth tactics, and regarded any individuals who remained in the rural areas as rebel sympathisers. There were considerable abuses against the civilian population.

2.5 1989-90: the emergency distribution

The numbers of displaced people in Gulu Town increased dramatically at this time; by early 1989, around 200,000 people were registered within the town's perimeter. Up to this point the food situation had been largely adequate, but the destruction of crops and food stocks in the rural areas during the offensive reduced food availability drastically.

ACORD's RDWs were forced into Gulu town along with the communities they had been serving. Staff were determined to continue working with these communities, but their existing methodology presented considerable problems in a conflict situation. In the face of the harsh conditions in the town, and after discussion with the displaced, the programme team decided to adapt its methodology, continuing to emphasise participation, but recognising that total self-reliance was extremely difficult to achieve in such circumstances. They aimed to complement the work of the relief agencies in the town by providing tools, seeds and support for agricultural production within the town boundaries.

By the time funds arrived in mid-1989, the security situation had improved and many people had begun to return home. There was still a need for tools however, and the team distributed them in the rural areas to encourage resettlement.

Four rounds of distribution were made between August 1989 and May 1990, covering 78,700 households in 15 of the 18 divisions in Gulu district. Gender issues were addressed by the use of a `keno', or cooking hearth, as the registration unit. This ensured that women received the tools. An exception was made for single men, certified as such by the Resistance Workshop 1, who were also registered for the distribution. This was important in a polygamous society where the women do the majority of agricultural work. At the same time animation work was begun with these communities, the distribution helping to establish the basis for longer-term work.

The distributions were judged largely successful by an external evaluation, combining development principles with an emergency operation. They enhanced ACORD's reputation with the local authorities and communities, and helped to develop the relationships with communities necessary for longer-term work. While some goods were stolen after they had been distributed, and the operation represented a major diversion from the programme's objectives and timetable, this did not detract from the overall success.

Improved security allowed work to begin again on the Rural Development Promotion Programme (RDPP) in April 1989, alongside the distributions. New field stations were opened, the coverage was expanded from 9 to 19 parishes, and 11 new RDWs were recruited (bringing the total to 23). A Credit Officer was recruited in September to push forward the creation of a member-controlled credit association, which was finally set up in December 1990. Loan Committees were elected by the member groups, and received training from ACORD.

The violence in Gulu district has ebbed and flowed. After 1989 most of the rebel groups with a defined political agenda had been defeated, had negotiated an agreement, or had taken up the government's amnesty. The remaining groups increasingly carried out sporadic and vicious attacks against the rural population. Support for the rebels declined as a result, many finding it particularly distressing that Acholi were killing Acholi. The population was weaty of a conflict that seemed to have little point, and that had been accompanied by proliferation of arms,

banditry, the destruction of cattle herds, and the loss and disruption of thousands of lives. In 1990, women demonstrated in Gulu town, demanding, with some success, that their husbands, brothers and sons stop fighting and return home.

In 1991, the violence increased dramatically, as the NRA launched an intensive operation to clear out the rebels once and for all. Communication with Gulu town was temporarily cut off. Despite the NRA's unpopularity, the people turned against the rebels and armed themselves in self-defence. In response, the rebels began a campaign of mutilation, cutting off people's ears, arms and lips; and the abduction of children and women increased.

The NRA offensive did not succeed in ending all rebel activity however, and since 1991 sporadic incidents have continued, often to the north of Gulu town. The ACORD programme slowly expanded as the local people felt increasingly able to move away from Gulu town. In 1991, RDWs were still able to operate only up to 24km outside the town. By the end of 1992 this had expanded to 30km, and over 1993 and 1994 the team continued to extend its coverage of the district. Considerable fear remains amongst the rural population, and during 1994 there was an upsurge in violence, suggesting that the rebel groups were better organised than was previously thought. However, on the whole the district is enjoying greater stability, and Resistance Councils (Uganda's government structures) have begun to operate throughout the district. The elections in 1994 to the Constituent Assembly went ahead without complications, in contrast to the national elections in 1989, when Gulu was the only district not to participate.

Despite the disruption caused by the insecurity, ACORD-Gulu has remained committed to the development of local institutions and capacities. A major success was the formation, by the health workers and committees with ACORD support, of the Gulu District Community-Based Health Care Association (GDCBHCA) in 1991. Initially, ACORD contributed 75% and the local community 25% of the cost of projects established at the parish level. But ACORD funding ceased at the end of the year, and in 1992 the local communities met 75% of the costs of training CHWs and TBAs, while ACORD helped the Association to find external funding

for the remaining 25%. ACORD and the Association maintain a working relationship; both are implementing the Integrated Gulu AIDS programme. During 1991, efforts focused primarily on awareness-raising, but in 1992 it was hoped to promote behavioural change.

ACORD's relationship with the government departments has also expanded. ACORD remains one of the few NGOs working in the district. Its team of RDWs is stationed throughout the district, often in areas that other agencies fail to cover. In the early 1990s ACORD staff demonstrated that it was possible to work in these areas. They encouraged government extension staff to move out of Gulu town, and provided a link between rural communities and the town. In 1992 integrated training was carried out with the government extension departments, and in 1993 the team helped design the 1993 work programme for the District Agricultural Office. ACORD implements the water component of the World Bank-financed Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Programme, in association with the District Natural Resources Officer. In addition, there has been increasing cooperation with the Resistance Council structures.

During 1991, a number of changes were made to the programme's organisation in order to increase the transfer of skills, to make the programme as responsive as possible to local priorities, and to prepare the ground for a local NGO, the Gulu Development Association, to take over the programme when ACORD pulled out. In addition, it was important that the programme reduce its costs, both because of donor pressure and in order to fulfil another objective - replicability.

A hierarchy of joint ACORD-partner committees was established to determine and direct programme activities. A District Rural Development Council (DRDC) was established in late 1991, where partner groups and ACORD met quarterly to determine the framework for future work. The previously `flat hierarchy' among the RDWs was altered, with some programming functions being decentralised to three newly created County Programming Officers (CPOs), appointed from the RDWs. These CPOs were to work with County Management Teams elected by the partner groups. Below them Parish Planning Committees were set up. ACORD also began

training `Village Change Agents' (VCAs), selected by the communities, who would work alongside the RDWs, learning their skills and eventually taking over from them. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the councils are representative of the partner groups, though there is some concern that the hierarchy of committees and teams reflects ACORD's priorities rather than those of the communities, with obvious implications for sustainability.

2.6 The effects of conflict on Acholi society

While the district has enjoyed greater stability since 1992, considerable long-term problems remain. The effects of conflict on Acholi society have been exacerbated by economic decline and structural adjustment. Traditional systems of social cohesion, maintenance of order, and security have broken down. The conflict further weakened a local economy already undermined by political repression, the collapse of marketing and distribution systems, and declining producer prices. The remaining cotton processing facilities were destroyed, and farmers were pushed further into subsistence farming, or even dependence on relief.

Experiences during the conflict and insecurity have destroyed feelings of trust which are essential for recovery. Most transactions take place in cash, and credit is virtually unobtainable. Attempts to raise livestock levels have been limited because of the continuing threat of theft. People have acquired goats, pigs and poultry rather than cattle or oxen, as the former are harder to steal, and the rebels do not eat pork for religious reasons.

The family as an institution has been disrupted. Large numbers of orphans and children were abducted and forced to take part in the fighting. Often removed from their families for considerable periods of time, they have been subject to little social control. There are few schools, little chance of work, and their families, where they still exist, often feel unable to control or educate these children.

The destruction of Acholi cattle herds has robbed many people of their key investments. Cattle were traditionally part of the dowry, and few can now afford

the price of marriage. This is extremely important as marriage traditionally helped to bind the different Acholi clans together.

In Acholi society male and female roles were traditionally clearly delineated, the major division of labour falling along gender lines. Women were subordinate to men, undertaking most of the agricultural labour, while men controlled the cash returns from crop sales. During the past twenty years gender roles have come under severe pressure because of economic decline and the brutal effects of the war. During the conflict many men fled to Gulu town, hid in the bush, or joined the rebels. The women were forced to remain in the homesteads, tending the fields. They sometimes needed to visit the town for essential supplies, and this exposed them to danger from both sides; the rebels forbade visits to the town, and the NRA suspected anyone remaining in the rural areas of being a rebel. Sexual violence and abductions were common, and many women were forced to hide in the bush, sometimes for years, in order to avoid detection.

This has had a number of legacies. Many women have been forced into prostitution through violence, economic necessity, or because they had been raped and therefore became ineligible for marriage. An estimated 50% of households in Gulu in 1988 were female-headed, compared with estimates of 20-30% in the early 1960s; this may have dropped since the men returned in 1992. Others chose to become `camp-followers' for the same reasons, or in the hope of some level of protection by being associated with a particular man.

Under these conditions, AIDS spread rapidly throughout the district, and represents a major problem for all communities. There are increasing fears about the safety of young girls, who are subject to the attentions of men who consider them to be`clean'. Economic constraints and a fear of AIDS have made brothers-in-law reluctant to take responsibility for their brothers' widows, as they had done traditionally. As widows have no claim to their husband's property, or children after the age of five, they can be left in a precarious position.

There is a growing disenchantment amongst women with marriage, though the need

for the respectability associated with marriage remains strong. During the conflict women were forced to take on many traditionally male roles. For example, they had to find the money for taxes and school fees. Men have seen their traditional economic roles disappear, and many seem unable to find new ones. Alcoholism increased dramatically in Gulu town's refugee camps during the war, and remains a major problem. Men continue to control cash revenues While women's workloads have increased, their control over resources has not. There is reportedly an increased incidence of domestic violence. Many women see little relevance for marriage when it means another burden to carry.

More generally, the conflict has had an impact on the division of labour and stereotyped gender roles, with destabilising effects on Acholi society. During the conflict women lost `women's land' (land traditionally set aside for food crops for the family) because of pressure on land in and around Gulu town. This land was turned over to cash crops, resulting in an increase in the burden of labour for women and the prevalence of malnutrition among children. The situation may have changed as the secure zone has expanded and land has become more available, but women still have to shoulder the responsibility of raising cash incomes.

However, the process has shown some positive aspects. Women have developed new skills and have gained in experience and assertiveness, and are proud of them. They have also taken on a role in peace-making. They have no wish to lose their new-found independence, but want to forge a new gender balance. There is still some resistance to this on the part of men. Despite government attempts to boost women's participation in local government, it remains limited to the required minimum. However, in 1992 63% of the leadership positions among ACORD's partners were filled by women.

There are other problems to be faced. Self-reliance remains impossible for many people, particularly where kinship safety-nets have been weakened. The economy remains weak, and structural adjustment and stabilisation measures constrain the rehabilitation of social services and education and health provision. Having survived the war, the population of Gulu now face the threat of HIV and AIDS.

Demobilisation of the army creates further problems; large numbers of soldiers return home with few skills and little chance of employment. In addition, trauma, among both the local population and the ACORD staff, has emerged as an issue that needs to be addressed.

The ACORD team has attempted to face up to many of these problems. Gender analysis tools and group fora have been used to encourage men and women to discuss their changing roles, and to examine new ways to cope with their situations. The team has encouraged women to use the courts to strengthen their claims on family resources by encouraging the use of wills, but often with little success.

Income-generating activities have been promoted, which require relatively little labour in order to ease women's burdens, and for those who are too old or sick to do agricultural work. Brewing is particularly popular, but has certain negative effects. It encourages alcoholism, it may increase domestic violence, and as young girls are often involved in the production and sale of alcohol, it both removes them from school and exposes them to sexual violence when they sell it.

2.7 Issues arising from ACORD's work in Gulu

ACORD's programme in Gulu has undergone considerable change and disruption since its inception in 1979. Between 1986 and 1992 the war in the district was brutal, and has changed both Acholi society and economic conditions in the district. ACORD has maintained a presence in the area throughout all these changes, adapting the programme to changing circumstances. ACORD's programme team proved flexible enough to respond to changing needs, and the emergency distribution of 1989-90 was largely successful, indicating that it is possible to use `developmental' techniques and principles (such as participation) in emergency situations. ACORD's determination to `stay on' in Gulu during the insecurity helped to build a strong working relationship with the local communities, provided psychological support, and allowed ACORD to identify and respond to needs and opportunities as they arose.

There were some negative outcomes of ACORD's response to the instability. The 1989 distribution did increase perceptions of ACORD as a relief agency, but the team demonstrated a flexibility which kept the programme relevant to the population's needs, and built a basis for longer-term work. However, the conflict has had long-term debilitating effects on Acholi society which will require sustained efforts to overcome. Unless these are addressed, there is a risk of renewed conflict in the future.

3. The Case of Southern Sudan

3.1 An overview of ACORD's programme

ACORD's involvement in southern Sudan dates back to the early 1970s. Its work has always centred on Juba, once the administrative centre of both the South and the Equatoria Provinces. The first ACORD programme comprised a multi-purpose training centre and vehicle repair workshop in Juba. In the mid-1970s this was handed over to the regional authorities, and ACORD launched the Amadi Rural Development Institute (ARDI) to the west of Juba. This aimed to provide the regional government with personnel trained in rural development methodologies for a new Department of Community Development (DCD). In the early 1980s, ACORD shifted its focus to more direct support for the Department in Juba. A training officer was recruited to advise the Department, and a Community Development Support Unit (CDSU) was established with the aim of providing mobile support to the Department's field workers.

3.2 1985-6: insecurity hits the programme

In 1983 the civil war broke out afresh in southern Sudan. It was not until 1985, however, that conflict began to affect ACORD's programme. During 1985, most agencies were forced to withdraw from the rural areas, maintaining only a skeletal expatriate presence in the towns.

In contrast, the CDSU continued its work in the rural areas in Equatoria Province. This was possible because of the staff's detailed knowledge of the conflict and their flexibility of approach. The CDSU provided villages with a link to other government bodies which were themselves unable to maintain a presence at village level.

In 1986 levels of violence escalated dramatically, severely disrupting ACORD's programme. In April 1986, the ACORD Deputy Representative in Juba was recalled. The city came under virtual siege for a short time in August and all lines of communication were cut. The ACORD expatriate Training Officer was evacuated and the CDSU was unable to work outside the town. Although a replacement Deputy Representative was appointed in June, neither he nor ACORD's Country Representative in Khartoum was able to travel to Juba, leaving the programme team isolated.

The Amadi Institute was similarly affected by the upsurge of fighting. In 1986, SPLA activity escalated in the area, and the Institute was attacked three times. Staff were evacuated, first to Mundri, but, following an attack on Mundri, they were withdrawn to Juba.

3.3 1986-7: rethinking roles - the Juba Economic Recovery Programme

Restricted to Juba, all ACORD's partner agencies began to rethink their roles. While they could no longer travel to outlying areas, they had previously worked with many of the displaced people in Juba. Conditions within Juba were deteriorating, however. A delay in the year's rains prolonged the traditional hungry season for three or four months. Famine was predicted for early 1987. Refugees continued to increase in the town; by the end of 1987, it was estimated that the population had grown to 250,000.

The Amadi Institute staff identified a role in providing `reorientation' training for extension staff to enable them to work in peri-urban areas, and sought funding from ACORD. The CDSU focused on three activities: logistics, transport and supplies;

support for two training courses on latrine construction and classes in literacy, nutrition and health; and a sanitation programme in Munuki, where most of the refugees had settled. The area's infrastructure was stretched far beyond its capacity and sanitation problems were growing. Considerable interest was expressed by the refugees in building ventilated improved pit latrines and trainers were trained, in cooperation with the Juba Water and Sanitation Programme (JWASP), to assist individuals and groups to build latrines. Following a survey, ACORD/CDSU began a latrine digging programme in primary schools.

ACORD was also rethinking its role in Juba. Four alternatives were envisaged: pulling out; undertaking relief work; working in SPLA areas; or staying on and attempting to emphasise and build up the long-term perspective of local communities. ACORD's long history of work in the region and its engagement with the communities precluded pulling out; the dangers of perpetuating dependency eliminated relief work. Furthermore, ACORD saw no evidence that the SPLA had either the capacity or the will to respond genuinely to the development needs of the people.

The new Deputy Representative arrived in Juba in May 1987, and made a strong case for ACORD staying on. A combination of voluntary departures and expulsions in 1987 had left Juba with only two secular NGOs (ACORD and OXFAM) and a number of church agencies. The people in Juba felt abandoned, and there was an overwhelming need for psychological as well as material support. However, did ACORD have a role? Would other agencies be better placed?

The Deputy Representative was critical of relief efforts thus far. Most agencies were involved in relief, working through the Combined Agencies Relief Team (CART)[1]. It was acknowledged that there was a real need for food aid, and that CART had kept 200,000 people alive in 1987 and 1988. As a network of NGOs,

[1] CART was established in early 1987 by Sudanese church organisations and international agencies, with close cooperation from the regional government. Initially, it worked in the rural areas, but by mid-1987 was confined to Juba town.

it also played a coordinating role and exerted stronger lobbying influence on donors than the individual agencies.

However, it was also felt that a relief bureaucracy had developed, with vested interests in its own continuation. There had been a near-total focus on food aid, to the detriment of health, sanitation, and other needs. Alternatives had been tried too late and few attempts were being made to increase local food production. Continued supplies of food aid were depressing production in the town. (Production rose when the barges were unable to deliver relief supplies.) Leaving Juba dependent on relief supplies and convoys/airlifts meant the continued monopolisation of trade by the army and northern traders. Free food and food-for-work schemes had had a detrimental effect on participation. In addition, some interventions had been inappropriate. For example, despite there being many blacksmiths in Juba, agencies had distributed 30,000 pre-fabricated hoes which then had to be adapted by local smiths.

The Deputy Representative was convinced that an emergency programme based on development principles was needed in Juba. It was important to try to strengthen people's self-confidence, so that they could return to their homes with a sense of their own dignity. Furthermore, there was scope for working alongside some relief agencies which had come to similar conclusions and were attempting to adapt their programmes and promote greater self-reliance in the refugee camps.

The war was not expected to end in the foreseeable future, and it was recognised that ACORD would have to plan accordingly. Juba was a town effectively under siege. Changes to operational procedures would be required. Adjustments to the programme design would be inevitable. Supplies, logistics and communications would be difficult and perhaps interrupted. This implied increased costs. Security would require constant and careful monitoring.

The fundamental basis of ACORD's programme was elaborated in 1987 in the Juba Economic Recovery Programme (JERP). ACORD envisaged a programme based on development principles (participation, the encouragement of self-reliance) which

would link relief, rehabilitation and development together. While there have been a number of changes to the programme since then, the fundamental approach has remained the same.

The programme identified unemployment and a lack of skills, commercial infrastructure and indigenous capital as significant constraints, both to local production and to self-reliant development. A three-year programme was proposed comprising three broad components: agricultural production; income-generating activities; and distribution of rehabilitation inputs for the displaced. The Department of Community Development was to remain ACORD's main partner and to be primarily responsible for the rehabilitation component. During 1990, it was planned to consolidate the programme components and prepare the project for handover.

The Juba office was also reorganised. A Programme Coordinator was appointed, seconded from the DCD, and supervised by the Deputy Representative. Teams were recruited (again mainly seconded from the DCD) to implement the different programme components, as well as a number of administrative staff.

During 1988 the situation in Juba worsened as fighting increased. Pressure on resources rose as the SPLA made increasing incursions into the town. In October the SPLA shot down two planes and the airport was closed. Relief flights were stopped for a number of weeks, and food prices spiralled. CART food stocks ran out, and there were extreme food shortages. Mines were extensively used by both sides, preventing the civilian population from using land for food supplies, and killing fifty people during October 1988.

3.4 1988: linking relief and development

The agricultural component

1988 was primarily taken up with the agricultural component. With the DCD and the Ministry of Agriculture, ACORD carried out a survey in late 1987 of land use

and production around Juba, which initially selected three villages: Khor-Ramula, Nyaing and Juba Na Bari. These villages were to receive assistance from a tractor hire service (THS) established by ACORD. While the team waited for approval and the funds to buy the tractors they began providing technical advice in traditional methods of vegetable production, later supplying farmers with vegetable seeds in an effort to build up a relationship with them.

The project was implemented by two teams comprising agriculturists, extension officers and CDOs (two of them women), which provided training, seed and agricultural inputs on a credit basis, directed the THS and encouraged community organisation. Each team was supported by a Village Development Committee (VDC), responsible for mobilising the farmers and acting as a decision-making body. In addition, ACORD encouraged the formation of an advisory committee, made up of representatives from local government and other NGOs, which met each week to discuss issues such as credit and security. There was no representation from the communities themselves or committees at community level.

By the end of October 600 feddans had been ploughed by the THS, and the farmers had planted sorghum, maize and beans. A total of 426 farmers were assisted, benefiting 2,556 people, most of them in the three selected villages. Training was also provided to the farmers, along with goods (tools, wheelbarrows and bicycles) imported from Kenya on a credit basis. These were provided at a saving of 25-50% against the market price (ACORD was able to make these savings because it could import the goods duty-free). Credit was guaranteed by both the village development committees (VDCs) and the individual farmers, payment being due at harvest.

The project coverage was less than had been hoped for because the tractors did not arrive until the middle of the growing season. However, in 1988 Juba enjoyed the best rains for 20 years, giving the project a boost in its first year. Both the staff and the farmers were encouraged; granary stores were under construction, and it was planned to extend inputs to two more villages. A proposal was made for an irrigation project to begin intensive vegetable production on the banks of the Nile

and the Luri rivers. As well as the material assistance these programmes provided, they were seen to give a psychological boost to a population under acute stress.

During September and October 1988, an external assessment of the agricultural component was undertaken to evaluate its economic and technical feasibility in the light of the insecurity and logistical difficulties. While it recommended a number of changes, it was generally favourable. Despite the insecurity it concluded that the programme did have genuine long-term development implications.

The agricultural component was primarily aimed at existing communities on the outskirts of Juba and not the displaced population. That the latter had no access to land was to prove a major obstacle, unless they were relocated to urban areas. Attempts were made to assist them in cultivating some land that they had been allocated, but these were largely unsuccessful.

During 1989, the agriculture component continued to expand, although after 1988 three years of poor rains reduced crop yields. By 1991, all the families who were likely to participate in the programme were considered to be doing so. It was therefore planned to carry out action research into the feasibility of poultry-rearing, agroforestry and fish-farming, as well as focusing on seed collection and storage in the hope of promoting the use of local seeds rather than imported ones. An irrigation component began during 1990 with the arrival of ten pumps and two feddans were irrigated in each of six villages.

However, problems were encountered with cost recovery. At the outset, both seeds and the THS were provided on a credit basis. A flat rate of 10% above the purchase price of the implements was charged, to be collected from each farmer at harvest time. The money was to go into a separate bank account in the name of the Village Development Committees (VDCs) to act as a revolving fund for the replacement of the machinery. However, the programme soon ran into arrears. Farmers faced considerable obstacles in repaying their loans, owing to poor rains, harsh economic conditions and insecurity. At the same time, many farmers expected ACORD to provide services free of charge as other agencies did, and it

was reported that government employees and individual farmers were encouraging the farmers not to pay. Nor were the VDCs effective in ensuring repayment.

The system was changed in 1991 and seeds were sold on a cash basis. This seemed to resolve much of the problem. By the end of 1993 the two elements had virtually diametrically opposed recovery rates; the THS had recovered 26.9% of its debts, while seed credit recovery was 74.1%.

Small business component

The Small Business Promotion Component (SBPC) began in 1990. A survey in 1988 identified a number of informal business activities on which people relied. Typically, these activities were small, family-operated businesses, which suffered from low initial capital and limited skills. The programme aimed to provide cash and material inputs on a credit basis, as well as to encourage technical innovation, community mobilisation and training.

This component was implemented by a five-person team (two women and three men), headed by a female manager based in the ACORD office. Project staff helped in acquiring business licences and other facilities, and provided training and credit from a revolving fund. The component was initially targeted at the six villages participating in the agricultural component. Small-stock rearing, carpentry, food preparation and tailoring were given priority. Credit was to be paid back on a weekly or monthly basis.

Assistance was aimed at the poorest sections of the community (defined as those with a monthly income less than Ls.750), with particular attention to female-headed households, the disabled and the elderly. Initially, the component excluded the displaced on the grounds that they might return home at any time. By the end of 1992, a total of 327 clients had been assisted. In 1993, the number rose to 650 (358 of them women). Like the agricultural component, the SBPC was initially targeted at Juba's local population, as the programme staff believed that few of the displaced were likely to stay long enough to be a `good risk'.

The programme began experiencing problems with repayments quite quickly. Recovery rates were reported to be 46.8% in 1991 (rising to 72.1% in 1992, but falling to 34.5% in 1993). Women's take-up of the scheme also seemed to decline. The high price of materials and the need for travel permits from the authorities, which were not always issued, were symptomatic of the harsh business environment in Juba. While it was acknowledged that the few businesses had much chance of becoming self-sustaining, the project did give beneficiaries a means of survival in a desperate situation and helped them move away from dependence on relief.

In February 1992, the component's guidelines were reviewed by the programme team and staff from other ACORD-Sudan programmes. It was argued that there was little contact with the intended beneficiaries, as the project was run from ACORD's central office in Juba. Applications were insufficiently scrutinised and administrative and financial procedures were weak.

A number of changes were recommended. These included the decentralisation of the fund's administration and the development of loan criteria to include displaced people. The ceiling for admittance to the scheme was raised, so that displaced people with a monthly income of less than Ls.3,000 were eligible. The poorest women were found to be poorly represented in the groups receiving funds, since they were constrained by time, lack of education, etc. The team was asked to scrutinise credit applications with this in mind. As a long-term aim it was recommended that ACORD should attempt to identify and foster community-based organisations which would be able to manage the funds. The provision of regular supplies and cheap commodities was planned to help alleviate this problem, though it was recognised as important to ensure that people would not simply sell the cheap goods.

The rehabilitation component

In 1987, the DCD had deployed 20 CDOs in 8 of the largest camps for the displaced as part of a relief and rehabilitation component. It was planned that another 35 graduates from ARDI would be deployed later on in the other camps.

ACORD provided a link between the CDOs and other NGOs and provided material support in the form of tents, bicycles, other supplies and salary supplements.

In early 1988, ACORD-Juba submitted a proposal to assist an influx of 30,000 people displaced by flooding. They had been allocated a site on the outskirts of the town by the authorities, but had received no other help. ACORD staff put forward proposals to provide PVC, poles and tools, to encourage the organised planning and construction of housing with water facilities, to extend the agricultural component to the displaced and to promote health education and a Mobile Health Unit. Once these basic needs had been met, schools were to be built. It was noted that some small-scale business activities had already begun. The DCD, the Ministries of Health and Agriculture and ACORD implemented a programme of training in marketing to support these activities, particularly those run by women.

Action did not begin immediately, however, owing to a delay in funding. This caused some resentment among the field staff, who felt that the donors had adopted a `wait-and-see' approach to the situation. Part of the problem seemed to be that ACORD had not proposed a classic relief programme. The operation did finally begin in December 1988 with the distribution of blankets, tents etc. Thereafter ACORD became increasingly involved in the provision of relief and rehabilitation. The aim was to implement a programme that would meet the relief and rehabilitation needs being neglected by other agencies, particularly in health, shelter and sanitation. Activities continued during 1990 and 1991.

In mid-1992, the situation in Juba deteriorated dramatically. The SPLA launched a concerted attack on the town in July and August. The split in the SPLA in August 1991 had also led to a wave of refugees fleeing from the factional fighting. The town was shelled almost continuously. Juba's swollen population (at this point around 300,000) was forced into one-third of the town, with predictable results for sanitation and health. People were unable to harvest the year's good crops and the shelling closed the airport, suspending food supplies for two months. The attack was repulsed, however, and the Sudanese army then began to advance.

3.5 1992-4: programme consolidation

In November 1992, a short four-day trip was made to Juba by two members of the RSS after five weeks of continuous attempts to travel. This was the first time they had been able to do so since the beginning of the year. They found the programme needing considerable reorganisation.

Juba had returned to some approximation of `normality', increased security combining with good rains to encourage cultivation. The market was flooded with locally produced food, although prices remained high. Local people and government officials hoped that the town might be able to become self-sufficient in food and most NGOs were focusing on development and rehabilitation. The agricultural component was said to be highly visible and much appreciated. This was due not least to the fact that the tractors and other vehicles had been unable to carry out agricultural activities and had been used instead for sanitation purposes during July and August 1992. Every spare piece of land in the town was being cultivated, including grass verges and backyards. This vindicated ACORD's agricultural component: the demonstration effect of the THS and the irrigation service had persuaded many Juba residents that it was possible to grow food. The irrigation scheme was said to be particularly valuable, as it gave the farmers more scope for securing a regular income and helped to feed the town. The inclusion of training and community development were valuable initiatives.

In contrast, the small business and rehabilitation components of the programme were heavily criticised. Both were considered to have had negligible impacts, even allowing for the difficult conditions. The SBPC was said to be inappropriate and unresponsive to people's needs, and the rehabilitation component needed to change its approach and methodology. The relationship with the DCD was problematic because of poor coordination and inadequate reporting to ACORD and the donors. The rehabilitation component had been implemented slowly and was unresponsive to people's needs. Despite clearly spelt out operational guidelines in the original documents, they had become confused. Overall, the accomplishments of the rehabilitation component were judged to be few and insufficient. Furthermore, the

small business component's approach and procedures were considered irrelevant to the situation, with private money-lenders and suppliers being seen as more efficient and responsive.

These problems were exacerbated by a vacuum in management and a lack of communication and support from ACORD. The expatriate Programme Coordinator had been absent for long periods of time, having been refused permission by the authorities to travel to Juba. The management problems had been worsened by the flight from the area of five staff members in July 1992, including the administration officer, the newly appointed accountant and the head of the rehabilitation component. As a result, the programme had lost its direction and the programme accounts were in complete disarray.

Communications were extremely poor; the programme was limited to using the WFP pouch and radio, as the authorities had confiscated the programme's radio. This meant that even the most urgent messages took a week to arrive. There were no obvious answers to this problem, but new procedures were established during the RSS trip. The staff were to check with the WFP at least every other day for radio messages and to send a weekly pouch to Khartoum. Khartoum was to reciprocate. There should also be at least two visits a year from the RSS and/or London.

A number of measures were proposed to address the problems. A joint management team was established from the programme component heads, to improve coordination between the different components. By this time, the Programme Coordinator had resigned, and it was suggested that a new PC should be recruited from the existing team because of the difficulties expatriates encountered in getting to Juba.

ACORD had been extricating itself from its relationship with the DCD since 1990. Seconded staff owed their main loyalty to the DCD and this obstructed ACORD's efforts to monitor and evaluate the rehabilitation component. There was no reliable information on the numbers of beneficiaries and systems of distribution. This was

of increasing concern. In order to resolve the clash of loyalties, between 1990 and 1992 seconded staff were given the choice of returning to their departments or becoming fully-fledged ACORD employees. By 1992, this process was complete. During the 1992 RSS trip, ACORD's concerns were made known to the Department and it was decided that if things did not improve the relationship would be redefined.

Conditions in Juba continued to improve after November 1992. Following the SPLA's failed attempt to take the town, the army began to expand its area of control, increasing its `security zone' to a 25-30 mile radius, which the SPLA was unable to penetrate. The government established `peace villages' in the zone, attracting displaced people from Juba and those who had been in SPLA-controlled areas. During 1993, the population in the town itself decreased. At the same time cultivation of food continued to increase and, as more land became available around the town, demand for the THS exceeded supply. Road transport became possible and communication links improved between Juba and the outside world.

ACORD's programme expanded with the `security zone', beginning with distributions of rehabilitation goods and the construction of 50 pit latrines in the `peace villages' (after March 1993) when they became accessible. This work by NGOs had been requested by the government. The agricultural component had been relatively successful, with 1,590 feddans being cultivated. The SBPC had 519 beneficiaries by September 1993 compared with 235 in 1992.

However, the programme still faced considerable problems, principally because the donors believed the conditions were inappropriate for such `developmental' work. The programme therefore lacked funds to fly in goods already purchased in Nairobi or to acquire new supplies. One of the five tractors was out of action due to a lack of spare parts; rehabilitation goods for the displaced ran out; the programme had to do without new office equipment and transport, and posts remained unfilled; and all assistance to the DCD had to end.

However, the Juba programme did gain increased institutional support. During the year, the RSS Gender Officer, a Small Business consultant, the Head of the RSS and the administrator from ACORD Khartoum visited, as well as representatives from the London Secretariat. Unfortunately, while security allowed increased contact, the high cost of travel to Juba, and the restrictions on it, still represented a major constraint.

The increase in support from London and the RSS led to a number of changes in the programme. An evaluation of the SBPC found that many of the problems which had been identified in 1992 still persisted. It was suggested that the programme needed greater participation by communities in the management of the fund; investigation of the possibility of mobilising local savings; and greater emphasis on sustainable businesses using local resources. Two of three planned sub-offices had been opened (a lack of funds had prevented the opening of the third), but staff had not fully devolved their work. Inflation had also undermined the value of the loans available, and they had to be increased. Overall, however, the consultant believed that the programme was still valuable.

Cost recovery continued to be a problem both in the agricultural and in the SBP components. In particular, recovery rates for credit within the THS and the SBPC remained poor (around 40%). During 1994, a number of measures were taken to improve the situation. Between April and June, credit provision within the SBPC was suspended, to allow a review of the situation. Meetings with the scheme's clients proposed the establishment of a Local Loan Committee (LLC) for each sub-office, elected from among the clients, with the task of monitoring loans and small business activity in the area. Improved participation was expected to increase both cost recovery and the sustainability of the activity. The Agricultural Advisory Committee was dissolved, since it was considered to be an elitist body unrepresentative of women or villagers. Elections were held for both the ACC and the VDCs. They produced committees far more representative of the communities, which immediately adopted a number of resolutions aimed at improving repayment levels. At the same time, it was also decided to put an end to credit for the THS and, instead, begin ploughing only after the community had paid for the service, in the same way as they were paying for seeds and tools. The first indications are that

this has improved levels of cost recovery.

The DCD had proved unable to make the changes agreed during the RSS visit in November 1992, and had not improved its reporting procedures or implementation. ACORD therefore ended its relationship with the DCD and began to implement the rehabilitation component itself from 1 January 1994.

Early attempts to promote community development and greater gender equality in the displaced camps through institutions like the AAC and CDOs, had been less successful than was hoped, not least because of the difficult conditions prevailing in Juba.

The dissolution of the old AAC and the VDCs did, however, produce more representative institutions and helped to address more effectively some of the original aims of the programme, namely community development and gender equality. Though attempts have been made to include and target women, the programme is thought to have increased women's workloads, in particular by promoting irrigation. Nevertheless some interventions, such as promoting planting in rows, which makes weeding easier, have inadvertently reduced their workloads. Furthermore, women are not a homogeneous group, and it seems likely that the poorest women have been severely disadvantaged in their attempts to join groups or make use of ACORD's services.

It is not clear, however, whether the conflict has been a fundamental obstacle to improved gender awareness. There are suggestions that gender roles have become more flexible in response to the changing circumstances. Evidence from other programmes suggests that, had the programme had a greater focus on this aspect, more progress might have been made. This is not surprising. The programme was able to receive very little support or training because of the insecurity, and it was largely cut off throughout the period during which ACORD was developing its gender policy. Since 1992, gender analysis has improved, as there has been greater support for the programme.

3.6 Issues arising from southern Sudan

ACORD's programme in Juba has achieved mixed results in extremely harsh circumstances. Until late 1992, conditions in the town were very difficult, and communications with, and support for, the programme were poor; monitoring and evaluation were weak. Since then the programme has been strengthened (organisationally and methodologically) and has received greater support from the ACORD Secretariat.

The agricultural component has clearly been the most successful part of the programme. The costs of food production were cheaper than those of flying food in. In addition, the project contributed to the development of skills and knowledge, reduced dependence and provided psychological support for the town's population. When UN flights have been stopped, ACORD-supported local production has sometimes been the only source of food in the town. The record of the Small Business Promotion component is more ambiguous. The number of beneficiaries has been small, and the scheme was inappropriate for many of those who needed support. The failure of the DCD to monitor the rehabilitation component properly means that an evaluation of its success or failure is problematic. For all the components there are questions about whether the programme was successful in targeting the poorest individuals and women.

However, ACORD has learnt from this experiment, and on balance its experience does suggest there are possibilities for `developmental' responses to emergency and conflict situations.

4. The Case of Mali

4.1 1974-83

ACORD's involvement in northern Mali dates back to 1974, when it began a relief

programme after the 1973-4 drought. It was not until the 1990 rebellion that the Malian programme had to deal with the effects of conflict.

The initial emergency programme, `la Relance du Mouvement Coopératif', aimed to strengthen the government-supported cooperative movement (DRACOOP) and to provide emergency support for the population. During the 1970s, the programme's achievements were limited by pervasive corruption throughout the cooperative movement. It also became apparent that working with the government technical services had largely benefitted sedentary groups. In an attempt to address these problems, ACORD became increasingly active, relying less on the government technical services and placing greater emphasis on cooperation with local NGOs and informal groups of producers and pastoral communities. However, ACORD did continue to make use of the government technical services for specific training and monitoring tasks.

4.2 1983-9

After an external evaluation in 1983, a two-pronged approach was developed. Institution-building and strengthening of groups were carried out by means of training, literacy and discussion work, and economic activities were supported through training in agricultural techniques, the provision of inputs and materials for farming, livestock rearing and market gardening, the construction of wells, irrigated areas and cereal banks, and the encouragement of alternative income-generating activities.

However, a severe drought in 1984-5 disrupted programme activities and ACORD was forced to deal with an emergency situation. 80% of the region's livestock died and there were food shortages. Over-grazing of pastureland along the Niger river increased pressure on resources. Aware that top-down, external relief/emergency interventions often undermine local structures, ACORD experimented with different forms of emergency work in response to these needs, while still continuing its institution-building and economic support activities.

A programme of subsidies for the sale and transport of cereals was introduced in order to facilitate the population's continued access to supplies. Some support was also given in the form of food for work. In 1984 ACORD increased its water programme, digging wells in the pastoral area of Kidal, and began providing support (in the form of equipment) to village health workers and the cooperative sector.

Pastoralist communities were badly hit by steep falls in livestock prices. The communities were encouraged to sell their livestock, in the form of dried meat, to relief agencies for use in refugee camps, the proceeds from the sale then being used to buy grain. The pastoralists were fully involved, providing the livestock, and carrying out the veterinary checks, the slaughtering of the animals and the drying of the meat according to traditional techniques. Clearly, such an activity is never entirely self-sustainable, nor replicable, given the dependence on relief agencies to provide a market for the meat. However, together with continued support for ongoing economic activities, it did enable a number of communities to survive the drought without having to migrate, and without suffering excessive erosion of the local organisational structures.

In 1988, following an evaluation in the previous year, the programme activities were redesigned. Different programmes were merged, so that communities would benefit from an integrated programme of economic and institutional support within one geographical area.

4.3 1989-93: conflict hits ACORD's programme

The new programming phase began in 1989, with a commitment to integrated and participatory programmes, and the development of `programme teams' staffed by Malians. (ACORD's programme had up to this point been dominated by expatriates.) Three-year programmes were established in four areas. These emphasised support for informal groups.

Attempts were made to represent both the Sonraï sedentary and the Tamasheq

nomad groups within the programme teams, although management positions mainly went to southern Malians. Expatriate staff numbers were reduced. By 1990, there was only one expatriate member of staff, who left when the rebellion broke out.

Considerable effort was put into the development of an auto-evaluation process. The aim was to enable ACORD teams and beneficiary groups to develop together a monitoring and evaluation system based on agreed criteria. The teams' later ability to adapt to the insecurity and to accept alternative monitoring and evaluation methods is in part due to this previous analytical work.

In June 1990, this new phase in ACORD's programming was disrupted by the outbreak of rebellion. Decision-making by the Secretariat the future of the programmes was hampered by a lack of information. The Secretariat only gradually became aware of the rebellion and of what was happening in the north, and most of this information came not from ACORD staff but from other sources, such as other NGOs and the press. Despite repeated requests from the Secretariat for up-to-date information about the conflict and its impact, this remained limited.

In the field, ACORD staff determined to continue the programme for as long as seemed feasible. The official State of Emergency and a series of other restrictions prevented NGOs from operating in the Kidal and Menaka areas. Consequently, the programme teams moved to Gao, where they were able to contribute to another ACORD programme. The well-diggers from the Kidal and Menaka programme, who were contract workers, were put on half-pay and remained in Gao.

Initially ACORD was better able to cope than some other INGOs, because of the previous development of entirely local teams. Most NGOs employed mixed teams of expatriate and local staff, with senior positions dominated by expatriates. With the evacuation of expatriate management staff at the outbreak of the conflict local staff were left without the capacity or experience to continue programme activities. The mix of Tamasheq and southerners in ACORD's teams also helped to maintain the agency's perceived impartiality.

However, insecurity continued to increase and activities around Gao became more and more restricted. The government's technical staff left the area, forcing ACORD to interrupt some of its work. (Some government agencies have still not returned to the Gao, Kidal, Menaka regions at the time of writing.) For a time, it was impossible to visit communities, as vehicles were a particular target of attack. However, by maintaining a presence in Gao town, activities were able to resume after the Tamanrasset agreements in January 1991. The use of relatively safer forms of transport, such as camels, horses and small boats, enabled staff to maintain contact with communities along the river.

During 1991, the conflict spread to Timbuktu, with serious effects for ACORD's programme. Until then, the programme had been able to continue its support for groups along the Niger river, but activities became increasingly restricted to the urban areas. Travel outside the urban areas by motorised vehicle was extremely dangerous, and it became impossible to stockpile supplies, such as fuel and grain, in the rural areas without inviting rebel attack. The teams continued to monitor activities with communities along the river until this became too dangerous. In May 1991, the logistics personnel and the families of staff not native to Timbuktu were evacuated. Vehicles and equipment were relocated to Mopti and Sevaré where staff continued to be paid for looking after them.

However, the conflict had a very negative effect on the programmes, even though staff were able to reorientate their skills to urban work in Gao town (building wells and latrines). ACORD's neutrality came under pressure. Many saw the conflict from its inception as an ethnic conflict between the nomads (Tamasheq) and the state, the army, and the sedentary population. It became extremely difficult to be regarded as neutral; a person's ethnicity was taken to determine automatically which side they were on, irrespective of their beliefs or behaviour.

Much of the nomad population had moved away from the programme area when the conflict broke out. With travel outside the urban areas severely restricted, ACORD support inevitably went primarily to sedentary urban communities and those living along the river. Within Gao town, there was considerable distrust of

ACORD's Tamasheq members of staff, who were accused of siding with the rebels. The programme teams were not immune to these pressures. At least one Tamasheq staff member left for Mauritania in response to these threats. Maintaining neutrality and team cohesion in these circumstances became very difficult.

The Secretariat was not kept fully informed of events in northern Mali, as information flows remained irregular and unreliable. This was partly due to continuing confusion over the respective roles and responsibilities of the Secretariat, the RSS and the programmes. In an attempt to resolve these problems, the Secretariat organised a meeting in Bamako in August 1991, which brought all the programme staff together and provided the space and opportunity for them to talk openly together about the conflict and how to proceed with the programming.

The meeting came to the conclusion that it would be possible to continue programming so long as the safety and liberty of staff and village-level intermediaries could be protected. It was also agreed that radio links between the programmes and Bamako should be guaranteed and that funding for the programmes should be assured by London. Four central aims were identified: reinforcing the ability and capacity of local structures to cope with the change of situation; responding to the additional needs created by the conflict; supporting any initiatives that reinforced mutual understanding and confidence between groups; and promoting a better understanding of the conflict in Bamako and internationally.

A major obstacle was the continued restrictions on travel outside the urban areas. The original methodology was based on regular and intensive visits by ACORD staff to groups for discussions, follow-up, training and `auto-evaluation' exercises. It was believed that much could still be achieved, while contact remained possible between ACORD staff and community representatives. Considerable effort was therefore put into finding ways of maintaining contact and enabling activities to continue.

4.4 New ways of working

Forms of programme support changed. Infrastructural activities, such as support for irrigation work and the digging of wells, were reduced. More emphasis was placed on activities which did not require regular technical assistance or advice, such as the provision of small-scale agricultural equipment and credit. However, the decline in trading activity caused by the conflict did have a detrimental effect on a number of groups, who saw their funds disappear.

The polarisation of the rebellion between the army and the nomads meant that everyone was identified with one side or the other. This, in turn, meant that certain staff members were able to travel more safely than others, depending on their ethnicity and who controlled the areas where they travelled. As it became impossible for team members to travel, ACORD well-diggers, drivers and boatmen took on a progressively greater role in community meetings. As local people they enjoyed greater freedom of movement. The teams in Gao used the tapes of the meetings to monitor activities and remain informed of developments in the programme area. This proved so useful that tapes are still being used in current programming. However, the practice of using tapes for maintaining contact with communities in the pastoral areas was risky, since the army believed that the rebels were using them to disseminate information.

In some cases the animators effectively became ACORD's intermediaries. They were trained to monitor activities and developments according to agreed qualitative criteria, which could then be passed on to ACORD in written form or on cassette.

Faced with the decline in field visits by ACORD staff, the communities initiated contact themselves with the programme staff. Representatives would travel to ACORD offices in the towns, or send verbal/written messages to them via tradesmen and other travellers. This process gradually became known as the `Inverse Method'.

While these developments helped maintain ACORD's support for communities, there were a number of drawbacks. Relying on groups to contact ACORD inevitably biased support towards relatively mature organisations, or towards

nearby communities or those with safe routes to ACORD offices. While it may provide part of the answer to working in some conflict situations, these problems will need to be addressed.

Efforts were made to respond to additional needs created by the conflict. The Gao team began a series of activities to run alongside the 1989-91 planned activities to support communities and individuals in the pastoral areas. These included a repetition of the dried meat operation which had been successful in supporting pastoralists during the 1984-5 drought.

In addition, experience of that drought, and the Secretariat's experience in Juba, Sudan, suggested that problems were likely to emerge in the urban areas. Possible forms of support were investigated in order to pre-empt a deterioration of conditions in the towns, should there be an influx of refugees from the fighting. However, most nomads kept away from the towns during the conflict; they were unsure about their safety in the urban areas and were able to live off the pasturelands following the rainy season. Growing restrictions on travel meant that ACORD turned its attention increasingly towards interventions in urban areas. In Gao, where restrictions on travel in the pastoral and river areas were more prolonged, this developed into a new programme component of support for women's groups involved in small business and petty trading activities.

4.5 Attempts to promote reconciliation

The programme teams believed that it was extremely important to promote mutual understanding of the conflict between the different groups of beneficiaries with whom they worked, both in order to ensure the safety of ACORD staff when travelling and visiting the communities, and to avoid an escalation of distrust and animosity between neighbouring communities. In an effort to encourage reconciliation between Sonrai and Tamasheq/Arab groups, an inter-community meeting was arranged in Timbuktu in December 1991. In addition, it was hoped

that the meeting would dispel rumours that ACORD was planning to pull out of the region, and also increase ACORD's own understanding of how best to support the communities during the conflict and identify relevant criteria/indicators of programme activity. This first meeting was attended by 24 community representatives, 10 of whom were women.

A second meeting in 1991 was organised by the Gao team in Wani, where 29 groups were represented. At this meeting, the tension between the sedentary population and the pastoralists present was tangible, and at first the team feared that they had initiated a potentially explosive situation. However, the discussion and expression of mutual fears facilitated greater understanding. Over the next two years, four more meetings were held in the Gao region, with almost 80% of communities represented. In 1992, similar meetings were held, one at Menaka and two at Tessalit.

These inter-community meetings and the `Inverse Method' have since become an integral part of monitoring and programming. Each zone and region meet three to four times a year. Since the government services also attend these meetings, they have been able to resume cooperation with the local communities. To what extent these meetings contributed to reconciliation between groups in the area is unclear, however, and more work needs to be done on the role and effectiveness of NGOs in conflict resolution needs more work.

The Bamako meeting had identified the lack of available objective information about the conflict in Bamako, which was seen as an obstacle to reconciliation. Given its diverse contacts with different ethnic groups, NGOs, intellectuals and the government, as well as its 20 years' experience in the north, ACORD was in a key position to facilitate processes of reconciliation. At that time, Bamako was the centre of political debate in Mali. However, debate on the conflict remained constrained by fear, misunderstanding and manipulation. The meeting proposed the creation of a new post, with responsibility for collating and disseminating information to interested parties and the Secretariat. In the interim, it was agreed that the regional Gender Officer should take on this role. The post never

materialised however, both because information flows from the programmes remained limited and because funding for the new post was not available. As an operational agency, ACORD was also concerned about expanding its role in international lobbying activities.

ACORD did take part in efforts to present a united NGO stance vis-a-vis the Malian Government, becoming in 1991 the regional representative of the Comité de Coordination des Activités-ONG (CCA-ONG). This network was created in an attempt to increase cooperation among NGOs during the conflict, and has permitted improved learning among agencies about programming in situations of turbulence. However, while some agencies have been critical of ACORD, believing that it did not exploit its international position as much as it might have done, ACORD-Gao is of the opinion that its efforts in supporting this network and lobbying for regional improvements have not been sufficiently appreciated by the Secretariat or by the donors.

4.6 Adapting to conflict

During 1992, the insecurity persisted. NGOs continued to suffer attacks on their vehicles and offices, and harassment of their staff. In June 1992, the murder of 8 staff members of Norwegian Church Aid by the army shocked NGOs, intensifying their fears for the safety of local staff.

Travel in the pastoral zones became increasingly dependent on military escorts, with a number of negative consequences. The escorts were slow, expensive and unpredictable, making it more or less impossible to plan visits and keep to timetables. Programme teams were often forced to carry out field visits at times which were inconvenient to the communities, for example during harvest time. Those communities far from military routes remained unvisited. Consequently, the use of vehicles was restricted to the transport of heavy equipment, while the teams continued to use boats along the river and camels in the pastoral areas to make monitoring visits.

In these conditions, 1992 was used as a period of analysis and evaluation. As security to some extent improved in 1993, programme activities were resumed and expanded into hitherto excluded areas. However, the need to negotiate agreements between the army and the rebels about staff security proved a considerable drain on ACORD's human resources.

In October 1993, three senior staff members attended an ACORD conflict workshop in Kampala. The meeting identified a number of challenges facing the Mali programmes due both to the democratisation process and to the persistent insecurity in the north. It was felt important for ACORD to help communities understand and play a role in the new multi-party constitution, by means of continued support for institutional development and popular education sessions. Furthermore, inter-community meetings should be continued in an effort to reconcile the different antagonistic populations. There was also a need to develop new policies to deal with refugee/displaced populations, trauma and demobilisation. The workshop also highlighted the importance of development mechanisms to protect staff in times of conflict, and of balancing emergency and long-term programmes.

Efforts were made to deal with these challenges. While the ACORD-Mali programmes have not developed a refugee policy, they have offered support to refugee populations. The Timbuktu programme includes support for the displaced, in collaboration with CARE, and a new programme, due to start in late 1994, was aimed at helping repatriated refugees in the region. However, the resumption of the civil war in 1994 prevented refugees from returning to their homes, and a programme is currently being planned to support Malian refugees in Mauritania.

Progress has been more limited in dealing with the problems of demobilisation and trauma. The reintegration of ex-rebels into the armed forces and civilian society has remained a bone of contention between the rebel movements and the government. Although the creation of mixed brigades has gone ahead, it has had little impact on the general feelings of insecurity. Despite suggestions from the teams that ACORD should work with the ex-rebels and find ways of incorporating them into its

programmes, it remains unclear how, and to what extent, this can be done. Little progress has been made in developing techniques for identifying and dealing with psychological trauma.

The programme teams and the Secretariat set about addressing the organisational problems that had emerged between 1990 and 1992. The need for the teams to increase and improve the communication network among themselves, the communities, the local administration, Bamako and the Secretariat has been reiterated. The need for comprehensive and regularly up-dated information about staff and their dependants, and the different degrees of danger which individual staff members face, given their ethnic and political links, is emphasised. However, it remains extremely difficult to devise general guidelines to cover such issues as programme suspensions, the relocation or evacuation of staff, or redundancies, and decisions continue to be taken on a case-by-case basis.

Finally, the need to balance emergency and long-term concerns and needs was stressed. This has been problematic, not least because hostility increased between the different communities, and consequently undermined intended moves towards greater integration between sedentary and pastoralist groups after 1993. Instead, the programme team decided to rely on village animators for training/monitoring and evaluation in sedentary communities. Contact with the pastoralist groups was made through charismatic and religious leaders.

Disputes over resources are a major cause of local conflicts and need to be taken into account as part of development programming. For example, market gardening in the pastoral zone, can have adverse effects on the environment, yet women's groups have requested inputs for horticulture, and it had therefore been included in project activities. This highlights the potential contradictions and conflicts between the need for income generation, natural resource management and participatory planning.

ACORD has put considerable effort into encouraging reconciliation during the conflict, and the question needs to be asked, of whether NGOs can play a role in

preventing or `dampening' conflict. In view of ACORD's work in numerous pastoral areas in Africa, this could be part of a clearer long-term strategy. External evaluations of ACORD's programmes as far back as 1983 and 1987 referred to the potentially explosive issue of land tenure: nomad settlements along the river beds of the Niger had brought them into conflict with agriculturalist/sedentary communities which considered this area as their own.

It may be that ACORD can best help Mali's pastoral communities by ending its approach of distinguishing between the pastoralist and agro-pastoral sectors and replacing it with an integrated programme of support. This would need to identify new, alternative economic activities which create less competition over resources and address the linkages between pastoralist and sedentary communities, as well as their differences.

In the absence of a pastoral code to establish the respective communities' rights and regulate these conflicts, it is unlikely that ACORD's programmes will have a lasting effect. In the absence of an enforceable national (or regional) strategy for the management of water points in the pastoral areas, ACORD's support for the pastoralist sector, which is based on maintaining water provision, is undermined. Should ACORD and other NGOs have been expending more effort on lobbying the government on the issues of a pastoral code and the hand-over of wells in pastoral areas? Can ACORD work, for example, to resolve the problems of the nomad refugees currently in Mauritania, who fear the reaction of sedentary and semi-pastoralist communities when they return to Mali and seek to exploit their abandoned land and resources.

ACORD's attempts after 1993 to redirect its programming were disrupted by the resumption of the civil war in 1994. While the psychological and social scars of hatred and fear had begun to heal, competition for resources kept antagonisms alive. Continued banditry has a destabilising effect, and the peace remains fragile.

The effects of almost four years of insecurity have had a devastating impact on an already impoverished region, and the causes of the conflict remain far from

resolved. Pastoralist systems of production and management of resources have been severely undermined, further increasing competition for resources. Mass migrations have led to an over-use of resources in those areas deemed relatively `safe'. Over-use of rangelands has undermined the region's ability to provide reserves during the dry season. Existing wells have been overrun by increased numbers of users and a decline in their maintenance. Pastoralist herds have been almost wiped out, through a combination of illness, lack of continuing veterinary care and rebel/army attacks. Trade routes to Algeria, which provide a lifeline for these groups, were cut until 1993. The north of the country was forced to rely on supplies from the south, and to a lesser extent from neighbouring countries. For regions such as Kidal, this has meant transporting supplies over 1000-2000km, with interruptions in supply and a rise in prices. These problems have been exacerbated by successive droughts.

During 1994 the Tamasheq rebel movement splintered into a number of factions. A new militia emerged, the Ghanda Koy (`masters of the earth'), made up of the sedentary Sonrai. The large number of rival groups, and the increased polarisation of the conflict has increasingly threatened the peace, and in mid-1994 the civil war broke out again. This time ACORD's ability to continue its operations has been much reduced.

4.7 Issues arising from ACORD's work in Mali

Although the rebellion took ACORD by surprise, the programme teams proved able to adapt in a rapidly changing situation. In part, this was facilitated by a reorientation of the Malian programmes in 1989, which had focused on integrated programmes of support for both sedentary and pastoralist communities, implemented by Malian programme teams. The emphasis on participatory methodologies and the development of an auto-evaluation process encouraged the teams to experiment with programme activities, despite the interruption of `normal' programme activities. As the conflict wore on, the local communities took more responsibility for activities, and demonstrated greater initiative in their relationships with ACORD. This has set the pace for the type of ACORD-beneficiary

relationship which prevails at present.

A key factor in ACORD's ability to continue its programmes between 1990 and 1993 was its perceived neutrality, and the maintenance of cohesion within the programme teams. Earlier efforts to ensure that both Tamasheq and sedentary groups were represented within programme teams gave ACORD links with all communities, and most field staff were able to set aside their differences and agree on common principles for the continuation of the programmes. ACORD's wide-ranging links with the communities encouraged it to take on a role in promoting reconciliation, and to facilitate negotiations between the rebels and the government. However, such strategies are extremely fragile, and with the growing number of factions in the conflict, neutrality has become increasingly difficult to maintain.

The challenge that ACORD faces is to devise strategies and methods for continuing to support beneficiaries in the current context of heightened social tension. In addition, ACORD's experience demonstrates the need to take much more seriously the issue of resolving conflicts over resources, particularly when these relate to programme activities. However, the experience of 1991, when ACORD, as an organisation, came under severe financial pressure due, in part, to its commitment to support programmes in Mali, has meant that the Secretariat is now more wary of the costs involved in attempting to weather conflicts.

5. The Case of Angola

5.1 The Peasant Association Support project, Uige

ACORD began to work in Uige Province, Angola, in 1987. The core aims of the programme were to strengthen Peasant Associations in the municipality, boost the

local economy in general (by increasing agricultural production and diversifying the economic base), and plan an integrated development programme. The programme was given strong backing by the Angolan Government, which wanted to gain experience and skills in integrated rural development, and hoped to boost investment in the province.

ACORD had previously considered undertaking programmes in Angola, but had believed that conditions were not suitable. However, by 1986 the agency considered that the shift that began in 1985 away from a centralised command economy towards a more free market, a decentralised economic and political system, and the greater emphasis on the promotion of an independent and dynamic peasant economy, opened up new space for a successful intervention.

Information on the municipality was limited, and the initial phase of the programme was taken up with investigating programming actions. Little was known about the Peasant Associations, the main target of the programme. The main implementing agents of the programme, the government extension services, were run down. Training amongst extension workers was poor, and there were severe shortages of resources. The majority of extension workers lived in Uige town and rarely visited the villages where they `worked', because of insecurity and the scarcity and cost of fuel.

The programme was to be implemented by an Animation Unit made up of seconded government staff, led by an ACORD-recruited expatriate Technical Assistant (TA). This unit was to stimulate the activity of the extension workers with Peasant Associations, and coordinate their activities. The unit reported direct to the Provincial Governor. Training was to be provided for both the government staff and peasant leaders so that the peasant organisations would become able to implement their own development initiatives.

Security considerations figured prominently in the design of the programme. The national situation remained precarious. Of direct interest to the programme, the UNITA rebel movement had shifted its main focus during 1986 from the south of

Angola to Malanje, Uige and Luanda provinces, in an effort to undermine the coffee and oil industries. Programming was still considered possible within the confines of a country at war. Activities would have to remain limited to Uige municipality, which was relatively safe, since it housed a government army base. In other areas of the province, low-level support activities were thought to be possible, but they would probably be limited to quick distributions of inputs. Mobility would be crucial, and the programme would need to avoid the creation of potential `economic targets' likely to attract UNITA action.

The Uige programme used a participatory planning methodology, and an eight-month needs and resources identification process was planned before programme activities began. However, there were a series of changes to the workplan and organisational structure of the programme and it increasingly strayed from its original objectives and approach.

The ACORD Technical Assistant came under considerable political pressure from individuals within the provincial authorities to demonstrate quick results and to encourage greater investment in the province. The programme became increasingly centralised under the Provincial Governor, and its main activity became the supply of goods to Peasant Associations. A lack of supplies had been identified as a constraint on the local economy, but, whatever the merits of this activity, this necessitated the Technical Assistant spending considerable periods of time in Luanda working out the logistics. This restricted his presence in the programme area and limited training for the government services and the establishment of relationships with the communities.

In addition, the security situation in Uige province continued to deteriorate. There were a number of attacks in early 1987, and roads were often closed. Convoys from Luanda needed a military escort and most supplies had to be flown into the province. Growing UNITA activity increasingly restricted the operational area. By mid-1987 it was difficult or impossible to work in half the municipalities in the province, and work was limited to three villages.

During November and December 1987, the Technical Assistant suspended the programme briefly because of the deteriorating security and increasing problems with the authorities. The programme's relationship with the Provincial Governor had collapsed after ACORD had complained about the misallocation of programme materials. By this time, the Governor's domination of the programme had alienated ACORD's designated counterpart departments and the security services.

The Secretariat made repeated attempts to reorientate the programme. The need for it to concentrate on its original objectives and activities, and to maintain a continuous presence in the programme area, was reiterated. Substantial support was provided by the Secretariat Programme Officer. However, the removal of the Provincial Governor in November 1987 left ACORD's programme in limbo, and the Technical Assistant continued to spend considerable amounts of time in Luanda. During 1988, the main programme activity remained the supply of goods to the villages, and little progress had been made in addressing the lack of information on the Peasant Associations or the programme area.

The appointment of a new Programme Officer for southern Africa precipitated a major review of the programme in April 1989. This concluded that, while progress had been made in increasing the availability of material supplies, little had been achieved in relation to broader institutional development objectives. Furthermore, the project approach had been neither participatory nor sustainable.

In collaboration with the Angolan authorities, it was decided to terminate the programme on 31 December 1989, and begin a `Phase II' in 1990. There was a strong desire in ACORD to continue working in Angola, and preferably in Uige, where it was felt that ACORD had an obligation to put right the mistakes it had made. It was considered that a new programme could identify a role for NGOs in Angola and assist in the development of a methodology of rural development.

5.2 1990: the transition

Attempts to reorientate the Uige programme were disrupted by worsening insecurity

in the province. Because of military activity, only two supply convoys managed to reach Uige during the whole of 1990. In consultation with the Angolan partners, it was decided to terminate the programme.

Despite the closure of the Uige programme, ACORD retained a country representative and continued to develop links with the Angola State Secretariat for Social Affairs (SEAS), the Agricultural Development Institute (IDA), and two potential partner organisations: ADRA, an embryonic Angolan NGO set up to promote local, self-managed rural development, and the National Union of Angolan Peasants (UNACA). SEAS was keen to see the methodology which had been outlined in Uige put to use, and suggested Viana II, a shanty town 20km to the east of Luanda, as a programme area. Viana II was linked by both rail and road to Luanda, and was secure.

Viana II was a new settlement of 300,000 people, established in 1988, adjacent to an existing small town, Viana. Each family received a plot of land and the materials to construct a basic dwelling. The population of the camp was extremely heterogeneous. However, three broad groups were identified: returnees from Zambia and Zaire; internally displaced people; and refugees from Shaba.

Few of the inhabitants had been recently displaced. Three-quarters had left their regions of origin more than five years before, half more than 10 years before, while a fifth had been displaced for more than 15 years. As a result, the majority of the inhabitants did not want to return `home', but rather wanted to stay in the urban areas. This was particularly true for the young people, who represented the majority of the population (57% were under the age of 18). Female-headed households represented more than 14% of households. In this context, ACORD believed that the appropriate response was to provide the means to build a better life in Viana II rather than adopt emergency/relief operations in the expectation that the displaced people would return `home' when the opportunity arose.

Negotiations with SEAS had begun in May 1990, and between June and August a joint ACORD/SEAS team conducted a survey using participatory methods. Within

the neighbourhood, few grassroots organisations existed, apart from militia and self-defence units, and the Catholic, Adventist and Pentecostal churches. The churches actively encouraged the programme, and provided an entry point into the neighbourhood. In the final months of the year, the results of the survey were analysed and discussed with the community.

Contacts were thus established with the community, and the research process seemed to foster the emergence of local leaders and embryonic forms of community organisation. The SEAS team were trained in data collection and participatory methodologies. The survey revealed new information to the municipal authorities, not least that more than half the people originally settled in Viana II had `disappeared' and that many plots had been rented out to third parties. This set in motion a process of transferring property rights to those actually living on the plots.

5.3 ACORD's programming expands, 1991-2: the Angolan peace process

During 1991 two fully-fledged programmes emerged. Activities in Viana II were expanded to Huila province. ACORD also still hoped to gain a better understanding of the peasant economy and Peasant Associations in the country, and to identify local partners to work with. In an effort to meet these objectives, an analytical study of Peasant Associations in three provinces was undertaken with ADRA and UNACA. ACORD hoped that this joint project would indicate the suitability of these two organisations as partners, and strengthen their capacity and experience in particular methodologies. ADRA was later to become involved in the Chibia programme, but UNACA proved unsuitable and far from representative of the Angolan peasantry.

Viana II

In Viana II, there was a shift in emphasis during 1991 and 1992, as relations with the state services became increasingly problematic. The bureaucratic and authoritarian nature of the Angolan state had always been perceived as a problem by ACORD, but this was exacerbated by the process of political transition during

1991 and 1992. Long-term planning was difficult, as both government personnel and policies might well change after the 1992 elections. The state structure became increasingly paralysed, and while this gave NGOs freedom of action, it also frustrated many initiatives. In addition, the SEAS team had had problems in implementing ACORD's participatory methodology. In January 1991, expatriate technical assistants were employed to provide the methodological framework and training for the programmes.

ACORD increasingly distanced itself from government structures, redefining its role as supporting the population in their negotiations with the public services, rather than substituting for those services. A programme team was recruited under the direction of an expatriate coordinator during 1991.

A one-year programme was designed in association with the community, and workplans were drawn up and monitored by the community, represented by a ten-strong elected committee. The earlier survey had revealed that many of the displaced did not have identity documents, which were vital in Angola's highly bureaucratised society, particularly for children who needed them to attend school. ACORD set about facilitating the process of accessing these documents.
The community also completed the construction of two water points (with another eight under construction), which simultaneously provided clean water, and the basis for greater community organisation. Viana II was organised into 10 zones, each centred on one of the water points, and each with a water management committee, which later began to take on other roles. In addition, ACORD supported an association of artisans, and attempted to raise awareness about the problem of deforestation.

Activities continued in 1992. The remaining eight waterpoints were completed encouraging the appearance of 64 kitchen gardens. Women were the main beneficiaries of the water activity, sure they no longer had to walk miles for water. A housing initiative had less tangible results, as it did not prove possible to progress beyond a detailed study of the problem. The construction of a health post was delayed, and the results of the first year of the community school (able to start once

identity documents were issued) were disappointing, with only 186 of 600 enrolled children passing their examinations. Employment generation was still in its early stages, but was expected to become the main activity once the basic necessities (water, education, and medical services) had been supplied.

The Huila programme

During 1991, a second programme was identified and begun in Huila province. A programme of methodological support for the Basic Social Services Project (PSSB) in Chibia municipality, it was to be implemented by staff from the Agricultural Development Institute, with support from UNICEF. The programme was undermined in its early stages by the launching of a FAO-coordinated Rural Extension Programme (PER) in the programme area. The PER's methodology proved incompatible with that of ACORD, and ACORD's continued involvement in the programme became questionable.

At the same time, it was clear that the peace process had significantly altered the situation in Huila province, opening up areas long closed by the war. Yet the bulk of NGO and other agency interventions remained in the municipalities of Huila, Chibia and Matala, which had been relatively unaffected by the conflict. As a result, in the latter part of 1991 the Huila programme was altered. On the basis of two criteria (that ACORD should work in war-affected regions, and/or with marginalised groups) two areas were identified for programming: i) the central plateau provinces of northern Huila and Huambo, where the fighting had been the most violent and persistent in the previous 15 years; and ii) pastoralist communities in southern Angola, on the border with Namibia, who were judged to be those most poorly adjusted to a modern market economy.

Historically, the central plateau was Angola's main agricultural area, with considerable agricultural potential. There had been a high population density, and the Ovimbundu, who lived in the area, had been engaged in modern, market-oriented agriculture. ACORD considered that this background would facilitate a successful adjustment to the new economic situation, enhancing the chances of

programme success and setting a good example for future programmes.

Existing commitments to train IDA extension workers were honoured during 1991, while programme identification began with a joint ACORD-ADRA mission to Caluquembe and Bailundo in September 1991, led by ACORD's expatriate technical assistant. The two areas were similar in terms of social and economic organisation, but Bailundo had suffered the effects of the war to a much greater extent than Caluquembe because of the presence of a UNITA base in the municipality. It was decided that work should begin in Caluquembe, where the chances of success were greatest. It was hoped that, once activities had been consolidated in Caluquembe, work could then start in Bailundo.

Even in Caluquembe, there was considerable damage as a result of intense fighting and occupation by UNITA forces. Roads and bridges to the provincial capital had been destroyed. The population of the town had been swollen by influxes of displaced people.

The municipality was characterised by intensive farming activity, as land availability was being relatively constrained. Soils were increasingly impoverished, there was widespread deforestation, and people were forced to walk long distances to find firewood. Electricity supplies were also limited.

State services had begun to be reinstated in the municipality following UNITA's withdrawal, but were constrained by lack of resources. SEAS was limited to delivering emergency assistance to 14,000 registered displaced people in Caluquembe town. Dependent on external assistance for supplies, the SEAS distribution came to a standstill in November 1991 due to a lack of support. Hunger was evident, the war having prevented many farmers from tending their fields. The local economy was characterised by barter trade, and there was a critical shortage of goods and transport.

Programme staff conducted a survey among the displaced people in Caluquembe. As a result of the survey, it was decided to work with the people of Vissapa Iela.

These villagers had been forced to abandon their homes in 1984 by the worsening military situation. They formed an homogeneous group and wanted to return home. The previously cultivated land was found to have returned to bush, all the houses had been destroyed, and the springs and other water supplies had been damaged. 56 families, who had already returned, relied on continuing links with Caluquembe, selling firewood in the market, supplemented by limited agriculture, hunting and beekeeping. A catechist had accompanied them to the village, and played a key role in the community. However, ACORD began its work with those community members who remained in Caluquembe.

The Huila work programme for 1992 was extremely ambitious. It was expected to develop a methodology and begin work in Vissapa Iela and two additional villages in the Caluquembe municipality, Moinho and Tchitungo. Programme staff were to develop an understanding of both Caluquembe and Bailundo municipalities and to undertake an exploratory study of agro-pastoralists and traditional agricultural systems in southern Angola. A three-year programme was to be drawn up, and ADRA was to receive training and organisational and institutional building support.

A number of constraints to their return home were initially identified by the villagers of Vissapa Iela: a lack of oxen, ploughs and tools to clear and cultivate the fields; a lack of housing; and a shortage of food reserves to survive to the next harvest. Addressing these constraints became the focus of the programme, primarily by encouraging the community to organise to deal with the problems themselves. The programme was implemented by a joint ACORD-ADRA team.

Groups were formed to deal with health issues and with credit schemes. The health group was primarily made up of, and led by, women. The ACORD team sought to encourage the autonomy and capacity of the group, involving it in negotiations with the Municipal Health Delegation and the Red Cross. As a result, a MSF vaccination campaign was extended to the villages, a health post was rehabilitated, and a small allopathic and medicinal plant pharmacy was constructed. These achievements had a number of other benefits, ending the women's need to go

outside the village for such assistance, and putting a value on women's organisational capacities.

Two credit schemes were established, one for the purchase of cattle and the other for tools and industrial goods. Community groups' control of the constitution of the schemes and as much as possible of the administration was encouraged. In the cattle scheme, members of the Caluquembe community identified an area in southern Angola for buying cattle and travelled there to choose them. The process was a considerable logistical exercise, as the cattle owners wanted goods in exchange that could be purchased only in Namibia. In all, around 100 cattle were supplied. The funds generated from these sales went into a rotating credit fund, which was able to complete its first rotation. The team noted that these activities were unlikely to be sustainable independently, as ACORD had provided the vitally necessary transport for the goods.

Efforts were also made to rehabilitate local roads and a school, although the work was not completed. In other areas, progress was made in understanding the problem and identifying possible solutions, but no work was begun. But ADRA had gained first-hand field experience, and it was thought that the programme had encouraged relief agencies to use more participatory, development-focused methods.

5.4 The September 1992 elections and the resumption of fighting

ACORD thus began 1992 with a new organisational structure and two fully-fledged programmes, both of them were autonomous and linked by an administrative assistant in Luanda who provided the logistical back-up. ACORD had identified a local partner, ADRA, for its work in Huila. However, political events again disrupted ACORD's programmes. Between August and October 1992 both programmes were suspended to prevent them from being hijacked by political interest groups in the run-up to the elections. The resumption of war in November prevented them from restarting.

Viana II: 1992 onwards

Viana II was not directly affected by the renewed conflict in October 1992 and the community seemed to hold together relatively well. Two people were `executed' on suspicion of belonging to `UNITA', and there were attempts to use the instability to settle old scores in the neighbourhood. However, while a number of families of Ovimbundu origin sold their houses and left in November, those who remained were protected by their neighbours. These events suggest that the heterogeneous community had developed a significant level of cohesion, encouraging ACORD to resume its programming in January 1993, after consultation with the community.

Despite the suspension of the programme and the absence of programme staff from Viana II from August to the beginning of December 1992, the groups fostered by the programme (the water management and education groups and the emerging craft workers' association) had continued to function. When members left, replacements were nominated by the water management committees. This was seen as demonstrating that the groups were functioning and were sustainable.

Women were poorly represented in these structures, however. In the water management committees only 4 out of 22 representatives were women, despite their heavy involvement in the construction of the water points. ACORD did attempt to address the problem, and 1992 resulted in a slight improvement over 1991, when there was only one woman and 18 men.

Significant changes in the programme were not deemed necessary; rather the renewed conflict seemed to reinforce the need for its continuation. Large numbers of people had been newly displaced, and settlements like Viana II became increasingly common. It seemed unlikely that the displaced would be able to return home in the foreseeable future. With the bulk of the state's resources directed to the war effort, the economy and the social infrastructure continued to deteriorate. In this context, a developmental response seemed the most appropriate.

It was proposed that, during 1993, the institution-building based around the

management of the water points should continue; the registration of inhabitants should be completed; and vegetable plots and tree planting were to be encouraged. It was also proposed to set up a building in the centre of Viana II which would house the primary school, a youth training workshop, and the programme offices, thus giving the team an operational base in Viana II.

ACORD has encountered considerable difficulty in securing funding for the Viana II programme, and was obliged to revise the budget downward for 1992. This proved less of a problem than might have been expected, as the programme's suspension meant that expenditure was only 50% of the expected level. This allowed the programme to re-start work immediately in December 1992/January 1993. In other situations, the circumstances might not have been so favourable.

Huila: 1992 onwards

Unlike the Viana II programme, the Caluquembe programme was unable to restart after its suspension, following UNITA's occupation of Caluquembe town and the adjoining rural areas. The two ADRA staff moved to Lubango, which remained in government hands, as ADRA's perceived association with the MPLA prevented it from working in UNITA areas.

Box 1

Building Trust with Participatory Methodology

While the Vissapa Iela programme was short-lived, the use of the participatory methodology proved illuminating. The programme's identification phase had been based on lengthy discussions with the community at large. The team's understanding of the community was initially limited, and the methodology used allowed a greater understanding to develop, and limited monopolisation of the programme by what the programme coordinator termed the `manipulative leadership'.

As the programme continued it emerged that the community was divided into two groups, one led by the recognised leader, the Sekulo, who had remained in Caluquembe. The other comprised those families which had returned to Vissapa Iela, led by an 'elder'; however, it became clear that he did not represent the views of the whole community, and was linked to the MPLA. By meeting in smaller groups, which then reported back to community-wide meetings, and using the programme staff's other contacts with the community, it proved possible to minimise the Sekulo's domination, and other leaders began to emerge.

However, this was a slow process as there was initially considerable distrust of ACORD because of its perceived association with the Sekulo. The community's choice as treasurer of the credit fund (the catechist) resigned in protest at the Sekulo's prominence, and was replaced by the Sekulo himself, which did little to help the programme gain community acceptance. It proved crucial to win the confidence and trust of the catechist in order in turn to win the community's support. A turning point in this may have been the restriction of the cattle credit scheme to those families which had resettled in Vissapa Iela. This excluded the Sekulo, against his expressed wishes, and perhaps provided the proof of the programme's independence.

The acceptance of the programme by the resettled community at one point saved it from a UNITA attack. During 1992 UNITA militants entered Vissapa Iela `to confirm their suspicions that the programme had links with the MPLA, since it worked with the leaders of the party's committee'. The intervention of the community convinced the militants that the programme was neutral, and they left the village peacefully.

After the resumption of the war, the programme maintained only infrequent contact with the communities as community members made occasional visits to Lubango, and the team has since lost touch with them. It appeared that the communities had initially managed to stay intact, having negotiated with UNITA to retain their cattle in return for supplying provisions to its troops. Caluquembe was occupied peacefully, though many inhabitants fled to Lubango and

Benguela. The agricultural cycle had been disrupted by a lack of seeds, however, and by December food became increasingly scarce. Social and economic life in Caluquembe was said to be at a standstill. The foreign staff and nurses at the Protestant mission and hospital had left, and there was a shortage of drugs. It was thought unlikely that the cattle herd would remain in the community's hands or the situation continue stable for long.

The programme lasted only seven months, and while a significant start was thought to have been made, the achievements had not been consolidated.

Unable to return to Caluquembe, programme staff began work in Lubango with people who had fled the fighting in the countryside. Lubango itself was one of the few major cities still held by the government; consequently, a number of different relief agencies were operating there. However, the programme staff were critical of their interventions, arguing that, while they served an immediate short-term need for food, the methods of distribution were rudimentary and open to abuse. Far from addressing the longer-term problems of the displaced, interventions were seen to encourage dependence and corruption.

The team identified two peripheral zones in the city, Bairro Sofrio and Bairro Caluva, as potential programme areas. Both contained considerable numbers of displaced people, more or less integrated into the local marginalised population. Both were relatively secure from UNITA attack, while both lacked heavy involvement from outside agencies. They had an embryonic level of local

organisation which could be built on. Neither seemed polarised politically. There were differences between them: Sofrio was more or less a typical peri-urban slum settlement, with high population density; Caluva was further from the town centre and so there was land available for the displaced.

Initial contacts in Sofrio were made through the Catholic and Protestant Churches and community leaders. Using Participatory Rapid Appraisal techniques, information was gathered on the communities and some pilot initiatives were undertaken. However, the initial work in Sofrio departed from the priorities identified in the survey, being determined instead by those groups that showed an interest and a capacity in undertaking initiatives. This deviation from the participatory methodology was felt to be justified, as a `success' would help to establish the ACORD/ADRA team's credentials in the community. Work began with a group of tailors - the first group to respond to ACORD's initiative - who identified a lack of equipment and basic working materials as a constraint. A small rotating fund/credit scheme was established. Other initiatives followed, including work with a number of bakers and pastry-makers. Health had been identified as a priority need, and a Health Commission began to organise the rehabilitation of a health post.

In Caluva the ACORD/ADRA team again used the Catholic Church to facilitate its entry into the community. Following meetings with the community, work began with a group of cobblers/shoemakers, who were constrained by a lack of raw materials and equipment. The team linked the cobblers to leather curers, and a small credit scheme was established. Water was identified as a priority area, and the team established contacts with the National Water Department and UNICEF, facilitating the drilling of two boreholes. A Water Commission was set up, with the intention of managing and maintaining pumps and standpipes that were to be installed.

In 1993, a programme was developed for the period 1994-6. It was proposed to continue broadly along the same lines, since it was thought that the war and displacement would continue for the foreseeable future. Previous waves of

displaced people had been unable to return home during the 16 months of peace in 1991/2 because they lacked the resources and social structures to do so. A key objective would be to assist in the revival of these structures and resources so that people could return home if the opportunity arose. The focus would be on capacity-building and community control of the programme, which would not specifically target newly displaced people, since they were dispersed across the city. The relationship with ADRA was to continue. ACORD would be responsible for the training and methodology, fundraising and networking, while ADRA would provide the field staff.

Activities in 1993 had been based on knowledge gained on an ad hoc basis. While this allowed ACORD to respond quickly to a critical situation and generated goodwill in the communities, it was regarded as insufficient for a longer-term programme. A more extensive study of the social organisation in the communities was planned to examine the nature of their vulnerability and to identify needs and resources. On the basis of needs already identified, it was proposed to continue infrastructural rehabilitation and support for artisan groups. The use of credit for petty trading was to be investigated, and the community was to be involved in developing longer-term plans for the various neighbourhoods.

5.5 Issues arising from Angola

ACORD's involvement in Angola has been relatively recent, and has been unusual in that the country was at war when ACORD began its programmes. The first programme was disappointing, but since then there have been some clear successes. The contrasts are interesting; greater use of participation, the use of local staff and local NGO partners, a minimum of resource inputs and an emphasis on clear programme methodologies have characterised the later, more successful programmes.

The war, economic decline, fundamental political and economic reforms have all combined to frustrate ACORD's work in the country. ACORD's programmes have been constantly interrupted by the war, and developmental programmes have often

seemed largely irrelevant in the face of the violence and enormous human suffering. However, while there have been large-scale relief programmes that have met immediate basic needs, these have also often encouraged dependence and corruption. On a wider scale they have been subject to manipulation and diversion, and may have played a role in prolonging the conflict. In this context, ACORD has continued to work where it can in Angola, in the belief that it still has a role to play.

6. Issues and Implications

Many of the lessons which have emerged from ACORD's experience of working in conflict situations are relevant to other organisations.

Since the mid-1980s, ACORD has become increasingly willing to continue, and in some cases to begin, working in areas affected by armed conflict. Each experience has been different, as the case studies illustrate. While different programmes have had different successes and failures, common lessons are emerging. These can be broken down into three broad areas: issues of programme content, management issues and strategic issues.

6.1 Issues of programme content

Development activities in conflict/emergency situations

In practice, distinctions between relief, rehabilitation and development are blurred. For populations caught in the midst of `political emergencies' or wars, and situations of declining natural and economic resource bases, crises are not unusual events. Often emergency assistance becomes just one more resource input in an on-going strategy for survival. ACORD has tried to provide a range of different

kinds of support for communities, with the intention that, as circumstances change, so will the mix of support that is needed and given. Often this has meant providing `emergency support in a developmental manner' in an attempt to support local coping strategies and institutions to weather crises and so to strengthen their ability to survive future crises unaided. This may mean the provision of emergency goods, but with an emphasis on participation and collaboration with the local institutions, and in the expectation that such activities will form the starting point for longer-term development work. In Juba, for example, this involved attempting to broaden people's coping strategies. By introducing a tractor hire service, irrigation, improved seeds, new bulkier and more nutritious crops (e.g. sweet potato) to urbanised communities, ACORD broadened their options and provided skills that could be used in the future.

The value of `staying on'

For ACORD, helping communities to weather crises has meant being more willing than in the past to work in conflict-affected areas. ACORD's experience, as documented here, would suggest that there has been some success in this.

In Gulu ACORD generated considerable goodwill for its continued presence, and by `staying on', even in those periods when activities were extremely limited, its presence gave psychological support to the local population. In addition, ACORD was able to gain an understanding of how the local situation was changing, and to identify needs and respond accordingly. Similarly, in Juba, ACORD's promotion of agricultural and income-generating activities has provided people with a way of generating income, and a sense of purpose in desperate circumstances.

Withstanding conflict

ACORD's experience suggests that certain forms of programming are more resilient during armed conflicts than others. Investments in infrastructure can be destroyed in a moment, or wasted through lack of use. Those programmes that have invested in the development of organisations and people who have the skills, capacities and

confidence to propose and manage activities with ACORD's support, have adapted most successfully in times of crisis and conflict. These successes have often relied on the prior development of a good relationship with the communities with whom the programmes work. These relationships increase the programmes' ability to remain relevant, identifying and adjusting to changing circumstances. The presence of staff local to the area, with their greater links with the local community, and their reluctance to leave, even in times of acute crisis, may be crucial in this respect.

The value of participatory methodologies and institutional development has been repeatedly demonstrated. Experiences in Gulu, Mali, and Angola all suggest that programmes which are truly participatory, and where local communities have a real sense of belonging and `ownership', are better able to withstand instability than those which are not. They are less likely to be looted, more likely to achieve credit and cost recovery, etc. In Uganda, the success of the Gulu health programme in maintaining some level of health care during the worst periods of insecurity was based on the commitment of locally selected health workers.
ACORD's programme in Uige, Angola, stands in contrast to the above approaches, and demonstrates the weakness of programmes that ignore protocol, do not respect obligations to designated counterparts, and fail to develop good links with the communities. ACORD's Uige programme relied too heavily on one powerful individual to `get things done', and this restricted the achievement of the programme's objectives, exposed the programme to abuse, placed it in limbo when the local politics shifted, and created suspicion amongst the local security services.

The impact of conflict

The impact of conflict is mediated by social, political and economic differences, in particular along gender lines. People are displaced, survival strategies and reciprocal relationships are disrupted, men often leave their communities and households, and there is usually a high level of female-headed households. Women are often forced to shoulder traditionally male responsibilities as well as their existing ones. They are often less mobile than men, have little claim to property or

resources independently of men, and are left to shoulder the burden of caring for children, orphans and the wounded alone. Despite the probable rise in female-headed households, local institutions are likely to remain male-dominated. Women may be forced to resort to socially unacceptable activities to earn some income.

Displacement is typified by the disruption of the family unit, a loss of assets, a lack of access to resources, trauma and distress. There are likely to be high numbers of family break-ups, abandonment and separation. The loss of ways of life that displacement often entails can be deeply traumatic.

These impacts not only affect individuals, but also encourage change in existing social structures and institutions, with long-term consequences for the livelihoods of individuals and households. For example, during the drought years of the late 1960s and early 1970s in Mali, women are said to have enabled their families to survive because of their savings and their ability to manage the scarce resources available. Shifts in traditional authority patterns also took place as a result.

In Gulu, the conflict and economic decline have had profound effects on Acholi society. Traditional systems of social cohesion and maintenance of order and security have broken down, and feelings of trust have been undermined.

Community development has been undermined as communities are displaced and distrust is created between and within them. Communities remain traumatised by the insecurity of continual fighting and looting. It is difficult for these people to organise themselves into group work with a long-term perspective which they find difficult to believe in. Credit and savings funds can be problematic, as people have very limited resources, and pooling funds leaves all members open to theft or the loss of funds because of displacement.

In Uganda, ACORD has attempted to address the differential impact of conflict on women and men by providing a forum and a tool (its gender analysis techniques) for men and women to come together and talk through these changes. This has helped to channel changes in a positive direction for many people, allowing men

and women to communicate and find new gender roles. The need for `healing' and reconciliation, both at a community and an individual level, is clear.

Similarly in Mali successive years of drought and conflict have stimulated high levels of male out-migration, a rapid growth of female-headed households, and subsequent changes in social institutions. There may be a need to deal more directly with changing gender relations, and other issues like trauma and the potential conflicts and violence when men return home after labour migration or displacement to find their role as family head usurped.

Social change has not been limited to gender relations. Since 1987, young people have been emerging as an increasingly powerful force in the management of group affairs in northern Mali. Within beneficiary groups, younger members are now taking a greater part in areas once reserved for traditional chiefs and religious leaders. However, there is (sometimes violent) resistance to this emerging `contre-pouvoir' and traditional leaders have tended to muster all possible forces against it. At the same time, a profound disintegration is currently taking place in Tamasheq/Moor society in the aftermath of the conflict, as families have been separated and traditional social systems of authority, social security and economic relations seem to be breaking down.

This common phenomenon of changing social relations in turbulent situations presents challenges to NGOs to recognise and respond to opportunities to effect positive change. This has been most clearly articulated in respect of gender relations. In areas such as Eritrea, ACORD has seen the return to a former unequal division of labour after women's highly active participation in the struggle for liberation.

Conflict affects individuals and communities in a variety of ways; programmes must respond in a strategic, `holistic' way, addressing the whole range of issues that face communities and individuals. In order to do this, programme teams require the capacity to analyse the changing nature of the communities and societies they are working in, and to respond to these changes. Gender analysis and analysis of

capacities and vulnerability represent some tools for this, but often the capacity within programme teams has been insufficient to meet this demand. It will be important for ACORD to strengthen the abilities of programme teams to use these tools in the future.

Psycho-social issues

Psycho-social stress represents a considerable obstacle to community rehabilitation, as well as a personal tragedy. This is a particular concern of the Gulu programme team, for example, who feel ill-equipped to deal with those individuals who have suffered traumatic experiences, either as a result of conflict or other things, such as HIV/AIDS. It will be important to develop a framework for dealing with trauma that is effective, culturally appropriate, and sustainable.

AIDS

AIDS is a problem throughout Uganda. Conflict has hastened its spread throughout Gulu: widespread sexual violence, displacement, the presence of the military and the need for many women to turn to prostitution to generate some income have all been linked to the conflict. The effects of HIV/AIDS are well-documented elsewhere, but they present particular problems for ACORD's programme. The emphasis on self-reliance, for example in the credit scheme, is problematic when many groups may be affected by HIV or AIDS, and the scheme may need to be redefined. In addition, AIDS programmes aimed at behavioural change can seem inappropriate where large numbers of women (more than men) have contracted HIV/AIDS not through their own actions, but as a result of sexual violence.

Demobilisation

Demobilisation emerges again and again as a potential obstacle to peace in post-conflict situations. Few ACORD programmes have attempted to respond explicitly

to the needs of demobilised soldiers. In Gulu, the large-scale demobilisation of the NRA (along with rebel troops integrated into it after taking up the amnesty) has given rise to concern that the returning soldiers will be unable to find work. The widespread availability of weapons in the district may lead to banditry once demobilisation payments run out. In Mali, the failure of the demobilisation process is thought to have contributed to the renewed fighting in 1994. ACORD therefore needs to examine more closely how it can include ex-fighters in its programme activities, provide them with income-generating opportunities, and facilitate their reintegration into society. ACORD's programme with ex-fighters in Eritrea is just such an attempt, and should provide useful lessons.

The need for flexibility

Working in conflict-affected areas requires considerable flexibility, both organisationally and in terms of programming. Programmes can quickly become inappropriate and irrelevant. Communities and staff may be displaced, and security conditions change. Furthermore, as previous needs disappear or are exacerbated, new ones are created.

The Gulu programme was able to demonstrate considerable flexibility, due to its methodology, its organisational structure, and the high level of training that the RDWs had received. The programme was implemented by a highly trained team of locally recruited RDWs, and the organisational structure was `flat', decisions being made on a team basis after discussion. This meant that the staff were able to work relatively independently, and to adapt to the changing circumstances.

The project's methodology strongly emphasised self-reliance, and the decision to organise the emergency distribution of relief goods was therefore a difficult one. However, in the conditions that prevailed, where people lacked the basic necessities, it was not possible for the programme to continue to focus simply on animation and self-reliance, and remain relevant. Changed conditions require changed responses. However, the relief intervention succeeded in responding without entirely abandoning the participatory methodology. The need for a

distribution was identified in consultation with the communities, and the distributions, and ACORD's willingness to stay on in Gulu when many other organisations left, enhanced its reputation and helped develop the basis for longer-term work with the communities.

In Mali, ACORD continued to support local groups (both materially and psychologically) and kept as much as possible to its long-term strategy, thus avoiding undermining local coping mechanisms. However, while previously planned activities were maintained wherever possible, new activities and new working methods were adopted in response to changing circumstances.

As the insecurity prevented ACORD staff from visiting communities, programme participants began to take the initiative in communicating with ACORD. The Mali team also made use of well-diggers and drivers, who tended to be local people, to animate community meetings. In this way, the team was able to continue its activities, although on a reduced scale, relying for a lengthy period on this source of information about what was happening at programme sites. The use of tapes has been judged very successful, and continued to be used after the insecurity subsided.

Field staff believe that beneficiaries would not have taken this initiative, had it not been for the support for institutional development and the auto-evaluation process prior to the conflict. As a result, communities were better prepared to analyse their situations and identify how ACORD could best support them. However, there are inherent problems with this `inverse method': it will tend to favour those communities and individuals who are able to travel easily and safely or communicate easily with programme staff. As a result, it should not be the only tool for continued programming.

In Angola, the use of participatory methodologies had a similar effect. When ACORD's programme was forced to abandon Vissapa Iela and move to Lubango, it proved possible to maintain contact with the community in Vissapa Iela, but not to continue programme activities. This was in contrast to ACORD's experience in

Mali with the `inverse method', because of the greater intensity of the conflict in Angola.

The Juba programme, far more than the other programmes cited above, raised questions about *whether* ACORD should continue its programmes in a conflict situation. Many of these questions were exemplified in discussions about the agricultural component of the programme and particularly the Tractor Hire Service (THS). They could be broken down into four broad questions. Did ACORD have a distinct role in Juba, or was relief the only possible response? Should ACORD encourage food production, or instead use food-for-work or similar schemes? If growing food is an appropriate response, should ACORD use tractors, which seemed unsustainable and depended on imports of capital goods into the town? And, finally, what impact would such a programme have on the conflict?

ACORD argued that it was valuable both in economic and social terms to encourage the production of food in Juba. Not least, it was able to supplement inadequate and unreliable relief supplies.

Criticisms that the programme was not sustainable in the long term missed the point. The land being used was unlikely to be farmed in peacetime, as it fell within the town's boundaries, and other areas would have a comparative advantage in crop production. However, during the conflict other circumstances prevailed. The people in Juba needed food. Relief supplies were inadequate and unreliable, and markets were monopolised by northern traders and the military. Assisting local production would improve local food security, help prevent feelings of dependence, and could lay the basis for longer-term development.

The use of tractors was questioned. However, there were a number of good reasons for using tractors. Much of the land had not been used for agriculture for many years and was very hard to open up. The use of tractors extended the time available for opening up the land because they were not restricted to the rainy season when the ground was moist. Furthermore, there was limited land available for grazing. Cattle were scarce (due to starvation, a lack of familiarity with animal

traction and the insecurity), and recent efforts by other agencies to restock the area for animal traction had failed.

Throughout the programme, the THS was often prevented from working at full capacity by military restrictions on travel, insecurity, and scarcity of spare parts. In addition, the army often refused to allow the growing of sorghum as its height might shield rebel movements. There were also the problems in terms of cost recovery, outlined in the case study.

However, the experience does illustrate that agricultural production in Juba did provide vitally needed food, tempered the skewed nature of the economy, and was cheaper than flying food in to the town (6.4 times cheaper in 1993, and 16 times cheaper in 1994). Finally, it is also believed that this form of emergency assistance is less vulnerable than food aid to manipulation by warring factions.

Credit and cost recovery in emergency situations

A principal dilemma for development-oriented interventions in conflict-related emergencies is that development programmes aim to maximise the ability of beneficiaries to provide for themselves and cover the cost of NGO-supported activities. Usually this is done by way of credit schemes and cost recovery. However, the standard criteria used are inappropriate in such situations, the prevailing economic conditions meaning that any income generated, or the loans themselves, are needed for survival rather than investment. This dilemma, and the obvious difficulties for debtors, may often lead to a less than vigorous pursuit of debts, with correspondingly poor recovery rates, fund decapitalisation, and weak targeting.

Rather than sticking with credit, and allowing loans to become *de facto* grants, other forms of support for income generation need to be investigated. For example, in Juba, these changes have centred on increasing the level of community participation, researching the needs of local businesses and what is viable in the circumstances, and identifying possible links between the credit schemes and

traditional mutual support schemes. During 1994 the programme team attempted to identify those small businesses that were able to function without relying on imported materials.

In contrast, the agricultural component has abandoned the use of credit altogether, but not the expectation that communities should contribute to programme activities. The successful switch in 1991 from providing seeds and tools on a credit basis to pre-payment in cash was extended to the THS in 1994, along with the dissolution of the existing Agricultural Advisory Committee and the election of a committee more closely rooted in the communities being served. So far this seems to have been successful in increasing cost recovery.

To a certain extent, ACORD in Juba has been affected by a short-term view of displacement. Both the agriculture and the small business promotion components initially focused on local people, because of the displaced people's lack of access to land and the expectation that they would not stay long in the camps. As a consequence, the displaced received mainly rehabilitation assistance in the early years. However, as was later recognised, their displacement was far from temporary, and longer-term interventions were needed. As a result, the SBP component was extended to them in 1992-3, and during 1994, as the government-controlled zone around Juba expanded, ACORD also extended its THS and agricultural services to those displaced who were allocated land. The constraints on pursuing particular activities will vary from place to place, but it will be important to maintain a long-term perspective in programming in emergency situations.

Conflict resolution and conciliation

ACORD has been most heavily involved in conflict resolution in Mali, becoming involved in locally-based mediation and promoting reconciliation between the sedentary and pastoralist communities with whom it worked. The need to bring communities together to promote social cohesion led field staff to experiment with inter-community meetings, and these have now been incorporated into programmes

as a regular forum for participation and monitoring programme activities, as well as creating links and understanding between the communities. Bringing together communities that rarely met helped to dispel rumours circulating about the sedentary and pastoral communities.

This mediation role at a local level was facilitated by ACORD's extensive network of contacts with the government, the different rebel factions and communities, resulting from its broad-based team of staff. It was matched by an involvement in the peace negotiations, where ACORD used its good offices to facilitate some discussions. ACORD also attempted to encourage understanding at a national level of the problems faced in northern Mali.

ACORD's experience in Vissapa Iela in Angola demonstrates the potential value of participatory methodologies in conflict resolution at a local level. NGOs often introduce substantial resources into communities; this can precipitate struggles for control of those resources or can create targets for attack or robbery, and thus jeopardise the safety of both staff and local people. Participatory methodologies can help to diffuse such tensions by giving the team an understanding of the divisions in the society and providing a forum for the discussion and resolution of key issues. Finally, programmes may be less vulnerable to external aggression if the community has a sense of `ownership' of the programmes.

These activities have been localised in nature, and while there is considerable interest in conflict resolution among NGOs, our knowledge and capacity in this field remains limited. While ACORD may have had some positive impacts on these processes at a local level, it has not influenced events at a wider national political and military level in Angola. From ACORD's experience, it is not possible to say that all programmes should become involved in such activities. Much will depend on the circumstances and the particular staff members in place. Perhaps the way forward is to acknowledge a role for ACORD and other NGOs in local conflict resolution, where such issues arise in the context of existing programming.

6.2 Programme management issues

Communications and information flows

Conflict isolates programmes and creates difficulties for distance management. Information flows between the Secretariat and the programmes deteriorate, and as a result there is reduced support for the programme team at a time when they are under considerable strain. There is less monitoring and evaluation of programme activities, and teams become isolated both physically and psychologically.

A lack of prompt communication between programme teams and the Secretariat can cause considerable concern amongst the teams. Similarly, a lack of information from the field about events in the programme area can limit the ability of the Secretariat to respond effectively.

Clearly, communications are a vital support for staff, and considerable effort needs to be made to ensure that as much as possible there are means of communication that can be maintained in situations of turbulence. At the same time, it will be important to improve mechanisms for information flows. In conflict situations it is often extremely difficult, if not dangerous, for staff in the field to be honest about what is going on around them. In addition, it is unrealistic to expect programme team members to be unaffected by the conflict and able to remain objective. Improving information flows will require clearer guidelines on reporting, both in terms of timing and content, so that programme staff understand the Secretariat's needs for information and analysis. At the same time, programmes should be encouraged to consider possible future scenarios, which will feed into increased flexibility and preparedness.

Strengthening programme teams

While communications and information flows are vitally important, ACORD tends to work in marginal and inaccessible areas, and controlling communications is often a primary objective of military forces in conflict situations. It is unlikely that communications can ever be guaranteed, thus making effective distance management precarious.

In fact, some programmes have carried out very good work when communications have been impossible. This has been based on good relationships with the local communities and cohesive, capable teams (as, for example, in Gulu after 1985). Indeed, it is the capacities of the programme staff that determine, to a large extent, the quality of ACORD's programming in conflict situations, and while considerable effort should be put into ensuring communications systems, similar emphasis should be placed on equipping teams beforehand with the skills, tools and confidence to cope in such situations.

The organisational structure of the Juba programmes was ill-suited to the situation, relying too heavily on the presence of the Programme Coordinator, who was often absent, to coordinate programme components. There was no deputy PC, and no forum for sharing information or for coordination of the components. In contrast, the Malian programmes (like the Gulu programmes) were more team-based, and seem to have had a more appropriate organisational structure. However, programme teams are not able to escape from the conflict within their society. These strains were kept to manageable proportions in the Malian teams primarily by the behaviour of key staff members who ensured that ACORD retained an impartial role. However, it is unrealistic to expect programme teams to remain aloof from conflicts within their societies, and it will be important to equip teams to recognise and manage such tensions.

Improving a team's ability to cope will involve a variety of measures. Fundamentally, we should work to strengthen team cohesion and team-building skills within the programmes, ensuring a balance between generalists and specialists. In conflict situations programme staff are under considerable strain, both as individuals and as a team. This is likely to have a significant effect on their ability to work well. Improved team-building skills, greater transparency within ACORD about decision-making and the constraints at different levels, the provision of counselling and stress management techniques, may all help to reduce the pressures. In addition, this may also involve reviewing recruitment procedures, the organisation of programme teams, etc., in order to encourage the formation of cohesive teams with a balance between different ethnic groups.

Furthermore, a recognition that distance management is not effective means that teams need to be equipped to undertake the range of programme management and development activities, often with little or no support. This will require higher levels of training to ensure that teams can effectively monitor and evaluate programme activities (including gender relations and programme impacts, vulnerabilities and capacities). With these skills and the knowledge that they can respond flexibly to changing situations, programme teams should be better able to cope at those times when there is little support. At the same time, the need for distance management will have diminished as many functions will have been delegated to the programme.

However, the Secretariat must retain the ability to fulfil its management and accountability functions. Ironically, distance management is most difficult at the very time that ACORD is most vulnerable to the loss of assets and finances through robbery, looting or the transfer of cash where banking systems have collapsed. While some losses are inevitable, risks must be minimised and financial controls ensured. In conflict situations, the Secretariat's reporting requirements, both on activities and finances, will increase.

Monitoring and evaluating are also vital in ensuring that the poorest are targeted by the assistance provided. In Juba, for example, monitoring and evaluation were a major problem, because of the security problems and the lack of communication. Efforts to improve monitoring and evaluation were complicated by the divided loyalty of the team's seconded staff (the vast majority). Staff seconded from the regional government proved to be in a poor position to pursue monitoring and evaluation requirements with a department of which they were a part and to which they would eventually return. In such a situation ACORD was ill-placed to enforce its demands in terms of monitoring and evaluation.

Programmes are often based on the notion that all conflict-affected groups are vulnerable by their very nature. However, in any situation there are winners and losers, and it is likely that those at the bottom of the pile are the ones for whom programme resources would make the most difference. Ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation, combined with gender analysis of activities and

communities, is thus vital for effective responses. Strengthening the capacity of programme teams on the ground to monitor and evaluate both programme activities and programme **impact** should also help to limit the diversion and manipulation of aid by the winners in these situations.

Strengthening programme methodologies

Conflict and emergencies expose the weak points in a programme. Isolated, and under great strain, programme teams, methodologies, and activities can crack. ACORD's first experience in Angola sharply illustrated the crucial importance of having clear objectives, strategies and a methodological framework for programmes during turbulence. Otherwise, programmes can easily be `hijacked' by particular interest groups, or can lose their focus as they adjust in an ad hoc fashion to changing conditions.

ACORD's later programmes in Angola have been more successful. Many of these problems have again been encountered, but the new programmes have benefited from having clear objectives and participatory methodologies. More appropriate staff (both expatriate and Angolan) have meant that the programmes have been better able to cope. The lesson is clear: the higher the quality of a programme prior to conflict, the more resilient it is likely to be in a turbulent environment.

The need for preparedness

There is also a need for greater preparedness for conflict. This means analysing the programme area and beyond for potential sources of conflict. In addition, it implies developing mechanisms that can protect staff, partners and resources.
In the past, ACORD has not considered these issues in any systematic way, and in the future programmes will need to look more closely at ways of anticipating conflicts, and formulating responses to them. This might involve considering different programming options and likely scenarios in the event of conflict, and preparing alternative budgets. Networking with other agencies would assist in

determining possible risks and likely sources of conflict.

Part of this process might involve preparing a typology of conflict, or at least a series of questions to guide programming decisions in relation to conflict. The conflict in Gulu clearly changed in nature, from a civil war between government and politically-motivated rebels to a more indiscriminate conflict where civilians bore the brunt of the violence. Different programming activities were possible and appropriate at different stages of the war.

Programmes should consider the impact they have on local conflicts (for example, latent conflicts over land use or rights), and how such conflicts can be managed. There may be roles for NGOs at a local level in the prevention and resolution of conflict, but this remains to be defined clearly.

Security and personnel guidelines

There is also a need for guidelines for staff procedures in times of conflict. These need to refer to programme suspensions, staff redundancies, responsibilities for dependants, evacuation, etc.

While ACORD's programmes have developed individual guidelines for staff and programme security, the agency is developing general guidelines as a priority. In the past, programme teams have expressed the need for `a clear and equitable policy governing personnel procedures in conflict which would protect all staff and set out clear guidelines' (Hamid, 1993).

There are limits to the policy measures that ACORD can take. For example, ACORD's southern Africa programmes seem to have the best developed security guidelines (apart from Somalia), perhaps because of the longevity of the conflicts in Angola and Mozambique. The security measures have imposed added costs and burdens on the programme: for example making homes and offices secure, supplying radios for vehicles, homes and offices and ensuring that expatriate staff members possess foreign travel tickets and exit visas at all times are all expensive

measures. Continued programming during periods of conflict in Mali in the early 1990s placed considerable financial strains on the organisation.

There are other obstacles. During the recent events in Rwanda, ACORD's members, the Secretariat and programmes in adjacent countries made every effort to locate and assist staff members and their dependants. However, these efforts were constrained by a number of factors which limit the amount of support that can be offered to local staff in comparison with expatriates. For example, UN evacuation procedures applied only to expatriates. It is virtually impossible to insure local staff in the same way as expatriate staff.

Resolving these issues will be extremely difficult. In practice, ACORD shoulders as much responsibility as is possible on a case-by-case basis. Amidst the events in Rwanda in 1994 all parts of the consortium pulled together to assist the country programme, but strains on the organisation were considerable. Arriving at a global policy will require a thorough process of dialogue within ACORD, and a recognition of the constraints that exist. Raising false expectations of what can be done will not help anyone.

Programme suspension and closure

Suspending a programme can be an extremely difficult experience for field staff, particularly local staff who are not in a position to leave the programme area. In Gulu and in Angola resentment remains about the manner of decision-making: staff feel that decisions were taken without sufficient input from those on the ground, who were bearing the brunt of the conflict and had detailed knowledge of the situation.

Clearly, there will always be difficult decisions to be made, often quickly and with little time for consultation. While staying on has usually been worthwhile, it may sometimes be better to suspend or close programmes rather than remain with a risk to staff and resources, when programmes have become unmanageable.

In Mali during 1994, ACORD's ability to continue its programmes deteriorated, as the conflict increased in complexity. Subsequently, the agency lost its perceived neutrality in a number of programme areas, and thus its ability to work with the target communities. Although ACORD has maintained a presence in the expectation that programme opportunities will re-emerge, this situation cannot be sustained indefinitely. Programme costs continue, even though activities are limited.

Expatriate or local staff?

During the 1980s, ACORD became increasingly committed to employing African staff, preferably local to the programme area. This process was heightened by decentralisation in the late 1980s. The number of expatriate staff has grown, however, as a result of working in conflict-affected areas. This is because of the perceived neutrality of expatriate staff, and the greater ease of recruitment of expatriates. The latter are also seen as offering some form of protection, signalling a continued interest on the part of the outside world. Many of the ACORD-Gulu staff felt that the presence of an expatriate Programme Coordinator `kept Gulu on the map' for the rest of the world. Expatriate staff are also sometimes considered less vulnerable to attack, and able to move more freely than local staff.

All these assumptions are open to question. In Mali, for example, having a mixture of southerners and Tamasheq staff helped ACORD to retain its neutrality, and also provided an example that the different Malian groups could work together.

The greater safety of expatriate staff is also open to question. Both expatriate and local staff have been increasingly targeted in conflicts. Often in ACORD's experience local knowledge, a shared language, and a commitment to the area and its people have allowed and motivated local staff to continue working, when different decisions might have been taken by expatriates. Expatriate staff can be tempted to rely on the support of particular groups to `get things done', if they themselves are isolated socially and politically within the programme area.

ACORD's experience demonstrates that it is the behaviour of staff members, as

much if not more than their nationality, which is important. Maintaining the safety of staff in Gulu was problematic, particularly when distributions began in the rural areas in 1989. The security of the team rested on its perceived neutrality and the good relationships it had built up over time with the communities. In Mali, having an entirely Malian staff meant that teams were not debilitated by evacuations of expatriate staff in senior positions when the conflict began.

Responses towards local and expatriate staff differ. Expatriate staff are usually evacuated to a `safe distance' or perhaps repatriated when conflict breaks out. ACORD bears a contractual responsibility to the staff member and his/her dependants. However, local staff are employed on local contracts, often without any involvement by the London office. Repatriation is obviously not an option, but rather displacement from the programme area. One lesson learned from the events in Rwanda in 1994 is that the Secretariat must maintain lists of staff, let alone their dependants.

Indeed, events in Rwanda placed the differences between expatriates and local staff, and the problems in ensuring their safety, in stark contrast. Fourteen members of staff lost their lives in Rwanda, in part because they worked for an NGO. The commitment of ACORD to nationalise teams means that this problem is likely to recur. It is clear that the different treatment of expatriate and local staff must be explicitly addressed.

6.3 Strategic considerations

Neutrality and impartiality

Neutrality is a complex issue and cannot be taken for granted. For example, the dynamics of the conflict in Mali meant that ACORD was unable to provide equal support for all communities. It was forced to work primarily in the river area where security was greater. The government's division of the north in July 1990 into a `safe zone', where NGOs could operate, and an `unsafe zone', where they could not, had implications both for ACORD's perceived neutrality and for its ability to

target those most in need. The populations in most need of support were arguably those in the `unsafe zone'. Furthermore, despite an awareness that the balance needs to be redressed in favour of the pastoral areas, renewed insecurity is likely to emphasise this imbalance.

The behaviour of individual staff members strengthened ACORD's perceived neutrality in this period. Staff acting in their personal capacities are often regarded by others as reflecting on ACORD as an institution, and during 1991-2 this worked in ACORD's favour. However, since the renewal of hostilities in 1994, vocal criticism of the army and rebel movements by field staff has contributed to increased security risks for ACORD staff.

ACORD's success in continuing its programming during the 1991/2 rebellion in Mali rested on what might be called `negative' neutrality. That is to say, all sides to the conflict accused ACORD of bias, and to some extent the accusations cancelled each other out. However, the renewed rebellion in 1994 has affected ACORD's operations more severely. The use by ACORD teams of military escorts has damaged the organisation's perceived neutrality. The rise of the Sonrai militia, and the splintering of the Tamasheq/Arab rebel movement into a number of factions, made the balancing act that much harder to perform. Neutrality needs to be continuously reinforced. While this `negative' neutrality proved sufficient to allow ACORD to continue its programmes in 1991-2, it may be that a more `positive' sense of neutrality would have been less fragile.

In Angola's polarised conflict, maintaining ACORD's neutrality has been extremely difficult. ACORD's mandate requires it to work with and through local institutions wherever possible, and in Angola it has attempted to distance itself from the state by working with local NGOs. However, the principal secular Angolan NGO is ADRA, which was formed by ex-MPLA adherents, and is perceived by UNITA as being pro-government. It has not been possible to forge links with more pro-UNITA organisations. This, combined with UNITA's hostility to the Angolan staff of international NGOs, has prevented ACORD from working on the UNITA side of the conflict, and has led to clear implications for its perceived neutrality.

Similarly, relations with the state services, and the UN, all compromise ACORD's neutrality in one way or another.

However, ACORD's experience in Vissapa Iela demonstrates the role that participatory methodologies and the development of such relationships with local communities can play in establishing neutrality between local interests, and, to some extent, in relation to wider conflicts.

During the events in Rwanda, where one side was engaged in genocide, ACORD found `neutrality' an inadequate basis for continuing operations. Instead, ACORD adopted the principle of impartiality. In other words, it applied its principles in a non-partisan manner. But as an organisation with a mandate to work with the poor and marginalised, it does have values it seeks to uphold.

Advocacy and lobbying

In Mali, a proposal was made to create a post for the dissemination of reliable information on the conflict both at a national and an international level. It proved difficult to secure funding for this activity. As a result the initiative was never properly pursued. This raises the question of how an operational agency like ACORD should approach the question of advocacy. There may be issues, such as land tenure, where changes in government policy would increase the effectiveness of programmes or help to resolve potentially violent conflicts over resources. Should ACORD be focusing on such work? Would this benefit the programmes in the long term?

However, advocacy on the basis of programming activities is relatively straightforward. A more difficult question is that of human rights. ACORD programme staff are sometimes aware of human rights abuses, and could therefore potentially play a monitoring, witness or advocacy role. Indeed, there is often considerable pressure on the agency to adopt such a role. However, the Secretariat does not generally engage in such activities, both because the consortium members do not expect ACORD to play such a role, and because it might threaten the

security of the staff, the participating communities and the programme on the ground.

Funding issues

Funds are often unavailable for developmental approaches to emergencies because of divisions between relief, rehabilitation and development budget lines, scepticism over the possible success of such programmes, and the dangers of losing the investment. Furthermore, emergency assistance is often viewed as politically neutral, in contrast to development aid. Consequently, governments often cut development aid to countries they take exception to, and replace it with `humanitarian assistance'. The consequent ebb and flow of funding creates problems for sustained programming in emergencies. For example, in 1994 there were large amounts of funding available for Somalia and in 1995 virtually nothing, as attention switched to Rwanda. The see-saw effect is exacerbated by the short-termism of emergency funding (lasting from 12 to 18 months). In some years, there can be too much money to deal with and the following year too little to cover the core costs of programmes.

This funding environment simply adds to the problems faced in maintaining a development programme in such situations and in responding to changing conditions, even though a number of donors have, in the past, shown flexibility in their funding, allowing some programmes to maintain some sort of presence, even if, for considerable periods they are unable to do much work.

The flexibility required in such situations about what is done, and how it is done, sits uneasily with the project cycle. The reporting and accounting requirements of development programmes are much more rigorous than those applied to emergency budget lines. In Mali, for example, ACORD was often forced to alter or abandon activities, and develop new activities and ways of working that did not appear in the original budgets or programme documents. This was possible because of the flexibility of some donors, a flexibility which cannot be taken for granted.

The complexities of many contemporary conflicts, the frequent manipulation of humanitarian aid as part of the political economy of war, and the clear inadequacies of traditional emergency responses demand new approaches, and greater flexibility and longer-term commitments on the part of donors. At the same time, programmes must demonstrate that changes in programme activities will contribute to the achievement of stated programme objectives in changing circumstances. The challenge is to balance the need for greater autonomy and flexibility for teams on the ground, with the need to ensure accountability in the use of donor funds. A more integrated approach to development and relief would improve responses.

Relief and development

There is currently widespread concern about the inadequacies of international responses to `complex emergencies'. In both Sudan and Angola, relief was seen to meet short-term needs for food, but methods of distribution were often rudimentary and open to abuse, and did not address the long-term problems.

There remains a need for greater integration and coordination between the different agencies that intervene in such situations. Conflicts often attract large numbers of relief agencies, which employ different, often contradictory, approaches. This has had negative implications for ACORD's programmes in a number of countries. For example, in Huila, the ACORD team believed that UNICEF's work methods hampered organisational development in one bairro of Lubango. Development agencies are often expected to take over from short-term relief interventions, but without greater harmonisation of methodologies the success of such handovers will remain limited. Furthermore, development efforts to date have failed to prevent the increasing level of conflict in Africa, and need to be reassessed in this light.

Conflict as a strategic issue

Treating conflict as a strategic issue means building it into feasibility studies, situational analyses, programme designs, and monitoring and evaluation systems. Programmes need to address the problem of how, through their activities, they can

reduce the likelihood of conflict, and whether they risk exacerbating it.

Some critiques of relief operations suggest that aid programmes should focus on the political and economic causes of conflict, rather than simply addressing the symptoms. Different agencies clearly have different constraints and capacities, and working together they can perhaps address the range of issues inherent in these protracted conflict situations. In some cases, it may be important not to intervene, as aid will be manipulated. Donors should be prepared to accept this. Much thinking has gone into the `scaling-up' of NGO activity, and has focused on finding strategic points at which to act to `make a difference'. It may be that, despite the pressures to act that are generated by fund-raising departments, the media and the public, advocacy and political action are more important than `humanitarian work' in some situations. Such a conclusion will have to be based on informed political analysis of the situation. Ensuring that agencies are able to make such an analysis will be crucial in the future.

7. Conclusion

Protracted conflict in Africa and elsewhere has had a devastating impact on civilian populations and development initiatives. The international response has been characterised by a growing emphasis on, and increased funding for, emergency `humanitarian' interventions at the expense of long-term development. Considerable inadequacies have been revealed in emergency responses developed to deal with natural disasters. There is a need for new ways of thinking and working different from those involved in both emergency and development work.

While the distinctions between relief and development, promoted by the modernisation school, have little meaning on the ground, and the division of donors' budget lines between relief and development has hindered ACORD's ability to help the poor cope with, and promote change on, a sustainable basis. More flexible approaches to emergencies on the part of donors are clearly crucial.

Armed conflict is a complex process; its roots lie in a web of social, economic and political relations. Conflict is both a symptom and a cause of social upheaval, and can therefore be analysed, perhaps predicted and even influenced. Within this process, NGOs are themselves actors; their action or inaction has implications for the course of events. This implies that development agencies must treat conflict-related emergencies not simply as `humanitarian' events but as political processes, in which there are winners and losers.

Conflict situations tend to magnify the weak points of aid programme structures. As a consequence, the quality of ACORD's programming in conflict situations depends to a large extent on the capacities of programme staff, the crucial strength of programme design and approach and the cohesiveness of programme teams. Improving ACORD's response to conflict, and that of other NGOs, will imply strengthening programming and staff capacities in periods of stability. In addition, greater preparedness will require building conflict into programming analysis, as well as defining procedures and guidelines to cope better with a turbulent world. Achieving this vision will require the investment of time and money prior to conflicts, with appropriate commitments from donor organisations.

Conflicts have become more common. ACORD's experience in unstable situations, of resisting the strategies of large-scale relief programmes and of maintaining the values and goals of community-based development contributes to an emerging debate concerning the role of international aid in responding to instability. Recognition of the potential for aid to fuel, rather than mitigate, violence, has brought into question the oft-claimed neutrality of emergency and development aid in unstable situations (see, for example, Duffield, 1994; Macrae and Zwi, 1994; African Rights, 1994). A re-thinking of notions of neutrality and a greater integration of emergency and long-term interventions are required.

References

ACORD (1992) "Operationality in Turbulence: the Need for Change", mimeo, London.

African Rights (1994) "Humanitarianism Unbound: current dilemmas facing multi-mandate relief operations in political emergencies", London, African Rights.

Duffield M (1994) "Complex emergencies and the crisis of developmentalism", *IDS Bulletin* 25(3)

Macrae J and A Zwi (1994) *War and Hunger: Rethinking International Responses to Complex Emergencies*, London and New Jersey, Zed Press.

Acronyms

AAC	Agricultural Advisory Committee
ACORD	Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development
CDSU	Community Development Support Unit
CART	Combined Agencies Relief Team
CHW	Community Health Worker
CPO	Country Programming Officer
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CDO	Community Development Officer
DCD	Department of Community Development
DRDC	District Rural Development Council
GDA	Gulu Development Association
GDCBHCA	Gulu District Community-Based Health Care Association
IDA	Agricultural Development Institute
JMC	Joint Management Committee
JWASP	Juba Water and Sanitation Programme

MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRA	National Resistance Army
PC	Programme Coordinator
PHC	Primary Health Care
RDDP	Rural Development Promotion Programme
RDW	Rural Development Worker
RSS	ACORD's Regional Support Structure
SBPC	Small Business Promotion Component
SEAS	Anglolan State Secretariat for Social Affairs
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
TA	Technical Assistant
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
THS	Tractor Hire Service
UPDA	Uganda People's Democratic Army
VCA	Village Change Agent
VDC	Village Development Committee
WACU	Western Acholi Cooperative Union

Relief and Rehabilitation Network

The objective of the Relief and Rehabilitation Network (RRN) is to facilitate the exchange of professional information and experience between the personnel of NGOs and other agencies involved in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance. Members of the Network are either nominated by their agency or may apply on an individual basis. Each year, RRN members receive four mailings in either English or French. A Newsletter and Network Papers are mailed to members every March and September and `State of the Art' Reviews on topics in the relief and rehabilitation field every June and December. In addition, RRN members are able to obtain advice on technical and operational problems they are facing from the RRN staff in London. A modest charge is made for membership with rates varying in the case of agency-nominated members depending on the type of agency.

The RRN is operated by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in conjunction with the European Association of Non-Governmental Organisations for Food Aid and Emergency Relief (EuronAid). ODI is an independent centre for development research and a forum for policy discussion on issues affecting economic relations between the North and South and social and economic policies within developing countries. EuronAid provides logistics and financing services to NGOs using EC food aid in their relief and development programmes. It has 25 member agencies and four with observer status. Its offices are located in the Hague.

For further information, contact:

Relief and Rehabilitation Network - Overseas Development Institute
Regent's College - Inner Circle, Regent's Park
London NW1 4NS - United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0) 171 487 7413 - Fax: +44 (0) 171 487 7590
Email: Internet: odi@gn.apc.org