

# Humanitarian Exchange

Commissioned and published by the Humanitarian Practice Network at ODI

Number 55 September 2012



**Special feature**  
**The crisis in  
the Sahel**



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### About HPN

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## Editorial



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The special feature of this issue of *Humanitarian Exchange* focuses on the humanitarian crisis in the Sahel region of Africa, where aid agencies estimate that more than 18 million people are affected by food insecurity. In the lead article Peter Gubbels argues that the main cause of this crisis is not drought or a food shortage but a 'resilience deficit' which has left vulnerable people unprotected against shocks like rain failure and exceptionally high food prices. Northern Mali has been hit doubly hard by a poor harvest in 2011, followed by political unrest and violence in 2012. In his article, Jean-Nicolas Marti explains how the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is working to improve access to people in need in northern Mali by promoting acceptance of humanitarian principles among belligerents there. Authors Amanda Farrant and Jeff Woodke explain how NGOs are helping communities to build resilience in Burkina Faso and Niger, and Nanthilde Kamara, Madeleine Evrard Diakite, Emily Henderson and Camilla Knox-Peebles look at Emergency Market Mapping Analysis (EMMA) in Chad. Zahairou Mamane Sani, Andrea Stewart and Caroline Draveny illustrate the benefits of coordinated needs assessments in Niger, while Ousmane Niang, Véronique Mistycki and Soukeynatou Fall review the impact of social safety nets in promoting behaviour change. Finally, Jessica Saulle, Nicola Hypher and Nick Martlew highlight the ways in which Household Economy Analysis can improve social protection programming.

Articles in the policy and practice section focus on 'humanitarian space' in India and Burma, lessons learned from a multi-agency IDP Vulnerability Assessment and Profiling (IVAP) project in Pakistan, experiences of training and supporting 'Skilled Volunteers' in Bangladesh and progress in the implementation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction policies and protocols in Nepal. We end the issue in East Africa with articles discussing the results of a programme monitoring cash and voucher transfers in Somalia and a Transparency International study examining corruption in food assistance in the 2011 drought response in Kenya.

## A new drumbeat for the Sahel

Peter Gubbels, Groundswell International

In the wake of drought in West Africa's Sahel region, a bleak narrative of an estimated 18.7 million people on the brink of potential catastrophic food crisis has captured media attention. There has been a constant drumbeat of calls from many agencies for more humanitarian funding.

Agricultural production in the Sahel fell due to late and irregular rains and prolonged dry spells in 2011. Drought also caused a significant fodder deficit in the pastoral areas of the Sahel. The Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) meeting of 12–13 April confirmed that Sahel cereal production in 2011 was 26% lower than in 2010. However, 2010 produced a record harvest; if compared to the average of the past five years, total cereal production in the Sahel was only 3% lower than normal. Despite what seems like a modest overall food deficit, a severe food and nutrition crisis has begun. Why?

### The 2012 crisis

Although rooted in long-term structural factors, every new acute phase of the Sahel crisis has its own distinct features. The 2012 Sahel crisis differs significantly from those of 2010 and 2005 in several ways.

First, prices of basic foods in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad are exceptionally high. This is one of the most alarming features of the current Sahel crisis. In Burkina Faso's capital, Ouagadougou, local millet has risen to 85% above the five-year average. In Bamako, the capital of Mali, the price has more than doubled. Prices were expected to keep rising during the lean season, which ends in August. The scale of price hikes in April surprised governments and humanitarian agencies alike. On average, the poorer rural households in the Sahel produce enough to meet only half of their food needs, and must buy the rest on local markets on which they trade their produce or their labour. With only very small increases in wages, such high food prices have pushed the poorer rural households into hunger, and more children into severe acute malnutrition.

Second, in the wake of the crises in Côte d'Ivoire and Libya, over 200,000 registered economic migrants returned to already vulnerable areas in the Sahel. This increased pressure on communities' scarce resources and caused tensions over access to public services such as water, health and education. The return of migrant workers, combined with the general downturn in the global economy, greatly reduced income from international remittances. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimates that the monetary transfers made by every migrant worker in the Sahel support about seven people in their country of origin.

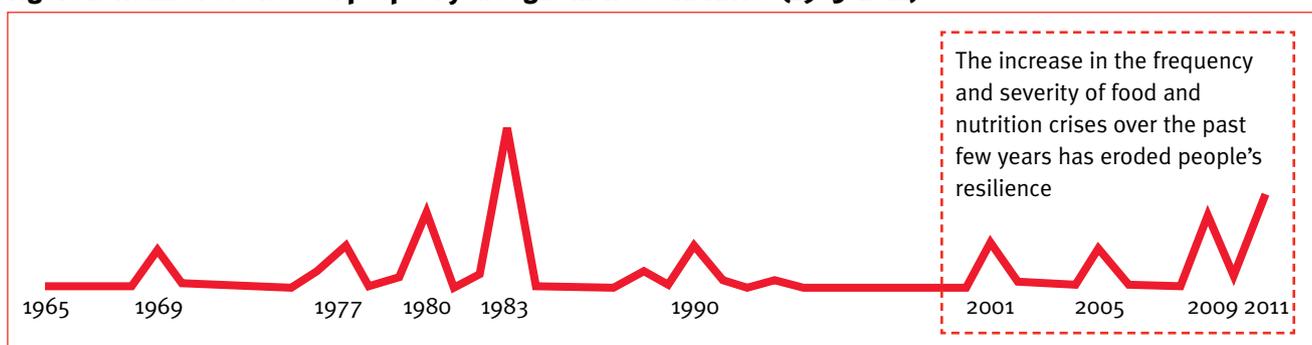
Third, conflict in northern Mali has resulted in the displacement of at least 320,000 people, including more than 187,000 refugees in neighbouring countries; food supplies have been disrupted and there has been large-scale looting in Timbuktu and Gao regions.

The frequency of such natural, market, economic and security-related food shocks affecting the Sahel is increasing. Rains are becoming shorter and less frequent, and pasture land is turning into desert. Local people have responded to these stresses with coping strategies that include migration and selling or mortgaging their land, household goods and livestock. These buffers have now reached the limits of their effectiveness. The most vulnerable households barely start to recover their livelihoods when they are hit with another major shock. This lack of resilience, not the 3% regional shortfall in food production compared to the five-year average, explains the massive humanitarian crisis.

### The 'resilience deficit'<sup>1</sup>

Since the last Sahel crisis in 2010, the vast majority of the most vulnerable households have not been able to get out of debt, or restore their normal livelihoods and productive assets, such as seeds and animals. This has undermined

**Figure 1: Number of affected people by drought in Western Africa (1965–2011)**



<sup>1</sup> See William J. Garvelink and FarhaTahir, *Misunderstood: Getting the Right Response to Food Shortages in the Sahel* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2012).

people's capacity to absorb this latest set of shocks. More and more households are falling into the trap of poverty and chronic hunger, from which they cannot escape, even when rains are good. The driver of the Sahel crisis is not the much scrutinised national and regional food deficits. It is the more complex, multi-dimensional 'resilience deficit'.

A Hausa proverb says: 'if the drumbeat changes, the dance must also change'. The looming crisis is irrefutable evidence that the drumbeat in the Sahel has changed. Food crises can no longer be treated as limited events, caused by occasional droughts. The number of people suffering from chronic food insecurity and high levels of poverty and vulnerability is increasing. Acute food crises, such as occurred in 2005 and again in 2010, are short-term peaks, triggered by drought, in an unrelenting trend of increasing chronic vulnerability. Food insecurity and poverty are so endemic that, even in years with good harvests, the rate of acute child malnutrition is consistently higher than the emergency threshold of 15% specified by the World Health Organisation (WHO). UNICEF estimates that, in years with good rainfall, more than 286,000 children die annually from malnutrition-related causes.

While families need emergency assistance today, long-term solutions must simultaneously be found. Communities in the Sahel, both farming families and pastoralists, need support to adapt to changing conditions and increase their resilience. As the 2012 Sahel crisis enters its most critical stage, governments have started to give urgent attention, not just to responding to the crisis, but also to finding ways to break the cycle of chronic hunger and malnutrition. At a high-level inter-ministerial meeting on regional food crises in the Togolese capital Lomé on 5 June 2012, co-financed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), governments made a strong appeal for concerted measures to address the root causes of recurrent food and nutritional deficiencies in the Sahel and West Africa, and for coordinated mobilisation of resources to ensure the consistency and efficiency of sustainable development.

The way forward, espoused by major humanitarian, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and development actors working in the Sahel, is often framed in terms of the concept of resilience. This reflects a consensus that, in order to break the cycle of hunger, humanitarian and development efforts need to be better integrated so as to 'strengthen the resilience' of vulnerable population groups. UN agencies have made strong public pronouncements, organised workshops and prepared strategies, conceptual frameworks and planning documents on resilience. Some donors, notably the UK, have adopted a 'resilience agenda'. The World Resources Institute and the influential Montpellier Panel have published reports on the role of agriculture in resilience.<sup>2</sup> In the UK, ten international organisations have formed

<sup>2</sup> See World Resources Institute, *Roots of Resilience: Growing the Wealth of the Poor*, 2008; The Montpellier Panel, *Growth with Resilience: Opportunities in African Agriculture* (London: Agriculture for Impact, 2012).

an Interagency Resilience Working Group to develop a common understanding and framework for resilience. The list of agencies embracing resilience continues to grow.

## Pathways to resilience

What are some of the pathways for strengthening resilience? One major pathway, and the one most favoured by governments, is to invest in agriculture to increase food production. Unfortunately, most proposals relate primarily to providing fertiliser, improved seed and irrigation. The limitation of such agricultural programmes is that increased productivity in the short term is the only focus. Most of the poorer households in marginal agricultural areas, where rural hunger is concentrated, do not benefit. Much more promising is the promotion of proven, low-cost agro-ecological farming techniques, including agro-forestry, and soil and water conservation. These approaches have improved sustainability and long-term resilience, not just productivity, as explicit objectives. In the Sahel, there is a growing farmer-led 're-greening movement', whereby small farmers foster the natural regeneration of drought-resistant trees in their fields. By pruning these trees twice a year, farm families generate a green manure or mulch that increases soil fertility and generates wood for cooking. This system regenerates degraded farm land, recycles nutrients and energy found on the farm and reduces dependence on expensive external inputs, such as artificial fertilizers.

For other international agencies in the Sahel, another pathway to resilience is to promote techniques for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), including adaptation to climate change. DRR encompasses a broad range of humanitarian and development actions to reduce the most frequent risks affecting people. Dry season gardens, improved water supplies, village cereal banks (so families can buy food at reasonable prices), fodder banks, improved roads and dune stabilisation have all been proven to reduce risk and improve resilience.

Other programmes work with women's savings and loans groups to develop alternative sources of food, such as community vegetable gardens, or train government nurses on the prevention and management of malnutrition at the community level. Providing food supplements to slightly malnourished children helps prevent them from sliding into severe malnutrition. Grain can be sold at affordable prices for the most vulnerable families, and to replenish the stocks of community cereal banks, and fodder can be provided for animals of small pastoralist families so their herds do not die of hunger. Persuading pastoralists to reduce the number of animals (destocking) by selling them early, when pasture and water resources are limited, is another important risk-reduction initiative.

Various social protection measures are also attracting increased interest because of their potential impact on the structural roots of chronic food and nutrition crisis. One common mechanism is direct cash transfers, often coupled with 'light conditions' for behaviour change. Many studies have shown that social transfers can improve resilience and reduce hunger and child malnutrition if targeted to the very



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*A community vegetable garden in Niger*

poorest households. Such measures are most effective if focused on women, who bear the brunt of poverty, and can reduce the flow of men who migrate to seek temporary work in urban centres or neighbouring countries.

Early warning and response is another critical pathway for overcoming the resilience deficit. The food crisis of 2010 indicated that the capacity of governments, UN agencies and donors to mount an early collective response, at an adequate scale, to protect the livelihoods of millions of vulnerable households is still inadequate. The humanitarian response in 2010 was earlier and better than in 2005. It saved lives. However, it failed to prevent massive loss of assets, particularly livestock and the means of livelihood of the poorer households, leaving people more vulnerable than before. In 2012, the early response in most countries was much faster than in 2010. However, with the resilience of the most vulnerable groups so low, particularly if assessed by near-emergency levels of acute child malnutrition even in good years, it clearly will not be sufficient to prevent death. The UN estimates that the case load of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) will increase from 872,000 cases (for 2011) to 1,027,900 expected cases in 2012. According to *The Lancet*, SAM increases the risk of child death by 9.7 times.<sup>3</sup>

Another serious issue that has emerged in 2012 is that early warning did not automatically trigger effective early action, based on pre-prepared contingency plans. Donor responses were initially delayed by problems in harmonising the analysis of FEWS NET with that of other early warning agencies as regards the scope and gravity of the crisis. In addition, there is still a tendency for international donors to provide sufficient funding only when there is sustained media interest in a potential emergency. However, media professionals are not early

<sup>3</sup> Cited in World Vision, *Global Health and Nutrition*, 2012, <http://www.wvi.org.uk>.

warning specialists. They find it difficult to know when predictions are accurate, or when aid agencies are making perhaps exaggerated claims about impending crises to stimulate an adequate response. Journalists generally prefer to go and see for themselves, and that often only happens as conditions become severe.

Without the public pressure caused by media reports, aid agencies often face a difficult challenge in persuading governments that they need to act not just quickly but at an adequate scale, before a crisis actually happens. Despite early action by many donors, as the affected populations in the Sahel entered the most critical period in June (the lean season, when the rains and farm work begins) there remained huge gaps to fill and areas to strengthen quickly if the humanitarian response was effectively to meet the needs of the most vulnerable households. By early June, the sum of all the consolidated appeals (CAP) for the Sahel in 2012 totalled \$1.6 billion, of which just 39% had been funded. Niger's CAP of \$450 million was 34% funded. Mali's CAP was 44% funded. Burkina Faso's CAP of \$126 million was the most underfunded, at 27%. The unpalatable reality is that media attention, not early warning, remains one of the strongest drivers of humanitarian action.

Since 2005, donors, UN agencies, international NGOs and governments in the Sahel have started to more effectively address not just the acute but also the chronic dimensions of food insecurity. Generally, the key actors know the promising pathways for resilience, but sufficient resources to pursue them are lacking. One reason for this is that the chronically food-insecure do not die in massive numbers. While the 2012 crisis may bring about an important shift in attitudes, national and regional leaders and policy-makers responsible for food security have not had a sense of urgency about the problem of *chronic* hunger and malnutrition. The chronically food-insecure population of the Sahel is not yet

recognised as a priority. These people have specific needs that are different from the needs of those *periodically* hit by calamities, or those in developmental stages. The lack of dedicated funding mechanisms for addressing chronic food and nutrition insecurity is the most glaring flaw in the current aid architecture.

To overcome chronic food insecurity, a new approach is needed that integrates humanitarian and development work and better supports recovery and resilience. The current architecture of aid still does not provide sufficient, long-term, flexible funding for resilience initiatives, particularly for recovery, disaster risk reduction, the prevention of malnutrition, social protection, and livelihood promotion for the poorest households. Many donor agencies and national policy-makers, while committed to resilience, are acting within institutional mechanisms and mandates that are based on the outmoded ‘relief to development paradigm’. They are not adjusting quickly enough to the need to address the chronic dimensions of the current food and nutrition crisis.

Even with good intentions and commitment, and knowledge of the major pathways, transforming institutional mechanisms to strengthen the resilience capacity of communities and vulnerable households takes time. It requires a comprehensive, multi-sectoral, coordinated and long-term approach. The elements of resilience are inter-dependent. They need to work in mutually reinforcing ways. But individual agencies are not set up to focus on resilience, and do not effectively integrate relief and development work. Within government, resilience requires actions that cut across different institutions. The same applies in the UN agencies, and within donors and international NGOs.

The approach to resilience in the Sahel is highly fragmented, dysfunctional and ineffective. At best, current efforts seem only to slow down the rate at which people’s resilience is being eroded. There is no consensus on what resilience would look like if it were achieved, or how to monitor and assess it. Actors differ in the dimensions of resilience they focus on, the beneficiaries and geographic areas they target and their favoured solutions. As noted by OCHA, resilience ‘require[s] integrated strategies by governments and between governments in the region, with the active

participation of civil society, development partners and the private sector’.<sup>4</sup>

This is not happening. A review of the resilience frameworks cited above suggests a strong tendency for actors to ‘repackage’ most of what they already do within the new discourse and conceptual framework of ‘resilience’, focusing on favoured techniques rather than making the systemic changes that are required. Beyond the rhetoric, many actors are mostly carrying on business as usual when the acute phase of a food crisis subsides, and the rains resume. Few have yet made institutional changes or developed new ways of working that support resilience. There is often no budget line for recovery or resilience, either in humanitarian or development agencies. Effectiveness is also limited, because the main actors are not engaged in a systematic, comprehensive approach to resilience. Instead, resilience is still being promoted largely through ‘siloe’d’ interventions within technical sectors or institutional mandates. Humanitarian and development actors are not engaged in a comprehensive approach developed for specific livelihood and geographic contexts, in which synergies between different levels and sectors are achieved, within an integrated system.

Chronic hunger in the Sahel continues to be badly underestimated. Relief interventions have become effective at saving lives, but do not prevent people from adopting desperate coping mechanisms. Nor do they prevent wide-scale loss of productive assets. Promoting resilience requires a different set of skills and resources, longer-term interventions and different partnership arrangements compared to relief. It also requires creating sustainable economic and social conditions so that the poor can better absorb future shocks. The institutional capacity for this is still poorly developed. The time has come for a new drumbeat in the Sahel.

**Peter Gubbels** is a rural development consultant working in association with the NGO Groundswell International in West Africa. He is the author of *Escaping the Hunger Cycle: Pathways to Resilience in the Sahel*, commissioned by the Sahel Working Group (SWG), a network of British and European NGOs working in the Sahel, and *Ending the Everyday Emergency: Children and Resilience in the Sahel*, commissioned by World Vision and Save the Children.

<sup>4</sup> OCHA, *Strategic Document Version 2 Response Plan Addressing the Food and Nutrition Crisis in the Sahel*, February 2012, p. 2.

## Addressing the critical humanitarian situation in northern Mali

Jean-Nicolas Marti, ICRC

Poor harvests in 2011, and then armed conflict and violence: people in northern Mali have been hit doubly hard. They are no longer able to meet their basic food needs. The majority of rural households owe their livelihood to farming and livestock activities. They have not had time to recover from the effects of drought, which has reduced their food security in recent years, and they are now suffering from the negative effects of conflict as well. Food is scarce and

expensive and people have no income to buy what they need. Their resilience capacity has been severely depleted by repeated humanitarian crises. They need urgent aid.

With the rainy season starting in May, farmers also need seed to plant their fields, in the hope of a good harvest next year, while herders need to preserve their livestock as far as possible, or sell animals in order to buy essential



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*Displaced women and children in northern Mali*

supplies. Access to health care is another major difficulty for the population of this vast, semi-desert area.

### **Conflict, displacement and food security**

In January 2012, the MNLA (in French, the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad) launched an armed separatist campaign in northern Mali. The MNLA took control of the three main towns of 'Azawad' (Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu) in the first days of April. Meanwhile, other armed groups made their way into the same urban centres. The central government is very unstable following a coup in March, and has lost control of the north.

The conflict has uprooted more than 300,000 people. The majority have sought safety in neighbouring countries (Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Algeria), and tens of thousands are displaced inside Mali, either in the north or in Mopti and other regions south of Gao and Timbuktu. This massive displacement is occurring just as Mali and the entire Sahel region are coping with a desperate food situation. Fighting in June in Gao between the MNLA and another armed group, the MUJAO (in French, the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique Occidentale), has led to fresh population movements.

The combination of the food crisis and armed conflict is having alarming consequences for tens of thousands of people. Food security is critical again in 2012, and perhaps even worse than it was in the region two years ago. In order to cope, many families are eating less, and less nutritious, food. Meanwhile, the looting that followed the fighting at the beginning of April affected harvest stocks intended for consumption, sale and the creation of seed stocks. The price of basic foodstuffs is rising exponentially. In urban areas, banks are no longer operating and workers are no longer receiving their pay. People's purchasing power is declining inexorably.

The crisis situation is further weakening small farmers at the start of the 2012–2013 crop year, while for stockbreeders the feed balance, which is in deficit, is seriously disrupting the movement of livestock to markets and rangelands.

Because the security situation is preventing buyers from coming forward, breeders are unable to sell their livestock in Mali or in other countries in the region. As the ability of animals to move about and search for pasture and water diminishes further owing to the lack of feed, herdsmen have no choice but to practically give away their beasts to the few buyers still operating in local markets.

Another threat has also arisen with the arrival of swarms of locusts, coinciding with planting and the emergence of this year's summer rain-fed crops in agricultural zones. There is an immediate and severe threat to crops in Mali, as well as in Niger and Chad. Insecurity and limited access inside northern Mali is hindering efforts to control the threat, increasing the risk posed to crops as the locusts move south towards agro-pastoral areas.

### **Food assistance**

In mid-July, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) launched a large-scale food distribution to assist people worst-affected by the combined effects of violence and the food crisis in northern Mali. In the first phase of the operation, more than 160,000 people will receive rice, semolina, beans, oil and salt, while rice and sorghum seed will be distributed to some 42,000 farmers as the new farming cycle begins. The ICRC will also buy around 10,000 goats, sheep and cows at a generous price from some 5,000 herding families. With this income, the herders will then be able to buy grain and other essential supplies. The livestock will be slaughtered while they are still in a fair condition, and the meat distributed to those most in need. Animal feed will also be distributed to herders to help them preserve their livestock. The distributions and other operations are being carried out in cooperation with the Mali Red Cross.

Due to insecurity, humanitarian organisations are scarce in this region. The ICRC is one of the few able to operate, maintaining teams in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, although these teams are smaller than usual. An office has been opened in Mopti, and the ICRC is still operating in Bamako, the Malian capital. More humanitarian organisations are

present in the neighbouring countries that are hosting Malian refugees. More than 60,000 refugees are now estimated to be in the north of Burkina Faso. The influx has only worsened the already difficult conditions in the country's Sahel, especially as the refugees arrived with their livestock (their main source of income). Available pastureland does not provide enough food for the approximately 150,000 head of livestock. In south-eastern Mauritania, a dry, hard-to-reach area, tens of thousands of refugees lack household essentials and milk. They also have their livestock with them – often in frail health. Thousands of people have fled to Niger's Tillabéry region, one of the areas hardest-hit by the Sahel drought and food crisis. The ICRC is closely monitoring the overall refugee situation, in coordination with other humanitarian organisations. This includes Algeria, where the national Red Crescent Society is responding to the needs of refugees who have crossed the northern-most Malian border.

### Health care and public services

Access to health care is another major challenge for people in northern Mali. The health sector has been disrupted by the conflict. Most community healthcare centres outside cities are no longer functioning, either because they were looted or because they were abandoned by their staff. Those centres that are still running are unable to obtain medicines because the Gao regional pharmaceutical warehouse is no longer operating.

Before the conflict, there were five hospitals and 65 community health centres. Today just one regional hospital and some referral centres are functioning. Only the regional hospital (which was looted in April) and community health centres in Gao are providing preventive and curative health care. People who cannot reach these facilities have no access to vaccination against diseases such as polio, tuberculosis, meningitis and measles. Due to the lack of a cold supply chain, national vaccination programmes have been suspended everywhere in northern Mali except in Gao. Maternal death rates have increased due to the lack of prenatal medical consultations. Another concern is the situation of injured people, particularly those with bullet wounds. Street protests and fighting between armed groups on 26 and 27 June in Gao resulted in over 40 wounded people being treated at the hospital. Access to proper health care is a major issue for Malian refugees as well, notably in south-eastern Mauritania.

The ICRC is providing the Gao hospital with medicines and surgical and other medical supplies, making sure that the hospital has electricity and clean drinking water, paying the wages of the 124 healthcare staff and making available some of its own staff. The ICRC is also providing aid to the referral centre in Assongo, and at the time of writing the ICRC is also preparing to resume its support for nine primary healthcare centres in northern Mali, having suspended its programmes in April due to insecurity. The ICRC has also supported a cholera treatment centre set up

by the local health authorities in response to an outbreak of the disease in a village near Gao at the beginning of July, in which two children died.

The conflict has disrupted public services in northern Mali, with a lack of electricity and water supplies in the main towns and the closure of most schools. Temporarily stepping in, the ICRC supplied power plants in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal with fuel, so that clean drinking water could flow again. The generators run the pumps in water wells and treatment plants.

### Constraints on humanitarian action

The main constraint on humanitarian action in Mali remains secure access for all humanitarian actors to the three northern regions. The ICRC is currently trying to ensure that all parties on the ground understand and accept the need for neutral, independent and humanitarian activity. It will only be possible to fully meet the huge needs in this region if those involved on the ground accept this role for the ICRC, the Mali Red Cross and other humanitarian organisations, and give solid security guarantees.

To monitor the conditions in which they are being held and the treatment they receive, the ICRC has been visiting detainees in Bamako, in connection with the conflict in the north and the political situation in the capital. It has also visited Malian army personnel held by the MNLA. Detainees were given the opportunity to write letters to their families. In its capacity as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC also facilitated the transfer of four released military personnel and placed them in the care of the Malian authorities. It also arranged for the return home of eight people from the north of the country who were released in Bamako, where they had been detained in connection with the crisis. After transiting through Niamey, they were reunited with their families in Gao on 25 May.

It is very difficult to predict how the political and military situation in Mali will evolve, and what the humanitarian consequences will be. Whatever happens, the ICRC would like to remind all those involved in armed violence of the need to respect the civilian population and all those protected by humanitarian rules, including the wounded and detainees.

In our view, the critical humanitarian situation in northern Mali must be addressed with the same urgency as political and security issues. Once the urgent humanitarian needs are tackled and the situation stabilises, it will be time to help the people of the region rebuild their resilience capacities, notably by establishing early warning and response mechanisms. But for now, the priority is clearly to respond to the current, very concrete and multi-faceted humanitarian emergency.

**Jean-Nicolas Marti** is Head of the ICRC delegation for Mali and Niger.

# Building resilience in the Sahel: lessons from Masboré

Amanda Farrant, Christian Aid

Life is not easy in the Sahelian and Northern regions of Burkina Faso. These regions are characterised by arid soils, land and resource degradation and recurrent droughts, aggravated by persistent high temperatures, erratic rainfall, violent winds and deforestation. Other recurring shocks, such as epidemics and disease, further undermine development gains. Many villages are caught in a perpetual cycle of drought, floods, hunger and locust invasions.

Efforts to build local communities' resilience to these risks and crises are being put to the test by the complex and deepening food crisis across West Africa. Eighteen million people are affected, including a million children at risk of severe acute malnutrition. Experts have alluded to a 'perfect storm' of contributing factors: last year's failed rains and harvests, political instability, reduced migrant labour and wages, rising food prices and a growing refugee crisis. So how are vulnerable communities coping, and what lessons have been learned from recent efforts to build community resilience against complex shocks and hazards?

In the village of Masboré in Zondoma province, Christian Aid's resilient livelihoods work with local partner Réseau MARP, initiated in 2008 and funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), illustrates the importance of integrating humanitarian and long-term development approaches, with a premium on participation and accountability. Community members say that they have made significant progress in identifying and implementing a range of locally appropriate measures to improve income, food security and disaster resilience. However, without long-term support from local government, technical services departments and donors, people will continue to rely on humanitarian relief in times of disaster like the present food crisis.

## A risk-centred approach

Masboré is one of 19 pilot villages in Burkina Faso that undertook Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (PVCA) in 2009 as part of Christian Aid's Building Disaster Resilient Communities programme. The PVCA approach helps poor people analyse their problems and suggest their own solutions. It is carried out by local partner organisations working with communities to collect and analyse information about short- to long-term risks and vulnerabilities in a structured way, and then develop community action plans from these findings.



© Christian Aid/Amanda Farrant

*A community-led risk assessment process provides women the opportunity to have an equal voice in the community*

One community member says: 'Before the PVCA process, NGOs came and told us what to do and we just did what they said'. Few of the interventions implemented in Masboré in the past involved the wider community, or took a holistic approach to community development. Nor did the community have an opportunity to assess and understand the role that local risk factors play in development processes. As a result, benefits were patchy and proved short-lived when risks and hazards recurred.

Christian Aid trained and supported Réseau MARP to facilitate the PVCA process in Masboré and five other villages, beginning with trust-building sessions. After the vulnerability and capacity analysis, Réseau MARP helped the community to develop a community action plan. The wholly participatory approach meant that the action plan is based on locally perceived risks and vulnerabilities. It is completely 'owned' by the community, and is now steering the community's development requirements. It has provided a basis on which the community can plan how to maximise local capacities to address short-, medium- and long-term risks and vulnerabilities. The community plan also serves as a negotiating and influencing tool through which the community can seek government, donor and technical support. The PVCA also acts as a baseline against which communities can assess progress through regular monitoring and review. In all, 87 people in Masboré, women and men of all ages, took part in the PVCA.

Timing is an important factor. Learning from past experience showed partners the importance of ensuring that meetings do not clash with planting times or harvests, for example, as it can be difficult to engage adequate community participation for the amount of time needed for each meeting or activity. In order to allow different groups within the community to have their say, particularly women, people organised themselves into age and gender groups to identify risks, vulnerabilities and local capacities, using tools such as community mapping, problem pyramids, focus groups and Venn diagrams. These different perspectives were later brought together into a holistic community risk, vulnerability and capacity matrix, which was used as the basis for the community action plan.

### Key risks and resilience efforts

Among the key risks identified by women were health problems, epidemics and malnutrition. Solutions included nutrition training for mothers, information for mothers on epidemics and vaccinations and the establishment of a mother and child clinic within the community. Réseau MARP helped link the community to local health services, which have since provided support for child vaccinations and nutrition training. For farmers and livestock breeders, the key concerns were drought, flooding, bush fires, conflicts over grazing, insect attacks and livestock diseases. The community recognised that they themselves could do much to prevent bush fires and conflicts between livestock breeders by setting up watch brigades and constructing livestock paths and enclosures. Réseau MARP helped the community link with agricultural service departments for information and support to improve livestock health and vaccinations.

The community was also able to utilise Christian Aid and DFID funding to convert a local building into a grain store. The new facility helps farmers manage their cash flow and guarantee some degree of food security when food supplies run very low. Farmers can deposit a sack of grain at the end of the harvest when prices are low, and then retrieve it for the same amount when market prices are high in the late dry season. Alternatively, the store can sell a farmer's grain at his request when prices go up, and return the profit to the farmer, less the original transaction amount. Members of the community say that they have noticed huge benefits in productive years when harvests are good. However, they recognise that, in years when harvests fail, such as 2011, resilience efforts like this are less effective. Having reviewed the community action plan in late 2011, they realised that they needed to establish or build on alternative livelihood options, such as livestock breeding and irrigated market gardening.

Small-scale livestock breeding proved one of the most popular resilience measures identified by the community. Several women-headed households that received a pair of goats or sheep as part of the original action plan reported that their situation in the current food crisis had improved dramatically. They have been able to sell some of the offspring produced by the livestock and use the money to buy food, pay for schooling or cover other family needs. Training in improved fodder techniques such as hay bailing

has also helped sustain livestock while fresh fodder is in short supply.

Until the action plan was introduced, the community in Masboré had low awareness of their vulnerabilities and the range of dangers and risks they faced; likewise, they did not recognise their existing capacities, and did not understand how to enhance their resilience against such threats. There was little in the way of an enabling environment for building disaster resilience, with local stakeholders such as NGOs and the local government rarely coordinating disaster risk reduction or development activities. Communities did not have much opportunity to participate meaningfully in planning, implementation and evaluation of interventions.

Since the PVCA process, the community has started to gain an understanding of the most effective measures for improving health, food security and incomes, for building more sustainable livelihoods and for preventing damage from bush fires, localised conflict and insect attacks. Community members hope to gradually reduce their dependency on external humanitarian relief during crises, and assert that the building of a local dam and the introduction of income-generating activities for women such as market gardening are far better ways to free them from this dependency in hungry periods. Such measures also mean that people will not have to resort to exploitative, poorly paid work at a local goldmine, which is harmful for their health and where labour conditions are extremely poor.

The community is now more aware of the government services available to it, and people are more confident about asking for, and even demanding, access to these services. At the same time the local government authorities are more willing, it seems, to engage with the community, having themselves become more aware of the community's vulnerabilities and the range of risks people face. Early engagement of the municipality's mayor and other government service department personnel during the community PVCA process was key to establishing a sustainable, trusting and more accountable relationship between all stakeholders, including local and international NGOs, Réseau MARP and Christian Aid.

As a result of the participatory and integrated approach to development and disaster risk management, community members also say that they feel much more in control of their own situation and their future. They have become empowered to seek support for the activities they want to implement, and as a community are more active in working together to find solutions to problems. Mahamadi Ouedraogo, president of the community resilience committee, which was set up in the early stages of the programme, says 'Now we understand the risks ourselves and what is needed to solve problems. We do the activities we want to do'.

The introduction of information-sharing and complaints mechanisms through the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership has also helped the community to hold all relevant stakeholders to account around the commitments

made, projects planned and budgets allocated and expended. Women in the community have put pressure on local government officials to honour a commitment to appoint medical staff to the village maternal health clinic. Understanding how project budgets are allocated and how budgets have been spent has enabled the community to challenge a contractor brought in to repair the grain deposit store. When he asked the community to supply the sand and cement for the job, they knew that the materials had already been paid for. After this was pointed out, the contractor understood that he could not take advantage of the community and got on with the job.

According to the community, the whole approach has been a very positive experience. 'It has brought a kind of enlightenment to the village. As a community we evaluate our situation and the activities that are proposed are things we have proposed. Then we discuss with our partners what we can and cannot do according to available budgets.' However, balancing the community's enthusiasm with a realistic view of the resources available is a challenge. According to Mahamadi Ouedraogo: 'The energy for building resilience is there in the community, but the means to do everything we want is not always enough. HAP has been a great benefit to the community and now people in the community feel empowered to ask for support. During the current crisis, they have asked our committee to provide them with livestock because they see this has helped those who received the livestock before. But neither we nor Reseau MARP immediately had the resources to help them. Fortunately, funding from Christian Aid and DFID is now available so we can help them'.

In addition to managing community expectations, there is still some way to go in connecting the community PVCA and action plan with local government policies

and development planning. Community members say that there is a need for greater government support for structures that can protect them in a timely way during slow-onset crises such as the current food crisis. The influx of Malian refugees has added further pressure due to the greater strain being placed on scarce resources.

## Conclusion

Christian Aid has been working with three local partners since 2008 to support 19 communities across the north of Burkina Faso to put in place measures to build their resilience to disasters and crises. Evidence from these communities suggests that, in areas where market gardening has been possible, resilience-building measures have had greater success than in the pastoralist communities further north, where households are dependent on livestock breeding alone. Initiatives such as new fodder storage techniques can buy households some time during periods of food insecurity. However, during extreme drought and when there is competition over food between humans and animals – especially between the local pastoralists and refugees crossing the border from Mali with equally hungry livestock and families – government and donor relief efforts remain of major importance to prevent malnutrition and loss of livelihoods. In addition, where families are already experiencing malnutrition and using extreme coping mechanisms, anecdotal feedback has been that the structures established to help deliver community action plans, such as the village committees, can work with humanitarian agencies, health centres and nutrition services to ensure that appropriate aid gets to those who need it most.

**Amanda Farrant** is Donor Communications Advisor, Christian Aid. The featured community's experiences are documented in a film, 'Lessons from Masbore', available at <http://youtube/GNAmJDVN8oc>.

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## Cash transfers and vulnerability in Niger

Jeff Woodke, JEMED

Cash for work and cash transfers have been used increasingly since 2005 to try to reduce chronic vulnerability in Niger. They have been used as part of humanitarian relief as well as disaster risk reduction (DRR) programmes. This article examines how one organisation, Jeunesse En Mission Entraide et Développement (JEMED), has sought to integrate cash for work, sales of food and fodder at a reduced price and long-term development activities, including land regeneration, into a single programme in Abalak, northern Niger, and the impact of this integrated approach on the resilience of pastoralists.

In addressing chronic vulnerability, traditional humanitarian relief and development approaches have been inadequate. It is vital to develop a new approach that not only alleviates the immediate effects of a food crisis, while also addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability. Such an integrated approach involves more than simply including disaster

risk reduction activities in humanitarian programmes. An approach that combines humanitarian activities, risk management and long-term development is needed.

### Integrating cash for work into sustainable development activities

JEMED is a national Christian NGO working with pastoralists in Abalak Department, in Niger's Tahoua Region. Tearfund, with which JEMED has partnered for over 20 years, provides funding and technical support. JEMED began using cash for work during a food crisis in Niger's pastoral zone in 2008/9, as part of a consortium of NGOs funded by DFID. This was one of four food crises that Niger has suffered since 2004.

In 2010, JEMED combined its DFID-funded cash for work programme with other longer-term activities designed to improve food security and economic sustainability. The

activities chosen for integration were the regeneration and management of land, grain banks and animal fodder banks. In some cases these activities already existed at the beneficiary sites, as part of ongoing development work. In other cases the cash for work programme was used to start these activities at new sites.

These long-term activities were designed to build resilience to recurring drought and food crises. At sites where the long-term programmes had finished without being interrupted by drought, there was an increase in the resilience of herders. Despite back-to-back droughts during 2008 and 2009, and the severe food crisis in 2010, in which herders lost on average 70% of their livestock, people at these sites requested little or no outside assistance, and livestock losses due to drought were much lower than the average in the area. This highlights that cash for work can help protect against drought the gains people made with the development programme.

Building resilience to future droughts is a key feature of JEMED's long-term work, and was initiated by the pastoralists themselves. From the first day of their partnership with JEMED almost 22 years ago, the pastoralists said that they were only interested in activities designed on the premise that drought had become a permanent part of the environment. They also stated that activities must take their nomadic lifestyle and culture into account. Applying this community-based approach to programme design and implementation is a key factor for success.

In Niger, development activities and disaster risk reduction activities often overlap. This is because traditional development activities like food security, livelihoods and natural resource management are essential to reducing the risk of drought. DRR and resilience need to be built into long-term development programmes; they should not be a separate set of activities. DRR, resilience and development activities must reinforce and complement each other, helping to build resilience in the long term. For example, instead of simply reconstituting depleted herds after a drought, people received loans of animals alongside the creation of permanent water sources, land and pasture regeneration and conservation, grain and fodder banks, human and animal health provision and even primary schools tailored to nomadic needs. The cash for work programme was designed to be integrated into ongoing development work, to reinforce and complement these long-term activities.

### Land regeneration through cash for work

Beneficiary households earn cash by regenerating degraded pasture land through the construction of grain and fodder banks. A collaborative approach is taken as the community and the local government environmental extension service choose the exact type and location of the regeneration activity. The community and JEMED are responsible for the organisation and implementation of the work, while the extension service provides training and technical follow-up. Land regeneration was chosen as the object of cash for work for three reasons:

1. Natural resource regeneration and management is



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*A cash transfer beneficiary in Tahoua, Niger*

important for long-term sustainable and resilient development in the pastoral zone. Pastoralists raise livestock as their principal economic activity, and depend on natural resources. Environmental regeneration at the local level will improve pasture and forest production. The cash for work activity also has an impact on long-term economic sustainability locally and nationally.

2. Pastoralists in Niger have no formal land tenure in the areas where they are residents. Non-resident herders can consume all the local pasture, leaving nothing for the residents for the rest of the year. Adaptation to climate change and environmental degradation mean that, even in good rainfall years, many pastoral households in Abalak are unable to migrate seasonally, and must rely on the pastoral resources in a limited area for much of the year. Regeneration activities can give local communities some limited rights over regenerated land, providing a drought or dry-season reserve.
3. Land regeneration is not traditionally practiced in the communities JEMED works with, and so the cash is not a disincentive to the completion of activities which would normally be done without payment. Consideration of ways in which a cash payment could undermine sustainability is important. JEMED actively encourages communities to continue land regeneration without payment, and has met with some success in this. Eventually a new work activity will have to be chosen, such as rainwater harvesting.

As part of equitable and sustainable resource management, the organisation has worked closely with local communities and their elected leaders to help them gain an official, although limited, version of land tenure, known as Priority Use Rights. These give local pastoralists the right to priority use of pasture resources in their home territory when in competition with transient herders for the same resources. The rights are secured after a process of training and demarcation of the home territory by the local government through land management committees. At sites where cash for work regeneration activities have been completed, the application of Priority Use Rights is much

easier. Even this year, with a severe drought and an almost total pasture deficit, grass was available at one beneficiary site until January 2012, thanks to the combination of land regeneration and Priority Use Rights. The government could improve livestock productivity by scaling up this combination of activities through cash for work.

### The cash and what to do with it

One advantage of cash for work is that it allows the integration of other resilience-building activities in the programme. The community itself develops the criteria, based on vulnerability and food insecurity, on which to select participating households. Wages range from 20,000 CFA to 30,000 CFA (\$40–\$60) per household.

Once the work is satisfactorily completed, herders receive the payment. Households can then use some of the cash to buy grain at a reduced price, animal fodder and other commodities. JEMED provides enough stock on site to serve each of the beneficiary households, although they are not obliged to purchase it. At the beneficiary sites, each household can buy between 100kg and 200kg of grain and 50kg–100kg of animal fodder. The amount is determined by the needs of the beneficiaries as well as the funds available to the NGO. JEMED assesses market prices weekly, and the prices are set at least 50% lower than the market rate, so that after the purchase the head of the household will still have a small amount of cash. The subsidised cereal helps maintain food security for the beneficiary household for up to one month per 100kg, depending on household size. In large-scale interventions, reduced-price sales can lower market prices generally, improving purchasing power for the larger population.

Most crises last longer than a few months. Successive cash for work actions at each beneficiary site are preferable, rather than artificially inflating the cash payment for a single cash for work episode. Often, funding availability is a primary factor in determining the scale of an intervention, and may limit the number of cash for work activities undertaken. In this case, the timing of cash for work activities becomes very important, and they should be implemented when they will have the greatest impact on the household economy.

Sales of commodities at a reduced price also increase purchasing power for the household. During a food crisis when pasture is non-existent, animal prices drop and grain prices rise. The exchange rate of sheep to 100kg of cereal is normally less than 1:1. However, in a crisis it can be 3:1 or greater. By providing another source of income, the cash allows the household to maintain its livestock capital. The fodder helps households maintain a small number of animals, helping to keep them alive and also providing some milk for women and children. This increases the ability of the household to survive the crisis and to recover once the crisis has abated. By holding the sales at the beneficiary sites, households are also able to economise on transport costs. This can be significant as the nearest market may be 60km or more away. This can amount to between \$15 and \$20 per round trip, depending on distance. During a crisis these transport costs alone can equal the value of two sheep.

The proceeds from these sales are put into a bank account by JEMED and, after the crisis has passed, the funds are made available to the community so that they can either create new or reinforce existing grain and animal fodder banks. Each of these structures has a community management committee that takes the money and purchases the commodities. Monitoring by communities and JEMED has confirmed that these committees manage the funds and stock effectively. They usually restock after the harvest when prices are at their lowest. Normally the community restocks the banks in bad years as well as good. However, in a severe year a drought can exceed their capacity, justifying support from an outside agency. Using cash for work minimises any dependence that might be created through a direct restocking of the bank by the NGO.

In this way, donor funds are used for both relief and development ends. The cash for work activities and food sales give households a flexible way to alleviate their immediate needs, yet the pasture regeneration and community grain and fodder banks also serve to enhance long-term food security and economic sustainability.

### The right tool at the right time

Cash for work is most effective in the early stages of a slow-onset food crisis. At a certain point it is no longer realistic to expect people to work: either they are too weak and stressed or environmental conditions do not allow it. For example, during the dry season in Niger (March–June), temperatures can rise to above 40°C. In cases where the amount of cash needed exceeds the amount that can be paid through wages on a cash for work project, grain and fodder sales at reduced prices can provide an indirect additional cash transfer.

Cash for work and cash transfers can help to reduce the magnitude of a food crisis early on. They can conserve household resources and improve survival from crises and post-crisis recovery. When designed with sustainability firmly in mind, they can complement long-term development activities, protecting the gains made through those activities from shocks and allowing communities to build resilience. Cash for work and cash transfers should not be implemented as stand-alone humanitarian activities, but should be integrated into long-term development activities.

The early recognition of the food crisis this year by the government of Niger and by international organisations was positive and essential. However, the response has been inadequate and is still based on the free distribution of food or sales at a reduced price from centralised depots. The government and institutional donors should take a decentralised approach, allowing local communities to integrate cash for work or cash transfers into multi-sectoral development activities. Institutional donors should develop funding mechanisms that allow this type of approach. This should happen quickly to facilitate the post-2012 crisis recovery in Niger and the Sahel more broadly.

**Jeff Woodke** is Director of JEMED.

# Integrating market assessments and response: Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis in Chad during the 2012 Sahel food crisis

Nanthilde Kamara, Madeleine Evrard Diakite, Emily Henderson and Camilla Knox-Peebles

A striking feature of the 2012 Sahel food crisis, as compared to 2010, has been the situation of markets across the region, with a number of indicators reaching worrying levels. Among these indicators and possible market stress factors were the unusual price increase of cereals at harvest period, the opening of new market routes, the limited export capacity in coastal countries and scattered areas of production deficit, even in countries where such 'shocks' are not usually felt. Overall, the substantial rise in coarse grain prices led to price levels 20% to 90% higher compared to the five-year average throughout the region, from December 2011 onwards. Given the number of factors affecting markets, it was very difficult to predict how they would evolve during the critical months of the hunger period.

A technical meeting was held in Niamey in Niger in December 2011 with the World Food Programme (WFP), Oxfam, FEWS NET and the Comité permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel (CILSS) to try to understand what markets were doing and what additional information was needed to get a better picture of the current situation and possible future developments.<sup>1</sup> However, interpretations of price rises and market stress varied greatly from one agency to another across the region, which led to differences in analyses and different projections of expected levels of food insecurity. As a result, mixed messages were sent to stakeholders planning for the response, making it more difficult to identify appropriate response modalities.

## The case of Chad

Chad is affected by the 2011/2012 food crisis, due to insufficient rains and unusually high food prices from November onwards (25% to 40% higher than the five-year average). This was compounded by disruption in cross-border trade and a decrease in imports from Libya, Niger and Nigeria. Meanwhile, differences in the interpretation of price rises led to the most divergent messages, with some actors claiming that cereal availability would not be a major problem because of supposed stocks left over from the previous agricultural season (2010/2011).

Market analysis based on existing market information and early warning systems, which are barely effective in Chad, proved insufficient to assess the potential of the markets to meet increased demand and to inform response options in targeted areas. As a result, in January 2012 Oxfam and Action Contre la Faim (ACF) decided to carry out an Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) in 1 CILSS was created in 1973, following severe droughts in the Sahel. It comprises nine countries (Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad and Cape Verde). It provides technical and scientific analysis, advice and support for policy design and implementation through early warning systems, food security analysis, best practice and capacity-building.



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*Millet is a food staple in the Sahel*

### Box 1: EMMA

The Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) Toolkit (<http://emma-toolkit.org/>) was developed by Oxfam and IRC, in consultation with a wide range of agencies from the humanitarian community. A manual for practitioners, it aims to improve emergency responses by encouraging and assisting relief agencies to better understand, support and make use of local market systems in disaster zones. Using a three-pronged approach – gap analysis, market analysis and response analysis – EMMA combines a variety of existing tools (seasonal calendars, market maps, household income and expenditure profiles and response frameworks) to examine the extent to which critical market systems are functioning, and can be used and supported to meet people's needs. EMMA was designed to allow non-specialist staff to collect enough systemic market information to identify blockages and inform response design.

their areas of operation, Bahr El Gazal and Kanem. Both have very high rates of malnutrition and chronic food insecurity aggravated by recurrent rain deficits and a structurally weak market network. One of the expected outcomes of the EMMA study was to test the feasibility and appropriateness of cash-based interventions.

The study indicated reduced capacity and elasticity of the local coarse grain cereal markets, meaning that they would not be able to respond rapidly to increased demand. This reduced capacity was also evident in the fact that market prices were steadily increasing in the target area and the small number of cereal traders were not able to influence

### **Box 2: Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis: cereal markets in Bahr El Gazal and Kanem in January 2012**

The three 'critical markets' studied were coarse grains: maize, millet and sorghum, priority commodities for ensuring the immediate food security of the target population. The key analytical questions guiding the study were:

- How do the millet, maize and sorghum markets work, in both good and bad years?
- Are there differences in the way markets function in the two regions? If yes, what are they?
- Is the sorghum market important in Kanem and Bahr El Gazal regions?
- What are the main constraints affecting vulnerable populations' access to grain?
- Based on the market studies for each of the three cereals, what is the overall capacity of these markets to meet the needs of target populations in each of the two regions?
- In this situation, what types and modalities of intervention are most appropriate: cash transfers, in-kind distribution and indirect or other interventions?

### **Box 3: Oxfam's response to the food crisis in Bahr El Gazal**

Oxfam focused on northern Bahr El Gazal, the pastoral livelihood zone most affected by drought and food insecurity according to Household Economy Analysis (HEA) results, and southern Bahr El Gazal, an agro-pastoral livelihood zone. Each household received a WFP food ration complemented by a voucher coupon with a value of £6/month, to be exchanged for spices, salt, sugar, tea and onions. In all 7,250 households were reached and there are plans to increase this to 12,250. Food was imported to the area but the voucher helped to keep local markets and traders active by boosting demand for non-staple food items. Traders were asked to deliver the goods at a given time and place. The voucher distribution provided an incentive for traders to come to remote areas and led to the start of regular weekly markets (the creation of a weekly market was part of the local (departmental) government's development plan). Oxfam also set up a system to monitor food and livestock prices.

prices. This was corroborated against the findings of a study of the main cereal markets supplying deficit areas conducted in Chad in January 2012 by a joint mission of CILSS, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), FEWS NET and WFP, which confirmed that markets were unable to increase the supply of grain to Sahelian regions sufficiently to meet additional food needs.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Mission d'Évaluation conjointe, January 2012. See also WFP, *La filière céréales dans l'Est du Tchad*, April 2012, and FAO, FEWS NET and WFP, *Marchés et sécurité alimentaire au Tchad*, February 2012, <http://reliefweb.int>.

The EMMA found that a cash-based intervention to enable access to cereals for the target population would not be appropriate due to the following factors:

1. Low availability of cereals in Bahr El Gazal and Kanem.
2. High cereal prices in Bahr El Gazal.
3. Limited supply capacity of local markets.
4. Disruption in cross-border trade.

Given these conditions, the study recommended a targeted distribution of imported food to cover the gap, primarily in rural areas. This distribution helped to stabilise cereal prices while ensuring that vulnerable people had access to food. A small commodity voucher was also provided to cover other food needs such as tea and sugar, and to support small-scale local traders. Longer-term interventions were also recommended, including:

- strengthening local market capacity, for instance through support to small businesses;
- exploring agro-pastoral and pastoral livelihoods support activities;
- advocating for, and contributing to, efforts to set up effective early warning and market monitoring systems; and
- piloting safety nets outside of the lean season, through a cash-based intervention in the assessment areas in a 'good year' (with above-average agriculture/pasture production) in Chad's Sahelian belt.

Based on these recommendations, Oxfam revised its intervention strategy to provide in-kind assistance in partnership with WFP. The study outcomes and recommendations were presented to donors, and ECHO, the largest humanitarian donor in Chad, adapted its response strategy, increasing funding to in-kind food assistance and encouraging the use of vouchers as a complement to food aid. Key stakeholders including the government of Chad and WFP stepped up their purchases of cereals outside the country, while also monitoring cross-border flows.

### **Lessons**

The EMMA proved to be a useful operational tool, providing clear direction on appropriate response options. The analysis was conducted over a three-week period, covering vast areas (Bahr El Gazal and Kanem) and requiring an understanding of complex regional and cross-border exchanges.<sup>3</sup> The findings allowed decision-makers to draw up a clear timetable for emergency and medium- and long-term interventions, including potential 'indirect' interventions such as market support. As EMMA is a rapid market analysis tool the findings it generates are easily incorporated into response analysis.

The information provided by the EMMA complements information provided by broader macro-level market surveys;

<sup>3</sup> In general EMMA assessments take one or two weeks and cost between \$8,000 and \$25,000, according to the context, existing information, the areas to be covered, the team already in place and programmatic decision needs. The flexibility of the tool has meant that it can be used in a variety of contexts and programme designs, with a variety of resources.

EMMA is based on both qualitative and quantitative data and, while focused on the micro level, also links micro and macro, is iterative in its approach and is driven by practical considerations and the principle of getting a 'good enough' picture of the market situation. Through its dynamic understanding of the market system it allows forecasting of the potential impact of changes in the context and different response options. This means that it can be used by a wide range of actors in emergency response and food security programmes.<sup>4</sup>

The EMMA methodology was originally designed for rapid-onset crises, and used a pre-/post-shock scenario analysis. Its application in Chad, in a slow-onset crisis, has shown that it can be adapted by using a 'good year' as a reference (instead of pre-shock) and bad year to describe the post-shock or current situation. EMMA was designed to be user-friendly and to be used by non-market specialists. While this is still valid, experience has shown that doing an EMMA well requires good analytical skills and a high level of confidence.

<sup>4</sup> Its initial use in WASH (for water trucking in Ethiopia in 2012) has proved its effectiveness beyond food security programming.

Regional, national and local market information systems must be strengthened to support humanitarian response analysis. In particular, divergent analysis and insufficient information to design programmes has pointed to the critical need to reinforce market information systems at all levels. In areas and countries where crises are predictable, it is important to invest in market system baselines linking micro with meso and macro levels. Stronger market analysis and greater capacity to make use of it within the humanitarian sector could support innovative thinking around market support interventions. Many international NGOs are looking at how to incorporate market support options as part of emergency responses. EMMA and other market analysis tools can play a major role here.

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## Coordinated needs assessments: the value of a collaborative process

Zahairou Mamane Sani and Andrea Stewart, Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project,<sup>1</sup> and Caroline Draveny, Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS)<sup>2</sup>

The humanitarian reform agenda recognises the need for evidence-based decision-making in emergencies. However, current approaches to humanitarian needs assessment often do not provide a sufficiently coherent picture of humanitarian requirements and, therefore, are unable to effectively inform decisions. Multiple, independent, uncoordinated assessments often represent significant duplication of time, effort and funds, provide a fragmented picture of need and risk neglecting certain beneficiary groups and leaving gaps in information. These efforts may not meet commonly promoted humanitarian standards of accountability to vulnerable groups affected by crises.

For all these reasons, coordinated needs assessments are increasingly seen as crucial for the more efficient use of resources, to obtain a more comprehensive picture of needs and to promote a shared understanding of needs and priorities, laying a good foundation for a well-coordinated response. However, conducting coordinated needs assessments is not an easy process, and convincing

partners of the added value of such an approach is a key challenge. Diverse mandates and sector-specific approaches make it difficult for agencies to allocate the time, staff and resources required to participate in a coordinated exercise.

### Coordinated needs assessments: a renewed partnership

Agencies participating in the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project are strengthening their ability to carry out coordinated needs assessments in five multi-agency consortia. The benefits of a coordinated approach – such as greater coherence and usage of results, stronger and more uniform data analysis and new opportunities for closer operational coordination in the field – are becoming more widely appreciated, and are beginning to counter the negative perceptions associated with the time and resources required to deliver a coordinated assessment.

To build on this momentum, ECB Project field teams are working in close partnership with the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), using small technical teams to train field staff on developing common assessment approaches and data capture and providing guidance on how to analyse and effectively use the data to inform programming decisions. After signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with ACAPS in 2010, ECB Project agencies began their collaboration in Indonesia, then expanded the scope and reach of their pilot initiatives to disaster-affected areas in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Kenya, Niger,

<sup>1</sup> The ECB Project is a global initiative of CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Save the Children and World Vision International. The goal of the ECB Project is to improve the speed, quality and effectiveness of the humanitarian community in order to save lives, improve welfare and protect the rights of people in emergency situations. The ECB consortium in Niger has been active since January 2009. For more information visit [www.ecbproject.org](http://www.ecbproject.org).

<sup>2</sup> The Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) is dedicated to improving the assessment of needs in complex emergencies and crises by providing tools, assessment specialists and training before, during and after crises. For more information visit [www.acaps.org](http://www.acaps.org).

**Figure 1: The coordinated needs assessment in Niger**

Timeline	
First secondary data review	11 November 2011
Second secondary data review	23 December 2011
Assessment design and planning	3–18 January 2012
Training and questionnaire review	16 January 2012
Field data collection	19–23 January 2012
Preliminary findings of the coordinated needs assessment	15 February 2012
Final report of the coordinated needs assessment	24 February 2012
Third secondary data review	13 March 2012
Press release	21 March 2012

Somalia and Uganda. The partnership has resulted in the release of secondary data reviews (SDRs) for use during the early stages of humanitarian crises, the confirmation of standard criteria against which to collect pre-crisis indicators, online database development, assessment tool design, the implementation of coordinated needs assessments and joint publications.

Niger has experienced rapid population growth and environmental change over the last 40 years. Arable land is decreasing, the population has increased fourfold and the country is regularly affected by major food crises (in 1974, 1984, 1998, 2005 and 2010). Following erratic rainfall in 2011, the famine early warning system (FEWS NET) estimated that close to three million people were at risk of food insecurity. In November 2011, ACAPS and ECB Project agencies undertook an initial SDR on the food security situation, which identified the need for a more coordinated approach to information collection and analysis. The following month, a food security assessment by the Cellule de Coordination du Système d’Alerte Précoce (CC/SAP), the government body in charge of early warning, found that more than 5.4 million people (35% of the population) were food insecure. Given this situation and the negative projections for the ‘hunger gap’ season, the seven ECB Project agencies in Niger decided to conduct

a multi-sector coordinated assessment, supported by ACAPS.<sup>3</sup> This was informed by an updated secondary data review, published at the end of December 2011.

The aim of the coordinated assessment was to gain a better understanding of food security in Diffa (an area with large numbers of pastoralists and few humanitarian partners, and about which there was relatively little information) and Tillabéri (one of the most affected regions). The target outcome of this collaboration was to create a common understanding and shared awareness of the situation among consortium members, and to begin discussions on response options.

The design phase of the assessment started in January 2012, focusing on the methodology (information needs, analysis plan, sampling, site selection, tool design) and coordination aspects (roles and responsibilities, mobilisation of resources, team-building, training, logistics and administration and developing a collaborative platform). Coordination with other actors (CC/SAP, the World Food Programme, other NGOs, local authorities) was a priority, to avoid duplication and maximise the value of the information collected. The assessment was

<sup>3</sup> The ECB Project agencies in Niger are CARE, CRS, Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Plan, Save the Children and World Vision.

**Box 1: Key facts**

Number of participating INGOs	7
Government participants	Drawn from the CR/PGCA (regional prevention and food crisis management committees)
Number of people involved in data collection	27
Number of sites selected	42 (Tillabery and Diffa)
Sectors assessed	Agriculture and livelihoods, migration, food security, water and sanitation, education, protection
Questionnaire	10 pages, based on systematic screening, scoping, trends, targeting and prioritisation questions within each sector assessed
Data collection technique	Direct observation, Community Group Discussion, Secondary Data Review
Available	English: <a href="http://www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/216-joint-needs-assessment-tillabry-and-diffa-regions--niger">www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/216-joint-needs-assessment-tillabry-and-diffa-regions--niger</a> French: <a href="http://www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/217-evaluation-conjointe-des-besoins-dans-les-regions-de-tillabry-et-diffa---niger">www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/217-evaluation-conjointe-des-besoins-dans-les-regions-de-tillabry-et-diffa---niger</a>

jointly designed and covered various sectors in addition to food security. It resulted in a shared questionnaire format, methodology and single final report.<sup>4</sup>

**Lessons**

The Niger coordinated exercise led to two major outcomes:

- Strengthening collaboration among the ECB Project agencies and within the wider humanitarian community, including the national government and the UN.

*Without question, the coordinated needs assessment has been the single biggest step towards a common approach to responding to the food and farming crisis of 2012. It allowed ECB Project agencies to pool their efforts, their talents and their resources to get an accurate picture of the crisis at a time when there were great differences of opinion with regard to the scale and seriousness of the emergency.*

**Aboubacar Djimraou, Deputy Director, CARE Niger**

<sup>4</sup> The final assessment report is available in English and French at [www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/tag/Niger](http://www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/tag/Niger).

- Building the assessment capacity of each ECB agency and enabling them to make more informed decisions and replicate assessment skills in other areas of Niger.

**Strengthening collaboration**

The coordinated needs assessment was credited with laying the groundwork very early on for better collaboration between actors responding to the food crisis. Indeed, it was one of the rare occasions when international organisations brought their resources together and worked in partnership in the face of a humanitarian crisis. Bringing together ECB partners that had previously worked on other joint activities facilitated further engagement and participation in each step of the assessment, from questionnaire design, data collection and analysis to reporting and dissemination.

The final assessment report enabled more frequent and informed dialogue between ECB Project agencies, partners, government staff, donors and the UN. This included supporting collaborative work and information-sharing between ECB Project agencies and UN agencies such as WFP and UNICEF. Closer coordination on advocacy and the publication of a joint press release<sup>5</sup> provided the media with key information and drew attention to the extent of the crisis and the need for further humanitarian engagement at both national and international level.

This joint exercise also resulted in improvements in emergency response coordination. The seven ECB Project agencies in Niger jointly planned their programme activities and ensured that the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Cellule de Crises Alimentaires (CCA) and the early warning system representatives (CC/SAP) also attended the assessment planning workshop.

ECB Project agencies agreed which agency would lead on the response in locations where there was traditionally no permanent agency presence. These pre-agreements ensured that the lead agency informed everyone else of any new crisis information or security issues arising in the area. Further joint discussions focused on the different developments and scenarios for programming, as well as response options following a deterioration in the situation.

The results of the coordinated needs assessment generated further proposals for emergency projects, and brought

*This was a formative procedure for our emergency staff and the rich qualitative and quantitative data generated by this report could be used as reference information within the framework of our own 2012 emergency response assessment.*

**Bill Rastetter, CRS Country Representative, Niger**

<sup>5</sup> The joint press release is available at <http://www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/228-press-release-niger-communities-say-they-will-run-out-of-food-before-next-harvest-joint-study-shows>.



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*ECB-ACAPS Coordinated Needs Assessment Focus  
Group discussion in the Diffa region, Niger*

with caution. This assessment took place in a context where actors held different opinions on the severity and scale of the crisis. ECB Project agencies reached a broad consensus on how to interpret the assessment results; they are committed to coordinating and disseminating any updated results with the government and other major institutions, and working together with these decision-makers to ensure that assessment results provide useful inputs when making important decisions and determining priorities at all levels.

together sector and support staff from the ECB Project agencies to share other approaches. For example, human resource managers planned further discussions on different agency policies on staff welfare.

#### Building assessment capacity

In addition to the collective benefits of collaboration and coordination, the joint exercise also allowed individual agencies to strengthen their own capacities. Agencies used the data from the coordinated needs assessment in a variety of ways, and in accordance with their own mandates. For example, Plan reproduced the assessment in the Dosso region, using a similar approach and adapting the tools to the context. Save the Children confirmed that the outcomes of the exercise corroborated the findings of its household economy analysis in Diffa.

#### Challenges

Collaboration and building trust remain at the core of a successful coordinated needs assessment. As any coordinated assessment process evolves it is important to ensure a clear understanding of the human, logistical, communication and financial resources needed to implement the assessment. In Niger, although the ECB partners are used to working together on other capacity-building initiatives, some coordination problems were noted.

Including multiple sectors, interests and communities in the first coordinated assessment provided useful results for the humanitarian community, yet some actors felt that the methodology and the sample chosen resulted in an assessment that did not sufficiently represent the overall situation across Niger. ECB Project agencies and partners will need to ensure that future assessments strike a balance between what is realistic, in terms of reach and coverage, and the expectations of participating agencies.

Dealing with the sensitivities of a food crisis is often very difficult and, depending on the context, may mean proceeding

#### Looking ahead

The experiences of ECB Project agencies in Niger and other countries with ECB consortia demonstrate that there are tangible benefits in adopting a coordinated approach to needs assessment. As well as providing a platform for agencies to increase coherence and coordination across a crisis-affected area, the resulting analysis and assessment report contribute towards more concrete and more informed discussions amongst decision-makers at the institutional and global inter-agency level. While it is safe to assume that a coordinated needs assessment will reduce assessment fatigue among disaster-affected people, it is also plausible to assume that a clearer, common understanding of the needs of those affected should result in better and more targeted aid delivery and improved working relations between agencies during the implementation phase. However, there is currently insufficient evidence as to the benefits for affected communities of a coordinated approach.

Agencies involved in the ECB Project and ACAPS will continue their action research to improve secondary data reviews, criteria development for pre-crisis data collection, assessment methodology development and training on coordinated needs assessment and data analysis. A new task force is refining its response to floods in Bangladesh, while a team in Indonesia is collecting pre-crisis data that can be entered directly into an online database. ECB agencies hope to develop further training opportunities for field staff based in Somalia.<sup>6</sup> In Kenya the ECB Project agencies, ACAPS, OCHA and UNICEF are planning further rapid data collection training for partner organisations and national NGOs, and developing a coordinated needs assessment approach similar to the one piloted in Niger.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Highlights from the Somalia initiative are available at <http://www.ecbproject.org/joint-needs-assessment/field-data-collection-for-humanitarian-needs-assessments-in-somalia>.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on these assessment activities contact [info@ecbproject.org](mailto:info@ecbproject.org) or [info@acaps.org](mailto:info@acaps.org).

# The impact of safety nets on the resilience of vulnerable households in Niger

Ousmane Niang, Véronique Mistycki and Soukeynatou Fall, UNICEF Niger

Niger is a landlocked country in the Sahelian zone of West Africa. Ranked 186 out of 187 countries on the UN Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Index, Niger faces extreme poverty and vulnerability caused by climatic factors and recurrent food crises. These crises have triggered large humanitarian responses involving food aid, nutrition interventions and cash transfers. These interventions, while important, have not addressed underlying issues of chronic vulnerability, which might be better tackled through social safety nets and social protection programming. This article examines the piloting of social safety nets in Niger, using cash transfers combined with the promotion of key family practices (KFP), and discusses emerging lessons on their effect on food insecurity and vulnerability.



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Cash distribution in Maradi, Niger

## Chronic poverty related to recurrent food crises

Estimated at 2.3% in 2011, the rate of economic growth in Niger is insufficient to meet the basic needs of the country's 16 million people. High levels of poverty affect nearly three out of every five Nigeriens. This is compounded by dwindling agricultural incomes, lack of income diversification, the impact of the global economic crisis and rising prices of food and other essential goods.

Recurrent food crises in 2001, 2005, 2008 and 2010 have undermined people's resilience. Nearly 50% of households were food-insecure during the crisis of 2010, and over a third will be in the same situation in 2012. These households have neither sufficient income nor enough food stocks to meet their needs and resort to survival strategies which lock them into a trap of poverty and chronic vulnerability. Survival strategies include decreasing the quantity, quality and frequency of meals, consuming foods only eaten in times of crisis (such as boiled leaves), the sale of personal property and breeding stock and the decapitalisation of productive assets and important basic resources. A study conducted by the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2010<sup>1</sup> revealed that most assistance used in response to food insecurity serves to protect households' immediate access to the means of subsistence, but fails to ensure the recovery of households most affected by recurrent shocks. According to the results of a survey conducted by the

<sup>1</sup> *Chocs et vulnérabilité au Niger* [Shock and Vulnerability in Niger], World Food Programme, 2010.

National Institute for Statistics in 2012, the main threats facing households are declining agricultural production (80% of respondents), rising food prices (54%) and crop infestation (56%).<sup>2</sup>

The high prevalence of severe and acute malnutrition, over 12% since 2009 and peaking at 15% in 2010 is one result of this situation. Chronic malnutrition has risen steadily since 2009 and currently affects over half of all children. Acute malnutrition is directly or indirectly responsible for 50%–60% of deaths of children under the age of five. Despite significant investment in basic social services and much progress in reducing child mortality, considerable efforts are still required in the areas of health, nutrition, hygiene and food security.

## An innovative social protection initiative

To address food insecurity, the government has adopted a national social protection policy targeting vulnerable groups. The policy emphasises implementation of the 2010 Action Plan for Social Safety Nets, which allows for the provision of a permanent system of safety nets as a complement to shorter-term food aid interventions. The two-year programme, supported by the World Bank in partnership with UNICEF, targets 70,000 households. Of these, 40,000 will benefit from monthly cash transfers of 10,000 CFA, as well as sensitisation on key family practices (KFP) (the specific practices are discussed below). The other 30,000 will participate in cash-for-work schemes over a period of two years, but will not be exposed to KFP sensitisation. The cash-for-work component will provide 60

<sup>2</sup> *Rapport de l'enquête Pratiques familiales essentielles et filets sociaux* [Key family practices and social safety nets survey report], Institut national de la statistique, 2012.

**Figure 1: Key Family Practices promoted through the safety net initiative**

 <p>DONNER SEULEMENT DU LAIT MATERNEL JUSQU'À 6 MOIS</p>	<p><b>Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months.</b></p>	 <p>DORMIR SOUS UNE MOUSTIQUAIRE IMPRÉGNÉE TOUTES LES NUITS</p>	<p><b>Sleeping under the ITNs by pregnant women and children.</b></p>
 <p>AJOUTER D'AUTRES ALIMENTS À PARTIR DE 6 MOIS</p>	<p><b>Qualitative complementary feeding of children after 6 months.</b></p>	 <p>AMENER L'ENFANT AU CENTRE DE SANTÉ AUX PREMIERS SIGNES DE MALADIE</p>	<p><b>Appropriate care seeking behaviour for diarrhoea, pneumonia and neo-natal conditions.</b></p>
 <p>LAVER LES MAINS AU SAVON</p>	<p><b>Hand-washing with soap at four critical times.</b></p>	 <p>VEILLER AUX SOINS PRÉVENTIFS DE SANTÉ DE L'ENFANT</p>	<p><b>Use of preventive health services (vaccination, deworming and vitamin A supplementation).</b></p>
 <p>RÉHYDRATER L'ENFANT AVEC SRO EN CAS DE DIARRHÉE</p>	<p><b>Managing diarrhoea through correct use of ORT and the recognition of early signs of dehydration.</b></p>		

days of work to approximately 15,000 people annually, for a total of 30,000 people during the lifetime of the project.

The pilot phase of the cash transfer component of the programme began in early 2010 and covers 2,500 households. The KFP promotion accompanying the cash transfer is meant to encourage sustainable positive changes in family and community practices to help improve living conditions in the medium and long term, and address the structural causes of malnutrition and food insecurity. KFP sensitisation, which is not restricted to cash transfer beneficiaries, is carried out at the village level. It involves several steps, including village assembly, group discussions and house-to-house visits.

The logic of combining KFP and cash transfers is clear. Cash raises household income, providing scope to increase food consumption (and widen the choice of foods consumed), and improve household resilience by enabling beneficiaries to avoid negative coping strategies and increase savings. At the same time, the promotion of KFP helps to create the mid- and long-term conditions necessary to prevent malnutrition and foster development, in particular by helping to improve health and development in early childhood.

UNICEF, in collaboration with the government and NGOs, has been testing the approach used to promote behavioural change and adoption of KFP in 176 villages in Maradi and Zinder since 2008. The approach is based on promoting practices with a proven impact on improving child survival and nutrition. Eight practices were selected (see Figure 1): exclusive breastfeeding for children under six months, quality complementary feeding after six months, hand-washing, addressing diarrhea and dehydration, sleeping under mosquito nets, care-seeking behaviour, using preventative health services and leaving more time between births. The approach also recognises

that community participation is the cornerstone of any intervention to promote behaviour change; it is informed by socio-anthropological analysis of knowledge, attitudes and practices of KFP in Niger.

### An effective combination

Evidence suggests that the promotion of KFP as an accompanying measure in the safety net programme has been very effective. As part of an evaluation of the programme, a survey was conducted in 2011 by the National Institute of Statistics of Niger in the Tahoua and Tillabery regions, where the pilot programme was carried out together with KFP promotion. To assess progress, the survey results were compared with the results of an evaluation of a KFP programme in the Maradi and Zinder regions, which has been ongoing since 2008. This revealed that, after just ten months, the combination of the social safety net programme and KFP promotion had achieved results comparable to those observed after four years in an area where only a KFP programme was implemented. This highlights the benefits of combining safety nets and the promotion of KFPs.

The behavioural changes observed within communities in Tahoua and Tillabery participating in the social safety nets and KFP programme and those observed in villages in Maradi and Zinder participating in the KFP-only programme are summarised in Table 1.

### Strengthening the prevention and management of food insecurity and malnutrition in children

The results of the survey support the hypothesis that the distribution of monthly cash transfers contributes to improving households' food security. Data analysis shows that cash transfers increase the capacity of households affected by food insecurity to meet their food needs and those of their children. The vast majority of households (95%) claim to have used the cash transfers mainly for the

**Table 1: Behavioural changes<sup>3</sup>**

Behavioural change	KFP only (%) (over 4 yrs)	SSN + KFP (%) (over 10 months)
Children fully immunised	48	48
Children dewormed	62	64
Children receiving vitamin A	87	75
Hand-washing before preparing food for children	65	16
Early breastfeeding	89	25
Use of oral rehydration salts	58	41

acquisition of food (83% of the cash went on food). This resulted in better-quality food for households benefiting from the safety net programme, as shown by an increase in the Food Consumption Score.<sup>4</sup> In addition, 85% of respondents believe that the programme contributed to improved food security, especially for children. In Tahoua, the percentage of malnourished children was 12.6% in households in the safety net programme, compared to 14.3% in other households – though these differences cannot be attributed to the safety net programme because of the many variables that impact upon malnutrition.

#### Strengthening the resilience of households vulnerable to food insecurity

The results also suggest the potential for cash transfers to contribute towards developing household resilience. Cash transfers were used for building savings in almost three-quarters of beneficiary households (72%), and for productive investments. More than half of these households (52%) invested in productive assets such as livestock, 46% made investments to diversify their economic activities and 38% invested in agricultural inputs. Furthermore, 75% indicated that the increase in the income of beneficiary households had contributed to the diversification of economic activities.

It also appears that the social safety net programme has contributed to strengthening social cohesion by giving the poor in the community an opportunity to restore their social capital within both their families and the wider community. For example, beneficiary households had a preference for saving money through ‘*tontines*’ (savings and loan groups).

<sup>3</sup> The figures in Table 1 are taken from the 2011 National Institute of Statistics survey.

<sup>4</sup> The Food Consumption Score is the weighted sum of the frequency of consumption of particular foods over seven days. An increase in this score shows that households are consuming nutritive foods more frequently.

#### Changing attitudes and social practices

According to the KFP qualitative survey, the combination of cash transfers and KFP has led to some changes in social and cultural practices, such as more babies being delivered in health centres and an increase in exclusive breastfeeding. The KFP activities also encouraged the participation of groups traditionally marginalised within their communities, especially women and young people, by including them in community volunteer selection, village meetings and other elements of community dialogue. Finally, social acceptance of KFP was observed. In some villages, additional group activities were initiated by the community itself, such as ‘hygiene and cleanliness’ days, organising transport for people needing medical attention and collective construction work. In some places, community volunteers assist the staff of the health centre by holding communication sessions for patients.

#### Consolidating gains and increasing impact

As chronic vulnerability in Niger is closely linked to food crises, social safety net programming could lessen the impact of the shocks and stresses that Nigeriens regularly face. The preliminary results of this pilot suggest that combining KFP with social safety nets may be a good sustainable strategy for strengthening the capacity of vulnerable communities. In 2012, the Social Safety Net Programme will be scaled up in 1,000 villages for approximately 210,000 people. This raises hopes for fighting chronic poverty, promoting social equity and encouraging positive behaviours and practices in communities and families. Furthermore, the lessons learned from the pilot social safety net project will provide information regarding the use of KFP as part of social protection interventions.

**Ousmane Niang** is Chief of Social Policy, UNICEF Niger. **Véronique Mistycki** is Reports Officer and Soukeynatou Fall is Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, UNICEF Niger.

### System failure? Revisiting the problems of timely response to crises in the Horn of Africa

Simon Levine, with Alexandra Crosskey and Mohammed Abdinoor

*Network Paper 71, November 2011*

Despite enormous investment in early warning, humanitarian response in pastoral areas in the Horn of Africa has consistently been late. Yet food security crises in the pastoral areas of the Horn are regular events, and droughts in pastoral areas are the slowest-onset crises imaginable. This Network Paper offers a fresh explanation of the fact that so many apparently simple problems have proved so intractable. It sets out three ideas for moving forward: a new framework for livelihoods programming and contingency planning; a new way of improving preparedness; and a new conceptual framework for the response system as a whole.

# Using the Household Economy Approach to inform social protection programming in the Sahel

Jessica Saulle, Nicola Hypher and Nick Martlew, Save the Children

The Household Economy Approach (HEA) is widely used as a framework for understanding food security, livelihoods and poverty. The framework also has the potential to inform social protection programming by improving understanding of the context in intervention areas, and enhancing targeting and coverage. In the Sahel, HEA has been used successfully for social protection programming in Niger and Mali in the form of safety nets based on regular cash transfers. Save the Children piloted safety nets in the Niger district of Tessaoua from 2008 to 2009 using HEA as a targeting and monitoring tool. The programme reached around 26,000 of the poorest households. Building on this experience, in 2009 Save the Children, Oxfam and the Government Institute of Rural Economy in Mali designed and implemented an 18-month safety net programme covering three livelihood zones.

## Understanding poverty and vulnerability

HEA provides an insight into factors affecting poverty, profiling how people from different livelihood and wealth groups typically access food and income, what they spend their money on, the basic services they use and their savings, debts and assets. Analysing the contribution of food and income sources to the household economy helps us to understand the specific vulnerabilities of different wealth groups to various shocks. For instance, the HEA profiles conducted in northern Mali showed that, while there are more wealth-generating opportunities in the pastoral zones than in the neighbouring agropastoral zone, pastoralists rely on increasingly drought-depleted livestock herds for their food and income. HEA profiles establish a clear link between the successive food crises experienced over the last two decades and the rapid impoverishment of these communities due to herd depletion.

Livelihood disaggregation enables a better understanding of local definitions of poverty and vulnerability and enables agencies to select intervention areas based on livelihoods rather than administrative boundaries. Communities in some livelihood zones may have more income-earning opportunities, or may be less affected by shocks than households in other zones. For instance, households in areas close to main cities or trade routes have more diversified income sources and are thus less affected by drought-triggered food crises than their rural counterparts.

HEA also provides an insight into the interdependencies between wealth groups and between different livelihood zones throughout the seasons. In some pastoral and agropastoral areas in the Sahel, community support takes the form of animal lending and does not necessarily target the poorest households, who are not trusted by the rich to look after these animals. Instead, the poorest people work for richer households in their fields, as herders or as

## Box 1: The impact of the Mali and Niger safety nets

Social protection plays a vital role in protecting vulnerable people during stable periods, as well as in times of crisis. It has the potential to increase resilience and prevent people from falling deeper into poverty. It also allows families to maintain expenditure on a variety of food items, and therefore protect the nutritional status of their children.

In both Niger and Mali, the safety net programmes improved targeted households' access to food and enabled them to increase their own production. Agrarian and agropastoral households tilled their fields earlier and planted on time, which increased their yields. This was largely because the cash transfer meant that they did not have to spend time labouring in other people's fields. Expenditure on health-care also increased (by up to 50% in Niger). In Niger, after the first distribution during the hunger gap about 50% of targeted households could afford nutritious food, while only a minority of those households could afford these items before the project.

In Mali, beneficiaries organised saving groups (*tontines*) to enable them to benefit from the money longer. In pastoral and agropastoral zones, another benefit of the project was to increase the trust that richer households had in the capacity of the very poor to take care of animals. This resulted in more animals being lent to the very poor, which increased their social standing and improved their diet. The safety net was however not sufficient to enable people to move out of poverty, and at least another two years of combined cash transfers and livelihoods support would have been required.

domestic workers. They are paid in-kind or in cash and are sometimes given credit by employers who depend on their labour and do not want to see them leave.

By disaggregating the population into livelihood zones and wealth groups, HEA has proved particularly useful in understanding the situation of the very poor. It has highlighted their reliance on the market for food, rather than their own production, their meagre income sources and how and when they reduce expenditure, are likely to become sick or might migrate. HEA has also helped to identify the coping mechanisms used by very poor households, and the point at which these coping mechanisms endanger the health of individual household members and the future viability of the household.

As the poor depend heavily on the market for food, even a small shock such as a price increase (even if seasonal)



© UN Photo/WFP/Phil Behan

*Mothers wait to be seen in a therapeutic feeding centre in Maradi Region, Niger*

can have a disastrous effect on nutritional status as people have less access to foodstuffs. When the nutrition of young children, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers is neglected, the damage to children's physical growth and cognitive development can be lasting, and in some cases irreversible.<sup>1</sup> HEA can predict the impact on households and therefore inform programming to prevent households from using negative coping mechanisms. Such programming can take the form of social transfers.

### Who to target first

Save the Children's experience in the Sahel demonstrates that using HEA in social protection programming leads to cost-effective targeting compared to other targeting methods, such as means-testing. HEA enables us to decide who should be prioritised, and its simple and participatory approach to determining wealth criteria makes it easy for communities to understand and accept the targeting decisions that are based on it. Criteria for each wealth category are discussed and defined for each livelihood zone together with communities. HEA-based targeting is also easy for local government staff to use (while NGOs are still the main users of HEA, governments are showing greater interest as more officials are trained in using the framework for early warning purposes). However, as with most targeting systems care must be taken that local elites do not try to manipulate the system to their advantage.

The Mali safety net programme was designed using wealth criteria defined with communities in the selected livelihood zones in October and November 2009. The criteria were validated again by communities before proceeding with household selection. Both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries stated that they found the system transparent across the project areas.

<sup>1</sup> Save the Children (2012), *A Chance to Grow*. London: Save the Children.

### Understanding the transfer size and seasonality

HEA tells us what proportion of their needs households can meet themselves, and what they need in order to be able to live without compromising their future. Transfers should reflect the cost of a nutritious diet, as well as factoring in other household needs so that the transfer effectively protects food security and livelihoods, preventing malnutrition and the use of negative coping mechanisms such as migration, child labour, reducing or stopping education and health expenditures and selling assets. One limitation of HEA is that it does not address micro-nutrient requirements. To understand the economic barriers to a household's access to micronutrients, and to ensure that families are eating the right nutrients throughout the year, HEA needs to be combined with another tool, the 'Cost of Diet', which provides a full overview of the availability and affordability of a nutritious diet in a particular context.<sup>2</sup> This tool helps to determine the minimum cost and affordability of a diet for a family, taking into account seasonal variations in local prices and food availability.

HEA takes seasonality into account, as labour and income-earning opportunities, food availability, health status and therefore food needs vary between seasons. For instance, in the agropastoral livelihood zone of northern Mali, crop production and related prices were crucial in defining what size of transfer was needed and when. Three cash transfers of varying amounts were made at different times of the year. In the first instalment, provided in April and May, beneficiary households were given enough to cover their basic needs and prepare for the planting season

<sup>2</sup> Save the Children, *The Minimum Cost of a Healthy Diet*, January 2009, <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/the-minimum-cost-of-a-healthy-diet>.

without having to borrow against future harvests. A second instalment was provided in July, during the rainy season (the hunger gap), to protect assets and cover basic needs, especially healthcare costs as malaria, diarrhoea and respiratory diseases are more prevalent during this time of year. A third instalment was provided to households at harvest time to enable them to buy cereals when prices were still low. This was important as the HEA indicated that the poorest households did not have sufficient cash to purchase cereals even when prices were low. The very poor can only purchase food when they happen to have money, which means that they buy small amounts and are highly vulnerable to seasonal price increases.

### **Understanding when scaling up is necessary and how much more is needed**

Transfer amounts should be adjusted in line with seasonal price increases, but more significant scaling up may be necessary when the population faces a larger shock, such as the 2011/12 food crisis. Indeed, while social protection programmes can play a significant part in increasing a population's resilience, they can play an equally important role in protecting the gains made by stopping crises before they happen.

The HEA outcome analysis tool, part of the HEA framework, allows for comparison between a difficult year and a baseline (reference) year. It can define the gap that various wealth groups in a particular livelihood zone are likely to face in the event of a shock, and what non-damaging coping strategies households use. HEA outcome analysis is being used increasingly in the Sahel by government-led early warning systems and by FEWS NET to predict how households in the various wealth groups and livelihood zones will be affected during the year to come. This exercise should be done as soon as it becomes clear

that there will be a shock. For instance, in the case of a drought in the Sahel it can be done in early September. In showing the extent to which households are going to be affected, the analysis also indicates the level of transfer needed, and whether it is necessary to expand coverage to households of other groups or in other livelihood zones. This analysis is crucial in pre-empting and even preventing the need for humanitarian response.

### **Conclusion**

Using the HEA framework in the design and implementation of social protection programmes helps in understanding the contexts in which people live and their specific vulnerabilities to common shocks. This is not usually considered in national poverty analyses. HEA is a cost-effective and transparent targeting tool, and has been used to calculate appropriate cash transfer amounts at different times of the year. HEA can help to determine the combination and levels of cash and in-kind support required, and how to increase such support in the event of a shock. The framework can also be used to model the impact of different modalities, transfer sizes and programme durations. The knowledge and understanding of livelihood zones accumulated from HEA baseline work and outcome analyses, and the skilled pool of HEA practitioners and analysts that now exists within NGOs, government and universities, could potentially also be used to analyse the effectiveness of current programmes (cash transfers, insurance or livelihoods support) to achieve greater impact and help to lift people out of poverty.

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## **Cash transfer programming in emergencies**

Paul Harvey and Sarah Bailey  
*Good Practice Review 11, June 2011*

This GPR synthesises existing cash transfer guidelines, centralises lessons from research and evaluations and adds practical examples drawn from cash-based interventions. It covers the provision of cash and vouchers to individuals and households in emergencies, protracted crises and recovery contexts. Separate chapters are devoted to vouchers and Cash for Work to cover the additional issues these forms of programming raise. The GPR is written primarily for humanitarian practitioners who plan and implement emergency responses – both those who are already familiar with cash-based interventions and those who are not. The GPR will also be useful for senior managers in the field and in headquarters offices who are involved in approving operational responses and ensuring that their staff have the capacity and systems to implement projects using cash transfers. Humanitarian donors, government officials involved in disaster response, students studying humanitarian assistance and aid agency staff engaged in policy issues will also find this GPR useful.

## Humanitarian space in India: why humanitarian agencies do not respond adequately to needs generated by internal armed conflict

Viren Falcao

This article argues that internal armed conflicts in India do not receive adequate attention from humanitarian agencies in the country. It seeks to outline some of the dilemmas that humanitarian agencies operating in India encounter in attempting to secure humanitarian space, whilst also working in situations of armed conflict.<sup>1</sup> The article argues that these dilemmas arise partly on account of the manner in which many agencies have adapted their role to complement the Indian state, and also due to the chronic nature of the challenges the country faces (immediate humanitarian concerns requiring long-term developmental solutions). These factors have made it difficult for most humanitarian agencies in India to position themselves and their activities in areas of the country where there is internal armed conflict. There is an urgent need for debate among humanitarian agencies themselves, as well as with the government of India, to redefine their collective approach to populations in greatest need. The issues emerging from the Indian context are also pertinent to humanitarian agencies in other countries, which are involved in activities that go beyond providing life-saving humanitarian assistance.

### Conflict and the state

The Indian state and its many institutions, including national, state and local governments and military forces, are by far the biggest responders to most emergencies in the country. The state has at its disposal significant capacity and resources to respond to the immediate life-saving needs of populations affected by disasters. This it has demonstrated in responses to several disasters in the recent past, with civil society and humanitarian agencies playing a significant, yet largely complementary, role.

While this holds true for emergencies triggered by natural hazards, it is not necessarily the case in situations of internal armed conflict. Across several regions, the Indian state is confronting a number of armed groups, including Maoist insurgents, an armed struggle in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and several long-running insurgencies in the north-east of the country. In response to these threats, the state has severely curtailed civil liberties in affected areas. The response has been particularly troubling in one of the areas worst affected by the Maoist insurgency, the southern part of the state of Chhattisgarh. Armed vigilante groups (recently declared illegal by the Supreme Court of India) have been supported and promoted by the state government, and tribal communities in these areas are often caught in fighting between these groups and the Maoists.

<sup>1</sup> This article understands humanitarian space to mean the ability of non-state actors to provide basic human requirements and assistance to populations in need, in a neutral and impartial manner.

The provision of humanitarian assistance in such situations is extremely challenging for non-governmental agencies. Despite the significant scale of humanitarian needs in areas affected by armed conflict, only a limited number of national and international NGOs are involved in responses in these areas. Several of these agencies restrict their activities to government-supported relief camps, and very few have a presence in areas actually affected by armed conflict. Agencies and groups that have attempted to provide humanitarian assistance in these areas have encountered difficulties and have been viewed with extreme suspicion by sections of the Indian state.<sup>2</sup>

The scale of the response to situations of armed conflict stands in stark contrast to responses by humanitarian agencies in disaster-affected areas. In addition to the state response, assistance following flash floods in the district of Leh in August 2010, which killed 192 people and affected thousands more, involved at least 23 national and international agencies, as well as local NGOs, the private sector, individuals and groups. In contrast, only a handful of humanitarian agencies are responding to the immediate needs of conflict-affected people in Chhattisgarh, where 171 civilians, 172 members of the security forces and an unspecified number of Maoists were killed in 2010, and an estimated 100,000 people were displaced between mid-2009 and mid-2010. Most of these agencies limit their operations to state-sponsored relief camps and do not go to conflict sites. As a party to the conflict, the Indian state is not best placed to respond in these areas.

### Challenges and dilemmas

The role of the Indian state and the chronic nature of humanitarian needs across India go some way to explaining the challenges facing humanitarian agencies in the country.

The Indian state and its institutions guarantee Indian citizens all basic entitlements (though they may not always be able to do this satisfactorily in practice). As such, most humanitarian agencies in the country have oriented their approaches away from service delivery, and towards increased advocacy to ensure that the Indian state is held accountable to its people. This requires them to engage with arms of the state, and take positions that cannot be strictly defined as neutral. This approach has significant implications for humanitarian agencies in areas of internal armed conflict that involve the state.

<sup>2</sup> Kristin E. Solberg, 'Health Crisis Amid the Maoist Insurgency in India', *The Lancet*, vol. 371, issue 9,621, 19 April 2008; Sujeet Kumar, 'Indian Police Accuse MSF and ICRC of Treating Maoist Insurgents', Reuters Alertnet, 21 January 2011, <http://www.trust.org>.



*An antenatal clinic in Semariya, Chhattisgarh*

groups that have lived there for centuries.

Large parts of India are at significant risk from geological and hydrometeorological hazards, and most humanitarian agencies have also recognised the need to incorporate DRR efforts into their programmes. DRR is typically seen in India as part of the mandate of the emergency divisions of humanitarian agencies. In order to sustain these efforts, agencies must align their DRR efforts with other development initiatives of the government. This requires agencies to work closely with local, state and national governments. This too poses a significant challenge in some parts of India, such as Kashmir, which is highly vulnerable to hazards (as seen during the earthquake of 2005)

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The second challenge facing humanitarian agencies in India is that the country's humanitarian problems are chronic in nature, and require a long-term, 'developmental' response, and close coordination with the Indian state. Consider two instances: the crisis of malnutrition that affects children across the country; and activities in the area of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), which seek to address the significant vulnerabilities of communities to a range of hazards. Despite rapid economic growth, malnutrition levels among children in India have remained persistently high. According to the latest available government estimates, a staggering 45% of children below the age of three in the country are stunted, 23% show signs of wasting, 40% are underweight and close to 80% are anaemic. Few would disagree with the assertion that such levels of malnutrition constitute an emergency. Given the scale and nature of the problem, civil society groups (including several humanitarian agencies) have adopted a strategy of public advocacy – working with the government to guarantee access to a universal public distribution system for foodgrains. A bill guaranteeing the 'Right to Food', pushed to a significant extent by civil society groups including a number of humanitarian agencies, is currently being debated in the national parliament.

In the state of Chhattisgarh, with a population of around 20 million, the nutritional crisis is even more acute (53% of children below three are stunted, 24% show signs of wasting, 48% are underweight and 81% are anaemic). Given that the state is in the midst of an armed conflict, engagement with the state – one of the parties to the conflict – limits the ability of humanitarian agencies to negotiate humanitarian space and address both the issue of malnourishment, and the needs of communities affected by the conflict. Cases such as Chhattisgarh, which is rich in mineral resources, also involve complex issues relating to land rights involving the state, corporations and tribal

but is also experiencing an armed struggle that has claimed thousands of lives over the past 20 years. The existence of significant pockets of support for the Kashmiri separatist movement among the local population makes the provision of humanitarian aid by any agency seen as being too closely aligned with the Indian state extremely challenging.

## Conclusion

The challenge for humanitarian agencies in India is thus one of reconciling the need to remain neutral in order to secure access in a situation of internal armed conflict, while engaging the Indian state and attempting to ensure that it provides its citizens with their entitlements. The involvement of most humanitarian agencies in activities that require significant engagement with the state constrains their ability to adhere to positions of strict neutrality, which would be required to secure access and guarantee their safety in situations of armed conflict.

The need for neutral and independent humanitarian action in areas of armed conflict in India is evident. This requires further acknowledgement both from humanitarian agencies themselves, and from the government of India at the national, state and district levels. Attempting to build and widen a consensus between agencies and the state around the provision of life-saving assistance such as emergency medical facilities could be a possible starting point for a dialogue on this issue. For their part, humanitarian agencies need to develop a consensus on the issue among themselves, as well as demonstrating both the willingness and the ability to provide humanitarian assistance in a neutral, impartial and independent manner. In doing so, however, they will be forced to confront and address the issues and dilemmas outlined above.

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# Redefining humanitarian space: the Kachin IDP crisis in Myanmar

Carine Jaquet and Conor O'Loughlin

The concept of humanitarian space has been the subject of intense debate in recent humanitarian discourse. Dominant still is the argument that this space is contracting, making it more difficult for humanitarian actors to reach crisis-affected civilians. However, this narrative has been increasingly challenged. New research highlights a range of definitional differences and a dearth in empirical evidence to support the 'shrinking space' hypothesis.<sup>1</sup> Policy-makers are beginning to lose patience with the term's vagueness.<sup>2</sup> This article aims to advance the current debate by determining the extent to which this conceptual confusion actually impacts on humanitarian interventions. Is it just academic, or does it help shape humanitarian operations?



© Steve Sandford/IRIN

*A doctor treats an elderly patient at the Je Yang IDP camp, Kachin State*

To do this, we look at the current humanitarian crisis in Kachin State in Northern Myanmar – one of the latest examples proffered by some international agencies to make the case that humanitarian space is under threat. Since the outbreak of hostilities in June 2011, many agencies have complained of restricted access to 60,000 fleeing civilians displaced in various locations of Kachin State and along the Myanmar–China border. Certainly, international agencies face many operational challenges in Kachin. It is clear that a number of different factors have hindered their ability to deliver aid, including travel restrictions for international staff, general insecurity, the destruction of roads and bridges and concerns about jeopardising relations with the government at a crucial juncture in Myanmar's political development. Taken together, these factors have been perceived by some international agencies as evidence of the continuing contraction of humanitarian space.

This article disputes this claim. Humanitarian aid has been delivered to IDPs from the start of the conflict in June 2011. While international agencies have had a troubled time in doing so, local agencies have effectively navigated a complex political and military environment to ensure consistent delivery of assistance to, and protection of, IDPs. In fact, international organisations have been guilty of defining humanitarian space narrowly: not just

<sup>1</sup> See Sarah Collinson and Samir Elhawary, *Humanitarian Space: A Review of Trends and Issues*, HPG Report 32, April 2012, <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/docs/7643.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> British Minister of State for International Development Alan Duncan has banned the Department for International Development (DFID) from using 'jargon' including 'humanitarian space'. See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/9349970/Alan-Duncan-issues-memo-at-DFID-banning-jargon-words-like-going-forward.html>.

as 'agency space', but more specifically '*international agency space*'. While international agencies have been preoccupied with their inability to operate freely, local and national humanitarian actors have been busy delivering aid, managing a complex network of camps and skillfully negotiating protection and assistance to IDPs with both warring parties. For these local actors, agency space to provide assistance to IDPs has never been the issue. The main impediment to aid delivery has been a lack of financial and technical support from international agencies.

## Background to the Kachin conflict

On 9 June 2011, clashes broke out between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and militia backed by the Myanmar government, breaking a 17-year ceasefire. The fighting took place near a dam being built to provide electricity for China, which is commonly perceived as a symbol of the exploitation of Kachin natural resources by Chinese and Burmese companies. Relations between the central government and Kachin leaders had been deteriorating for months beforehand. The 2009 strategy of the Myanmar government to co-opt ethnic armed groups into Border Guard Forces (BGF) was particularly divisive. This was a bold attempt by the government to wrest military control of its borders from various armed groups. In return, the military agreed to share control of the lucrative (and often illicit) border trade with various ethnic militias. While some groups accepted this offer, the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) rejected it, equating it with the surrender of its struggle for autonomy. This generated considerable bad will in the government, to the degree that a Kachin political party, the Kachin State

Progressive Party, was barred from competing in the 2010 general elections. Consequently, the nationwide transition towards democracy, welcomed in most parts of the country, has been a bitter experience for people in Kachin, whose hopes for autonomy and participation in national politics have been set back. Subsequently, the KIA remobilised its troops, presaging the resumption of conflict.

### The Kachin IDP and refugee crisis

Thousands of people have been displaced by fighting since June 2011. As of June 2012, an estimated 60,000 people have been affected, 25,000 of them located in government-controlled areas and a reported 35,000 or more in KIO areas. There are an additional 7,000 refugees across the border in China. Several thousand people have been displaced in Northern Shan State, which has been made highly unstable by the presence of government-backed militias.

The humanitarian situation is complex. The demarcation line between government and KIA forces is constantly in flux, making it difficult to plan operations, and camps have been moved from one location to another. KIA forces have recently resorted to using guerrilla tactics such as roadside explosive devices, which have made main transport routes unsafe. Conflict has escalated as government forces attempt to weed out KIA combatants. Civilians, most of whom are Christian, have taken refuge in Catholic and Baptist church compounds in both government- and KIO-controlled areas. More than 30 camps have sprung up. Their composition, size and remoteness vary, as do the needs of the people in them.

The positions of both sets of belligerents towards the delivery of aid to displaced civilians have been ambiguous from the beginning. During the first months of the crisis, the Myanmar government refused to grant official authorisation to international aid agencies, before eventually allowing supervised access through convoys. The government's position on the provision of assistance to IDPs in KIO-controlled areas (where the vast majority are located) was far more intransigent, and there were deep suspicions that civilians in these areas were sympathetic to the KIA. Even if the central government had allowed direct aid to these areas, this access would still have been contingent upon the agreement of the de facto authority, the KIO. While the KIO has said that it welcomes external aid for IDPs, it has refused to provide any written authorisation. Without formal clearance from all of the belligerents, in the prevailing atmosphere of mistrust and insecurity international agencies were for the most part unwilling to send staff into the area.

### Delivering humanitarian assistance

Despite considerable effort, it took six months for the UN team in-country to gain official access to conflict-affected IDPs in KIA-controlled areas. The first convoy of relief items, delivered in December 2011 to the KIA headquarters in Laiza, was facilitated by local civil society organisations, which acted as interlocutors between these international agencies and the KIO, and made their own vehicles and staff members available to facilitate aid distributions.

In March 2012, a second convoy carried relief items to remote camps along the border with China. A third convoy was arranged in April and at the time of writing more are expected, though the deteriorating security situation and damage to roads caused by heavy rains have created fresh logistical challenges. It is these delays and restrictions that have fuelled international agencies' claims that humanitarian space has been denied.

While international agencies were engaging with government officials in high-level talks to increase access, local faith-based NGOs in Kachin and NGOs operating within KIO-controlled areas were providing locally procured food assistance. In the initial weeks, this mainly consisted of private donations by wealthier members of the community. These organisations assumed responsibility for managing the camps, constructing shelters, wells, toilets and dispensaries while delivering regular food aid, hygiene kits and basic education to IDPs on both sides of the frontline. This was achieved through careful negotiation and trust-building with both the Myanmar authorities and the KIO, predicated on three main pillars: undertakings to remain apolitical and to regularly share information on humanitarian needs, and demonstrated capacity to deliver aid effectively. In this they have succeeded from the start of the conflict, safely passing through the checkpoints of both parties and accessing even the most remote camps.

The main impediment to local agencies' response has been restricted funding and limited technical knowledge of humanitarian relief operations. To mitigate this, local agencies requested both technical and financial support from international NGOs in Kachin State. Local agencies have been working in partnership with INGOs for several years, and key personnel had received relevant training from these international partners prior to the conflict. Others have now been trained in Sphere standards and camp management. In some cases, technical advisors were temporarily deployed from international agencies to work with local agency staff as advisors, particularly on project management, procurement and water, sanitation and hygiene. Although capacity-building is needed, particularly for camp managers in the most remote areas, opportunities to improve operational standards remain scarce. Available funding continues to be monopolised by service delivery interventions.

### Conclusion

Should the lack of access to IDPs by international agencies be construed as evidence of a contraction in humanitarian space? If it should, does this matter? In Kachin, the dominant view is that humanitarian space is restricted, and this has influenced key policy decisions. The idea that humanitarian space is absent, particularly in KIO-controlled areas, has until very recently dissuaded international donors and agencies from delivering humanitarian assistance to IDPs. Yet space to provide assistance to IDPs has never been raised as the key problem by local agencies, which have successfully negotiated the delivery of aid with both parties from the very beginning of the conflict. In fact, the main obstacle to the delivery of aid has been the lack of resources

and funds. Several local NGOs that initially responded with their own funds and limited INGO support were forced to scale back their operations due to sporadic funding, despite the steady increase in the number of IDPs.

Almost all discussions of humanitarian space in the context of Kachin have focused on international humanitarian agencies gaining access to IDPs in conflict areas. Their mixed record in doing so in the first months of the crisis confirmed for many that space was closed, and this message was relayed to the donor community. This boils the concept of humanitarian space down to how well long-established agencies can perform service delivery. This does a disservice to the plethora of local agencies that are often first responders,

and are often better able to navigate the choppy political and military waters that characterise many humanitarian emergencies. In the case of Kachin, for example, church agencies enjoy unparalleled respect and trust, from both belligerents and civilians. There is a responsibility on international agencies and donors to acknowledge this and use it. This means giving greater recognition to local agencies' place in the broader humanitarian arena, channelling more funds directly to their programmes and helping to improve their technical competence.

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## IDP Vulnerability Assessment and Profiling (IVAP) in Pakistan: a report and appraisal

Nicki Bennett and Bobi Morris

The IDP Vulnerability Assessment and Profiling (IVAP) project was launched in Pakistan in 2010 to enable agencies to provide humanitarian assistance in a more impartial and targeted manner. Responding to needs arising out of a protracted conflict, humanitarian agencies in Pakistan's north-western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province were preparing to provide aid to hundreds of thousands of conflict IDPs for a third consecutive year. Effective targeting of beneficiaries – particularly in a period when financial resources were steadily decreasing – required humanitarian agencies to locate and identify those directly affected by the conflict, broadly understand their priority needs and then analyse vulnerability and threats at the household level. More than a dozen humanitarian agencies joined together in Pakistan to gather data to address these concerns. The resulting analysis was used to influence programming decisions and bring broader response policy more closely in line with needs. IVAP was designed to meet a very specific set of expectations within a very particular context. This article does not claim that it has been an unqualified success; however, it does argue that it represents a unique inter-agency initiative and contains a number of innovative elements that may be relevant or replicable in other response contexts.

### Why IVAP?

The idea that humanitarian assistance must be given to those who need it the most (the basic principle of impartiality) is widely considered to be an essential element of humanitarian action. In practice, however, this principle is not always observed or successfully implemented. Studies and evaluations have repeatedly found that emergency responses are often based on poor or non-existent analysis, and driven by the resources available, rather than needs. Decisions on who to assist – and how – are often only weakly based on evidence, and formal needs assessment continues to play only a

marginal role in the decision-making processes of many humanitarian actors.

In north-western Pakistan in 2010, a number of humanitarian actors observed serious inclusion and exclusion errors resulting from the government-led registration process. The process had been established in 2008, and was used by most large UN agencies and their implementing partners as the basis for assistance provision. Members of an inter-agency 'Durable Solutions Task Force' agreed that targeting decisions needed to be informed by an enhanced understanding of the scale and severity of the humanitarian situation. The decision was taken to carry out an assessment that would verify the overall number of conflict IDPs in KPK province, while simultaneously providing humanitarian actors with a better sense of humanitarian needs.

### Operational and technical approach

#### Assessment design

The particular objectives of the IVAP required a specific assessment design, some elements of which may not be required or appropriate in other contexts.

The IVAP essentially represented a census of 94,454 conflict-affected IDP families (497,894 individuals), collecting data on a range of needs and vulnerabilities and registration status. This data was analysed to better understand whether humanitarian needs existed amongst this group, and if so what kind, and which households were most vulnerable and subsequently most in need of assistance.

#### Implementation

Following a pilot phase which profiled 14,000 IDP families in Peshawar district, the IVAP was formally launched in November 2010 by a group of 15 humanitarian actors: six UN agencies, the International Organisation for

Objective	Explanation	Impact on assessment design
Identify and profile the conflict-affected IDPs in KPK province	Resulting from concerns that many IDP families had not been included in the registration process, and many families had spontaneously returned, the humanitarian community needed to know exactly who remained in order to facilitate corrections in the active registration list and target locations for interventions.	The need for an active registration list meant IVAP had to find and interview every conflict-affected IDP family, instead of taking a sample of the population. If only a sample was assessed, IVAP would not have been able to facilitate assistance for those who were originally excluded from the registration process.
Inform decisions on household-level targeting	Political pressures and funding constraints called for a shift from blanket food assistance to all registered IDPs towards targeted assistance only. Clusters and humanitarian actors were keen to ensure that their limited funds were targeted at the families most in need of their particular type of assistance (i.e. most vulnerable to the threats they, as an actor or thematic cluster, were trying to address).	The questionnaire needed to cover a broad range of sectors, vulnerabilities and needs. Various targeting methods and definitions of vulnerability needed to be explored to allow assistance providers to improve targeting.
Broadly assess ongoing humanitarian needs	Some actors (especially the government) questioned the justification for humanitarian assistance, and the appropriateness of the assistance provided.	The questionnaire needed to include indicators that were standardised for use in humanitarian contexts – to understand how the IDP population in Pakistan compared to other humanitarian environments – as well as indicators commonly used in Pakistan to establish qualification for national social protection programmes.

#### Box 1: IVAP partners

- OCHA
- UNHABITAT
- UNHCR
- UNICEF
- WFP
- WHO
- IOM
- ACTED
- Action Contre La Faim
- Handicap International
- International Rescue Committee
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- Oxfam
- Lawari Humanitarian Organisation
- Foundation for Rural Development

Migration (IOM), six international NGOs and two national NGOs. Some of the key elements of implementation are discussed below.

- *Management through committee.* The management of the project remained a joint initiative supported by several committees, which guided the process and made key decisions. While implementation by one agency might have been simpler, it would not have achieved the same degree of ownership of assessment results and would have led to fewer agencies targeting on the basis of the data collected.
- *Cluster-developed questionnaire.* A questionnaire of approximately 50 questions was developed with input from the clusters and humanitarian actors in Pakistan. Involving in-country technical leads in the development of the questionnaire improved both the use of the data inside Pakistan, and its comparability with other assessments in the country.
- *Mass communication campaign.* Under the leadership of IOM, radio, television and newspaper advertisements were published throughout the hosting regions explaining the purpose of the IVAP, that the data would be used to inform the humanitarian community on how best to provide assistance and providing toll-free phone numbers to call if a family had been missed out.
- *Inclusion policy.* A driving factor behind the IVAP was the need to redress inclusion and exclusion errors in the original registration system, as well as determining who was still displaced following spontaneous returns. IVAP developed a policy to include all families who had fled their area of origin due to conflict, fear of conflict, individual threats and economic reasons directly linked to the conflict (based on the definitions in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement).
- *Door-to-door survey.* While limited by security constraints in some areas, 90% of families were interviewed in their homes. This allowed the registration of families who were unable to access registration desks due to transport or other reasons (exclusion errors), and the removal from beneficiary lists of families who were included in the original, desk-based registration, and who were not actually displaced but held official ID cards with an address from a conflict area.
- *Data quality monitoring.* The World Food Programme (WFP)'s Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) unit seconded ten data collection monitors to the IVAP to systematically monitor the survey teams in the field and ensure the quality of data collection, including through spot-checking interviews to ensure that each question was posed correctly. On average,

the IVAP had around 50 surveyors in the field, rising to over 150 at the height of data collection.

- *Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs)*. IVAP data was collected in large part on handheld PDAs, from which the data was directly uploaded and initially cleaned by the IVAP database. This allowed both for automated checks in the questionnaire (prompting enumerators to review unlikely responses), as well as minimising data entry errors, as the software does not allow for skipped questions or ambiguous responses.

### Vulnerability targeting

IVAP aimed to collect enough information at the household level for each humanitarian actor to target assistance as effectively as possible to IDP families most in need of the specific types of assistance available.

This required all humanitarian partners to have timely access to data, which IVAP provided through an online database that allowed for detailed analysis across all indicators, including filtering and sorting capabilities. This database allows any IVAP vetted and registered assistance provider to filter information on the basis of one or more indicators in the database to identify families who fall into their specified definition of vulnerability. For example, the child protection sub-cluster can identify separated children (one indicator), or children living in low-income families, with tent-like shelter and more than five siblings (three indicators combined).

In addition to providing individual assistance providers with access to relevant data, IVAP partners also developed a 'vulnerability index' to move from general distributions covering the entire IDP population to the more targeted distribution of food and cash assistance. While reaching agreement on the 'correct' technical approach proved to be challenging and there was a temptation to simply abandon the effort (since no vulnerability index would ever be 'perfect'), IVAP partners ultimately agreed that it was preferable to target on the basis of an index designed to reflect the need for cash or food assistance than accepting assistance criteria designed to support a political strategy (e.g. cutting off assistance as a way of encouraging people to return to certain areas of origin).

### Results and lessons learned

#### Use of IVAP data and impact on response planning

The IVAP has influenced how the humanitarian community supports IDPs from KPK and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). INGOs use IVAP data to inform IDP family targeting for interventions ranging from livelihoods, agriculture assistance and non-food items to document reclamation and child protection. IVAP data is also used to target community-based assistance, with assistance actors using the data to inform decisions on priority areas



© UN Photo/JUNICEF/ZAK

*Displaced by floods in Pakistan, a family rests in a makeshift shelter*

for specific interventions, such as protection monitoring in areas with high concentrations of IDP families. Similarly, cluster leads use IVAP data (including mapping of areas with high IDP concentrations and limited public services such as water, healthcare or education) to prioritise specific projects or activities within their overall cluster strategies. In 2012, IVAP data formed the basis for both the joint Humanitarian Operational Plan and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

IVAP's most significant impact, however, has probably been its influence on the registration process and the distribution of food and cash assistance. In terms of registration, IVAP found around 200,000 IDPs (42% of IDPs who are still displaced) who were never registered, primarily because they never reached registration desks. The government agreed to register families who wanted to do so (a small number of IDP families did not want their information shared with the government), and who met the policy of possessing a valid government ID card and whose area of origin was still categorised as unsafe by the government. As a result, approximately 70,000 IDPs were registered by the authorities for assistance. While humanitarian actors continue to advocate for changes in government registration policy to align registration criteria more closely to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, IDPs who are not permitted to register remain in the IVAP database, and can therefore be targeted by independent humanitarian actors that do not limit assistance to those on government lists.

As conflict displacement has continued in Pakistan in 2012, the IVAP continues to profile newly displaced families. Recently, around 10,500 newly displaced families have been reached and profiled, and the plan is to cover another 70,000 before the end of the year. In addition, in recognition that all data has a limited timeframe of validity, the IVAP has expanded to include ongoing data

updates (using a call centre and relocation team), as well as sample-based surveys to ensure that the database remains as current as possible.

### **Politics and the role of government**

The IVAP was developed and implemented in close coordination with the government of Pakistan, particularly provincial disaster management authorities and senior military officials operating in KPK/FATA. The project was formally endorsed by the Policy and Strategy Committee, a senior forum for decision-making on humanitarian issues, and was discussed in detail in the Committee as well as in monthly working-level meetings. However, unlike other vulnerability mapping and targeting initiatives (for example social safety nets), the IVAP was never designed to be wholly owned or led by the government. Placing the government fully in charge of data collection and vulnerability ranking would have been difficult within the context of an ongoing conflict in which it is one of the main parties, and where the humanitarian community had already observed several instances of political or military interference in targeting, for example preventing humanitarian assistance from being distributed to certain tribes or even specific families or individuals, usually on the basis of political affiliation. IVAP partners agreed that IDP families needed to be assured that the government (and the military) would not have direct access to personally identifiable data unless families provided informed consent. The reasons for this were clearly explained to the government, and were accepted by officials participating in IVAP committees.

IVAP partners made a conscious decision to manage the project as an independent humanitarian initiative, and believe that the contextual factors described above made this unavoidable. It is acknowledged, however, that the decision creates certain limitations for humanitarian actors. First, it can complicate the transition from emergency humanitarian assistance to the kind of predictable livelihoods support (like social safety nets) that may be more appropriate to meeting protracted humanitarian needs. Second, it can create confusion regarding the precise role of the federal and provincial governments – which have primary responsibility for assisting their citizens – in making decisions about the targeting of assistance, particularly in situations where humanitarian actors are being asked to support government policies that conflict with humanitarian principles, such as the expectation that humanitarian assistance will support the broader political and military strategy of ‘stabilising’ conflict-affected areas by promoting IDP return.

### **Cost, financial sustainability and the role of donors**

The cost of the IVAP mechanism was substantial, both in terms of design and implementation. Within an 18-month period, \$1.5 million (funded by USAID) was spent to achieve the initial project objectives, and an additional €600,000 from ECHO has been committed over 15 months to complete data updates, conduct sample-based surveys and profile newly displaced families. Donors and the humanitarian community alike have questioned whether

the output is worth the cost, and whether such a mechanism would be an advisable investment in other contexts. The cost might be deemed reasonable in contexts where one or more of the following are true:

- Large numbers of displaced people living in host communities have not been identified and/or are not accessing assistance.
- There is sufficient support both from the humanitarian community and the government concerned to ensure that action will be taken on the basis of the assessment findings.
- Information on the needs and wishes of displaced people is likely to have a clear impact on future programming and funding priorities.
- Displacement is expected to be protracted, and funds for assistance are expected to decline.
- A significant number of affected people are displaced to hard-to-reach areas, or in locations where the UN or government actors cannot complete registration (the door-to-door approach of the IVAP allowed it to reach thousands of families who were unable to reach registration desks).

### **Conclusion**

The IVAP was created to help humanitarian actors identify solutions to specific challenges arising within the context of conflict-related displacement in north-western Pakistan. However, the project’s broader aim of ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches those who need it the most remains relevant far beyond any particular crisis or country. Not all aspects of the IVAP may be suitable or relevant to other contexts, but there is no reason why individual elements of both the conceptual and operational approach would not provide a foundation for a similar initiative in other humanitarian responses characterised by protracted needs in an off-camp displacement context.

Despite the many challenges encountered in planning and implementing the IVAP, the decision of donors and humanitarian actors to continue funding and implementing the project suggests that it has helped to define, quantify and compare various types of vulnerability. It has also shown that better data can lead to a more principled and effective response on the ground, for example as demonstrated by the IVAP’s success in linking thousands of previously unregistered IDP families with assistance providers. The IVAP has made a difference in these families’ lives by helping IVAP partners to resolve and negotiate sensitive political issues with the host government, and ultimately attempt to correct the serious exclusion errors made during the initial response phase of the IDP crisis.

Providing assistance strictly in line with basic humanitarian principles – including the principle of impartiality – remains a major challenge for any humanitarian actor in north-western Pakistan, as it does in many other contexts. The IVAP has certainly not eliminated the factors that make it difficult for humanitarians to provide assistance on the basis of need alone, nor has it enabled humanitarian

actors to remain immune to political pressures. It has, however, provided sufficient credible data for a diverse group of humanitarian actors to develop more robust methodologies for informing operational humanitarian responses – with the ultimate outcome of moving its partners closer to providing humanitarian assistance in a principled and appropriate manner.

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## 'Skilled Volunteers': an innovative approach to disaster management

Haseeb Md. Irfanullah, Sazzad Hossain Miah and Md. Ashraf Uddin, Practical Action Bangladesh

Volunteerism in disaster management is well-accepted and widely practiced. The roles volunteers can play in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and preparedness, early warning, disaster response and post-disaster rehabilitation have been recognised in a number of policy instruments, such as the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005), and many international bodies, including the UN and the Red Cross, have well-organised volunteering systems for motivated and enthusiastic young people.

Bangladesh, being a disaster-prone country, has a strong pool of volunteers. The Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, for example, currently has about 50,000 active volunteers in 13 coastal districts, who help to save lives and assets in cyclones, tidal surges, storm surges and tsunamis. Even so, making community volunteerism an effective and sustainable part of disaster management can be challenging.

### Combining disaster management and livelihood support

Many poverty alleviation, food security and livelihoods projects in Bangladesh have a DRR component, especially in disaster-prone areas, and developing community volunteers is an important part of these initiatives. These volunteers are often selected from the poorest sections of the community, and often have links with formal organisations, such as disaster management committees at local government and district levels.

Since many volunteers come from poorer families, there are few incentives to continue volunteering after a project ends. Moreover, as the focus is often on training young people – who grow up and move away from home in search of a better life – new volunteers must be continuously recruited to replace them. To address these challenges, the UK-based NGO Practical Action has piloted an innovative approach to disaster volunteerism in the flood-prone district of Sirajganj, by the River Jamuna, in Bangladesh. The approach combines two components: disaster volunteerism and extension and advisory services. In addition to helping their communities during disasters and supporting them in post-disaster rehabilitation, the selected volunteers are also trained in livelihoods skills (see Table 1). This enables them to provide technical services and advice to their communities during non-disaster periods, in exchange for a small fee.



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*Skilled Volunteers disseminate early warning messages in Sirajganj, Bangladesh*

In 2010, Practical Action Bangladesh started working with 200 Skilled Volunteers, including 46 women. Their capacity was built in two complementary areas. First, they learnt about disaster risk reduction – preparing communities for disasters like floods, alerting them through early warnings, rescuing people and helping to rebuild damaged infrastructure. Second, their livelihood skills were improved through formal training and follow-up and monitoring of their activities and performance. These skills enabled them to make a living by providing technical services to their communities. For the second capacity-building programme, the volunteers were divided into 14 groups, based on their background, preference and capabilities. Each group was then trained in a specific livelihood skill. Building effective links with community-based organisations and disaster management committees within the local government system to ensure sustainability was an integral part of this capacity-building process.

**Table 1: Livelihood services provided by the Skilled Volunteers to their communities**

Skilled Volunteers	Men	Women	Improved livelihoods services provided to the community
1. Plant health	8	0	Integrated pest management (IPM) for crop protection, fertilizer for crops, plant reproduction techniques (e.g. grafting and budding) and general farm management
2. Livestock promotion	16	0	Vaccination, de-worming, castration, feed management for domestic animals, artificial insemination and primary healthcare
3. Poultry vaccination	2	18	Vaccination and feeding and housing management to improve poultry production
4. Goat breeding	5	3	Improve the production of local goats by introducing Black Bengal breeding bucks
5. Fish breeding	16	0	Pond/water body preparation, species selection, fingerling stocking, feed management, fertilising and harvesting
6. Fish trading	16	0	Fingerling hardening before transport/sale, transportation techniques, fingerling distribution
7. Apiculture	10	0	Producing and selling honey, supporting others interested in apiculture by making and selling bee boxes and selling, collecting queen bees and advising on feeding bees in the off-season, prevention/protection from diseases and honey extraction techniques
8. Food processing	9	9	Producing and selling food for local markets, and providing technical assistance to other food processors to make foods with local raw materials
9. Health promotion	6	2	Primary healthcare, measuring blood pressure, dressing wounds, offering advice to pregnant women and nursing mothers, weighing pregnant mothers, infants, children, dietary advice, referring patients to hospital
10. Power-tiller operation	19	0	Fixing, maintaining and operating power-tillers and 'shallow machines' (a kind of pump used for irrigation and river transportation)
11. Cycle maintenance	18	0	Fixing bicycles, rickshaws and cycle-vans (important vehicles in rural areas)
12. Masonry	18	0	Construction work, quality control of materials and construction management
13. Carpentry	8	0	Woodwork (housing, furniture-making etc.)
14. Handicrafts	3	14	Making <i>shitolpati</i> (a kind of mat) using locally available resources (cane) and selling to local markets
<b>Total = 200</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>46</b>	

### Does the approach work?

Over the last two years, these Skilled Volunteers have played an important role in raising awareness within their communities of the importance of disaster preparedness. After receiving early warning information through the national early warning dissemination structure and electronic media, the volunteers have spread messages by using megaphones and the public address systems of mosques.<sup>1</sup> They have also erected measuring poles in flooded areas and rivers, following local water levels and alerting people accordingly (usual levels of flooding occurred in the last two monsoons, in 2010 and 2011, and only small-scale evacuations were required). The volunteers also regularly attend local government meetings as part of their incorporation into the formal disaster management system.

Regarding the livelihood component of the programme, almost all the Skilled Volunteers were providing services to their communities. Three-quarters of the 200 volunteers sold their services on a regular basis (at least 20 days a month), while 21% did so seasonally or infrequently (about ten days a month). As a group, the coverage (households

<sup>1</sup> Early warning information is generated by national agencies including the Flood Forecast and Warning Centre (FFWC) and the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD). It is then disseminated by the Disaster Management Bureau (DMB) to local Disaster Management Committees and via the TV and radio, as well as through the websites of the FFWC, BMD and DMB.

### Box 1: Female Skilled Volunteers

Most female Skilled Volunteers (39 out of 46) are now earning income from selling their new skills. Besides offering these services to others, they are also earning money from livestock and poultry rearing, sewing and vegetable gardening. This additional income is being spent in a range of ways, including their children's education and house repairs. The women also report that they have the confidence to express their opinions to their families as well as within their communities. Attitudes towards them also appear to have improved, and both communities and local government officials have expressed appreciation for their work. The women also play a key role in preparing and reviewing the community disaster preparedness plans supported by the project, identifying existing and potential problems and preparing action plans to overcome them.

or villages) and popularity of the Skilled Volunteers increased daily. Table 1 summarises the services these Skilled Volunteers offer to their communities.

In all, 40% of the Skilled Volunteers considered that their improved skills constituted their primary occupation. The remaining active Skilled Volunteers were using their skills as secondary or additional sources of income. The average

monthly income of most of the Skilled Volunteers has increased by about 70% over the last two years, reaching Taka 3,000 (\$38). Previously, the Skilled Volunteers were unemployed on average for three months per year, and many (especially men) had to temporarily move to other districts for work during lean periods. After training the number of days Skilled Volunteers spend working has increased by 25%, and out-migration by men in search of work has decreased by around 70%. Female Skilled Volunteers have also benefited substantially from the programme.

The benefits of this approach to the community are clear. Over the last two years, the volunteers have reached more than 11,000 households in the project areas and beyond. Community members confirm that around 90% have received early warning messages. The volunteers have also worked with community-based organisations to operate early warning systems, evacuation boats and boat ambulances. Their support in disaster risk reduction and preparedness has helped save people's lives and assets. The technical advice they have provided has resulted in reduced losses of livestock and other assets, and improved food and economic security. Alongside other project demonstrations, for example raising the base of hand-pump tube-wells for safe drinking water and raising the plinths of homesteads to protect assets, the Skilled Volunteers have made communities more confident that they can face future floods on their own.

### Challenges and opportunities

Despite significant progress, the programme also encountered a number of challenges. Although most of the Skilled Volunteers used their skills effectively, some found this more difficult for a number of reasons. First, demand for some skills, such as power-tiller operation and apiculture, is seasonal, and volunteers cannot support themselves through these activities all-year-round. Second, the extremely poor often struggle to become technical extension workers because their initial client base, drawn from their own section of the community, is usually too poor to pay for services. Third, for some

livelihood services there is a significant gap before any return on investment can be obtained. For example, it takes four months to fatten a cow for sale and ten months to raise a milking cow. Very poor Skilled Volunteers need additional support to tide them over. Finally, there is low demand for some services because communities do not perceive them as a priority. People are often not willing to pay for poultry vaccination, for example, when there is no apparent disease threat. Refresher training to support continuous skills improvement, guidance to develop year-round individual business/investment plans, revising the range of livelihood service activities to take into account seasonality and raising awareness amongst communities of the potential benefits of services such as poultry vaccination are some measures that can be taken to make the approach more effective.

The last devastating flood in Sirajganj was in 2007 – before the Skilled Volunteers initiative began – and the volunteers have not yet been faced with a large-scale disaster. They have, however, helped to prepare their communities for disasters, provided a range of livelihood support services and increased their own incomes. To make this system resilient and sustainable, its links with local community-based organisations, local government bodies (e.g. the Union Council and the Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC)) and government departments such as agriculture, fisheries and livestock need to be strengthened.

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## Making disaster risk reduction and relief programmes LGBTI-inclusive: examples from Nepal

Kyle Knight and Richard Sollom

Evidence of the particular vulnerabilities of LGBTI people (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) has been documented in several emergency and disaster situations. For example, men who have sex with men (MSM) in Haiti were denied food aid after the 2008 earthquake because ration schemes were targeted only at women, and these men had no women registered in their residences; transgender people reported being denied entry to IDP camps after the floods in Pakistan because they did not possess proper government ID that matched their appearance; and aravanis (feminine,

male-bodied, gender-variant people) routinely faced discrimination in access to housing, medical care and toilets in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami in Tamil Nadu.

Research on post-disaster and crisis situations demonstrates that emergencies often exacerbate prejudices and make marginalised people more vulnerable. Although disaster risk reduction (DRR) and relief protocols are increasingly sensitive to the needs of at-risk and vulnerable populations, the specific vulnerabilities of



© Kyle Knight

A Nepali transgender activist holds up her citizenship certificate

LGBTI people are often overlooked. Nepal offers some compelling examples for implementing LGBTI-inclusive DRR and relief policies and protocols. With full legal protections for LGBTI people (including legal recognition for a third gender category – marked ‘third gender’ or ‘other’ on documents and registers, including the federal census), the local political landscape is conducive. Nepal is also highly disaster-prone. While implementation of LGBTI-friendly DRR and relief programmes has only just begun, Nepal’s experience is indicative of how improvements to existing programmes and policies can be put into practice around the world.

### Sidelining gender and sexuality

Research suggests that development staff often overlook gender identity and sexuality concerns because they cause unease and because of a lack of protocols to deal with these issues across different cultural contexts.<sup>1</sup> Similar gaps exist in disaster risk reduction and emergency relief programmes.<sup>2</sup> Documents produced by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) make no mention of the needs of LGBTI people. The disaster and crisis relief protocols of UNAIDS, the Joint UN Program on HIV/AIDS, likewise lack any specific acknowledgement of this group’s health needs. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has conducted some LGBT-inclusive studies, but its shelter protocols are silent on how to categorise or care for people outside of the male–female binary. Relief efforts typically use the family as a common unit for analysing and distributing relief services. As a result, relief aid rarely extends to

1 Anna Runeborg, *Sexuality: A Missing Dimension in Development*, Sida, 2008, <http://www.sida.se/Documents/Import/pdf/Sexuality-A-Missing-Dimension-in-Development---brief-version.pdf>.

2 Marcilyn Cianfarani, ‘Integrating Diversity into Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR): A Literature Review’, *International Association of Emergency Managers Bulletin*, March 2012.

LGBTI people. LGBTI people are vulnerable to being forced out of their family living situations as a result of stigma and prejudice. For those who live with their families, prejudice inside the family unit can mean that LGBTI family members receive less material aid inside the household.

### Acute post-disaster discrimination

In Nepal, the district of Sunsari is particularly vulnerable to regular heavy flooding of the Koshi river. After a flood in 2008, residents of villages destroyed by the flooding who identify as *metis* (male-bodied feminine people – often categorised as gay or transgender) report facing discrimination. ‘When the district leaders came to hand out food supplies, my family got half of what other families got’, explains Manosh (a pseudonym) who lived with her

family and her boyfriend in a village near the Koshi.<sup>3</sup> ‘They told my parents that they didn’t need to feed me, and that the family didn’t deserve the full portion because they had a child like me’.

LGBTI people may live in non-traditional arrangements. For example, in societies where having children in the household substantiates the claim of having established a ‘family’, LGBTI people living without children in their homes can suffer. Sophie (a pseudonym) explains what happened after the Koshi river flooded and destroyed her village: ‘I lived with my boyfriend. We never faced violence or discrimination. But after the floods, people were desperate. The officials didn’t give us food because we didn’t have children, so they said we didn’t need it as much as other households’. In Sophie’s case, her non-traditional living situation combined with increased desperation and competition for resources put her and her boyfriend in an acutely vulnerable position. As a result of such attitudes and discrimination within families and communities, LGBTI organisations may serve as *de facto* family for many of their constituents. In this capacity, these organisations and related networks serve as default social spaces, sources of protection and providers of information in a variety of situations, including disasters.

### Chronic post-disaster discrimination

When aid and relief are distributed over the long term, deeply embedded prejudices can carry through, and discrimination can become chronic. In the case of Nepal’s Koshi floods, long-term discrimination became an issue for displaced people. People who are either allocated land far from where they originally lived, or who receive no land and are forced to move in with relatives or friends far away,

<sup>3</sup> *Metis* often prefer female names and pronouns, and their partners often prefer male pronouns. However, in their relationships they usually identify as same-sex couples.

can suffer from cutting ties with supportive communities and employment opportunities.

For example, in the Terai – the plains in southern Nepal – many *metis* work as itinerant dancers for religious ceremonies and festivals. In some areas, the words used elsewhere for these people (*meti*, transgender, third gender) are replaced with the word *natwa*, which simply translates as ‘dancer’. Living near the Indian border allows them access to the dance labour markets in India as well. If forced to move after a disaster, their access to this casual economy can be disrupted. For some, this means their family’s financial sustainability suffers long-term damage. Anjali (a pseudonym) tells her story:

*It has been years and they still haven’t given us land like the other families. So we live with my aunt two hours from here. I used to travel to India during festivals to dance, but now we live so far away from the border in a very remote area far from roads – it’s too expensive to travel all the way to India. I have no income. I was the primary income for a household of six. Now I am useless.*

### Making relief LGBTI-sensitive

Because discrimination against and marginalisation of LGBTI people can occur so pervasively and across a range of activities in disaster risk reduction and relief, simultaneous sensitisation of aid organisations and their policies and capacity-building of local LGBTI organisations can save lives. There are several relevant conceptual considerations and practical steps to making DRR and relief programmes LGBTI-inclusive.

Because of marginalisation, low education levels and the need for discretion to ensure safety in some cases, LGBTI people often rely on their community organisations for information. As such, it is essential that outreach and training programmes as part of DRR target LGBTI populations by engaging with relevant civil society organisations. In making contact with LGBTI organisations, it is important for DRR administrators and training professionals to understand the local political landscape for LGBTI people, the appropriate terminology and relevant concerns. Not all sexual and gender minority populations or communities ascribe to the ‘LGBTI’ acronym of identities.<sup>4</sup>

In Nepal, a seminar was designed by the local LGBTI umbrella NGO, the Blue Diamond Society (BDS), the Disaster Risk Reduction office of USAID and the US Embassy.<sup>5</sup> The US DRR officials saw this seminar not only as an opportunity to deliver valuable information, but also as a way to bring in the community’s own suggestions and views: according to the DRR director at USAID Nepal: ‘findings today will not only ensure the

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Together, Apart: Organizing around Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Worldwide*, 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2009/06/10/together-apart>.

<sup>5</sup> Blue Diamond Society, ‘BDS and USAID Hold Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction and Relief for LGBTI Community’, <http://bluediamondsociety.wordpress.com>.

LGBTI community here in Kathmandu is better prepared for a large scale earthquake, they will inform future activities across Nepal’.

The half-day programme took place in the conference room at BDS, ensuring a safe and welcoming atmosphere for LGBTI community members. In advance of the seminar, DRR officials consulted BDS to see which subjects would be relevant to the community, and the appropriate language to use in referring to the community members present. During the seminar, transgender attendees voiced concerns about male and female segregated emergency shelter, health and bathroom facilities, and asked how they should select the facility that would guarantee them safety and dignity. These concerns were noted, and the Red Cross representative – who attended to present on accessing relief services post-disaster – issued an invitation to routine first aid training sessions, as well as an offer to initiate similar sessions in BDS offices, where LGBTI people felt safe in asking questions. According to one participant, a human rights officer at BDS: ‘I knew about the threat of an earthquake, but I never thought about how it would affect me as a transgender man. Now I feel I know how to ask the right questions and access services like everyone else’.

### The scope of inclusion

In relief policies and protocols, there are several important considerations for ensuring inclusion of the LGBTI population. These include, but are not limited to:

- How the definition of ‘family’ or ‘household’ may affect same-sex couples and their households, groups of people who do not live in traditional family units and homeless people or people who migrate.
  - Red Cross-Nepal’s definition of ‘family unit’ includes non-traditional and non-heterosexual groups of people living together.
- How transgender (or, more broadly, non-male, non-female) people can safely access facilities such as health clinics, bathrooms and shelters which are male-female gender-segregated.
  - The construction of Nepal’s first gender-inclusive public toilet in Nepalgunj demonstrates the government’s commitment to inclusive facilities.
- How government-issued identification documents are used to validate citizens or grant access to assistance, and how this might affect people whose current appearance does not match the gender listed and the photo presented on the documents.
  - The government of Nepal recently implemented a 2007 Supreme Court decision to issue citizenship certificates and other documents with the gender designation ‘other’ based on self-identification.
- How people living with HIV/AIDS can access appropriate Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) in a safe and timely manner.
  - Nepal currently stocks eight months’ worth of ART supplies in the central Kathmandu warehouse, and a four-month supply in 36 district-level storage facilities – the same facilities normally accessed to receive ART.

- How all data collection and intake surveys, interfaces and databases can be adjusted to capture meaningful data on LGBTI populations in emergency situations.
  - Nepal’s 2011 census demonstrates progress – albeit with flawed methodology – towards implementing inclusive data schemes. Considering how to frame questions so that they are LGBTI-inclusive and -sensitive is an important measure.<sup>6</sup>

The marginalisation and diversity of LGBTI populations around the world demand engagement with local activists and organisations in order to develop inclusive DRR and relief policies. Engagement with LGBTI NGOs and community organisations has also been shown to be beneficial as these groups can provide efficient and meaningful support in the wake of disasters.<sup>7</sup> Additional

<sup>6</sup> The Williams Institute, *Best Practices for Asking Questions About Sexual Orientation on Surveys*, November 2009, <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu>.

<sup>7</sup> K. Sanz and J.-C. Gaillard, ‘Why Gender-sensitive Disaster Risk Reduction Should also Include LGBTs’, [http://www.preventionweb.net/files/globalplatform/entry\\_presentation~16hoo.pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/files/globalplatform/entry_presentation~16hoo.pdf).

research has demonstrated that engaging with LGBTI NGOs and sexual and gender minorities can enhance and improve the broader community’s response to disasters.<sup>8</sup>

As aid organisations become more LGBTI-inclusive, it will be crucial to consider local legal systems and consult regularly with local NGOs and experts. Not only will this improve the nuance of programming, but it will also empower LGBTI people and organisations to act in the wake of disasters. As Nepal’s experience demonstrates, having a friendly legal environment and political landscape can expedite inclusive policies. Nonetheless, small changes to DRR and relief policies across legal and political contexts can prevent significant injury and loss of life, and ensure the continuation of important LGBTI protection and human rights activities in spite of disasters.

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<sup>8</sup> B. Balgos, J.-C. Gaillard and K. Sanz, ‘The Warias of Indonesia in Disaster Risk Reduction: The Case of the 2010 Mt. Merapi Eruption’, *Gender and Development*, 19(2), forthcoming.

## Monitoring results of the Somalia cash and voucher transfer programme: Phase I

Catherine Longley, Sophia Dunn and Mike Brewin

This article summarises the findings of a recent monitoring report on an emergency cash-based intervention in South Central Somalia. In what is thought to be the largest cash programme to be implemented by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), 14 NGOs (six international and eight local partners) distributed \$50.6 million-worth of cash and commodity vouchers to 136,673 households affected by the famine of 2011. Approximately half the beneficiaries were located in parts of the country controlled by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), and half were in areas controlled by the Islamist group Al Shabaab (AS). The monitoring exercise was undertaken by the Somalia Cash and Voucher Monitoring Group (CVMG) from September 2011 to March 2012. The CVMG (Phase I) is coordinated by UNICEF and made up of the six INGOs, their local NGO partners, three independent consultants contracted by the Humanitarian Policy Group/Overseas Development Institute and two organisations contracted to provide Independent Field Monitors (IFMs).

### Why a cash-based intervention?

Although cash-based interventions are increasingly used in humanitarian response, they still make up only a small fraction of overall humanitarian assistance and are rarely used at scale except by governments responding to natural disasters and chronic poverty. The reasons for implementing cash and commodity vouchers on such a large scale in South Central Somalia were partly related to the challenges involved in distributing food aid, and

the opportunities afforded by Somalia’s robust market system, large network of money transfer agents (*hawala*) and considerable experience of cash-based programming among NGOs in the country. In addition, the World Food Programme (WFP) had been forced to withdraw from South and Central Somalia in 2010 after repeated attacks on its offices and convoys and a subsequent ban imposed by Al Shabaab. With the withdrawal of WFP, deteriorating food security and rising malnutrition rates, cash-based programming was one of the only viable methods for providing assistance.

There were four main risks associated with large-scale cash-based interventions at the time: whether NGOs would be able to gain access to populations in need, without safety risks to their staff, particularly since many of these areas were controlled by Al Shabaab; whether the cash itself would be diverted by Al Shabaab and other authorities and local militias through taxation, intimidation and extortion (agencies were particularly concerned about the risk of diversion following a series of allegations of diversion against WFP-Somalia in 2009 and 2010); whether the market would be able to supply the quantities of food required; and whether the cash and voucher distribution would lead to inflation. In view of the risks involved, a joint CVMG monitoring exercise was established, managed by an independent organisation, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), and undertaken together with the international and local NGO partners.

## The Cash and Voucher Monitoring Group

The Somalia Cash and Voucher Monitoring Group (CVMG) was formed in September 2011. Monitoring activities involved the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data relating to the implementation process, and market and household impacts. Quantitative data were collected by the implementing NGOs, and qualitative data were collected by 18 IFMs hired specifically for the CVMG exercise.

For the cash projects, \$43.9 million was distributed to 94,699 households through six *hawala* companies. The actual amount paid to beneficiaries varied among the NGOs and between regions according to the specific aim of the project and local market prices. The size of the cash transfer ranged from \$75 to \$125 a month, depending on the actual cost of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) in the local area.<sup>1</sup> For the voucher projects, over 7,000 tonnes and 655,000 litres of commodities were distributed to 41,974 beneficiary households. The commodities exchanged for the voucher were three or six litres of oil, 10kg of sugar, 25kg of wheat flour and 25kg of rice. The value of the commodities received through the vouchers was considerably less than the value of the cash, ranging from \$51 to \$65 depending on local conditions. The voucher projects aimed to meet 70% of an average family's nutritional requirements. Vouchers were distributed to the beneficiaries by the NGO, and the beneficiaries then exchanged their vouchers for the specified food items with 45 shopkeepers selected to participate in the project. The shopkeepers were subsequently reimbursed for the value of the food distributed, based on the prices agreed in the shopkeeper contracts.

The biggest implementation challenges were access and security, particularly in Mogadishu and areas controlled by AS. Negotiations with the local authorities (AS, TFG and other local leaders) led to start-up delays in some areas, and two INGO projects were suspended when permission to operate was withdrawn by AS. Security deteriorated in AS areas during the course of the implementation period due to military incursions by the Kenyan and Ethiopian armies into Somalia. In cases where a planned distribution was not possible, beneficiaries were subsequently given two monthly transfers in one instalment, or the interval between transfers was shortened. The overall proportion of planned beneficiary transfers that was actually delivered was 64%. In areas controlled by AS, the proportion was 42%, and in TFG areas it was 85%.

<sup>1</sup> The MEB was developed by the Somalia Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU). It represents a household's minimum daily food and non-food requirements.



*A money changer in Mogadishu, Somalia*

© Kate Holt/IRIN

The overall performance of *hawala* agents and voucher shopkeepers was generally good. The monitoring system identified projects and places where improvements could be made to the implementation process (e.g. the need for shorter waiting times and travelling times to distribution sites; the need to increase the amount of the transfer) and changes were subsequently made. All participating CVMG partners had a feedback mechanism in place to collect and respond to complaints or feedback from the communities with whom they worked. This system was effective in capturing simple operational issues relating to individual beneficiaries (e.g. corrections needed on ID cards), but there was a low level of awareness of the feedback mechanism among the surveyed beneficiaries (55%), and not all complaints were recorded on the feedback forms. Fundamental issues such as inclusion and exclusion errors were not captured through the feedback mechanism, which was not designed to gather feedback from non-beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

There were attempts on the part of local authorities (both TFG and AS) to influence the targeting and registration process, and to tax implementing NGOs and beneficiary households. Most of these attempts were successfully resisted or resolved by the NGOs concerned, but in one case a local NGO implementing partner had its operations suspended by AS because it refused to pay a 30% tax. Survey results indicated that, in total (across all post-distribution monitoring surveys), 2% of sample cash beneficiaries (5% in Mogadishu) reported having paid someone to access their cash, though in some cases these payments were given as gifts to relatives and it is clear that the respondent misunderstood the question. In Mogadishu, many of these payments are thought to have been made to gatekeepers (self-appointed 'leaders' of urban IDP camps who provide services to IDPs, such as access to land, security and access to aid). The total value of these payments is estimated to be up to \$66,000, or 0.2% of the total cash amount transferred.

Regular market monitoring revealed that key food items were generally available in the markets, and the cash distribution allowed people in most areas to buy more, and more diverse, food. No inflationary effect was found as prices followed their normal seasonal pattern, declining considerably due to the good harvest season. There was, however, an appreciation of the Somali Shilling by 20% over the same period that counteracted some of the decline in price. This fluctuation in the currency rate was due to the massive influx of dollars into the market through relief operations, remittances from overseas, foreign investment and income from overseas livestock sales. Given that the cash and voucher transfers made up less than 3% of the total dollar inflows into Somalia, they therefore did not cause the inflation.

There were significant changes in household food consumption patterns over the course of the project. Not all of these changes are attributable to the intervention; the good harvest and the fall in prices also contributed substantially to the improvement in household food security. Before the projects began, households reported eating slightly more than one meal per day, largely consisting of cereals and oil (an average Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) of 1.7).<sup>2</sup> By the end of the first three months of distributions, adults in the household were consuming two meals a day, and children three. In addition, dietary diversity had increased to at least four food groups, with cash-receiving households consuming a more varied diet (HDDS = 6) than households in receipt of commodity vouchers (HDDS = 4). There was also a rapid decrease in households facing severe food insecurity. At baseline more than 75% of households reported going to bed hungry, going a full 24 hours without food or having no food in the house. After six months of distributions, no household in the rural areas reported these conditions, while less than 10% of urban households were still facing these problems. In addition, household debts decreased substantially, opening up critical credit lines.

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank estimates that the Somali diaspora transfers approximately \$2 billion annually into Somalia through the hawala system (Somalia: From Resilience Towards Recovery and Development: A Country Economic Memorandum for Somalia, World Bank Report No. 34356-SO, 2005). By comparison, it has been estimated that only \$1 billion in international aid is provided to Somalia annually (Associated Press, 6 May 2011).

The ways in which the cash transfer was spent became more diverse over the course of the project, with the proportion spent on food and debt repayment decreasing over time. Food expenditure was gradually replaced with spending on non-food items, including agricultural inputs, livestock, water, education, medicine, business investment and savings. Some of these patterns reflect normal seasonal changes, but they also suggest some level of recovery.

A number of secondary impacts were noted relating to household and community harmony. Community leaders interviewed by the IFMs reported that the cash intervention improved the status and dignity of the beneficiary families, allowing them to meet their priority needs. This feeling was reiterated by some of the case study households, who felt that their status in the community had been improved now that they had a little money or food to help others, rather than needing community support themselves. Jealousy between households was reported to be common, though this ill-feeling does not appear to have resulted in conflict and non-beneficiaries reported sharing meals with beneficiary households. This was confirmed by the household interviews, with 62% of cash beneficiaries and 67% of voucher beneficiaries reporting that they shared food with guests.

## Conclusion

Overall, the experience of the CVMG partners was positive and confirms that effective implementation and monitoring of large-scale cash-based programming projects in a complex, conflict-affected environment like Somalia is possible provided that appropriate checks and balances are put in place to ensure transparency and accountability in targeting and cash distribution. Overall, the CVMG projects allowed for a significant level of humanitarian aid to reach those in need. The CVMG monitoring exercise has shown that large-scale, collaborative monitoring can be done in a complex, conflict-affected environment, and provides a basic model for how this can be achieved, including the improvements that are being made under Phase II of the CVMG programme.

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## Local to Global Protection in Myanmar (Burma), Sudan, South Sudan and Zimbabwe

Ashley South and Simon Harragin  
*Network Paper 72, February 2012*

This Network Paper presents the findings of five community-based studies on self-protection in Myanmar (Burma), Sudan, South Sudan and Zimbabwe. The studies demonstrate how vulnerable people seek to protect themselves, and how local understandings of 'protection' vary from how the concept is used by international humanitarian agencies. The paper suggests two distinct but complementary approaches to protection: strengthening local capacities for self-protection, and generating the political will to prevent or stop targeted attacks on civilians.

# Kenya's 2011 drought response: corruption risks in food assistance programmes

Adele Harmer, Humanitarian Outcomes, and Nicolas Seris, Transparency International Kenya

Over the last decade, there has been an increased focus on corruption in emergency assistance. In recent studies, food aid has been identified as one of the most vulnerable sectors, along with cash programming and post-disaster reconstruction.<sup>1</sup> In the 2011 drought response in Kenya, Transparency International Kenya (TI Kenya) launched a study examining the integrity, transparency and accountability of food assistance.<sup>2</sup> The main question explored was the extent to which different types of food assistance instruments (in-kind aid, cash and vouchers) posed different risks, and the standards different assistance actors applied to ensure the integrity of these mechanisms, including the government of Kenya and non-government agencies. It also considered whether the policies and systems in place help to protect against corruption and ensure the integrity of assistance.

## Food assistance in Kenya and the 2011 drought response

Recurrent failed or poor rains, sustained high food prices, a lack of migration options, insecurity and limited recovery time from previous droughts: all have strained coping mechanisms and exacerbated pre-existing chronic poverty, particularly in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of northern Kenya. Warnings of another drought emerged in November 2010, but the government and the international community were slow to respond. It was not until May 2011 that the government declared a national disaster, with 3.75 million people said to be food-insecure in rural Kenya.<sup>3</sup> The worst-affected areas were the ASALs, where rates of global acute malnutrition in some parts exceeded emergency thresholds. In the district of Turkana North levels of malnutrition were higher than in some areas of South Central Somalia (over 37%).

Food assistance programmes have represented the largest component of humanitarian assistance in Kenya for many years, and have been the most consistently funded. The 2011 drought response was no exception: 84% of the UN-led appeal for food aid was funded, compared to 29% for agriculture and livestock, 15% for health and 40% for water and sanitation. For its part, the government of Kenya announced that it would provide 9 billion shillings (\$100 million) to buy food for victims of the drought.<sup>4</sup>

1 Daniel Maxwell et al., 'Preventing Corruption in Humanitarian Assistance: Perceptions, Gaps and Challenges', *Disasters*, vol. 36, no. 1, January 2012.

2 Integrity is defined as 'behaviours and actions consistent with a set of moral or ethical principles and standards, embraced by individuals as well as institutions, that create a barrier to corruption'. Transparency International, *The Anti-Corruption Plain Language Guide*, July 2009.

3 Government of Kenya, *The 2011 Long Rains Assessment Report*, Kenya Food Security Steering Group, 2011.

4 'Kenya Cabinet Authorises \$100 Mln To Fight Drought', 14 July 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/07/14/kenya-food-idUSLDE76D15C20110714>.

## Corruption risks in food assistance

In the 2011 drought response in-kind food aid was considered to be most vulnerable to corruption and diversion, largely because of its scale and scattered dispersion and weaknesses in transparency and accountability mechanisms. It was diverted physically through transport and storage, and indirectly through manipulation of targeting and registration. Two food pipelines were run, one by the government and the other by the World Food Programme (WFP). The rationale for running two pipelines was partly to ensure coverage, but there were also wider political factors at work. Having its own pipeline gave the Kenyan government visibility and demonstrated its capacity to support its own people in times of need. These political pressures meant that the government had to be seen to be providing food aid, even though most stakeholders agreed that one pipeline would have been preferable, that WFP was better able to run it than the government, and that the government should have focused on more sustainable interventions. As one interviewee in the TI Kenya study noted: 'there's a double language in Kenya: the broad public message is that sustainable programming is most important but at the district level, MPs with a shorter political life want to be seen to be giving food'.

Partly due to these political drivers, the government struggled to ensure an accountable and transparent response. There was no official reporting in the public realm on how government funds were spent, or how food assistance was allocated. According to interviewees, monitoring of government food aid was almost non-existent, and the information channels between different line ministries and the district-level administration were very unclear. At district level, there is little understanding of the criteria used by the government in food allocation, specifically how much could be expected, how it compared between districts and how it should be prioritised. This was due to poor information management as well as considerable inconsistency in the pipeline, which meant that tonnages varied from month to month without warning. An important conclusion from the study is that, if there is no clear information regarding the number of actors involved, how much food aid is planned and the timeframe for receiving it, as well as clarity in the responsibilities of the various actors in the distribution chain, there are going to be larger opportunities for diversion. The lack of governance and accountability in the government's food aid system was most acutely demonstrated in West Pokot County, where a District Commissioner was arrested in September 2011 and charged with stealing 280 bags of maize worth KSh1.2million (approximately \$13,000). Employees of the National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB) were also charged with selling relief food.

Cash transferred by electronic mechanisms was perceived to be less prone to corruption due to the

greater emphasis on accountability mechanisms and the use of technologies which tend to accompany cash programming, such as mobile phone transfers and smart cards. Cash transfers linked to broader social safety net programmes were however harder to scale up in the emergency, and a number of agencies chose to undertake direct delivery of cash. This posed considerable security and corruption risks, entailing substantially more administration and staff time. Generally, cash projects were all closely monitored, perhaps because of their perceived vulnerability to fraud.

Although vouchers are less common in Kenya, the European Commission's Food Facility is one large-scale programme being implemented in two counties in the ASALs. The biggest risk to the scale-up of the voucher project during the emergency was perceived to be traders providing poor-quality goods or short measures, and strong price, market and post-distribution monitoring was required to mitigate these risks.

### Common risks

There were also risks common to all three food assistance instruments involving all types of actors – government, NGOs and UN agencies. In particular, there was evidence of political leaders, local elites and local relief committees manipulating targeting and registration. Most complaints from beneficiaries surveyed were about targeting and inconsistency of food distributions. There was political interference in recruitment matters and pressure to employ staff from certain ethnic groups, and the rapid scale-up of the response led to procedural short cuts. There were also risks regarding transportation of food aid, partly due to political influence in commercial trucking companies (as a form of rent-seeking). The fact that transportation costs were not adequately resourced within the government pipeline increased the likelihood of food rations being looted as a form of payment.

These risks were exacerbated in the 2011 drought response by broader challenges to ensuring the integrity of the humanitarian response. First, the failure to respond to early warnings led to a late, rushed and politically pressurised response. This meant that some organisations struggled to put strong procedures in place in the time available, heightening the risk of corruption and diversion. Second, the complicated aid architecture in Kenya, involving multiple ministries with differing responsibilities, meant that it was unclear which ministry was ultimately accountable for the humanitarian response. There was also a lack of clarity in policy. Disaster management policy is not formalised, and food assistance actors straddle the disaster management and social protection spheres, muddying the waters still further.

Important reforms and policies have recently been enacted in the areas of governance, ASAL development and drought management, and these should lead to improvements in coordination at central and district/county levels, including the establishment of a National Drought Management Authority. However, it is not yet clear what impact this will have on general disaster management and overall accountability for disaster preparedness and response. Multiple actors are involved in food assistance in the drought response, with limited understanding between agencies as to who was doing what where.

### The need for a collective focus on corruption

The study found that important investments have been made in beneficiary accountability mechanisms in the ASALs. The more creative and innovative approaches have longer-term objectives and a means of coordinating with other assistance providers, as opposed to single-agency initiatives or one-off post-distribution monitoring exercises. The value of a more coordinated approach includes improved programming and greater transparency and accountability in capturing the feedback of beneficiaries, as well as enhancing learning between organisations.

The study also argues that actors engaged in humanitarian response in Kenya should understand that corruption is a major public policy issue, and that addressing corruption risks requires political commitment and coordinated action among government and non-government aid agencies. Focusing on internal procedures, whilst important, is not sufficient. In particular, actors involved in food assistance – whether in-kind or cash support – should jointly analyse the potential corruption risks involved in different food assistance instruments as part of emergency preparedness, and collectively identify mitigation measures and processes for the joint monitoring and evaluation of food assistance activities. Agencies should also urge the government to provide more accurate and timely information to the public regarding the response effort, including transparent reporting, monitoring and evaluation of the government's financial commitments to its own relief efforts. For their part, donor governments should promote transparent reporting of corruption cases and related challenges by partner organisations, and provide more resources to support field monitoring, downward accountability mechanisms and forensic audits.

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## Humanitarian Practice Network

The Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN) is an independent forum where field workers, managers and policymakers in the humanitarian sector share information, analysis and experience.

HPN's aim is to improve the performance of humanitarian action by contributing to individual and institutional learning.

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Funding support is provided through the HPG Integrated Programme by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), the British Red Cross, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Denmark, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Netherlands, Oxfam GB, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and World Vision International.

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Typesetting Design To Print Solutions Limited  
Printed and bound in the UK by Charlesworth.  
ISSN: 1472-4847

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