May, ACORD found itself working on the RPF side of the divide between the rebels and the government.

There were a number of practical reasons for this. ACORD had experience of working in those areas, and logistical support was available from existing programmes in Uganda. With no programmes in Burundi or Zaire access to the government areas was much more difficult. Furthermore, the RPF-held zone offered a minimum guarantee of security that the government areas did not, though ACORD was determined to work in the government areas if it became possible. However, there was considerable criticism of ACORD for being supposedly pro-RPF, other agencies’ interpretation of neutrality meaning that they should not work with either side, if they could only work with one.

ACORD’s position was further complicated by differences in analysis with other agencies. ACORD took the view early on that there were two conflicts taking place, one a civil war between the RPF and the Rwandan army, the other an orchestrated campaign of massacres against opponents of the extremist Hutu parties. The latter presented the greatest threat to Rwandan lives, and, in light of the international community’s failure to act, the RPF gave the greatest hope of ending the massacres. ACORD did not support calls for a UN-brokered ceasefire between the RPF and the army, which would have solidified the army line and allowed the massacres to continue behind it.

Once the RPF succeeded in taking control of the country, the bulk of Rwanda’s population fled to refugee camps in Zaire, where they have remained, despite appalling conditions, due to fears of RPF retribution, and intimidation by the Hutu extremists, who hope to build the basis for a reinvasion of the country. Within the country the RPF has formed a new government and has appealed to the refugees to return. ACORD continues to work inside Rwanda, but has failed, due to human, financial and logistical resource constraints, to develop a programme with Rwandan refugees.

ACORD has not been neutral between the two sides to the conflict, though its position has remained impartial, and based on its mandate, and it has no political allegiance with any particular side. ACORD’s fundamental aim remains to work with poor people in Rwanda, and this means the peasantry, who are mostly Hutu. However, being seen to be pro-RPF may jeopardise ACORD’s ability to do this.

For the future Rwanda clearly needs a process of reconciliation. How best to go about this remains unclear. The RPF, and the UN, demand justice for the perpetrators of genocide. Yet it is clear that dividing the guilty from the innocent, when the majority took part in the massacres and have not rejected the political leadership that organised them, will be extremely difficult, if not impossible. However, without acknowledgement of, and remorse for these crimes, is reconciliation and a lasting peace possible? Should not development agencies leave to human rights bodies the responsibility for passing judgement on past atrocities, and concentrate on promoting reconciliation through community-based action?
Attempts to create ‘zones of tranquillity’, where fighting is controlled and violence reduced, in order to distribute relief aid have often been of limited success. It has been argued that Operation Lifeline Sudan has become integrated into sustaining the local war economy (Duffield, 1994b). In Somalia the most tranquil zones have been outside the areas where UNOSOM was keeping the peace. The economies of Croatia and Bosnia are virtually underwritten by the relief operations there, while in Bosnia, the ‘peace havens’ have arguably frozen the war, offering little future for those inside the havens, evidenced in the high rates of depressive illness and suicide.

Relief interventions, however, may contribute to the reduction of tension. In Somalia a blanket distribution of food by ICRC and other agencies helped to reduce looting and fighting over food supplies (IFRC, 1994). Critical to ICRC’s work was the method of distribution using multiple entry-points, and ensuring the close involvement of Somalis in the distribution network. The financial cost of this operation was enormous, and the future political costs of dividing Somalia into resource distribution areas may still have to be paid.

A range of international protocols exist to protect civilians in times of war, that can contribute to the reduction of violence. Among others these include:

- The Fourth Geneva Convention (August 1949), for the protection of civilian populations in times of war;
- The UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), for the legal protection of refugees;
- The UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1951), which specifically authorises the UN to take action to prevent acts of genocide;
- Weapons Convention (1980), for the restrictions on weapons that are indiscriminate;
- Landmines Protocol (1980), for regulating the use of mines.

These Conventions should in theory protect civilians in war and contribute to the reduction of violence. In all the current wars these Conventions are continually flouted. In Bosnia and Rwanda, for example, the UN failed to act to prevent genocide.

The impact of relief operations on the political and economic dynamics of wars has been noted. As their numbers grow and as their operations increase in size, NGOs are in danger of being co-opted into actions whose future consequences are unknown. In Somalia, for example, NGOs, ICRC, and the UN paid large amounts of money to free-lance militia to protect their staff, operations, and relief supplies; they thus made direct payments into the war economy. In recognition of their increased role and the impact of their operations in disaster situations, a number of NGOs have drawn up a professional Code of Conduct to set universal basic standards to govern the way in which NGOs work in providing assistance in disasters (IFRC, 1994).

Questions: What interventions can aid agencies make that can help to reduce violence? How can aid agencies monitor the impact of their own work on levels of violence? What restrictions exist that prevent the UN from acting upon the Conventions of international law?
8.2.7 Conflict resolution

What would have the greatest effect on the suffering of millions of people caught up in emergencies would be the resolution of the conflicts that have created them. While the safety-nets of humanitarian relief are an understandable and morally justifiable response to war, there is little evidence that they are addressing the root causes of armed conflict or supporting the conditions for a return to peace. If suffering, in the form of famine, refugee camps, or deepening poverty, is the result of wars, humanitarian agencies need to give some thought to what contributions they might make to resolving these conflicts.

The international community so far has failed to curb the onset of new political emergencies, or to bring an end to current conflicts. Arguably, in Somalia, Angola, Kurdistan, and Bosnia international interventions in the form of peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace-enforcement have caused more problems than they have solved. Why have these interventions failed to stop the violence or prevent new violence from erupting? What relevance does ‘conflict resolution’ have to current debates? What is meant by ‘sustainable’ peace and can it be achieved?

A consequence of the development versus relief dichotomy is that NGOs and UN agencies have tended to take notice of conflict only after it has manifested itself in acts of violence. This is to miss the point that political violence and armed conflict are the symptoms of other problems. Long-term development which tackles issues of human rights, control over resources, power differentials, debt, and the alleviation of poverty (structural violence), might be said to be addressing the causes of conflict by transforming the conditions which generate it. However, the failure of national governments and the international community seriously to address these underlying issues means that the international community continues to be taken by surprise when conflict breaks out.

One of the weaknesses of political mediation or peacekeeping efforts in conflicts in Africa has been the concentration on ‘constitutional’ issues, rather than ‘civil’ issues (African Rights, 1993d). Conflict resolution is normally sought through constitutional negotiation and the creation of formal mechanisms for managing security, such as peacekeeping. In Sudan, Somalia, Angola, Liberia, and Bosnia, negotiations have not stopped the predatory forces which promote the wars. If anything, negotiations and the payments made to warlords to attend peace conferences, and for other services, legitimise and strengthen those forces. Such negotiations detract from attempts to identify and strengthen alternative legitimate political structures.

Furthermore, negotiations by themselves are insufficient. Wars are not fought by individuals. Violence is enacted by groups of people, all of whom may have a stake in the continuation or resolution of a conflict. The resolution of a conflict requires the involvement of people at many different levels. The gunmen and fighters are as much in need of alternative means of survival as are their victims (Keen, 1994b). There is a need to understand the political and socio-economic incentives working against and for the resolution of the conflict. This may also require some reflection by NGOs on their own motives. The tendency among NGOs to assume responsibility for different geographical regions can contribute not only to the
further division of those regions, but also to competition between NGOs over spheres of influence. Providing relief in war zones brings in money, pays for overheads, and is good for organisational profile. Conflict resolution may, in that sense, be less rewarding.

A framework for conflict resolution needs to distinguish between ending the violent expression of conflicts and the institutionalisation of long-term measures to prevent or mitigate conflict (Steadman, 1991). Once violence erupts, security and survival create a new set of problems that need to be addressed, one of which may be famine. At this stage there may be little to choose between neutrality or solidarity, for to some extent either stance may signify a failure not to have acted earlier.

It may be helpful to distinguish 'conflict resolution' from 'conflict management' and 'conflict settlement'. Conflict management suggests conflict is an organisational problem that can be managed by changing the conditions within institutions. Conflict settlement is concerned with negotiating 'peaceful' outcomes, which may not lead to real structural changes. Conflict resolution might be conceived of as a collaborative process of analysis and problem-solving that attempts to address the underlying issues that generate conflict (Burton, 1990).

Governments, the UN, and humanitarian agencies need to identify the level or levels at which they might support the resolution of conflicts. The armed conflicts referred to in this paper, which generate political emergencies, are large-scale regional or national wars. The NGO contribution to the settlement of these conflicts at a constitutional level is likely to be limited. The dangers of NGOs and their staff trying to mediate with warring parties and becoming co-opted or targeted by them are obvious. At the same time, NGOs working at the grassroots have a mandate and responsibility to ensure that the perceptions and needs of the weak in society are represented, and influence the policy-makers and politicians involved in political negotiations.

Furthermore, many large-scale wars have their roots in local conflicts, which may continue during the wider conflict. There may be possibilities at a local level to support civil organisations working to reduce tensions and resolve localised conflicts. Several long-established international and local NGOs, many with religious origins such as the Quakers and Mennonites, have been working on these issues for many years. There is also a growing number of secular organisations, such as International Alert. At the very least, development and relief organisations confronted with the dilemmas of new operational environments should open a dialogue with such organisations.

8.2.8 Vulnerability and conflict resolution

To date much of the emphasis of conflict prevention or resolution of internal conflicts has focused on the success and failures of international or external responses and solutions. This partly reflects the extant power relations between the conflicting parties and those who intervene. The focus has been on strengthening international or regional institutions. In the process the possibilities of internal solutions have been overlooked. Working for the reduction of violence is not the sole privilege of external agents. If conflict is inherent in human societies,
then mechanisms also exist within societies to manage and resolve conflicts. Mediation, peace conferences, peacekeeping, peace-enforcement, monitoring, safe-havens, humanitarian aid, and legal and judiciary procedures are just some of the overt and obvious mechanisms.

The concentration on constitutional issues means that the potential for resolution and reconciliation through civil society has been largely neglected. There is an assumption that because a society is in a state of conflict, local means of resolving conflicts no longer exist. Local peace groups, NGOs, and professional groups are currently active throughout former Yugoslavia. Evidence from Somalia and Somaliland suggests that even during the height of the war there, individuals were moving around mediating between conflicting parties in order to prevent a further escalation of war. The most sustained and successful attempts at peaceful reconciliation in Somaliland have been based on a long-term, indigenous, participatory process of conflict resolution (Yusuf, 1993; Bradbury 1994b). This has involved rebuilding the social integrity and political efficacy of Somali civil institutions, and the construction of local political alliances and agreements on the security of trade and management of resources. While the war in Somalia has clearly been more than a ‘traditional’ war, local solutions have been sought through adapting customary practices of conflict resolution and management. However, the legitimacy given by governments, the UN, and NGOs to these processes is minimal. Research into local processes of conflict resolution has been limited.

Involvement in conflict resolution and identifying viable structures within which to work requires a good knowledge of an area and a level of political analysis that is missing in many NGO, donor, and UN operations. However, the possible choice for organisational involvement at different levels in conflict resolution is potentially wide. In Mali ACORD was drawn into dealing with resource conflicts between pastoralists and sedentary communities. Through a process of inter-community meetings they sought to promote a negotiated solution. This involved seconding two staff members to the government to negotiate with the insurgents. This was only possible because of the long-standing relations between ACORD and the communities. Long-term working knowledge of the area also enabled ACORD to develop a range of methods for working during the 1991-92 conflict in Mali. In Ethiopia, Oxfam has supported some local negotiations over resource disputes. In Cambodia they have supported training for Buddhist monks and nuns in conflict resolution and mediation. In El Salvador they have supported training for members of the National Union of Salvadorean Workers in reconciliation and democratic processes, and given similar support to the Centre for International Studies in Nicaragua (Roseveare, 1993).

Vulnerability, and the protection of livelihoods and human rights, are the justifications for relief interventions in conflict situations. As the literature on coping strategies in famine has suggested, the means by which people attempt to make themselves less vulnerable should be a starting point for analysis and prescription in famine relief policies (Curtis et. al., 1988). Equally, the way in which people are able to continue to construct and reconstruct viable ways of life must be a starting point for analysis in situations of conflict (Allen, 1989). Understanding the conditions and processes (and perhaps costs) that make a
Questions: What can relief and development organisations contribute to the resolution of conflicts? How can such organisations working in war identify local accountable structures, through which they can operate and which can provide a forum for reconciliation? How can these organisations work in situations of conflict in such a way that they unite rather than divide? Is it possible to restore and empower indigenous forms of peace-making and conflict resolution, and how can these contribute to overall resolution of conflicts?

8.2.9 The meaning of conflict

It has been suggested that Western concepts of conflict do not necessarily allow for 'African realities' (Bozeman, 1976). In some societies war and peace are not mutually exclusive; in 'warrior cultures', war need not be shameful, nor peace necessarily good. In the West, conflict is incompatible with civil society, while violence in the form of war is legitimate. Some of the most interesting work on conflict resolution has involved eliciting people's own understanding of conflict (HAP, 1988; Lederach, 1989). This work suggests, for example, that Western ideas of neutral mediation are incompatible with some non-Western notions of 'neutrality'. A neutral, objective approach to conflict assumes a certain neutral, objective view of the world. Clearly this has little relevance in, for example, a Muslim society (Salem, 1993). The legitimacy and authority of the mediator is not based on their distance from the fray, but their insider knowledge. Furthermore, while Western approaches to conflict resolution have tended to focus on the thoughts and impulses of individuals, other cultures recognise conflict as a group issue.

These insights are important for organisations working in situations of conflict. It has been argued that during a famine, relief activities should take a lead from local conceptions and attitudes (de Waal, 1989). Ryle's work with the Dinka in Sudan, for example, suggests that their notions of survival were different from those of relief agencies (Slim and Thompson, 1993). This was important in understanding their actions and reactions (coping strategies) during famine. Equally, the importance of listening to refugees so that they can participate in formulating plans to address their needs and fears has been stressed by a number of writers (Harrell-Bond, 1986; Wallace, 1990). In Malawi, Vaughan (1987) drew on local songs to understand how social organisation affects patterns of hunger and nutrition. In Uganda, ACORD have been using songs and proverbs to facilitate discussions between men and women about their changing roles after the conflict.

War is a social phenomenon, which uses technology. Much of relief aid in situations of conflict is still premised on a technical fix. In order to make political judgments in these situations the sociological aspects of conflict need to be better understood. The NGO Code of Conduct was drawn up with the hope of ensuring that responses to disasters are appropriate. If this Code is to be effectively implemented there is a need to find out how people think and feel about, and experience, conflict.

Question: What methods of analysis exist which can improve our understanding of different people's experiences of conflict?
8.3 Post-conflict development: the price of peace

8.3.1 The problem of peace

Although conflict resolution and peacemaking are largely alien in development literature some notion of peace has always been implicit. Development policy is often formulated in the name of stability, security, and peace. During the Cold War, poverty was perceived in the West as a threat to stability. Recently UNDP has linked development, livelihoods and security (UNDP, 1994).

Peace means different things to different people. Wars are waged in the name of peace. Pacification, a forceful form of conflict management, links peace with repression. The recent genocide in Rwanda might be seen from one perspective as an attempt to resolve a long-running conflict through a 'final solution'. It does not automatically follow that the end of violence will solve the underlying problems that generated it. The ending of the East-West nuclear confrontation has not brought an end to wars, nor done anything about changing the political structures that produced those weapons. The empowering of losers may be a solution to one conflict, but create another. Peace can have winners and losers. Attempts to impose or enforce peace by external actors is clearly fraught with problems, as seen in Somalia. Arguably, in the few cases where wars have been 'won' (e.g. in Ethiopia and Uganda) more peaceful outcomes have been achieved. However, this has also not prevented other conflicts from continuing, such as between the Oromo and the government in Ethiopia. The transition from war to peace is not easy (Case study 7).

Case study 7: Post-conflict responses

Moving to support the reconstruction of a society after a genocidal conflict like that in Rwanda clearly illustrates the potential impact that interventions can have on the likelihood of future conflicts.

Establishing the validity of competing claims to resources, and particularly land, presents a major obstacle to moving from an emergency aid to a rehabilitation programme in Rwanda. Over the last 30 years there have been successive waves of displacement out of Rwanda. Following the RPF's victory many exiles who had been living in Uganda, Tanzania, and Zaire are returning. The majority of more recent refugees remain wary of returning, intimidated by supporters of the deposed government and fearing retribution from the RPF. As a result the country is largely empty, and long-term exiles have returned to lay claim to land and property recently vacated during the current wave of displacement. ACORD must be careful not to acquire the role of arbiter in competing claims over resources, or to implicitly legitimise particular claims through its actions. To avoid this the programme intends to restrict programme support explicitly to those whose rights are generally recognised by local community structures.

However, clear problems exist. Local structures may be imbued with attitudes prejudicial to the rights of single or widowed women to own land. Following
the conflict it is not clear who are the authorities with legitimate powers to make these decisions. ACORD intends to consult widely with other groups, in an effort to minimise these difficulties. The new administration has a stated policy of legal resettlement for all those displaced, but whether it has the will or the resources to enforce such a policy remains unclear. However, if competing claims of a legal (recent and commonly recognised), historic (ancestral) or de facto nature are not resolved in a just and widely acceptable manner, disputes about resource may be the source of future conflict.

Similarly, ACORD intends to target the youth in an attempt to avert possible future conflict. Inter-generational ties have been dealt severe blows by the recent conflict. Young people, with little prospect of work or land to farm, were easily recruited into the militias, which were paid to carry out the massacres, and were largely responsible for them. If they are not to fall back on violence, banditry, and political extremism, often the result of poverty, they will need other means of supporting themselves in the future.

8.3.1 The State in post-war reconstruction

The difficulty of sustaining peace may be two-fold. Firstly, there is the question of political legitimacy of any new regime which comes to power. The battle for the hearts and minds of a population embittered by internecine war can only be won through a political consensus. This cannot rely on electoral processes or institutional democracy alone. Governments need to demonstrate their commitment to the welfare of society and to justice. A commitment to justice may include support to ‘truth commissions’, such as that established in El Salvador under UN auspices, or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. A commitment to justice also means educating people in their rights.

Secondly, the pressure on governments to provide for the needs of populations after war, and to demonstrate good governance, are enormous; but governments need resources in order to implement these commitments. A critical problem with the disengagement of the North from Africa is the lack of resources available for post-conflict development. While billions of dollars are committed to peacekeeping operations, few commitments are made for rehabilitation. In Somalia, for example, for every $10 dollars spent on military operations, only $1 was spent on rehabilitation. The outbreak of war means that embassies close and bilateral development aid is cut. As a consequence of the war in Yemen, the British government cut all bilateral aid, and the post of aid attaché at the embassy was rescinded. If Britain resumes aid, it is unlikely to be at the same level. What funds are available will be passed through NGOs.

Most of the countries afflicted by war carry heavy debt burdens. The cancellation of debts would contribute to post-war recovery and political stability. In Somalia, funds for European forces involved in Somalia were ‘borrowed’ from Lomé II funds allocated to Somalia, but are unlikely to be returned. To sustain the peace, people must be offered economic alternatives. This requires more development investment, not less. The role of the State and civil society is perhaps the central debate in situations of conflict. There is little evidence, however, that rational economic development as currently articulated through the nation-state model has
led to peace: quite the opposite. However, whether wars can ever be settled without the over-arching authority of the State, and how that State regains legitimacy and the capacity to manage future conflicts remain fundamental questions.

If, as has been argued (section 4.1), centralised government and political control by the centre has, in part, been responsible for generating conflict, the unthinking re-establishment of structures of central state power may create the conditions for new conflicts. In post-conflict situations, the propensity of donors, the UN, and NGOs is to try to reconstruct what they recognise as government in sectors where they work. It may be better to use opportunities presented by conflicts to support the emergence of local, rather than centralised, political structures, that will ensure autonomy and local management (Shepherd, 1992). Supporting the devolution of power does not reduce the need to ensure the support and participation of marginal groups in any new local political structures.

Where the State and its institutions have been destroyed, undermined, or radically altered through conflict, agencies must consider how best to position themselves with the State-civil society duality. It is not the role of NGOs to substitute for the State, yet they may find it impossible to function without doing so, or at least propping up inappropriate state machinery. In Niassa province, Mozambique, for example, ACORD has been providing support to the provincial government since 1989, in order to strengthen the capacity of local government to promote decentralised development activities. In retrospect, it might have been better advised to focus more directly on supporting grassroots structures.

Since the 'Age of Enlightenment', peace in the West has been linked to material and moral progress. It is wrong to place conflict and peace at different ends of the spectrum of development. It might be better to de-link the notion of peace and development conceived as progress, or at least to accept that there may be alternative forms of development.

8.3.2 Demobilisation

Large-scale demobilisation poses a major problem in most conflict-affected areas. Demobilised fighters face specific problems of reintegration. They have often been brutalised by their experiences and find it difficult to fit back into their old social roles; and they may be injured or disabled. Furthermore, they are returning to economies often bankrupted by war and in which everyone is struggling to survive. The skills they have learnt as soldiers may be of little use in making a living other than through banditry. In Mali the recent outbreak of violence is linked to the inability of demobilised Tamasheq fighters to find employment either in the regular army or in the civilian economy.

In El Salvador, Mozambique, and Malawi, Oxfam have provided support for demobilisation programmes (Roseveare, 1993). In Somaliland, UNDP-OPS commissioned Zimbabweans with experience of demobilisation in Zimbabwe to advise the new administration on demobilisation there. Lack of funding, however, severely hampered that programme. In Eritrea, ACORD has plans to train ex-fighters as 'barefoot bankers' for a credit scheme, and train groups of ex-fighters as
economic units (e.g. in brick and tile making) in order to use their experience of
team-work. However, such schemes can only reach a few people. Furthermore,
demobilisation programmes which focus on providing finance, training, and
support to ex-fighters often fail to address the psychological and social problems
they and their families face on their return to civilian life. Finding a new economic
role for tens of thousands of ex-combatants is a major challenge for governments
and administrations in post-conflict situations. It is clearly not something that
NGOs alone can tackle.

Questions: How can governments, the UN, NGOs, and others support
demobilisation of combatants? Where has demobilisation been successfully carried
out and what lessons can be drawn from these examples?

8.4 Operational issues

Crisis situations often magnify weak points in organisational management, yet an
effective response in situations of armed conflict depends on organisational
capacity. Successful adaptation to working in situations of conflict will require
defining in advance organisational procedures and guidelines for working should
conflict erupt (case study 8). The following section looks at some operational issues
which organisations need to address in working in conflict situations.

Case study 8: The need for preparedness

ACORD's programme in Sablaale, Somalia, has been severely destabilised by
the conflict in the country. Targeting of programme activities became
extremely difficult as a constantly changing population in Sablaale made
previously gathered baseline data unreliable. ACORD was forced to respond
to the changes, most notably in the number of female-headed households, on a
day-to-day basis while trying to provide food relief. Unfortunately, because of
a loss of senior staff in the area, ACORD did not have in place sufficient
expertise to do this. This contributed to the local elders' ability to control and
manipulate the distribution of food.

It may be the case that no one, no matter what their background, could have
coped in such a situation. However, the development of specific systems and
operational guidelines for conflict, or the direct involvement of local
community groups counter-balancing the influence of the elders, as has been
done more recently, might well have facilitated a more effective response.

8.4.1 Staffing and management

In conflicts field teams are often cut off from their headquarters at the time that
they are most in need of support (case study 9). Senior staff may be absent for
periods of time, while others might be killed or displaced. National staff come
under considerable stress during conflicts. They may be forced into taking sides or
suffer personal trauma. If field staff are inadequately supported they will have
difficulty in responding with flexibility to emergencies. Meeting the needs of staff is therefore an important aspect of organisational management in conflict situations.

Case study 9: Operational problems in conflict

ACORD’s programme in Juba has experienced considerable operational problems. For sustained periods the town was only accessible by air. The expatriate Programme Coordinator (PC) was often absent due to the insecurity, while a number of senior staff members were displaced by a major SPLA offensive in 1992. Communications were cut off, the programme’s radio was confiscated, and for a number of years the programme has relied on the World Food Programme mail-pouch and radio. Representatives from the Secretariat and the Regional Support Structure (RSS) were unable to visit the programme for considerable periods.

As a result the programme became increasingly isolated, both physically and psychologically. Monitoring and evaluation, and reporting fell upon relatively junior members of staff, who were insufficiently trained and experienced for these roles. Programme quality inevitably suffered.

The experience in Juba illustrates the need for greater efforts to provide for communications and information flows during conflicts. However, it is inevitable that communications will suffer, and consequently, teams must be equipped with the ability to maintain programme quality should they become isolated.

The quality of programming in conflict situations clearly depends to a large extent on the capacities of the staff, and the quality of support they receive from headquarters. In emergency situations there is a tendency among NGOs to revert to relying on international staff. A problem that faces UN, NGOs, and donor agencies which rely on expatriate personnel is the high turn-over of staff and the lack of institutional memory. Considerable effort therefore needs to be invested in strengthening the capacities of local staff and equipping them with the skills, tools, and confidence to cope in such situations that will diminish the need for distance management.

ACORD’s recent experience in Somalia illustrates the extreme difficulties of long-distance management in such conditions. Staff on the ground were unprepared to cope, and unsupported, in a situation of extreme unrest. Attempts to control operations from Nairobi and London failed because no effective communications strategy under conflict conditions had been agreed upon beforehand. Guidelines concerning communication and reporting clearly need to be in place before a conflict begins; once it starts it is too late. Furthermore, a strong managing presence is also required on the ground, with at least occasional access to the programme area.
Preparedness can involve a variety of measures including a review of the most appropriate organisational structures for working in conflict situations. Team-based structures, rather than hierarchical structures, may be more capable of responding with the flexibility required. Reducing the operational presence of international NGOs, and supporting local NGOs or community organisations, may be an even better strategy.

In its programmes in the Horn of Africa, ACORD is currently attempting to incorporate these lessons into its programming. So far efforts have focused on the development of a series of indicators and a monitoring system to detect signs of turbulence, improve a programme's preparedness for it, and aid decision-making should conflict affect the programme. The indicators (on the level of communications, reporting, financial controls, managerial control, programme activities, relations with the communities, team composition, and security) are to be monitored on a regular basis, as part of normal monthly reporting requirements.

This is very much 'work in progress', an attempt to develop simple tools for monitoring programmes and their preparedness, using key indicators. The expectation is that these tools will be tested during programme activities, and that changes will be made accordingly. They are meant to aid, and not substitute for, the management process, principally by providing a mechanism which regularly raises relevant issues. Any final decision will require judgements, not only on these issues but also on likely future prospects.

ACORD have concluded that team cohesion, and team-building skills within programmes are the most important factors in enabling programmes to work in conflict situations. Programmes with a strong team ethic cope well with absences of staff members. This approach involves ensuring a balance between multi-skilled staff and specialists. The composition of teams along gender and ethnic lines can be crucial to team cohesion, and perceptions of an agency’s impartiality. Achieving a programme of well-trained and supported 'frontline staff', who are able to maintain programme quality, while isolated for periods of time, requires investment in people prior to conflicts. For ACORD, this has been something difficult to fund.

### 8.4.2 Communications

Communications are vital in conflict situations not only to maintain information flows, but also to provide psychological and other support to programme teams. If information flows and reporting were problematic in normal conditions, they are likely to worsen in situations of conflict. Communications systems such as radios are often an early target of military forces. Often, it is the technology of agencies that make them a specific target for armies and banditry. To overcome this agencies have increasingly invested in security by hiring armed guards, with implications for impartiality and their contributions to the war. Finding a way to maintain effective information flows and preparing these in advance, will go some way to ensuring an ability to support staff and continue to manage programmes.

ACORD's experience has been that some programmes are able to carry out very good work when communications have been impossible, due to good relationships with the communities and cohesive, capable teams. Strengthening people's
abilities to cope and respond flexibly to conflict situations is as important as the technology of communication, and should go hand in hand with the efforts to maintain communication systems.

8.4.3 Responsibilities

When a conflict breaks out in a country where an agency is working questions arises about staying or leaving. While staying on has often been valuable in linking emergency work to longer-term development there may be costs attached in terms of risks to staff and resources. Clarity in each situation of the costs and benefits of staying on is difficult to obtain. Some agencies (such as ICRC or MSF) have clear mandates and structures, which enable them to take certain risks. A key indicator for many agencies is whether agency staff are being deliberately targeted.

Case study 11: Programme suspensions

ACORD's programme in Gulu district, northern Uganda was repeatedly suspended between 1985 and 1988, due to conflict. At the time the programme was managed by expatriates who were based in Kampala. Within the Gulu team there remains considerable resentment about the unparticipatory and abrupt manner in which decisions to suspend programmes were made and communicated to programme staff. This resentment is heightened by the continuation of programming activities between 1991 and 1992, when the conflict was more violent. With the increasing willingness of NGOs to work in conflict situations, and the nationalisation of ACORD teams, these problems are likely to recur. In the future it will be important to maintain open and transparent dialogue about these issues, and establish guidelines about how staff are treated.

Most agencies are increasingly confronted with these issues in the course of their work. In Rwanda, events happened so quickly that there was no time for questions of programme suspension. Instead, ACORD made considerable efforts to trace staff and to rescue others whose lives were under threat. These efforts were not helped by the UN's restriction of airlifts to expatriate staff. Arrangements were made to pay those that were found alive, and to include them in future programmes, if they so wished. However, there were considerable problems with redeployment to other programmes due to security problems elsewhere.

In the event of programme suspension or closure, the responsibilities agencies have for their local staff and dependents is often unclear and poorly handled. The UN's restriction of air evacuation procedures to expatriate staff provided a stark reminder of the need to address these issues so that all staff are afforded the same protection and support in conflict situations. While terms and conditions among agencies differ, a pooling of experiences on such issues might prove extremely valuable.

Questions: What forms of organisational structure are best suited for aid agencies working in conflict situations? What training and skills can best prepare staff for working in these situations? What responsibilities do organisations have for their employees working in situations of conflict?
8.5 Advocacy and policy reform

Although agencies claim to design their interventions on the basis of need, in practice various factors determine how choices are made and which needs are responded to. The humanitarian assistance policies of major donors and the UN are among those factors delineating the political and financial criteria within which agencies such as NGOs can operate. For example, the lack of official recognition for the Somaliland government has inhibited several agencies from working in that country. If official aid to a country is suspended, for human rights reasons, long-term development programmes may suffer financial cut-backs, thus compounding the injustices being meted out to the population. The distinction between ‘development’ and ‘humanitarian’ work often has more to do with the political positions taken by governments than the demands and potential of the situation on the ground.

Increasingly, the direct involvement of governments, the UN, and their military in humanitarian activities, is having a marked effect on the political and military profile of the wars themselves, as seen clearly in Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda (section 7.1). High-profile and high-spending involvement creates its own dynamic in terms of population movements, markets and employment, prices, and the expectations of the population. At the same time, the UN is constrained by lack of resources from operating effectively and meeting its stated commitments. For example, in Bosnia donor commitments of peacekeeping forces have fallen way behind requests. In Rwanda, the US and British governments were unable to provide transport for African peacekeeping forces when requested. And yet within hours of Iraq threatening a second invasion of Kuwait, the US and British governments were able to send thousands of troops.

The inconsistency of international responses to these conflicts makes it imperative that NGOs working in conflict-prone areas develop mechanisms to influence the policy environment in which their operational and financial plans evolve. This includes, inter alia, influencing the media which themselves create pressures on governments; encouraging official preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution; pressing for UN reforms; and attempting to secure agreements on limiting the scope of the arms trade.

Questions: What are the key policy issues that relief and development organisations, donors, the UN, and other NGOs, should be working on in the light of current conflicts?

8.6 Thinking about conflict

For a number of humanitarian agencies formed in response to situations of war, armed conflict and civil disturbance has always been a strategic issue in the relief of poverty. For others this is new and uncertain territory. This paper has suggested some issues that agencies may need to address in responding to situations of armed conflict.

What are the best ways of instituting change within an organisation to take
account of these issues? Should donor agencies, for example, adapt by becoming operational? Should agencies adopt human rights into their mission statements? Should agencies train staff in conflict resolution? Rather than 'skilling up' the organisation, would an alternative be to strengthen other organisations and individuals? What is the process that agencies can go through in thinking through these options?

Oxfam in 1990, ACORD in 1993, and ActionAid in 1994, have all held workshops in Uganda to discuss the implications of conflict for their organisations. Oxfam commissioned a number of studies to complement this, including a review of Oxfam's work in conflict situations (Agerbak, 1991), on the relationship between war and famine in Africa (Duffield, 1990), the psychological impact of war (Summerfield, 1990), the sources of training in mediation (Fisher, 1990). In 1992 Save the Children convened a meeting on conflict and relief in African famines (Petty et. al. 1992). ActionAid are in the process of commissioning a study on conflict resolution and have established an internal learning group on peace, conflict, and reconciliation. As part of work on conflict issues, ACORD has convened a network on conflict, development, and peace (CODEP), which brings together NGOs, donors, and academics. In 1994, the European Liaison Committee to the European Community convened a conference on 'Conflict, Development and Military Intervention'. In 1994, IDS and IIED convened a workshop on conflict resolution and PRA. A number of agencies have sent staff for training with the Responding to Conflict Programme.

Information networks have been established in response to some specific conflicts. These include the British Agencies Afghanistan Group, and the Gulf Information Network based at the British Refugee Council, and the Inter-NGO Committee for Somalia. Is there a need for another agency that can monitor and gather information, rather than establishing ad hoc committees?

Crises produce quick reactions, but crises also demand thought. Engineers, medical teams, logisticians, and administrators, rarely have the time to think beyond the nuts and bolts of delivering aid. To understand the causes and consequences of conflict and the impact of relief interventions there is a need for a variety of social, economic, and political analysis. This means that organisations may need to become more intellectually resourced. There is a need to move beyond the constraints of 'logical frameworks' and to consider what forms of analysis can best serve organisations in identifying the strategic issues in conflict situations. With a rapid turnover of staff in emergencies, institutional memory is quickly lost; how can this knowledge be retained?

Questions: To what extent have these initiatives changed the way that aid organisations are thinking about and working in conflict situations? How can organisations think about conflict, and turn thoughts into policy and policy into action? What resources are available to help them do this?