8 ORGANISATIONAL ADAPTATION IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

The following section reviews some of the key issues that development and relief organisations may need to consider in responding to situations of armed conflict. A key theme to emerge from the foregoing analysis is the need to understand conflict as a historical process that is mediated by socio-political and economic structures, at a micro and macro level. It is a process that involves social actors (as individuals and communities), who are differentially affected; there can be winners and losers. One way of considering what organisational adaptations agencies might make is to look at the different stages of conflict progression (Fig 2). The section follows this approach, looking at Development and conflict, Working with conflict, and The problems of peace; and concludes with some reflections on operational issues, advocacy and policy reform, and the process that organisations might go through in thinking about conflict.

![Figure 2: The Conflict Progression (From Curle, Making Peace, Adaptations, Lederach)](image)

### 8.1 Development and conflict

#### 8.1.1 Conflict as a strategic development issue

Development is a turbulent process of change, in which environmental decline, political instability, economic crisis, and wars are likely to occur, and re-occur. The long-term impact of wars on the poverty of nations and regions, and the livelihoods and vulnerability of individuals and communities, means that conflict can no longer be left to the purview of government security structures, or the UN Security Council. Conflict has to be incorporated as a strategic issue into the work of agencies working for poverty alleviation and justice.

How can agencies approach conflict as a strategic issue? The first step may be to move away from a perception of armed conflict as an aberration. While the conflagration of internal wars and the emergence of complex emergencies perhaps mark a historic and disturbing shift in global political and economic systems, conflict, from the level of dispute to the level of endemic violence, is a feature of life for many people throughout the world. In 1993, when the UN designated 26 conflict-generated emergencies as 'complex', there were over 80 other violent conflicts recorded (see section 1, Trends in armed conflict). In many countries not at war violence and insecurity are daily realities in the private and public lives of many women, children, and ethnic and religious minorities, with profound
consequences for their physical, psychological, and material well-being. Insecurity and violence are developmental issues that have received little serious attention from the UN, governmental agencies, and NGOs working for poverty alleviation and justice.

For example, conflict over land or in the form of cattle rustling is a chronic problem for pastoral nomadic and sedentary farming groups in many countries (Lane and Swift, 1989; Oba, 1992; Markakis, 1993). As one writer has noted 'pastoral development is often as much concerned with the management of conflict between competing interests as it is with physical or economic improvements' (Prior, 1994). Development interventions can exacerbate these conflicts. Agricultural or veterinary extension programmes are unlikely to have the intended impact in areas where land tenure is a contentious issue. Supplying inputs to farmers may exacerbate tensions by legitimising disputed occupancy. Emphasis might be better placed on supporting community or government institutions that are in a position to resolve competing claims, before distributing inputs. A study of conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in Senegal demonstrates the ability of communities to manage their own internal conflicts over resources effectively, once the rights of local people and their responsibility for managing the resources were recognised (Gueye, 1994).

A great deal of time is often taken up by government officials in trying to mediate or settle such conflicts. At the same time centralised government bureaucracies, judicial structures, and government staff in many countries are often poorly equipped to deal with such disputes. Few, if any, government employees are trained in mediation and dispute resolution. At worst, national political, economic, and environmental development policies, such as resettlement programmes, land tenure policies, unequal inheritance laws, industrial relations policies; and technological developments, such as dams, water supplies or roads (as in Britain), over which people do not have democratic control, can create the conditions which generate conflict.

Equally, NGO development programmes, with their own hierarchical and alien bureaucracies, where 'development' is implemented in project-sized chunks, and which rarely look beyond the amorphous 'community', or 'target' groups, can create their own forms of turbulence. Few NGO staff are trained in mediation or dispute resolution. Despite the political rhetoric of empowerment strategies, much of community development glosses over conflicts of gender and class, or political issues such as land rights.

The development policies of major donors can also generate conflict and have an impact on the evolution of conflicts. Environmental or structural adjustment policies, for example, can exacerbate divisions between rich and poor and between different resource-users, and thus exacerbate underlying causes of conflict. Conditionality associated with economic liberalisation, the rolling back of the State, and democratisation following Western models, may engender conflicts, and weaken the State's ability to mediate between them. Trade policies designed to promote the commercial interests of manufacturing countries are often directly contrary to the economic and livelihood needs of the poor. This is seen most starkly in the case of the arms trade.
The annual budget of WHO amounts to three hours of the global expenditure on arms. Half a day's global arms expenditure would pay for the immunisation of all the world's children. While Northern governments make aid conditional on good governance, they continue to export to the South the materials (including torture equipment and arms) that support bad governments. The greatest transfer of technology from rich to poor countries is armaments. Ever since the Vietnam War, the South has provided a testing ground for the North's destructive technologies; the export of equipment for manufacturing poison gas to Iraq by Britain is a recent example. The wars in the South reflect the priorities of the world powers, and are one way in which they exert their influence. The duplicity of arms manufacturers being paid by aid donors to advise on the removal of their own landmines is a recent case in point. As Zwi and Ugalde (1989) noted, 'there is little doubt that much of the political violence in the Third World will subside the moment industrial nations cease to export it.'

Questions: How should governmental, inter-governmental agencies, and NGOs address conflict as a developmental issue? Are some forms of development more likely to generate conflict than others? What forms of governmental, inter-governmental structures, or civil organisations are best able to manage or prevent conflict? How should these organisations tackle the problem of the arms trade?

8.1.2 Conflict prevention

If, as suggested (section 6), conflicts can move from latent to overt expressions of violence, this implies that it should be possible to identify 'critical thresholds' and to affect outcomes through political or economic interventions. Certain interventions may increase the likelihood of conflict while others may help to reduce the likelihood or prevent the escalation of conflict.

The international response system, including the UN, governments, and NGOs, is generally geared towards the protection of the victims of conflict only after conflict has developed into full-scale war and pathological violence. Then survival and security become the burning issues, making relief operations or, in extreme cases, military intervention, apparently 'the only option'. Is it possible to prevent or reduce the escalation of wars?

Answers to this question depend partly on an analysis of the causes of conflict. If the current wars are essentially conflicts about power, over the State, or arise from unmet needs, then it may be possible to develop institutional means to prevent or manage such conflicts, and to build democratic structures that ensure participation and equity. If the conflict arises from conditions of poverty, then conflict may be prevented by addressing the structural causes of poverty. However, if the war is being organised for the benefit of some people, to the detriment of others, then military action may be needed to counter this.

The United Nations Secretary-General (Boutros-Ghali, 1992) has set out various options for conflict management in the 'new world order'. He has emphasised the need to develop conflict early-warning systems, and for conflict prevention and preventative diplomacy. Emphasis is placed on strengthening regional organisations such as the OAU and ASEAN in dealing with regional conflicts. To what extent is this new agenda working?
**Diplomacy and sanctions:** Peace agreements and preventative diplomacy did not prevent genocide in Rwanda. Elections did not prevent the renewal of conflict in Angola. The deployment of a human rights monitor to Sudan has not prevented the continual ‘ethnic cleansing’ of the Nuba from central Sudan. The regional peacekeeping forces in Liberia have not brought an end to the war there. Democratic elections did not prevent the military from retaining power in Nigeria or seizing power in The Gambia. Continual monitoring and protestations by human rights activists about East Timor have not prevented the sale of arms by Britain to Indonesia.

On the other hand, diplomacy has helped to bring an end to apartheid in Namibia and South Africa, allied to internal pressures for reform and economic and cultural sanctions. Mediation by the San Edigio religious community and regional governments helped to broker a peace agreement in Mozambique (Vines, 1994). International diplomacy has assisted in bringing about the peace agreements in Israel. Dialogue has contributed to the IRA cessation of military operations in Ireland.

**Early warning:** Until recently, few organisations, except internal security agencies, have monitored potential conflicts. As human rights agencies, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and African Rights demonstrate, information is crucial to the protection and promotion of human rights. The electronic information revolution has created new opportunities for monitoring, and for making information the basis for action on conflict prevention and diplomacy. However, few development agencies actively monitor the countries in which they work for potential conflict. Rather than reacting after the event, can relief agencies monitor areas of instability for new conflicts and work to prevent conflict? Could human rights monitoring be incorporated into disaster early-warning systems?

**Strengthening civil society:** Some analysts view the growth of NGOs in the past decade with unease as it matches a decline in the North of a redistributive and accountable state. Others view the ‘third way’ of NGOs as a means to strengthen people’s participation and control over their own affairs, by ensuring accountability and democratic development (Clark, 1991). Non-governmental civil organisations can play a role in preventing conflict; for example, in India a coalition of civil organisations, film stars, and pop stars helped to prevent an escalation of religious conflict in that country, which the government appeared unable to control.

Recently there have been a number of conferences and networks established to bring together governmental and non-governmental organisations on this issue. International Alert, for example, recently facilitated an international conference in Addis Ababa on ‘The Challenge of Peacemaking in Africa’, to strengthen conflict resolution capabilities in Africa.
Questions: To what extent do, or could, conflict prevention measures achieve their aims? What kind of information is needed and to whom should the information be sent? What networks exist to put pressure on the right people in the right organisations at the right times? Which are the appropriate organisations to undertake this work?

8.1.3 Conflict analysis and planning

Understanding the impact of development interventions requires a 'process approach' to programme planning which, through monitoring and evaluation, routinely and explicitly questions whether activities will reduce the likelihood of conflict, or risk exacerbating it. To what extent, for example, did support by development agencies for communal work (umuganda) in Rwanda contribute to the creation of the interahamwe militias that carried out much of the genocidal killings in Rwanda (African Rights, 1994)?

In order to be able to ask such questions and to make political judgments, conflict analysis and human rights issues need to be built into vulnerability profiles, feasibility studies, programme designs, and monitoring and evaluation systems. Political analysis is often missing, or at best only implicit, in development projects. A review of logical planning frameworks on ODA-funded development projects in Asia, for example, revealed only a limited analysis of the political environment in which projects were being implemented, and the political impact of those projects on inter-group relations and relations between people and government (Shepherd, forthcoming).

Certain forms of analysis may reveal latent tensions and the likelihood of future conflicts. For example, a participatory appraisal of a proposed irrigation system in Zimbabwe revealed the fears of women that men would spend any extra income generated on drinking, thus increasing household tensions (Welbourn, 1993). Programmes that seek to reduce vulnerabilities or strengthen capacities may need to adjust activities or incorporate measures to manage or resolve such conflicts before they become protracted. This requires a level of knowledge and trust between an agency and community that can only be built up over time.

In understanding conflicts the importance of historic factors is increasingly recognised (El Bushra and Piza-Lopez, 1994a; Keen, 1994). However, historical analyses are almost entirely missing from the policy and project documents of development agencies. Needs assessments, socio-economic household analyses, and vulnerability profiles of stable communities or refugee populations capture the conditions of people at a particular moment in time, and are usually devoid of any historical perspective. Evaluations rarely cover longer periods than the funding cycle of projects. The few exceptions show the great value of a historical perspective (Porter et. al., 1991).

Questions: What forms of analysis and methodologies are available and most appropriate for analysing the causes and impact of conflicts? And who are the appropriate organisations to carry out the analysis? Do relief and development agencies (both NGOs and official agencies) have the relevant skills and capacities? If not, where can these be obtained? What organisational adaptations are required
to make use of the new information? Can conflict analysis and political analysis be incorporated into programme design, where a discussion on ethnic or tribal conflict might be construed as racist or where political dialogue is banned?

8.2 Working in situations of conflict

8.2.1 Development in situations of conflict

The longevity of many armed conflicts suggests there is a need to move away from a simplistic, and by now anachronistic, distinction between development and relief. Long-term development programmes need to be tested against their ability to give people the capacity to deal with crises, while short-term relief activities need to take into account future needs and long-term consequences of their actions.

Work which can be done in the midst of war

Meeting basic needs: This is work to relieve immediate suffering by the provision of basic welfare in the form of food, water, shelter, medical treatment and safety. This might include sheltering refugees and displaced persons, transportation of wounded, tracing and re-uniting families, and burying the dead.

Mediation and negotiation: This is work to facilitate the declaration of cease-fires and safe zones, arrange the transfer of hostages or prisoners, to limit weaponry, target or zones of fighting. This involves meeting combatants, politicians, civil servants, diplomats and working towards direct meetings and negotiation.

Political options: This continues the work of mediation and negotiation and helps to institutionalise a peace process, by helping to formulate laws, treaties, boundaries, constitutions, voting procedures, and other political measures to transform cease-fires into truces and truces into settlements.

Promotion of justice and rights: The protection of rights during war might include monitoring the treatment of civilians, prisoners, and the wounded, and enforcing bans on the use of chemical or biological weapons, torture, and other illegal acts. It includes making people aware of their rights. This might include active use of the media and lobbying of governments and donors.

Development: In the midst of war development work must continue, to ensure there are structures and institutions on which reconstruction can begin. This might include training in primary health care, literacy, sanitation, water, agriculture, veterinary work, and support to civil institutions.

Physical rehabilitation: The rebuilding of some infrastructure, such as roads, water systems, transport, and communication systems, needs to continue during war, not only to ensure the delivery of welfare services, but also to help to keep communities together.
Social rehabilitation: The aim of this work is to prevent further social disintegration, by helping to keep families and communities together, providing trauma counselling, and preventing aid-dependency by supporting self-help efforts.

Reconciliation: This involves investment in rebuilding harmonious relations, helps to reduce inter-personal violence during war, and is a means of preventing war from breaking out again.

Source: Sue Williams, Working with Conflict, 1994.

This paper cannot cover all the possible needs and ways of working in situations of war listed above. In working in conflict, NGOs, UN, and donors may need to consider appropriate divisions of labour, based on their particular capabilities, rather than each agency trying to build up skills in all areas. A danger of the division of labour, however, is that it may lead to the further institutionalisation of the aid system, as seen in the NGO-donor sub-contracting relationship. Attempts to improve co-ordination, through the development of the DHA and ECHO, have in many cases created more confusion and wastage than solutions.

A key issue for working in conflict is flexibility. Different weighting may need to be given to different kinds of activities at different points in time. Figure 3 presents the changing emphasis between different programme activities that has been observed in ACORD’s programmes, and this diagram can be used in conjunction with Figure 1. Acceptable practices in ‘stable’ conditions will need to be adapted in conflict situations. For example, standard criteria for credit schemes and cost recovery may be inappropriate in conflict-affected areas. The prevailing economic conditions may be such that any incomes generated, or the loans themselves, are needed for simple survival rather than investment. Schemes designed in a period of crisis must identify from the outset the capacity of the target group to service loans and determine accordingly whether grant or loan-type activities are most appropriate. Rather than continuing credit schemes, and allowing loans to become de facto grants, ACORD in Juba in Sudan has switched from the provision of tools and seeds on a credit basis, to pre-payment. The introduction of higher value crops by ACORD made it possible for farmers to pay cash in advance. Just as important as credit is support to savings and loan groups.

Questions: How do relief and development organisations define their roles in conflict situations? How do they decide to respond to one emergency rather than another?
Figure 3 The changing emphasis of support

A represents support needs and roles related to: income-generation, enterprise development, savings and credit, sustainable health and education systems, environmental protection, capacity building, institutional development; encouraging strategic alliances, increasing ability to dialogue with the State and undertake national and international lobbying, preparing withdrawal; reinforcing women's entitlements and rights to gain access to credit, health, education, legal protection; promoting and strengthening women's ability as individuals and as groups, and developing networks and alliances with progressive agencies, legal services etc.

B represents support needs and roles related to: political stability, democracy at all levels, organising capacity, self-confidence, increased ability to deal with next crisis, securing and re-starting production, rehabilitating or establishing infrastructure; broad-based training, network building, strengthening people's ability to place demands on government, building economic foundations for group development; the readjustment and renegotiation of women's roles and gender relations; promoting and strengthening women's groups and women in mixed groups.

C represents support and roles related to: preparedness for possible crises, contingency planning, securing production, diversifying options, strengthening coping mechanisms; consolidating local control and management of resources by credit, training, support for organisational capacity; women as managers and consumers of shrinking resource base, directly involved and supported in all projects.

D represents support needs and roles related to: relief (eg food, shelter, medicine), preservation of local culture, strengthening of local coping mechanisms, political protection and lobbying, securing production; the provision of a liaison between community and external providers; thinking with community, 'being there', moral support, emphasis on life-enhancing principles, and avoiding dependency; women as guardians of family and culture, and as providers; protection, ensuring that although vulnerable, women are not seen as victims.

Case-study 1: New Ways of Working in Conflict Situations

The conflict in Mali during 1991-2 quickly made existing infrastructural work (irrigation and well-digging) impossible. However, by developing new ways of working, the ACORD programme staff were able to continue support for revolving funds and credit schemes, and the provision of small-scale agricultural equipment.

It quickly became too dangerous to use motor vehicles to visit rural communities, or to build up stocks of fuel and spare parts, as these became targets for attack. Initially, the teams switched to safer forms of transport (camels, horses, and boats) to service communities, but it then became too dangerous for any sort of movement, and this led to the development of what has been called the 'inverse method'.

As ACORD staff became increasingly restricted to the towns, communities took the initiative in communicating with field staff. They sent written or verbal messages via representatives, traders or fishermen on the Niger, to ACORD about what was happening, what the problems were, and what support was needed. Community representatives, who enjoyed greater security than ACORD staff, travelled to ACORD offices to negotiate forms of support such as funds and small-scale equipment which they could transport easily. The teams used these meetings (and wider inter-community meetings) to monitor activities, decide on the best forms of support, and satisfy themselves that the support reached its intended destination.

ACORD also made use of its drivers and boatmen, who as local people had greater freedom of movement than other members of staff. Using audio tapes to assist the process, they progressively took on a greater role in animating community meetings. Meetings were facilitated on the basis of prompts and notes developed by the teams, and the discussions were taped. The teams then listened to the tapes.

The basis for this development was the institutional development support, and particularly a major auto-evaluation exercise, that had preceded the conflict. As a result, communities were better able to analyse their situation and propose solutions and forms of support.

However, there are inherent problems in the 'inverse method'. As it relies on groups or individuals coming to ACORD there are obvious implications both for beneficiary targeting, and the preservation of neutrality. Immature groups, or those for whom ACORD is inaccessible, are at a considerable disadvantage. Future use of the method would need to address these shortcomings.

8.2.2 Strengthening coping strategies

The provision of emergency assistance in a developmental manner might include supporting local coping strategies and assisting local institutions to weather crises, with the aim of improving their ability to survive future crises unaided (ACORD, 1991a). This might involve ensuring that basic needs are met by promoting 'relief production' or 'relief income generation', rather than just the provision of commodities (Case studies 2, 3 and 4.)
Case study 2: The emergency distribution in Gulu, Uganda.

In 1989-1990 ACORD carried out an emergency distribution in Gulu, northern Uganda. Gulu was the site of a long-standing ACORD rural development programme. When fighting broke out between the NRA and rebel groups in 1987, ACORD staff, along with the rural population, were forced into Gulu town.

Within Gulu town, conditions were extremely harsh, with limited relief supplies, and the town's infrastructure was unable to cope. The ACORD Rural Development Workers (RDWs) carried out a needs assessment with those displaced, who expressed the need for tools, seeds, and support so that they could utilise land in the town for food cultivation. This would complement relief supplies from other agencies, and, the programme team believed, limit the growth of a feeling of dependency. A package of goods was jointly identified. It was originally proposed to include machetes, but it was feared that rebels would take them as weapons, and they were replaced by axes.

By the time the funds began to arrive (in mid-1989), people had started to return home, and the team went ahead with the distributions in the rural areas in order to encourage resettlement. The ACORD team implemented the distributions itself, registering people, and transporting and distributing the goods.

Gender issues were addressed by the use of a *kenoor* (cooking fire) as the registration unit. This ensured that women received the tools, though an exception was made for single men, certified as such by the local authorities, who were also registered. This was important in a polygamous society where the women do most of the agricultural work.

Because of the emphasis on self-reliance in the programme's methodology, and uncertainty that programme teams could depart from programme proposals and budgets, the distribution prompted considerable debate. However, it was felt that in conditions where people lacked the basic necessities, a programme could not continue to focus simply on animation and self-reliance, and remain relevant. However, the team did use the programme's 'developmental' and participatory principles in their response, and the distributions enhanced ACORD's reputation and provided an entry point for longer-term work.

A strategy to support local coping mechanisms needs to be approached with caution. Measures to help one group to 'survive' may place additional burdens on others. For example, the movement of people away from war zones in search of security and food creates problems for host populations in terms of competition for resources and environmental degradation. Large-scale relief operations in support of the forced migrants can exacerbate these problems if host populations are not involved and consulted. This is currently happening in Tanzania with the influx of Rwandan refugees. Furthermore, the provision of relief to safe-havens or refugee camps can encourage the migration of people and assist military strategies to depopulate contested areas (Keen, 1992).
Case study 3: Emergency support to agricultural production

ACORD began implementing the Juba Economic Recovery Programme in 1987, after the SPLA had laid siege to the town in southern Sudan. The programme laid out a three-year programme of economic assistance to the population in the form of support for agricultural production and small businesses, and a rehabilitation programme for the displaced.

The agricultural component has provided a Tractor Hire Service (THS), seed, tools, advice, and support to the town’s inhabitants. These services have opened up land unused for agriculture for decades, allowing the production of considerable amounts of food. This has helped to counter the development of a mentality of dependence by broadening and supporting coping strategies; it has helped to supplement inadequate and unreliable air-lifts of food aid to the besieged town; and it has proved to be seven times cheaper to grow food than to fly it in. Furthermore, as the security zone around the town has expanded and new areas of land have become available, the programme has been able to offer these services to displaced people.

The movement of refugees, which typically involve more women and children than men, can result in the disruption of the family unit; a loss of assets and resources such as land; and psychological stress. The employment of one survival strategy involves the loss of opportunities to deploy others. Choices are made. The employment of coping strategies, such as the sale of assets, can enrich the powerful, and compensatory aid to shore up coping strategies may reinforce this process. Under stress people are often reluctant to sell off assets needed for future investments (de Waal, 1989), and the sale of food aid may not represent an absence of need or abuse of the system, but attempts to preserve other assets. Agencies should perhaps be acting to ensure that people do not have to resort to such coping strategies in the first place.

Gender analysis reveals the danger of treating communities as undifferentiated wholes. Particular groups in a community (e.g. women or the elderly) have different basic needs and may employ different strategies to survive. On the other hand they may be prevented from doing so due to cultural constraints which can go unrecognised in emergency situations. For example, in Somalia Oxfam distributed clothes to women who, because of loss of clothing, were unable to leave their houses to get food supplies. Support to local coping strategies requires an understanding of local conditions and cultures.

Case study 4: Emergency support to income generation

ACORD’s Juba Economic Recovery Plan has suffered considerable problems in attempting to use credit and achieve cost recovery in a conflict situation. In the agricultural component, tractor hire, tools, and seeds were initially provided on a credit basis. However, repayment rates were unacceptably low. Cost recovery has been improved by changing to a system of pre-payment in cash for the tractor hire service, tools and seeds, instead of providing them on credit.
The Small Business Promotion Component (SBPC) also had problems. Two evaluations in 1992 found the programme was failing to reach significant numbers of people, despite the high level of informal trading in the besieged town. The scheme was judged by Juba's inhabitants to be unresponsive and inappropriate, private money-lenders being more responsive and efficient.

A number of problems were identified in the SBPC. Staff losses due to the conflict had left the programme team with insufficient capacity to respond effectively, and a sustained period of training and support was recommended. In addition, research was needed into existing patterns of lending, and how ACORD could make its methodology and procedures more responsive. (For example by decentralising the team and establishing 'neighbourhood offices'.) In addition, this research might reveal other, non-credit methods of supporting and promoting income-generating activities. Training was proposed to strengthen the community's ability to make use of credit.

However, a key survival strategy of people in war is a commitment to group survival. As Ryle's work with the Dinka in Sudan revealed, their concern was not so much with the preservation of life itself, but the preservation of a 'way of life' (Slim and Thompson, 1993). The UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) lays down that the 'maintenance of culture' is a particular right of refugees. However, this can be undermined by the emphasis of humanitarian agencies on the protection of the rights of individuals, when responding to the needs of vulnerable groups. The vulnerability of these individuals (who may be women, the young, the old, or refugees) partly stems from the break-up of households and communities and the targeting of specific minority groups. The Muslims in Bosnia, the Tutsi in Rwanda, the Nuba in Sudan, and Shi'ia in Iraq are vulnerable, not because of their individual status, but because they are members of a particular group. Focusing on community, or group rights, rather than individual rights might focus humanitarian efforts to work through and support community or civil structures and thus help to reduce individual vulnerability.

8.2.3 Institutional support

Weak public capacity in many states in Africa, due to lack of investment, or government suppression of trade unions, professional associations, and national or regional civic organisations, compounds the inability of states and people to survive the destruction of war. While in politically stable environments agencies have come to see institutional development as an important empowering strategy in alleviating poverty, in situations of war such a strategy is usually eschewed in favour of commodity provision. Institutional development is replaced by neutral relief. Accountability to beneficiaries is lost in the modalities of controlling relief commodities. In the process, civic structures are further undermined, reducing the possibility of recovery.

In Somalia, the failure of the UN to re-engage early on in the conflict led to the collapse of remaining governmental structures (Slim and Visman, 1994). More thought is needed as to how organisations can work to support civic structures in the midst of war. The support for the ANC in South Africa is a recent example of this. Other examples might be the relief programmes of ERA and REST supported
by NGOs during the Ethiopian conflict (Duffield and Prendergast, 1993), UNICEF's work with professional groups of teachers in Bosnia (Duffield, 1994a), Save the Children's work to rejuvenate governmental services in Somaliland, and the work of ActionAid with councils of clan elders in Somaliland (Bradbury, 1994a; IFRC, 1994). The work of groups such as the Mennonites to create 'peace constituencies' during times of conflict may also be relevant in this respect (Lederach, 1989).

ACORD's experience is that the programmes which have most successfully adapted in times of crisis and conflicts have involved investment in the development of people and organisations, and have staff have with the skills, capacities, and confidence to propose and manage activities, as well as to resolve conflicts themselves.¹⁸ These successes have usually been premised on the previous development of a good relationship with the communities with whom they work. The presence of local staff, with their greater links into the local community and their reluctance to leave, has been crucial. Working in this way requires an ability to make political judgments and can place considerable strain on programme impartiality (see case study 5).

---

**Case study 5: Establishing impartiality**

ACORD began a programme in Huila province, Angola, in mid-1991, after the Bicesse Peace Accords had brought the fighting between the MPLA government and Unita to an end. The aim of the programme was to support the resettlement of displaced communities. A participatory methodology was used, and work began with the community of Vissapa Iela.

Despite a major division within the community, and initial distrust of ACORD, the programme team were quickly able to establish their impartiality by using participatory methods to decide upon the kinds of support needed, and who should benefit from them. The sense of community 'ownership' that resulted improved the programme's security.

An incident in 1992 illustrated the point. Unita militants entered the village with the intention of looting from, and possibly attacking, the staff. They believed ACORD was linked to the MPLA both because it worked with the government's local structures, and because ACORD's local partner, ADRA, was staffed by ex-government officials. However, the people from the community intervened to convince the militants that the programme was independent, and the militants left the village without incident. (The fact that ACORD's programme did not involve large amounts of cash or goods may also have been a contributory factor.)

---

As development aid declines and is replaced by relief aid, ACORD has faced problems with obtaining funding for capacity-building work. The priority of donors is to fund 'hardware' projects, such as food or infrastructural work, and they are often reluctant to support 'software' projects, such as training or institutional strengthening. Speedy delivery of equipment and medical supplies remains the
hallmark of the donor and NGO response in humanitarian crises. NGOs have made major organisational investments in communications, logistics, and transport to speed up delivery systems. Less has been spent on helping people to deal with the crises themselves, or to see that delivery is effective.

Much has been written recently on institutional development and capacity building, particularly among Southern NGOs and community-based organisations (Fowler, 1992). Much of this has focused on development in a stable rather than in a turbulent environment. War creates new operating environments not only for international NGOs but also for indigenous NGOs and community-based organisations. More attention needs to be given as to how these institutions themselves manage conflict and might adapt and survive in conflict situations; and how they manage their relationship with governments and political movements.

Questions: As development aid declines can relief and development agencies continue to do development within relief budgets? How can acceptable and accountable professional, civil or religious organisations be identified to work with? How can agencies ensure their own accountability to the beneficiaries? What kinds of skills and strengths do local organisations require to sustain themselves in conflict situations?

8.2.4 Trauma

War is a deeply traumatic experience for individuals, communities, and the personnel of agency staff working in war situations. The psychological impact of conflict has been recognised for some time, for example among US Vietnam war veterans, or the victims of military repression in Latin America. In Croatia and Bosnia a large number of governmental and UN organisations and NGOs are running psychosocial programmes. In Africa less attention has been given to this aspect of conflict.

The deliberate destruction of cultural institutions and ways of life in wars may be as traumatic as individual acts of violence. In Mozambique, Liberia, Angola, and Somalia, violent acts such as the mutilation of kin by kin, and the 'cross-dressing' of warriors, suggest a total breakdown of normal societal values that cannot be explained purely by rational survival strategies. The destructive nature of war makes it relevant to ask to what extent societies can survive to provide a template for post-conflict rehabilitation. Free from societal constraints, breakdown may be so severe that social continuity and a return to normality may no longer be an option for some (Richards, 1992). The emergence of millennial cults, such as the Alice Lakwena Holy Spirit Movement (Allen, 1993) or religious fundamentalism suggests an active search for new meanings, to re-order disorder.

Provision of commodity relief is clearly an insufficient response to working in situations of conflict. Furthermore, dependency through aid, particularly among refugees, can prolong trauma and reduce the ability of people to deal with it. The failure to involve refugees, particularly women, in the administration of camps and aid programmes, or to make use of their knowledge, skills and capacities, weakens the effectiveness of the intervention and can create feelings of helplessness and exacerbate trauma (Harrell-Bond, 1986). The work of the UNHCR 'Women Victims of Violence' programme among Somali refugees in Kenya has successfully managed
to involve both women and men in taking responsibility in addressing the problem of rape and trauma among women (Musse, 1993).

The applicability of Western notions of trauma as an individual condition to be treated by a trained medical professional has to be questioned in non-Western cultures. It is not clear that all societies experience trauma as an individual condition in the way in which Western medical science understands it. A community-based approach may be the most useful way of tackling the issue. However, individuals experience trauma in different ways, and some people may benefit from individual counselling, for example, after suffering sexual violence.

Most cultures have their own mechanisms ('protectors') for healing. These may include the physical reconstruction of communities, communal ceremonies, and individual treatment in the most extreme cases, such as sexual torture, where women and men may not be able to speak openly about their experiences. It is important to identify and build on these, and to adopt an integrated approach that addresses trauma as both an individual and a wider process of community reconstruction. Such an approach might combine support for community reconstruction under community control, such as clearing landmines to allow rural people to resume their agriculturally-based way of life; measures to sensitisve community health workers; work with local healers; or family tracing schemes. Support for the burial of the dead is one example where organisations have given attention to the problem of trauma during war.

It is essential not to relegate trauma to something that is dealt with after the conflict, but to address it as part of emergency responses during war. For example, in northern Rwanda, following the events of April 1994, ACORD encouraged the displaced in relief camps to draw on their existing skills and trades to generate incomes and supplement food distributions. By doing so it was hoped that they would regain their self-esteem and thus be better able to cope with trauma, and avoid the condition pejoratively referred to as 'dependency mentality', which results from cultural bereavement, institutionalisation within camps, and enforced inactivity.

Questions: Why have the psychological impacts of conflict only recently been recognised as an issue in Africa? Why should this issue have been given more prominence in Bosnia and Croatia, for example?

8.2.5 Human rights

The atrocities against civilians — women, children, and ethnic and religious groups — which have occurred in current conflicts have raised awareness of the need to address human rights as a development issue. The denial of human rights can generate conflict. UN peacekeeping missions have been launched and rationalised on the basis of the protection of the rights of victims. Rights are closely linked to livelihoods. For example, rights to land, rights to employment, and rights to travel affect the livelihoods of women and minority groups.

However, human rights remains a delicate issue. Human rights, self-determination, and democracy are used as rallying calls in war. Justice, freedom of
religious expression, and the right to own personal property are full of cultural meaning and value. The idea of human rights being embodied in the individual, rather than as a citizen of a state, is a relatively new concept that passed into international law in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration. In Islam the umma (the Islamic community) is held to be more important than the State or the individual, in contrast to the rational liberalism of the West. Although humanitarian agencies advocate the protection of individual rights, actively monitoring or discussing human rights can place humanitarian agencies, and their staff, in danger, as has been the case in Rwanda.

Questions: How can organisations incorporate human rights into development and relief work? Which are the appropriate organisations to carry out this work?

8.2.6 Conflict reduction

If wars are lasting longer, one of the objectives of responding to situations of conflict should be to reduce the length of conflicts. While a de-escalation of violence may not solve the underlying causes of a conflict, it may help to prevent conflicts from becoming more protracted, mitigate vulnerability, and certainly save lives. If, as has been argued, violence disrupts people's coping strategies (section 4.3.3), then a reduction in violence can help to restore or support coping strategies. This is one argument for military interventions, peacekeeping, peace-monitoring, and safe havens.

The reduction of violence can help to create the political environment in which mediation and negotiation become feasible. Creating channels of communication can help to counter mistrust and misunderstanding and so reduce levels of violence. Active mediation and election monitoring contributed to the reduction of violence and a peaceful electoral process in South Africa. In Kenya, the UNHCR Women Victims of Violence programme is involved in educating Kenyan policemen in the rights of refugees, to reduce the incidence of violence against Somali women refugees.

During the Rwandan crisis, however, ACORD, together with several other organisations, took the view that it would not lobby for a UN-sponsored cease-fire, because the RPF's advance was the most likely force to bring an end to the massacres taking place behind the government army lines, given the absence of international action. Similarly, if the EPRDF had not defeated the Mengistu regime militarily, the war in Ethiopia would have dragged on for much longer, with greater levels of impoverishment and destruction. The Rwandan crisis has brought questions of neutrality and impartiality into sharp focus (case study 6).

Case study 6: The Rwandan crisis: impartiality, reconciliation, and justice.

The Rwandan crisis in 1994 brought into sharp focus the dilemmas surrounding questions of neutrality. At the time ACORD had two programmes in the country, and an office in Kigali. All three were devastated by the events in April, and for a number of weeks ACORD concentrated on locating staff. When an emergency programme was launched in northern Rwanda in early