



INTRAC

The International NGO
Training and Research Centre

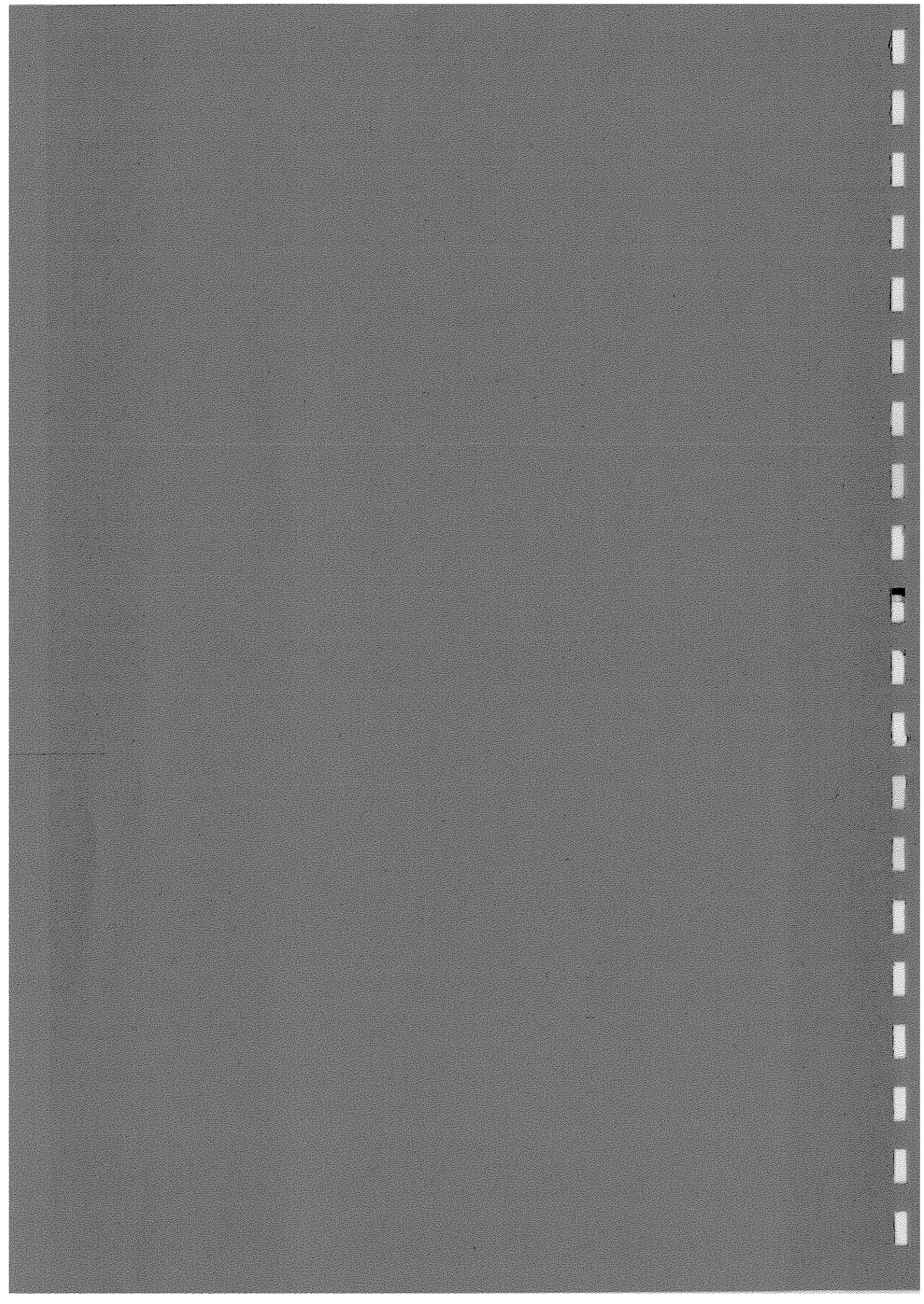
*Occasional Paper Series
Number 12*

NGO Management in Situations of Conflict

Cleo Small
August 1996

INTRAC
PO Box 563
Oxford OX2 6RZ
United Kingdom
Tel +44 (0)1865 201851
Fax +44 (0)1865 201852
e-mail: info@intrac.org

Registered Charity No. 1016676



Preface

In the last fifteen years NGOs have become increasingly involved in situations of conflict, especially civil conflict. Due to the issues of sovereignty and security, interventions in such conflict were in the past usually in the hands of international organisations such as the Red Cross family (ICRC & IFRC) and UN agencies, but today humanitarian responses increasingly include a wide range of other NGOs in central roles.

But how well are they able to respond to people's needs in situations of conflict? In what ways can NGOs most usefully contribute? And what are the organisational capacities required if they are to be effective and appropriate in their response - building on people's resiliences rather than increasing their vulnerabilities? We feel that the time is now ripe for NGOs to reflect on the ways in which they have intervened and on the difficulties they have encountered in their work and to assess the ways in which they have dealt with problems that have arisen. The lessons need to be learnt and guides to good practice developed.

INTRAC has over the past year commenced research into this area some of which has drawn on consultancy and training programmes in conflict zones (including Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Somalia, Southern Sudan). We will soon begin a major research project that will examine the roles of NGOs in complex emergencies. The research is funded by ESCOR and is being conducted by Jonathan Goodhand in collaboration with Manchester University. As a preliminary stage in the wider research Cleo Small carried out a review of the literature and held discussions with many practitioners. This led to the present examination of some of the issues and challenges NGOs face when posed with the possibility and reality of working in situations of conflict.

On the basis of this and other recent research carried out by INTRAC, for instance in Somaliland and Cambodia, we are to run a training workshop later this year (11-15 November, 1996) *Working in Long Term Conflict: Managing the Organisational Challenge*. The course, designed for NGO managers and policy makers, will be run by Hugo Slim and Jonathan Goodhand and is being funded by the ODA. Through the use of key resource people and in-depth case studies the implications of long-term conflict for the management and organisational structures of NGOs will be examined.

For more information about our work in this area please contact us, as we are keen to collaborate with other agencies and researchers in this complex and important area.

Brian Pratt, INTRAC, Director, September 1996.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to: Jo Boyden (independent consultant), Peter Chamberlain (Oxfam), Robert Dodd (Action Aid), James Fennel (CARE), Alan Fowler (INTRAC Associate), Joanna Macrae (ODI), Liz Phillipson (International Alert), Malcolm Ridout (Oxfam), Hugo Slim (CENDEP), and to Sara Gibbs, Jonathan Goodhand, Brian Pratt, Leo Thomas and all the staff at INTRAC.

Acronyms

DHA	Department of Humanitarian Affairs, UN
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
LNGO	Local non-governmental organisation
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRDU	Post War Reconstruction and Development Unit, University of York
SCF	Save the Children Fund

Contents

<i>Preface</i>		<i>i</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>		<i>ii</i>
<i>Acronyms</i>		<i>ii</i>
1.	Introduction	1
1.1	Conflict	2
1.2	Aid	2
1.3	Role for NGOs	4
2.	Problems with the Current Response	5
2.1	The Powerlessness of Relief	5
2.2	Undermining Community Coping Strategies	5
2.3	Undermining Government	6
2.4	Aid Fuels Conflict	7
2.5	Development Principles are not the New Panacea	7
3.	A New Approach? Capacities needed by NGOs	10
3.1	Understanding the Context: Theoretical Framework and Political Analysis	12
3.1.1	Understanding the causality and dynamics of long-term conflict	12
3.1.2	Resiliences and vulnerabilities	13
3.1.3	Method	15
3.1.4	Early warning	16
3.2	Organisational Assessment	16
3.3	Strategic Planning and Programming	17
3.4	Programming	20
3.4.1	Pressures on programming	20
3.4.2	Impact of conflict on programmes	20
3.4.3	New roles	21
3.4.4	Advocacy, campaigning and lobbying	22
3.4.5	Exit strategy	24
3.5	Organisational Structure and Management Systems	24
3.6	Monitoring and Evaluation	25
3.7	Institutional Learning	26
4.	Conclusion	28
	<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>29</i>

NGO Management in Situations of Conflict

1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict raises profound ethical, operational and organisational issues for relief and development agencies. (Borton, 1995)

Conflict has significantly affected 15 of the 20 poorest countries over the last decade and a half of low income countries are currently embroiled in conflict, or are considered to be in the process of post-conflict transition. Furthermore, many other countries (for example Tanzania and India) have been severely impacted by conflict in neighbouring countries (Holtzman, 1996).

At the same time, entrenched internal political instability and conflict pose deep challenges to the operation of the aid system. Prompted by the well-publicised failures of the international system to respond adequately to recent conflicts such as those in Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda, and by the perceived rising occurrence of conflict, 'conflicts' (or what have become known as 'complex political emergencies') have become the subject of an increasingly high profile debate in recent years.

At the centre of the debate are vital and pressing questions concerning the role of aid in these situations and the capacities that are critical if NGOs are to have a positive impact. Many of the very foundations of the aid system have been questioned.

Based on a review of the material from this debate and discussion with practitioners, this paper aims to explore the challenges that conflict poses to the aid system and the capacities that are vital to NGOs if they are to have a positive impact in conflict situations.

The paper has been written from the perspective of International NGOs (INGOs) although arguably much is relevant for all NGOs and also for other actors in the aid system including donor agencies.

Section 1 introduces the key themes of the debate: the characteristics of modern conflict, the changing nature of international response, and the role and potential impact of NGOs. Section 2 discusses the problems of current aid system responses, and Section 3 discusses key capacities required by NGOs. Based on the organisational model used by INTRAC, these capacities are divided into five areas: political analysis, organisational analysis, strategic planning, programming and institutional learning.

1.1 Conflict

The end of the Cold War brought optimism for a new era of global stability, and for the redirecting of much-needed investment capital to human development both at home and abroad (McCall, 1995). However, while the last decade has created opportunities for the reduction of conflict in several proxy wars, many argue that the number of conflicts has actually increased. Mark Bradbury, for example, argues that 'complex political emergencies' have increased in number from 5 to 28 in the decade to 1995 (Bradbury, 1995).

The argument for this rapid increase is not universally accepted: Joanna Macrae argues that the actual number of conflicts and the level of violence as conventionally measured, is not increasing (Macrae, 1996). What may have changed is less the existence of such conflict than awareness of it in the wider world (Minear, 1995). However, whether or not there has been a recent rapid increase to reach this current level of conflict, what is important to recognise, and what is unchanged by these arguments, is the profound impact of recent and current conflict on affected populations, and the profound challenges that it is posing to the aid system.

Causality of conflict

The end of the Cold War revealed the full reality of the complex and deeply entrenched causes of conflict. Today's conflicts are recognised as being rooted in historically located long-term processes of systemic economic crisis, associated political instability and degenerative change (Duffield, Macrae and Zwi, 1994).

These conflicts are essentially resource battles that may be crystallised around ethnic and religious boundaries (Goodhand, 1995). Conflict is conducted within, and directed at, the very fabric of society itself: the conflicts are illustrative of the 'depredation dynamic' (Duffield, 1994b) in which deliberate attempts are made to destroy people's survival strategies. A distinct feature of modern conflict is the high occurrence of civilian casualty: UNICEF figures reveal that 90% of the casualties are now civilian, compared to 10% in World War I. Impoverishment, displacement and dependence on relief are not so much by-products of war as a specific military and political objective (Keen and Wilson, 1994). Violence is used as a rational strategy for economic and political survival within the context of limited environmental resources and increasing marginalisation from the world economy (Slim, 1994). The violence may be perpetrated by 'disaffected youth' who have few other options for employment. The impact of globalisation and the search for identity in the modern era have also been suggested as driving forces in today's conflicts.

1.2 Aid

The increasing proportion of aid to 'complex political emergencies' is a well-documented trend in the international aid system. Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) for relief from OECD countries rose from less than \$500 million in 1980 to more than \$3,500 million in 1995 (DHA News, 1995). This aid is typically in the form of short-term relief.

One factor of this increased expenditure is the historic shift towards greater interventionism in war zones over the past decade (Duffield, 1994; Slim, 1996), coupled with an equally significant shift away from state-to-state funding.

Prior to the mid-1980s, the principle of sovereignty meant that direct intervention in war zones was limited to the uniquely mandated IFRC and UNICEF, and to some illicit NGO cross-border operations. State-to-state funding was by far the dominant response to an emergency. Since the 1980s, however, war zones have opened up to all manner of international humanitarian intervention (Slim, 1996). One of the principal characteristics of the changing policies is that INGOs have become one of the main instruments of international response. Possible factors underlying increased interventionism include the decline in the concept of nation-state sovereignty; increasing media pressure for the supply of humanitarian aid to an emergency, and government policy shifts away from diplomacy and towards a de-politicised response of aid.

Another factor is the rise in negotiated access, that is the process of securing the agreement of warring parties to the movement of neutral humanitarian aid (Duffield, 1994a). Negotiated access has marked the rise of work within ongoing conflict, and has also seen the emergence of a new UN/NGO relationship in which the UN secures access and funding and provides co-ordination while NGOs subcontract work for the actual relief programmes (although this division of labour is, of course, far from clear cut). The Gulf War established the principle of using military personnel to protect a UN mandated relief operation (Roberts, 1993; cited in Duffield, 1994a).

The impact of this new interventionism has, however, been far from clear. Severe problems in the UN system's ability to respond to conflict have been widely publicised. More than this though, the impact of aid itself has been thrown into question by academics, NGOs, donors and recipient populations themselves.

Questions go beyond those of technical inefficiency, to questions about the essential paradigms of humanitarianism, developmentalism and modernism (DHA News, 1995). Doubts have been raised about the idea of the temporal nature of crisis, the concept of the neutrality of aid and the belief in the beneficial impact of aid. Instead of relief stabilising the situation to eventually pave the way for development (as understood in the 'relief-development continuum'), it is now recognised that NGOs operating in conflict may not only face powerlessness but can sustain and even fuel the very conflicts that they mean to relieve: ill-considered programmes can heighten and worsen tensions, undermine community resiliences and increase dependency and vulnerability, while resources and hard currency may be indirectly or directly channelled into the war economy. NGOs may also find that their aid projects have become political targets within the conflict. These issues are discussed further in Section 2.

1.3 Role for NGOs

The debate on the impact of aid in conflict makes it easy to become negative about the role and impact that NGOs can have in situations of conflict. It may be true that the ability of aid to pave the way for peace has been overestimated, and the ability of aid to have an inflammatory impact in conflict has been severely underestimated. However, there is still a very significant role for NGOs to play in terms of providing emergency relief to communities where it is needed, and possibly helping to support community resiliences and address local causes.

The ability of NGOs to have a positive impact in conflict is, however, critically dependent upon them having certain capacities and the aim of this paper is to identify and examine these, as discussed in Section 3.

The focus of this paper is on the need for strategic planning, or what has been termed 'Strategic Management'. While working in conflict demands some specific operational capacities, much of strategic planning demands principles and techniques which are not new in themselves (Slim, 1996). In fact, many of the principles and techniques are part of what is already accepted as good practice. But these capacities become much more crucial in conflict, and can be more difficult to fulfil, not only due to the politicised insecurity itself, but because of funding and other pressures to get involved in high profile relief activities.

These are very real obstacles that must be recognised. Given the very serious impact that ill-considered intervention can have in conflict, NGOs must find a way to overcome these opposing factors. NGOs must take serious responsibility for the impact their actions have.

2. PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT RESPONSE

The natural disaster template

By far the most common response to conflict situations is the channelling of relief through INGOs. A short-term response, very similar to a response to a 'natural disaster' such as earthquake or flooding, may prevail even in situations which have been ongoing for many years.

The relief response is characterised by short cycle, project based, supply driven, mainly external interventions aimed at provision for basic needs (largely based on the supply of food, shelter and medical services).

Relief is based on the belief that the right to receive humanitarian assistance, and the right to offer it, is a fundamental humanitarian principle that should be enjoyed by all citizens of all countries (IFRC, 1994). Justifications are that it is apolitical and driven solely by humanitarian motivations, and also that it is a temporary response necessary to ensure survival and to stabilise conditions before development can take place. Intervention designs are dominated by the perception that needs are obvious and that speed of action is of prime importance.

Without doubt, there are situations where there is urgent need for the rapid provision of foodstuffs, medicine and shelter, especially given the large numbers of displaced people that are associated with these conflicts. However, the dynamics of war are very different to 'natural' disasters, which themselves are neither 'natural' nor un-complex. It is now well recognised that the natural disaster template is seriously inadequate for the reasons outlined below.

2.1 The Powerlessness of Relief

As discussed in Section 1.2. the entrenched nature of these conflicts has highlighted the powerlessness of relief to bring about the stabilisation envisaged in the concept of the relief-development continuum. Relief, with its failure to address the underlying causes of conflict (seen as a complex interaction of political, economic, social, cultural and physical factors, operating at an international, national or local and individual level, in which 'development' itself has played a part), cannot adequately respond to a situation in which conflict may have become a social reality in itself with no guarantee that it will come to an end.

Relief does not address the causes of conflict and at best addresses only a limited number of its effects.

2.2 Undermining Community Coping Strategies

Relief can also undermine a community's ability to withstand and resolve conflict by failing to recognise the resiliences that exist. In past emergencies, people have been treated as 'recipients' of relief services, with an underlying assumption that they could not and were not doing anything on their own (Alan Fowler, personal communication).

Although attempts may be made to work, for example, through community leaders, too often there is insufficient emphasis on consultation and planning with communities. Relief is still dogged by the top-down importation of ready-made ideas. Too often imported relief resources undercut local producers and traders, and aid agencies override and overrun community decision making systems or co-operative relations. This can create dependency, add to social tension and arguably destroy structures which potentially hold opportunities for dealing with the conflict.

Relief can also break down communities with its 'magnetic' effect: food, health care and education services offered within camps may be better than those outside, thus actually stimulating displacement to the camps.

2.3 Undermining Government

There are currently no clear guidelines or agreed principles for how NGOs are to work with government, local civil and political authorities and local structures over the long term in conflict (Duffield, 1994a). The IFRC Code of Conduct (RRN, 1995) has a general endeavour that NGOs 'co-operate with local government structures where appropriate' but the question of what is appropriate remains undefined. Although there are some NGOs, such as SCF, with a policy of working with government structures wherever possible, many others occupy the space of and compete with governments without any theory to justify this.

When the state is one of the belligerents against the population, the question of whether to work with state structures plainly becomes a serious strategic problem. In these cases support for the government may endanger the project through loss of neutrality, as well as going against the moral values of the NGO workers. In such contexts the inability of the host government to regulate NGO activities may be seen as a positive circumstance.

However, bypassing the government may have many costs if the government is a legitimate structure. The severe and chronic breakdown in the functioning of a government is a common element of 'complex political emergencies' but this may be due to economic crisis, international isolation of an existing regime or perhaps a completely new government rather than a loss of legitimacy (Bennett, 1995).

Bypassing the government can weaken its status and thereby reduce the responsibility it holds to its citizens. Arguably, this weakening will undermine the capacity of government to address the causes of conflict and its ability to negotiate peace. Many opportunities are also lost for increasing the sustainability of the work and for making a real contribution to institutional development. The government may lose staff as its officials are attracted away to the higher aid salaries.

While acknowledging the great difficulties that exist in the highly politicised and insecure environment of conflict, NGOs must aim to strengthen, support and supplement the capacity of government wherever this is legitimate, not replace it or undermine it. What is wanted is a win-win situation, as opposed to one that is zero-sum. It may be possible for NGOs to work through government structures at the local level rather than at the national level which may be more highly politicised. The local

level may retain a legitimacy and distance from the conflict that national government has lost.

In some cases the affected government may easily become overloaded by a huge influx of aid machinery, but in this case the priority should be to increase government capacity. Capacity building of other structures must be considered in terms of the impact that it has on the state. Clearer policy directives from NGO head offices will help to avoid a negative backlash from governments that is, unfortunately, becoming all too common (Bennett, 1995).

2.4 Aid Fuels Conflict

Most seriously, in the highly politicised environment of these complex political emergencies, relief has actually become the very fuel to sustain and exacerbate conflict, and this may occur in more than one way.

In current conflict the distinction between combatants and civilians has broken down, as was clearly the case in the Rwandan refugee camps. As such, support to civilians cannot be isolated from support to those taking active part in the instability and violence.

In addition, NGOs aiming to introduce resources into the resource-scarce environment may unintentionally free-up internal resources for the war economy as well as increase tensions and affect the balance of power between groups.

Furthermore, increased use of negotiated access has meant growing acceptance of the channelling of resources directly into the war economy. In Ethiopia, relief food was regularly used to feed the government troops and especially the unpaid peasant militia. Similar diversions have occurred on both sides of the conflict in Sudan (Duffield, 1995). Large proportions are accepted as 'loss' in the process of getting access, on the basis that the small amount that does enter occupied areas will ensure the survival of the vulnerable and may pave the way for peace. But is this argument justifiable? The aid which does reach the communities will often be distributed by the local commanders, not following objective need but reflecting social and political relations (Duffield, 1992). The majority may go directly to the soldiers.

Aid has become drawn into structures that support or aggravate the conflict, as well as putting NGO staff, and potentially communities with which NGOs are working, at risk. There is an urgent need for a profound rethinking of the aid system's response.

2.5 Development Principles are not the New Panacea

Analysis of the impact of aid in conflict leaves the relief approach wide open for criticism. Unless the approach is community-based, needs will not be identified, local resources will not be recognised and aid will be susceptible to manipulation. In response to this, there has been much talk of the need to incorporate development principles and these have been put forward as the new panacea.

The development approach is based on the ideas of strengthening people's capacity to develop their own values and priorities, and to organise themselves to act on these: empowering women and men to bring about positive changes in their lives (Eade and Williams, 1995).

Only by using a development approach, it is argued, are viable alternatives to violence to be found. The basis for work must fundamentally include the building of local capacities, including capacity building of indigenous structures and local NGOs. The work should rely on indigenous knowledge systems and, in addition, NGOs should work with women and other groups which are normally marginalised in decision making. Programming should be adaptable and flexible; there should be delegation of decision making to the field level and a willingness to innovate (Bradbury and Shepherd, 1995).

The way forward is not, however, as simple as replacing relief with development principles. Rather than development being the direct converse to relief, both relief and development concepts are, of course, devised from the one model that sees crisis as a temporary 'blip' amidst the normality of stability. Development concepts that are devised on an assumption of stable and sequential progress do not translate easily into the instability of conflict and hold many opportunities for provoking the conflict further. Agencies are finding that the distinction between relief and development is increasingly irrelevant to the chronic instability experienced by their operations (Borton, 1995).

The difficulties of applying development principles to the context of conflict are revealed in many ways. There are many challenges to development work, for example, given the difficulties of transport and communication, the collapse of markets, the lack of raw materials, staff insecurity, large population movements and the difficulties of planning. If 850,000 displaced people arrive at a site in 5 days, a development approach alone is clearly inadequate. In addition, the traditional model of development is based on communal, collaborative initiatives. Where instability and violence have undermined trust such initiatives may not be possible. It may also be very difficult to find neutral, impartial and legitimate 'partner' organisations through which to work. Many leaders and skilled members of the population may have been killed or fled the country.

Furthermore, the extent to which the underlying causes of conflict are within the reach of the development approach must be seriously considered. Also, the development framework contains no explanation as to why conflict may become entrenched; nor why physical structures that may be built (including schools, hospitals, grain stores, etc.) may become targets for destruction; or why work to empower some sectors of society, and work to strengthen community structures, may risk being in direct opposition to the aims of warring factions. The ideologies of the factions may inhibit the setting up of alternative community structures which are seen to be a threat to faction power. Development work may thus fuel the conflict and directly endanger those people who are meant to be 'empowered'.

The development framework also gives no guidance for a situation such as that in the Goma camps after the crisis in Rwanda. In this case, agencies found that support of

community-based initiatives in the camps was actually increasing tension by empowering those who were commonly known to be leaders of the genocide and who were gathering strength for future violence, as well as increasing tensions with the surrounding community. Some aid agencies reached the conclusion that promoting vulnerabilities — and thus promoting the return of the refugees to Rwanda — was in fact the 'least worst' option.

The development framework as it is frequently discussed these days has become almost entirely de-politicised. Unless interventions are fully based on a commitment to understanding the context (including the political context), the development framework may have as much potential for a negative impact as the relief approach.

Lastly, the development approach is also difficult to apply given the far greater ease of getting funding for relief, relief's higher profile (also important for getting funding), and the driving force of the impetus to 'do something' in the face of huge complexity and the unlimited needs of the affected population. Preparedness and contingency planning are not encouraged by the donor community and there is inadequate up-front funding. NGOs are assessed according to their income, cost effectiveness and aid delivery (Goodhand & Chamberlain, 1996) and this will often be a strong disincentive for development work.

3.

A NEW APPROACH? THE CAPACITIES NEEDED BY NGOs

It is clear that the aid system must re-think its response to conflict. Conflict demands specific skills, such as the ability to develop systems for distance management; and for staff security. However, the need is not to define a new 'third approach' so much as an alternative to the relief and development paradigms.

Conflict demands flexibility and adaptability to context, not a fixed strategy: in some contexts there is a role for the provision of relief supplies, and for outside intervention. In others, the need is plainly for a community-based development approach. Specific operational capacities demanded will vary according to different contexts and according to the needs of different actors (human rights groups, funding groups, relief and development groups for example). The challenge of conflict goes beyond technical skills to the need to reassess core organisational capacities.

What is most needed, and what is different from relief and development as often practised, is greater commitment to understanding the reality of conflict and a vital commitment to both political and organisational analysis prior to and during intervention. In addition, the ability to use this analysis to construct a strategic plan and to continue to adjust this plan as appropriate is essential. Instead, of being an alternative to relief and development, the development of an appropriate approach to conflict must inform practice that is carried out under 'stable' conditions or 'natural' emergencies.

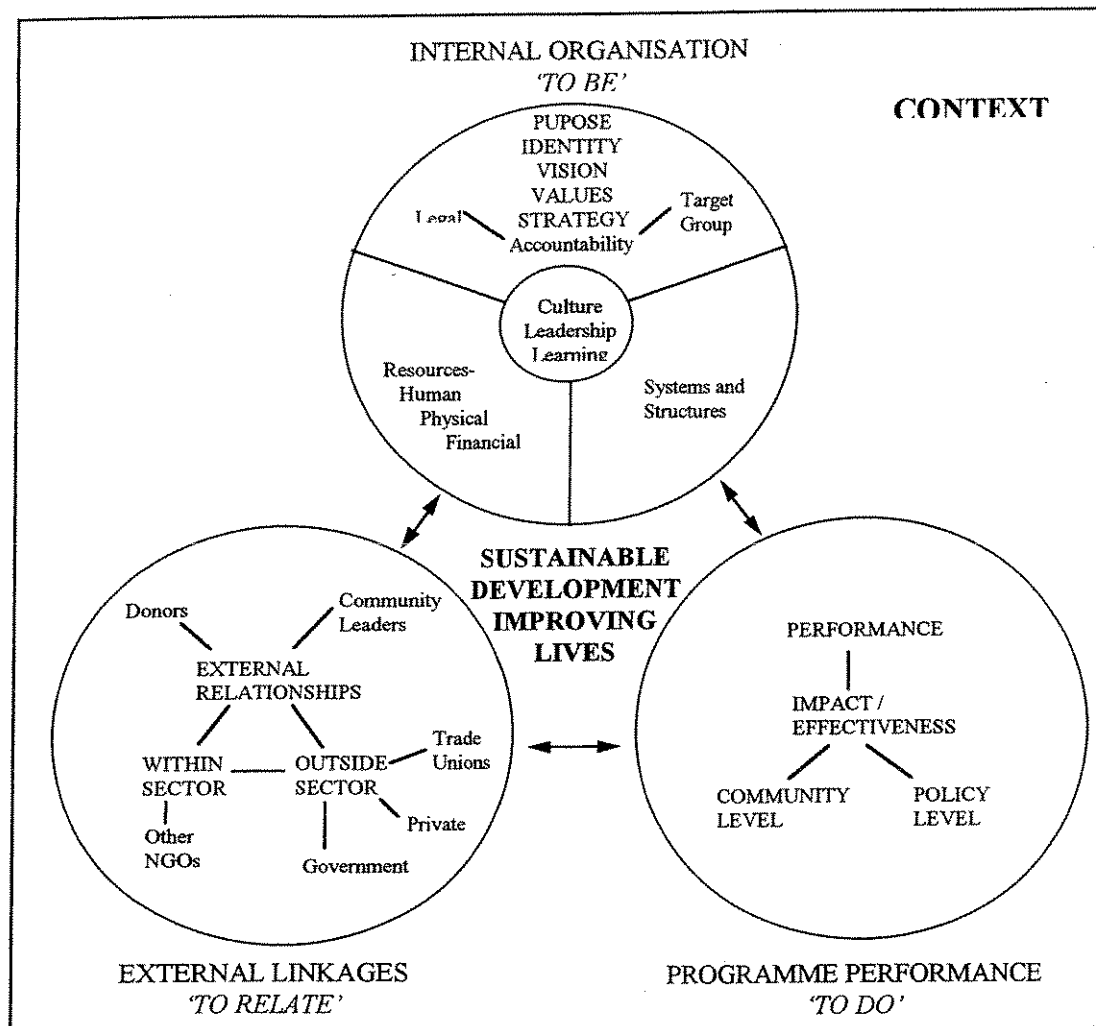
What becomes clear is that although some skills and capacities needed in conflict are specific, not all are new. Many of these capacities have been argued to be the very comparative advantages of NGOs (such as flexibility, innovation and links to the grassroots). The circumstances of conflict, however, put particular challenges to these capacities and bring out any weaknesses of NGO management and programming that may exist, but be unapparent, under stable conditions.

...extreme conditions may help us to recognise truths which are present more subtly elsewhere. (Chamberlain, 1994)

In order to identify the challenges that conflict poses, a model of the organisation will be used that has been developed by INTRAC and its associates. This is not the only possible organisational model but is useful in understanding the different structures and systems which make up an organisation's capacity to operate effectively. The model begins at the level of organisational identity and mission and then works outwards to management systems and structures, relations with others, and programming and technical capacity.

The first set of capacities to discuss are those connected with an NGOs analysis of the context.

Figure 1: An Organisational Framework



Campbell/Fowler (developed as part of INTRAC/WUS Programme)

Institutional development

Although this paper has been written from an INGO perspective, there must be change and development of capacities within all levels of the aid system in order to improve the impact of aid, and there is a role for INGOs in bringing this about. Institutional Development involves not only capacity building with partners but also, crucially, relating to donor agencies who have a significant impact on the nature of aid through the agendas they set. There needs to be work done (by INGOs and LNGOs collaboratively) to improve the 'enabling environment', although this is often hampered by the dependence of NGOs on donors for funding.

3.1 Understanding the Context: Theoretical Framework and Political Analysis

3.1.1 Understanding the causality and dynamics of long-term conflict

A lack of curiosity about social and cultural causality invites operational responses which are insensitive to local social and cultural conditions...increasing civilian jeopardy. (Boyden & Gibbs, 1996)

Interventions must be based on a committed attempt to understand the context if they are to meet real need and avoid exacerbation of the conflict.

As already stressed, it is critically important to understand the unique and complex set of causes that lie behind each conflict, including those which lie well beyond the scope of an NGO's work. It is essential that there be a strong **baseline assessment**, along with a monitoring process that follows the conflict's mutations. Systems of analysis need to be worked out prior to intervention.

Underlying causes may be other than the explicit focus of the instability: the focus (whether based on territorial claims or ethnic or ideological opposition) may be being used as a rallying point to gather support for what may actually be a different agenda. The conflict may also be a case of 'blaming the other' as an outlet for deeper-rooted discontent.

The search for understanding of conflict must go beyond analysis of causality to also include analysis of the function of conflict. It must identify who the war may be **benefiting**: who are the winners and losers.

A questionable aspect currently under debate is the overriding interest in restoring harmony. What must be recognised is that harmony does not mean freedom from oppression. Imposing a cease-fire is not necessarily equivalent to acting in the best interests of a community. 'Trading justice for harmony is one of the unrecognised fall-outs of the 1960s' (Laura Nader, quoted in Voutira and Whitshaw-Brown, 1995).

This has implications for the 'organisational positioning' of an NGO in relation to other actors within the conflict. It raises the question of whether NGO interventions should be based on neutrality or solidarity. The central dilemma of the issue of neutrality is that in a context, for example, of oppression, is it in the best interests of the community for an NGO to be neutral, irrespective of how neutrality may compromise that NGO's commitments to human rights' charters as well as its core values? On the other hand, is it possible to adopt anything other than the principle of neutrality if human rights are to be respected and long-term security of the aid system protected? While neutrality might ignore the lines of conflict within a society, solidarity might make the mistake of believing them to be clearly drawn (Slim, 1994).

MSF and other groups adopt a principle of 'active neutrality' in which an organisation works with politicised groups on both sides. This method is widely accepted, though it has many risks of its own. In the tension of conflict it can be that each side perceives the NGO as giving greater support to the other. Also, when relief is distributed directly to the political groups, how much control can the NGO have in terms of ensuring that materials reach those in need?

Duffield introduces another aspect to the neutrality/solidarity debate which is that NGO support for the dominant side may actually be almost impossible to avoid, even if NGOs aim to be neutral.

Especially in a situation of internal war or of divided governance, NGO relief operations, lacking an international mandate or externally guaranteed access, will almost inevitably be co-opted by one side or the other. (Duffield, 1995)

Clearly, this particular aspect of conflict is one of the most difficult dilemmas. NGOs must devise ways of working that do not increase the tensions between groups, and do not endanger the NGO, and yet are compatible with the organisation's own values, compatible with humanitarian law and meet the needs of the community. This may be impossible to resolve.

It is not only work within communities that risks loss of neutrality. Within refugee camps there may be enormous potential for tension and violence between different groups. Even the setting up of a water supply within a camp can be a very political issue (Chalinder, 1994).

In addition, there has often been insufficient consideration of the impact of the camps on the local population, including massive depletion of local resources, and disruption of local markets and the local economy, as well as ideological opposition, with the real risk of sparking conflict.

3.1.2 Resiliences and vulnerabilities

Organisational positioning crucially relies on political analysis and one analytical tool that NGOs could use is the resilience and vulnerability framework.

The resilience and vulnerability framework was originally devised by Anderson and Woodrow to identify the particular needs and requirements of a community or of vulnerable groups or individuals within that community, given a consideration of factors operating at a local, national or international level. The resilience and vulnerability framework operates reasonably well in 'natural' emergencies and is arguably also helpful in analysis of 'man-made' conflict.

Using this framework, 'vulnerabilities' are the long-term factors (either global or local) which make a state/region/community or individual susceptible to conflict. 'Resiliences' (sometimes referred to as 'capacities' though not to be confused with NGO capacities) are the strengths with which a state/region/community or individual might resist, withstand or resolve instability or violence. Different individuals within a

community will have different vulnerabilities and resiliences, according to age, class, ethnicity and gender. Resiliences and vulnerabilities can also vary greatly over time.

As mentioned in Section 2.2, all actors in the aid system may have a positive or negative effect on resiliences and vulnerabilities, directly or indirectly (donor funding strategies have an indirect impact, for example). The impact of an intervention may not be clear-cut: whilst reducing some of the symptoms of conflict, the aid system may actually be increasing vulnerability in other ways (for example, by creating dependence, channelling resources to the war economy, undermining local decision-making structures, distorting markets or fuelling tensions between groups).

As originally devised, the resiliences and vulnerabilities were divided into social, cultural and economic categories. To this has been added a political category, particularly important in conflict situations. Where warlords hold undemocratic sway, for instance, vulnerability analysis must include reference to the relation of individuals and communities to these warlords. In conflict, the exacerbation of vulnerabilities and the destruction of capacities may be the specific political aims of warring factions. For examples of resiliences and vulnerabilities, see box below.

BOX 1: Examples of Community Resiliences and Vulnerabilities

PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCES

- Security from natural hazards, industrial accidents, pollution, land mines
- Access to/purchasing power for 'basic' resources (food, water, fuel, shelter, clothes, medications)
- Access to processes of production (including access to productive land and inputs/technologies; protection from environmental degradation); or access to other forms of assured income. Also, access to alternatives if first are disrupted
- Access to infrastructure, trade networks, markets
- Transferable skills

SOCIAL RESILIENCES (relationships, services, structures)

- Access to services (health care, education, police, legal system)
- Cohesion of family/community
- Existence/maintenance of local coping mechanisms. These involve social networks at different levels: family, community. Examples include: remittances (important), rural-urban exchanges, sharing and exchange of food and goods between groups, trading, eating wild product (spread and diversity of contacts, patronage systems, church)

POLITICAL RESILIENCES

- Existence of, and authority of, local decision-making systems, ability of leaders to give moral authority, negotiate, mediate, and ability of community to have consensus and respect this authority. This also includes the maintenance or development of information networks for conflict resolution, including networking between social organisations
- Representation, political freedom and protection of human rights
- Relation to local power holders (may be a function of ethnic group, family)
- Rights and entitlements of women, different cultural and religious groups, minority groups, vulnerable groups, and ability to maintain these in conflict

CULTURAL RESILIENCES (norms, values, attitudes)

- Maintenance of social belief systems, systems of social affirmation (and therefore social cohesion, social unity, a sense of confidence in the future, a sense of identity, continuity of cultural meaning)
- Sense of ability to bring about change/plan effectively
- Ability to cope with trauma, uncertainty, insecurity

As the box above shows, analysis must include identification of local coping mechanisms, local decision-making structures and local conflict resolution mechanisms. Analysis must also identify key actors within the community, and the power balances and tensions between groups and individuals. This analysis is crucial for appropriate strategic planning and programming.

In addition, analysis involves identification of groups that may be threatened by the NGO's work, groups with whom the NGO could make links, and groups that have a vested interest in the NGO's continued operation.

In conflict situations which are typically complex and rapidly changing, resilience and vulnerability analysis is not only more difficult to undertake, but more necessary given the consequences of ill-designed programmes. A strong commitment to continuous and sensitive monitoring is required.

3.1.3 Method

To perform a thorough analysis, NGOs require rapid and easy access to reliable information including, for example, information on the likely length of the conflict, the numbers affected, the local resiliences and vulnerabilities and the activities of other groups (including local government, UN, other NGOs, local population). In conflict, information gathering can be extremely difficult for many reasons.

Firstly, there is the physical danger of the extensive travelling and exposure within a war zone that information gathering may require. Much more than this, however, is the fact that information itself is intensely political and therefore gathering it may entail great danger to all parties involved. In addition, information that is available is liable to be heavily distorted by political interests: information is disseminated as a political instrument.

Another problem is that in the midst of emergency the gathering of data can appear to be a low priority. If conflict is considered temporary, then data collection can seem unimportant, especially if needs are seen to be overwhelming and obvious. Many NGOs feel that there are benefits in specialising, for instance in water, sanitation, food or shelter. At the same time, however, familiarity with a particular specialisation can make it too easy for an agency to assume that it knows what the community's needs are without seeing the whole picture.

The commitment to assessment is made more difficult by the urgency of the situation, intense media pressure to get rapidly involved, increasing competition between NGOs and the difficulty of getting funding for assessment or 'alternative projects'.

Furthermore, any analysis is subjective and there may be very different perceptions of the situation, and what the needs are, from different parties. This can lead to difficulties in relationships between NGOs and the community, government and partner organisations, and between different NGOs trying to collaborate, and make it very difficult to convert information gathered into a strategic plan that is accepted by all parties.

Nevertheless, NGOs must seek means to commit more time and resources to developing and operating systems for information gathering. Triangulation (cross-checking of information with a minimum of three sources) is important to validate information as far as possible, and there is ongoing research into other methods to overcome data manipulation. Gathering information from within an organisation's staff can be a valuable process that may be overlooked.

Information gathering is also vital for early warning (3.1.4), organisational assessment (3.2) and monitoring and evaluation (3.6).

3.1.4 Early warning

The use of information gathering discussed so far relates to the response to conflict, but arguably a very important use of political analysis is for **early warning**. Given the entrenched nature of conflict and the limitations of the international response to conflict, the benefits of preventative action are clear.

Much work is being done on developing early warning systems. Andrew Acland, for example, has drawn up a list of behaviour patterns (cited in Slim, 1996) which he associates with the onset of conflict. Early warning needs good systems of exchange of information and research between academic, NGOs, intergovernmental organisations and governments. Human rights monitoring groups such as Amnesty International, Africa Rights and Human Rights Watch may have an important contribution to make.

There are many technical challenges of conflict early warning, but the biggest problem is well recognised: how to ensure that information is translated into preventative action. Also, what forms of preventative action are possible and appropriate?

3.2 Organisational Assessment

In addition to analysis of the external environment, internal assessment of an organisation's capacities and competencies is a vital step before strategic planning can take place. An organisation's structure, its competencies and weaknesses will clearly have a great impact on what an NGO can achieve.

As introduced at the beginning of Section 3, organisational capacity depends on the strength of an organisation's identity, its structure, systems and management as well as the skills and experience of staff and team cohesion.

Identity

A clear identity forms the essence of an effective NGO, especially within the challenging context of conflict. Identity, or mission, concerns what the NGO is for, not just what it does. Identity is formed by the values of the organisation and its competencies, but also in relation to the external context and in relation to other actors such as other NGOs, governments, donors and the community within which it works.

Structure, systems, management

Developing sound structure, systems and management is not usually an explicit priority for most NGOs. Most of their planning efforts focus on programme and operational issues while the important processes of organisational growth and

development are rarely the subject of careful and deliberate planning (Sahley, 1995). This is especially true for NGOs operating under the pressures of a conflict situation, while in these contexts the need for strong and competent organisations is more vital than ever.

Effective NGOs, however, must find space to assess and develop organisational capacity and identity. These issues are explored in more detail in Section 3.5.

Assessment of competencies amounts to a process of self-regulation: NGOs must have the capacity to decide when it is inappropriate for them to intervene. Clearly, other forms of regulation are needed when NGOs are not regulating themselves sufficiently. Even for those committed to self-assessment, there may be almost impossible decisions to be made between intervening and risking escalation of the conflict, or doing nothing (Anderson, 1994).

As with external analysis, it is important that organisational analysis be an ongoing process as both a conflict and the organisation itself undergo change. Again, this can be a difficult task in highly politicised, turbulent situations.

3.3 Strategic Planning and Programming

The value of conflict and organisational analysis lies in the translation of this information into an appropriate course of action, i.e. the process of initial and ongoing organisational positioning.

Organisational positioning/strategic planning involves both establishing the most appropriate relations with other groups involved in the conflict (discussed below) as well as decisions as to the type of programme in which to be involved (see Section 3.4).

Relations with others

A key step in strategic planning regards the relations that the NGO will aim to establish between itself and other groups. While the aid response to conflict has been dominated by INGOs going directly operational and acting fairly independently, there is a need to strengthen ideas of alternative strategies. NGOs may choose instead to support government structures (as discussed in Section 2.3), indigenous structures, local NGOs or local umbrella organisations. Conflict may pose challenges to establishing relations with others, but the advantages must be seriously considered. Another consideration regards the relation that the NGO will establish between itself and the warring factions — the growing practice of negotiated access must be thought through. There is also a need for better co-ordination between the many actors involved in conflict response.

Capacity building with local NGOs

Capacity building with local NGOs is a principal aim of current development practice. In these highly politicised environments, however, there may be serious difficulties in terms of trying to find (or create) suitable and legitimate groups to support, and in some cases it may be impossible. Even under stable conditions, the strengthening of indigenous structures or a LINGO may affect one sector of society more than another.

In conflict, the consequences are far more critical. If there are no impartial groups to support, should an agency support a partial group? Should the agency support politicised groups with whom it has common values, or should it give equal support to such groups from all contesting factions? Alternatively, if there are no impartial groups to support, should the NGO decide to become directly operational itself, or decide not to intervene at all? Agencies working in conflict situations may face profound ethical dilemmas relating again to issues of neutrality and solidarity. If agencies are to be able to resolve such issues, they must be able to rely on good communication systems between headquarters and the field, clear delegation of decision-making responsibilities and a strong and shared conception of NGO identity.

Even if neutral or suitable groups can be found, the building of relations of trust and common vision will be made more difficult by the context of instability, and the difficulties of travel.

Questions are often raised over the role that LNGOs have in conflict. This question is also posed in relation to LNGOs in stable conditions, but in conflict it becomes even more relevant given the pressure for LNGOs to emerge quickly following the massive influx of aid. Do LNGOs really have legitimacy and a constituency in the local community, or are they just opportunists acting in their own self-interest? Basing a project on capacity building does not in itself ensure that local structures will not be undermined: indigenous structures may get bypassed or pushed aside by initiatives to support new local NGOs. Furthermore, the support of LNGOs does not guarantee that the poorest and most vulnerable will benefit. Existing disparities may become entrenched.

There is also a danger of local initiatives being suffocated by over-zealous support, and the danger that the strengthening of groups may lead to them being targeted by the warring factions.

Consideration of the role for LNGOs should also reflect that LNGOs may function as a survival strategy for the community — a source of employment. Many LNGOs will become service contractors and not be motivated to any deeper vision. However, should LNGOs resembling businesses be dismissed as illegitimate just because they don't fit our own judgement of what an NGO should be?

Different LNGOs serve different important functions, and the variety of different LNGOs is not necessarily a failing. In a particular conflict context, the best-suited LNGO may not necessarily be a monolithic institution. It may be appropriate that a proportion of LNGOs function only for a short time before breaking up and reforming as something else ('virtual organisations'). Certain LNGOs represent the nascent private sector — something essential for the future. Different types of LNGO can help to strengthen community resiliences in different ways (for example by harbouring and developing future leaders) and this should be respected. It should also be noted that the same questions about role and mandate could just as well be asked of INGOs.

If INGO capacity-building programmes are to be successful it is vital that the political orientation of groups be identified, and the different functions that various kinds of NGOs can serve be understood. INGOs must be able to distinguish between

organisations with community representation, businesses or political pressure groups and support each as and if appropriate to the context and the needs of the community, as well as to the values and competencies of the INGO. Capacity building must not be imposed according to a pre-set formula.

INGOs must also be aware of the differences between true capacity building and donor pressure for indigenisation as part of a process of withdrawal. With indigenisation, capacity building may be used as a tool to legitimise a process which has been embarked on anyway and is characteristically donor driven and top-down, not bottom-up, leaving structures built on imported models which are less likely to be sustainable in the long term.

Alternatives

NGOs can also provide support to umbrella organisations and LNNGO support organisations that often find it hard to get funding and yet can be an important part of institutional development of the local NGO sector. If supported appropriately, such umbrellas or support organisations can not only give practical support but also a voice to the local NGO sector, and reduce competition between groups by increasing dialogue and understanding. Difficulties may occur, however, if an umbrella group is simply formed from a particularly strong local NGO without consideration for the competitive feelings or mistrust that this may arouse.

It has been suggested that religious structures may also be appropriate for NGOs to support and could have the capacity to revive traditional values which could have a role in providing alternatives to violence. NGOs also are involved in supporting 'indigenous' structures such as the elders in Somalia. Such support may build on community resiliences and may provide continuity with the past, and these structures may have more legitimacy than NGOs. As in the support for local NGOs or governments, however, such support in itself does not guarantee that the poorest or most vulnerable groups will benefit. Support may also endanger these structures in terms of putting them at risk from the warring factions or swamping them with resources. Also, choice of support will again crucially depend on political affiliation and organisational position in relation to neutrality or solidarity. Support of this kind also raises questions about the role of INGOs in civil society. The real long-term impact of such external interventions on these structures must be carefully thought through before such interventions are attempted.

Co-ordination

It is widely agreed that systems are needed to improve co-ordination between different NGOs; and between NGOs and government and community-based organisations. In particular, there is a need for co-ordination at a planning and policy level that goes beyond a mere geographical division of labour.

On some occasions, such as in Goma, co-ordination has been successful to some extent, facilitated by the channelling of most funding through the UNHCR (though UNHCR had much less success with co-ordination in Rwanda). However, in Goma it was still difficult to get a lasting coalition of NGOs even for administrative tasks, let alone political objectives. Many NGOs refused to accept a political interpretation of the disaster (Chamberlain, personal communication).

Co-ordination is also hampered by the well-recognised problem that NGOs are competing with each other for funding and profile. Many agencies are keen to be involved in high-profile media activities such as the provision of food aid or child health care, whilst many low profile but important areas risk being overlooked by donors and NGOs alike, including for example, sewage systems, or work in prisons. Without adequate co-ordination of activities, the effectiveness of programmes is severely hampered; work will be duplicated, areas left out, and agencies risk working at cross purposes and in direct opposition to each other. Security of the whole aid sector will also benefit if NGOs agree to a common code of conduct and act with at least some form of unified voice. This principle itself is not straightforward however. There have been occasions, for example in Somalia, when NGOs have felt that association with the UN system would result in increased risk as the UN was perceived to have taken sides.

3.4 Programming

Whether they are to be directly operational or working to support other organisations, NGOs must make key decisions on the focus and scope of programmes: whether programmes are veterinary, literacy or agricultural projects, the provision of primary health services, human rights monitoring, or capacity building of local structures.

3.4.1 Pressures on programming

Ideally, programme design is a participatory process thoroughly based on comprehensive political analysis, organisational analysis and analysis of other factors, described above. In reality, programme design may also be heavily influenced by other demands, including financial needs, the need to maintain a high profile and pressures from the media and supporters. These demands may be such that an organisation may find itself compelled to intervene in a situation and in a certain way, despite objective grounds for not doing so. This can also happen when an NGO finds that it has got 'caught up in conflict' which develops in a country where it is already established.

In this way, organisations may be driven to get involved in a situation where, in fact, they do not have the appropriate competencies. The decision as to what programmes to conduct may often be largely determined by the already existing competencies of the organisation rather than being based on need. Organisations must reassess their core values and mission as a means to resist such pressures.

3.4.2 Impact of conflict on programmes

Under the constraints of conflict, needs cannot be addressed in the same way as in stable conditions.

It has been argued that INGOs should not concentrate on projects with a production focus, but instead look at strengthening portable skills and assets (including human resources), the regeneration of social and political structures (including social networks), and social cohesion (Anderson and Woodrow, 1990; Chamberlain, 1994; RRN, 1995). The reasons for this are that fixed physical assets are easily destroyed and that material aid may be very expensive to protect and could be a source of fraud and other problems. In addition, INGOs are arguably unable to understand the

complexity of the situation sufficiently to operate projects effectively. People may evacuate during conflict — especially the more skilled ones — but they can, and do, return, often to resume their former role in aid work.

Programmes must be able to withstand a discontinuity of management that may be imposed by the instability. Programming must also include contingency planning: preparation for different phases or fluctuations in conflict. It is also important to analyse what type of programme is possible under different conditions of conflict. Is it possible to identify the minimum pre-conditions necessary for an NGO response to be effective? Robert Dodd of Action Aid is currently working on this issue.

If levels of conflict are high, and programmes are not possible, an NGO needs to decide if a witness function alone justifies a continued presence. It can often be extremely difficult to leave given that immediate staff and community feel the need for support. But up to what point does this justify the high costs of retaining a presence?

Programming also needs to be able to recognise what have been termed 'stabilising points' (in reference to chaos theory): structures, groups, charismatic individuals, events, specific issues or ideas that provide a centre around which stability and co-operation may be built. NGOs must be able to identify these so that they may become stabilising points themselves (Slim, 1996).

Similarly, NGOs must be able to perceive 'windows of opportunity' and 'critical thresholds': moments and opportunities which are crossroads in the conflict, offering a possibility to break the cycle of violence if they are taken advantage of and supported. An example might be the concept of the 'peace zones' in the Philippines, or an opportunity to support a land rights claim. Unfortunately, it is much easier to recognise these opportunities with hindsight (Adams and Bradbury, 1994; Slim, 1996).

It is important that NGOs can recognise the opportunities that conflict may offer. Conflict may promote the emergence of new groups, a new role for women, for example, or the growth of a sense of social cohesion in adversity.

3.4.3 New roles

When programming in conflict, NGOs may also find themselves with the opportunity to play a new role, or they may find a new role being thrust upon them.

An organisation, for instance, might find itself in a position whereby it can make a positive contribution by taking up a role as a co-ordinating body, or as a spokesperson for a certain group or issue. Not all new roles may be appropriate however. New roles must be taken up only on the basis of an in-depth understanding of the context.

Conflict resolution and mediation are roles that have been increasingly discussed in relation to NGOs and conflict but this is a very difficult and potentially very hazardous area to get involved in. It may be that an agency that has been around for a long time in an area finds that it has the opportunity for such a role, based on established trust and the request of the community itself. However, for relief or development NGOs to start using conflict resolution as a basis for intervention is, arguably, very different and dangerous. Conflict resolution work can legitimise illegitimate groups and undermine

local conflict resolution mechanisms; it can impose a conception of 'peace' that is alien and inappropriate to the context, as discussed at the beginning of Section 3. Most of all it risks backfiring and heightening the conflict, endangering the NGO and the communities with which it is working. There are many reasons to believe that conflict resolution should be left to those who have in-depth knowledge of the context and great experience of such mediation. In so far as there is a role for an outside group, NGOs should leave this to specialised groups such as the Quakers who have many years of experience, or organisations such as the Carter Centre, Reconciliation International, the Peace Brigades or International Alert¹.

At the same time, however, negotiation, in terms of the capacity for negotiation within the NGO, and between the NGO and its external relations, is a key capacity for NGOs and one that is too often left out of staff training.

Rather than conflict resolution, what may be a more appropriate role for NGOs is some sort of conflict prevention or tension dissipation function brought about **indirectly** through projects which in the course of things bring different groups of people together, increasing dialogue and supporting the building of trust, e.g. a water project. Nevertheless, this again could have very serious and dangerous consequences if not done with the utmost care and sensitivity.

Demilitarisation

Demilitarisation programmes are something in which it has been suggested that NGOs can play a real part. For combatants, the conflict may have become a way of life and it may be that they have few other options. Combatants may have been separated from their families and villages at a young age: in Cambodia, 75% of recruits were less than 20 years old, and 43% were 10–16 (Boyden and Gibbs, 1996). They have few other employment options and no former social role to fit back into. Finding a new economic and social role is a major challenge which NGOs will not be able to meet on their own, but in playing a part in this type of programme NGOs could contribute to a real opportunity for promoting peace.

3.4.4 Advocacy, campaigning and lobbying

The idea of aid as a tool for addressing migration and war, and the idea of the 'relief-development continuum' have emerged together in the post Cold War era. This re-emergence has underpinned the ascendant view that development assistance is in a unique position to tackle the economic, political and social distortions which characterise the internal causes of conflict. It has also allowed the external causes of conflict, such as military, aid and policy interventions to be quietly forgotten. This in turn has underpinned the emergence of an analysis of conflict which is partial and ahistoric, which sustains rather than challenges the status quo, and which leaves Western leaders wide open to charges of hypocrisy when they make demands for good governance and conflict reduction. (Macrae, 1996)

¹ For further discussion of this issue: Voutira and Whitshaw Brown 'Conflict Resolution: A Cautionary Tale — A Review of Some Non-Governmental Practises', Refugee Studies Programme, April 1995.

Arguably, another very important role for NGOs exists in terms of advocacy and lobbying with INGO home governments, donor agencies and the general public.

Some NGOs, such as Oxfam, SCF and Radda Barnen, are already working to increase their competency in, and commitment to, this area, but others are not involved at all. Given the global causes of conflict and the impact of donor government agendas on the aid system itself, it could be argued that lobbying at home must be a part of the activity of all NGOs if they are to be legitimate and pursue their mission statements. Without an attempt to challenge the system, NGOs claims to be independent agents of change are weakened. Mobilisation of the international community at the political level is a necessary part of effective humanitarian action.

Issues that must be addressed include:

- raising awareness of ongoing conflict and human rights violations and pressing for action;
- pressing for response to signals from early warning systems;
- working for better forms of aid from donor agencies (including support for local structures, including government structures if appropriate, not just funding for high-profile programmes);
- campaigning in relation to the arms trade (86% of the world's arms are supplied by the 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council; two-thirds of these are sold to the poorest countries of the world, (Judd; cited in Slim, 1996);
- lobbying against damaging economic policies and predatory corporate investment;
- working towards a better system of co-ordination between INGOs and encouraging wider support for codes such as the Red Cross Code of Conduct which establishes a system for self-regulation. Exploring options for an accreditation system;
- combating the image of disasters as natural and inevitable, and the image of those involved as victims/barbarians rather than survivors. There is a need to raise awareness about the North's part in causing these conflicts and its responsibility to do something, more than simply providing relief.

There is also potential to explore a greater role for advocacy in the South at a national or regional level. During the crisis in Rwanda, the need for counter-propaganda was felt very strongly. In Goma, there was a need to put pressure on the Zairian government to arrest intimidators within the camps.

Whether directed at home or abroad, advocacy and lobbying pose many challenges often felt to be impossible.

A major problem with lobbying aimed at home governments is that NGOs are increasingly dependent on government funding. This decreases their autonomy and their freedom to criticise policies of the international community and donors (Borton, 1993). British NGOs also face trouble from the Charity Commission if they are seen to be too politicised. Some governments have threatened NGO's tax status when they have criticised the foreign policy of the donor government (Adiin-Yaansah and Harrell-Bond, 1995).

Most of all, participation in advocacy is inherently political and can pose great danger to the security of projects, programmes and field staff, whether the lobbying is aimed at home governments or within the state affected by conflict itself. There is a big question in relation to how NGOs can remain operational whilst playing an advocacy role.

One solution is to have a division of labour — to farm out advocacy, although there is still a risk of this being traced. It is argued that groups without any operations suffer lack of credibility although this is not necessarily true as shown by the impact of pressure groups such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International.

Advocacy clearly requires the ability to deal with political sensitivities but it also requires a commitment from NGOs to accept the political reality of the environment in which they are operating; the global causes of conflict which include action of the home government, and the political nature of development itself.

3.4.5 Exit strategy

If NGOs decide to intervene then they must define their exit strategy right from the start. This may require criteria of success other than peace. The sustainable transfer of ownership of a programme to a partner organisation might be a desirable alternative. However, with the prospect of entrenched instability and insecurity, the reality of goals must be stringently assessed.

3.5 Organisational Structure and Management Systems

As noted in Section 3.2, the state of the internal organisation can have a significant impact on its ability to operate effectively in the instability and insecurity of conflict. The importance of NGO identity was discussed, as was the importance of effective structure, systems and management.

This section looks at the particular capacities that organisations need in conflict situations.

Organisational structure

A capacity that is frequently put forward as important in conflict is that of flexibility. An NGO must have the ability to adapt to changing demands as conflict mutates in intensity, groups holding power change, etc. This demands not just the reactive plugging of gaps, but a system designed to cope with change: 'proactive adaptability' (Chamberlain, 1994).

The decentralisation of significant decision-making power to the field is important to allow flexibility, but although flexibility also requires the flattening of bureaucratic and time-consuming hierarchies, the role of manager is vital in conflict and it is counter-productive to flatten the organisation excessively.

Management

Conflict places huge demands on the field manager, and the head office must give extra support to reflect this. It is suggested that it is important that managers be not new to the organisation when they are recruited for a conflict situation. A system of

apprenticeships may be essential. Good communication systems are vital and need to be sorted out beforehand to facilitate the manager's role as much as possible. Managers must not get involved in trouble-shooting. Instead, they should focus on building up the capacity of the organisation to respond (Roche, 1994).

Successful operation in conflict also requires great personal skills on the part of the field manager, including skills for motivation, mediation, negotiation and establishment of trust with staff, and with community.

The organisation must be able to adapt to systems of distance management, or working in waves as violence permits. The 'inverse method' devised by ACORD may be appropriate. Using this strategy, project beneficiaries travel to the NGO office to report on progress and plan rather than vice versa if conditions make it more difficult for NGO staff to travel. However, this will work well only if a strong prior relationship has been established between the groups.

In high-intensity conflicts INGOs must co-ordinate with the UN military and cope with the vast chaos caused by the sudden influx of scores of agencies. Successful management again requires strong negotiation and mediation skills. Having established the role and identity of the organisation, successful operation in conflict demands an ability to 'manage' this identity and convey it to others who may question it.

Staffing issues

Managers must involve staff at all levels within the organisation and work on building a cohesive team. There must be proper staff support mechanisms including living arrangements, vacation arrangements, travel arrangements, evacuation plans, insurance and psycho-social support. Staff must be treated equitably, importantly this includes both national and expatriate staff. Staff need support for dealing with trauma, feelings of powerlessness, internal divisions, etc.

In addition there must be careful recruitment procedures as the skills and personal qualities demanded of staff in conflict are very high, just as they are for managers. This is often very difficult in conflict when needs are pressing and programmes may be set up in a rush.

It may be important to get a balance of the various competing groups in the organisation's staff (although this might be difficult in contexts such as Cambodia where staff are expected to be selected on a patronage system). Managers need to find out where staff allegiances lie.

3.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are both vital processes in addition to the political and organisational analysis discussed in Sections 3.1 and 3.2.

Clearly, despite the difficulties discussed in relation to information gathering, monitoring and evaluation are especially crucial in conflict given the potential consequences of an ill-designed programme.

Monitoring the impact of the NGO must comprise a wide range of factors including, for example, an assessment of the degree of channelling of resources through commanders, monitoring the costs and benefits of negotiated access, and appraising the impact of the NGO on different groups and local structures.

What is particularly difficult about evaluation in conflict is the lack of criteria against which the impact can be assessed. In conflict, for example, it is not clear that one can equate the supply of relief with 'success' if in the course of delivery it has channelled resources to the warring factions. Similarly, the destruction of a building that was constructed by an NGO project may not necessarily deem the project a failure if, during the construction, skills were acquired or groups brought together. The instability of conflict makes concrete results difficult, and criteria for evaluation must be developed that are sensitive to the full complexity of these situations. Groups such as the PRDU in York are currently working to develop such evaluation methodologies.

3.7 Institutional Learning

The above sections have all emphasised the importance of analysis and of monitoring experience. A key organisational capacity that is made even more vital by the context of conflict is that of organisational learning.

There is an increasing literature on organisational learning, including work by Senghe and Dixon, which emphasise the need to invest time and resources in developing and maintaining systems and structures for learning. The notion that institutional learning will come about naturally in the course of work is even more insufficient in the context of conflict.

Solutions to increase learning include staff development programmes involving systems for information exchange, training, internal research and more participative planning. What is needed is to establish a climate in which learning in general, and learning from each other is supported and actively encouraged. There needs to be a fit between the process of information generation and decision making, and a shift to create space for reflection as well as action.

However, the processes of learning may be particularly difficult in conflict given:

- the complexity of conflict making concrete learning difficult;
- the high turnover of staff typical in conflict situations, undermining organisational memory;
- the division of relief and development sections within organisations;
- the lack of feedback between regions;
- the lack of co-ordination between NGOs;
- sensitivity/confidentiality — there is pressure not to share experiences of failure as this is seen to pose a threat to credibility, and ability to raise funds;
- current evaluation methodologies which require stability for information gathering and are based on criteria for development or relief which are not sufficient or appropriate to a situation of conflict. Conflict means that new indicators for evaluation must be established (e.g. the criteria of 'success');

- the low priority for the investment of time and resources into institutional learning in intense conflict: it may be considered far less important than meeting pressing practical needs (also if conflict is considered temporary);
- the difficulty in finding funds for institutional learning in conflict.

Despite these problems, institutional learning is vital if NGOs are to develop appropriate methods in relation to prolonged political conflict. Arguably, NGOs can't afford not to learn: learning increases NGO performance, effectiveness, adaptability and sustainability, as well as staff cohesion and motivation. Learning is in fact the best way to deal with complexity and change (Goold, personal communication, June 1996).

4. CONCLUSION

To summarise, aid, and especially aid channelled through NGOs, is increasingly being relied on as a major part of the international response to 'complex political emergencies'. However, conflict poses profound challenges to the aid system: neither the relief nor development paradigms are appropriate in themselves for these entrenched, highly politicised and turbulent environments. Rather than mitigate conflict, ill-designed programmes have the potential to have a highly negative impact.

Debate about the role of INGOs in conflict and lack of confidence about the impact of aid is coming at a time when INGOs are already feeling threatened by the overall stagnating levels of aid, increased competition between NGOs, and a threat to the 'value adding' role of INGOs by the increasing practise of direct funding.

The conflict debate makes many demands on NGOs to improve all aspects of their work. As suggested by this paper, key capacities must be developed in terms of improved political analysis (3.1), organisational analysis (3.2, 3.5), strategic planning and programming, including looking for new roles and alternative strategies (3.3, 3.4), monitoring and evaluating the impact of the intervention (3.6) and institutional learning (3.7). Can NGOs possibly be expected to achieve all these changes given funding and time constraints?

It could be argued that the division of labour may be a solution. Some INGOs already specialise in, for example, the development of early warning systems, conflict resolution or advocacy against the arms trade. However, a good response is not achieved by specialisation alone. Many of the vital capacities demanded by conflict are those that are needed by all organisations if they are to have a positive rather than a negative impact in conflict.

Despite the difficulties it is vital that NGOs find a means to develop these capacities. Given the potentially negative impact of aid, NGOs cannot afford not to do so. As part of this, NGOs must recognise the political nature of their work and the full realities of conflict. Time and resources must be made available for crucial processes of analysis and reflection. NGOs must critically assess whether it is appropriate for them to intervene. With the current lack of external regulation, NGOs must seriously commit themselves to a process of self-regulation. The process of organisational positioning and intervention strategy must be pursued with extreme sensitivity and care, and monitoring of the conflict and of the NGO competencies and impact must be an ongoing process. NGOs must work on developing strong internal systems and structures to facilitate these processes. INGOs must also take up their role in advocacy, campaigning and lobbying within their home countries. There are serious obstacles that NGOs face in pursuing these goals, including the nature of conflict itself, but also funding pressures and competition with each other. However, these capacities are vital if NGOs are to have a stabilising rather than a destabilising effect in conflict. Learning from conflict will inform all aspects of NGO work.

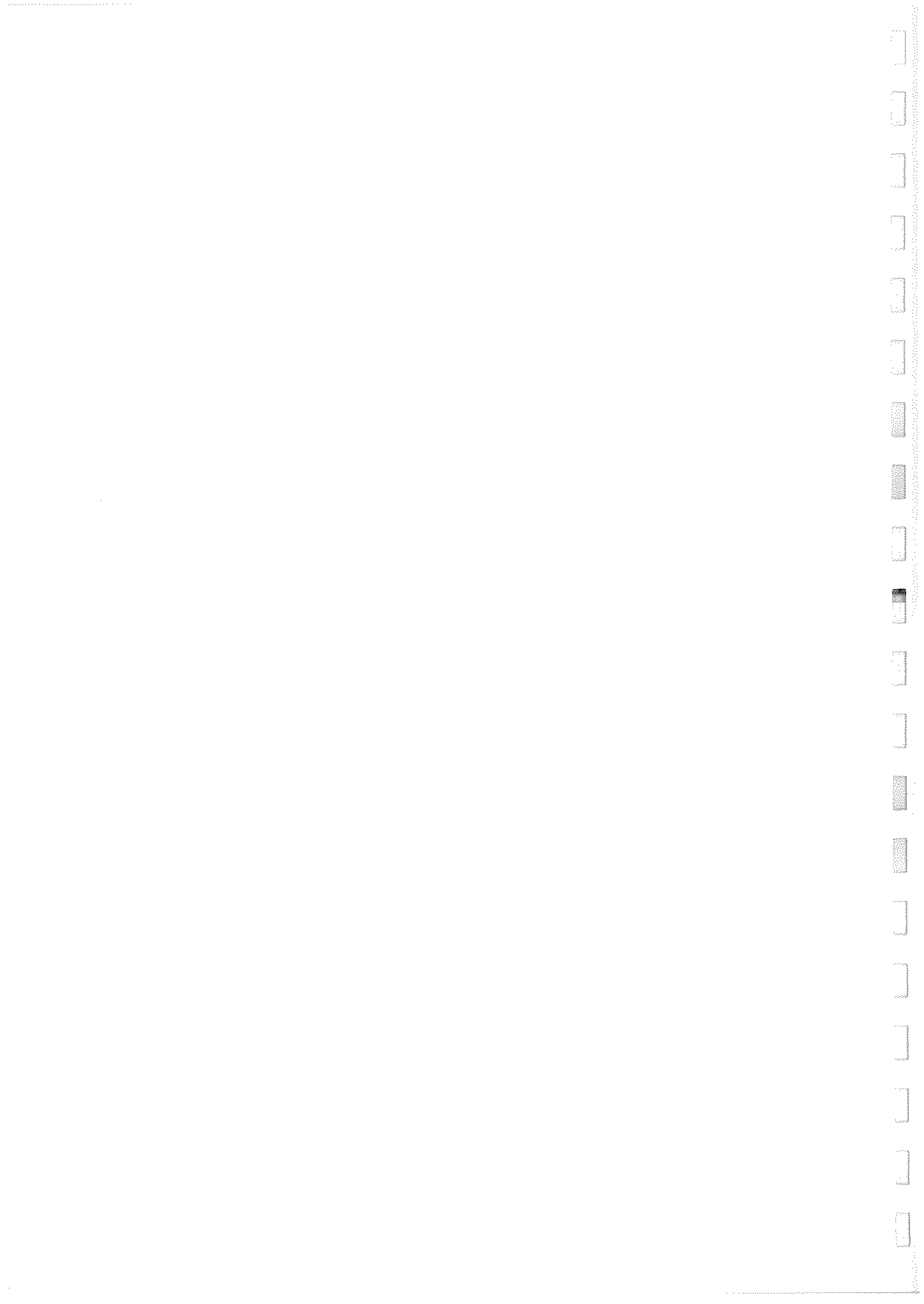
BIBLIOGRAPHY

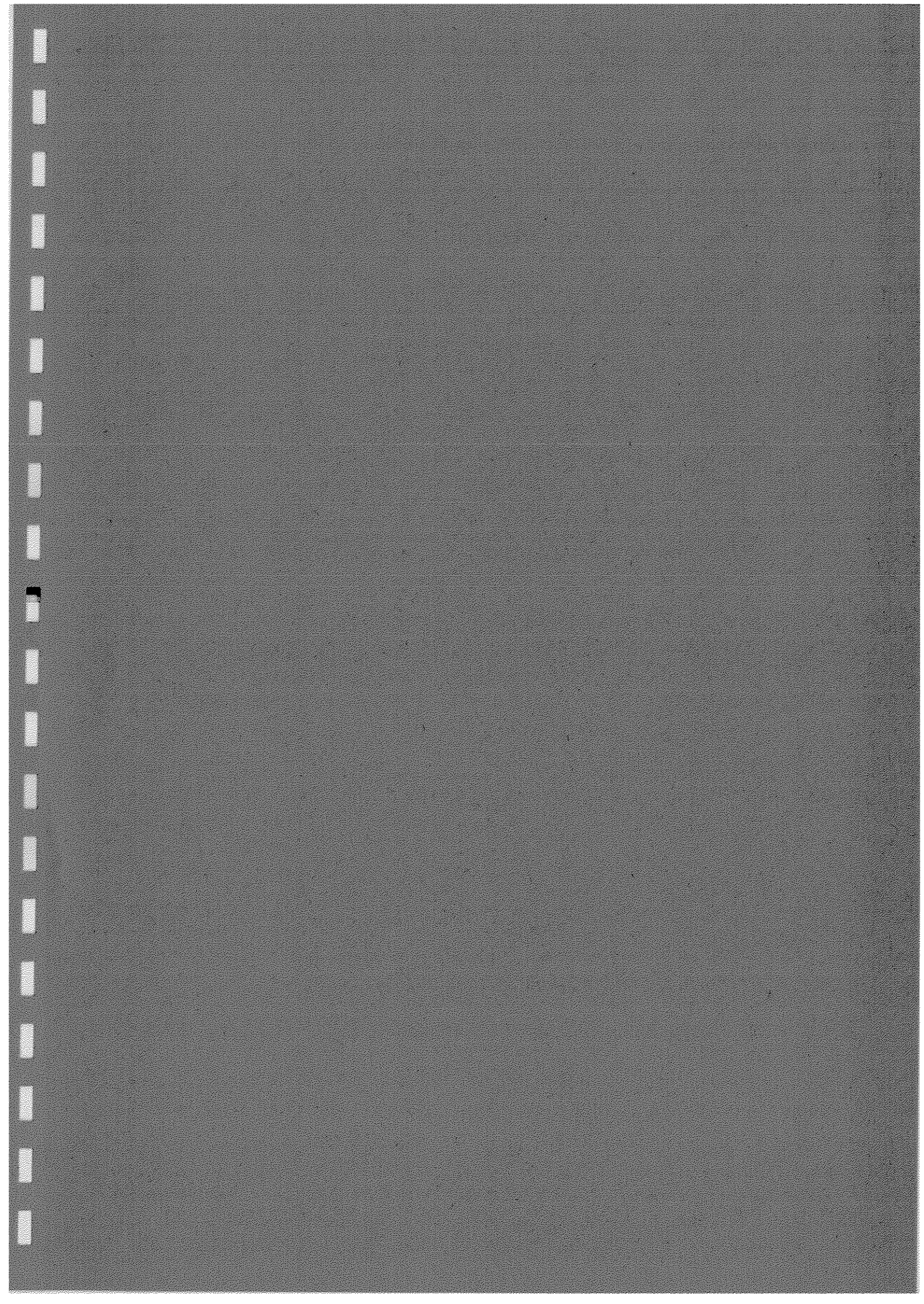
- ACORD** (1992) *The Relief/Development Debate: Some Lessons and Suggestions for the Future*, Workshop paper, London.
- ACORD** (1994) *Development in Conflict Case Study: ACORD's Programming in Mali*, London, October.
- ACORD** (1994) *Development in Conflict Case Study: ACORD's Programming in Southern Sudan*, London, October.
- ACORD** (1994) *Development in Conflict Case Study: ACORD's Programming in Gulu, Uganda*, London, October.
- Adams, M. & Bradbury, M.** (1994) 'Organisational Adaptation in Conflict Situations', Theme paper for: *Development in Conflict Workshop*, November, Oxfam Discussion Paper no. 4.
- Adiin-Yaansan, E. & Harrell-Bond** (1995) 'Regulating the Non-governmental Sector: The Dilemma', In: *Refugee Participation Network (RNP)*, No.19, May, Refugee Studies Programme, Oxford, UK.
- Anderson, M.** (1994) *International Assistance and Conflict: A Negative Impact*, CDA, Harvard.
- Anderson, M.** (nd) *Local Capacities for Peace*, CDA, Harvard.
- Anderson, M. & Woodrow, P.** (1990) *Disaster and Development Workshops: A Manual for Training in Capacities and Vulnerabilities*, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University.
- Bastian, S.** (1993) *Towards an Intervention Strategy in a Conflict Situation*, Sri Lanka, Intermediate Technology Group.
- Bastian, S.** (1995) *Resolving an Ethnic Conflict – Limits of Developmentalism*, Sri Lanka.
- Bennett, J.** (1995) 'The NGO Code of Conduct: NGO Obligations towards Governments', In: *Refugee Participation Network (RNP)*, No. 19, Refugee Studies Programme, Oxford, UK.
- Bexely, J. & Warnock, K.** (1995) *Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect – Women Speak Out About Conflict*, London, Panos Books.
- Borton, J.** (1993) *Recent Changes in the International Relief System*, Overseas Development Institute Briefing Paper, London, January.

- Borton, J.** (1995) 'Crisis of Identity? Explorations of the Role of Development Agencies in Conflict Situations: A Report of a Workshop on Development in Conflict', In: *Rural Extension Bulletin*, No.8, The University of Reading, AERDD, Reading, UK.
- Borton, J., Brusset, E. & Hallam, A.** (1995) 'Humanitarian Aid and Effects', In: *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience*, Volume III, ODI, London, UK.
- Boyden, J.** (1994) 'Children's Experience of Conflict Related Emergencies: Some Implications for Relief Policy and Practice', *Disasters*, Vol. 18, No. 3.
- Boyden, J. & Gibbs, S.** (1996) *Vulnerability and Resilience: Perceptions and Responses to Psycho-Social Distress in Cambodia*, UNRISD / UNICEF / INTRAC, Draft report, forthcoming in UNRISD monograph series.
- Bradbury, M.** (1995) *Rebels Without A Cause?: An Exploratory Report on the Conflict in Sierra Leone*, CARE, London.
- Bradbury, M. & Shepherd, A.** (1995) 'Development Agencies in Conflict Situations: Challenges faced by Organisations working to promote long-term development', In: *Rural Extension Bulletin*, No. 8, University of Reading, AERDD, Reading, UK.
- Bradbury, M., Fisher, S. & Lane, C.** (1994) *Working with Pastoralist NGOs and Land Conflicts in Tanzania*, workshop report, IIED Pastoral Land Tenure, Series no. 7.
- Chalinder, A.** (1994) *Water and Sanitation in Emergencies*, RRN Good Practice Review no.1, ODI, London, June.
- Chamberlain, P.** (1994) 'The Dynamics of the Relationship Between Relief and Development in an NGO Context', Dissertation, Institute of Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester.
- DHA News** (1995) 'Aid Under Fire: Relief and Development in an Unstable World', DHA, Geneva, Switzerland.
- Duffield, M.** (1992) 'NGOs, Disaster Relief and Asset Transfer in the Horn: Political Survival in a Permanent Emergency', paper presented at the *Annual Conference of the Development Studies Association*, University of Nottingham.
- Duffield, M.** (1994a) 'Complex Emergencies and the Crisis of Developmentalism', *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 25, No. 4 1994.
- Duffield, M.** (1994b) *Complex Political Emergencies, With Reference to Angola and Bosnia*, an exploratory report for UNICEF, March.

- Duffield, M.** (1995) 'NGOs and the subcontracting of humanitarian relief', In: *Refugee Participation Network (RPN)*, Issue No. 19, Refugee Studies Programme, Oxford, UK.
- Duffield, M., Macrae, J. & Zwi, A.** (1994) 'Conclusion', In: Macrae, J. & Zwi, A. (eds), *War and Hunger*, London, Zed Books.
- Eade, D. & Williams, S.** (1995) *Oxfam Handbook of Development and Relief*, Vol. 1, Oxfam, Oxford, UK.
- El Bushra, J. & Piza Lopez, E.** (1993) *Development in Conflict: The Gender Dimension*, workshop report, Oxfam Discussion Paper No. 3.
- Fowler, A.** (1992) *Institutional Development and NGOs in Africa: Policy Perspectives for European Development Agencies*, INTRAC and Novib.
- Fowler, A. and James, R.** (1994) *The Role of Southern NGOs in Development Cooperation*, INTRAC Occasional Paper Series No.2.
- Goodhand, J.** (1995) *The Contribution of NGOs to Peace Building in Complex Political Emergencies*, Research proposal, University of Manchester.
- Goodhand, J. & Clarke, P.** (1995) 'Sri Lanka: can a development approach be adopted in conflict situations? The experience of SCF (UK) in civil war zones', In: *The Rural Extension Bulletin*, No. 8, AERDD, University of reading, UK.
- Goodhand, J. with Chamberlain, P.** (1996) 'Dancing with The Prince': NGOs' Survival Strategies in the Afghan Conflict, In: *Development in Practice*, Vol. 16, No. 3, August.
- Holtzman** (1996) 'The World Bank and Reconstruction', In: *ICVA Forum*, March.
- IDS** (1995) *Confronting Famine in Africa*, Policy Briefing No. 3, April.
- IDS Bulletin** (1994) *Linking Relief and Development*, Vol. 25, No. 4, Brighton, October.
- International Alert** (1993) *Establishing Partnerships For Peace*, May.
- International Federation of the Red Cross** (1994) 'Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief', *RRN paper*, No.7, ODI, London, September.
- International Federation of the Red Cross** (1995) *World Disasters Report 1995*, Netherlands, Kluwer.
- Jaffer, R.** (1994) 'Management Implications of the Psychosocial Impact of Conflict', workshop report, Oxfam, Afghanistan, June.

- Keen, D. & Wilson, K.** (1994) 'Engaging with Violence: A Reassessment of Relief in Wartime', In: Macrae, J. & Zwi, A. (eds), *War and Hunger*, London, Zed Books.
- Large, J.** (1995) *The Work of Generations: Gender Analysis and Future Policy Directions, Exploratory Thoughts*.
- McCall** (1995) 'Confronting the new world disorder', In: *DHA News*, No. 14, Geneva, Switzerland.
- Macnair, R.** (1995) 'Room for Improvement: The Management and Support of Relief and Development Workers', *RRN paper No. 10*, ODI, London, September.
- Macrae, J.** (1996) *Working in Conflict*, Oxfam Workshop.
- Macrae, J. & Zwi, A.** (1994) *War and Hunger*, London, Zed Books.
- Macrae, J., Zwi, A. & Fortsythe, V.** (1995) *Post-Conflict Rehabilitation: Preliminary Issues for Consideration by the Health Sector*, RRN paper No. 12, ODI, London, September.
- Miner, L.** (1995) 'A conceptual framework', In: Monney, T. L. (ed.), *The Challenge of Development within Conflict Zones*, OECD, Paris, France.
- Nicholds, N. & Borton, J.** *The Changing Roles of NGOs in the Provision of Relief and Rehabilitation Assistance. Case Study 1: Afghanistan/Pakistan*, ODI working paper No. 74, London.
- Oxfam** (1993) *Improving the UN's Resonse to Conflict-Related Emergencies*, Oxfam briefing No. 6, November, Oxford, UK.
- Oxfam** (1996) *Oxfam's Work in Conflict Situations: workshop report*, Birmingham 29/1 - 2/2.
- PRDU** (1994) *NGOs and Peace-Building in Afghanistan*, workshop report, April.
- Project Ploughshares** (1995) *Armed Conflicts Report 1995*, Ontario, Canada.
- Refugee Studies Programme** (1995) *Refugee Participation Network (RPN)*, Issue 19, May, Oxford, UK.
- Reynolds, R.** (nd) *Development In A Refugee Situation: The case of Rwandan refugees in Northern Tanzania*.
- Reyntjens, F.** (1996) *Burundi: Breaking The Cycle Of Violence*, Minority Rights Group.
- Roche, C.** (1994) 'Operationality In Turbulence: The Need For Change', *Development in Practice*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1994.





- Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI)** (1995) *International NGOs and Complex Political Emergencies: Perspectives From Anthropology*, workshop report, January.
- RRN** (1995) *Development in Conflict: The Experience of ACORD in Uganda, Sudan, Mali and Angola*, Network Paper No. 9, ODI, London.
- Rupesinghe, K.** (1993) *The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in Early Warning and Conflict Resolution*, London, International Alert.
- Rupesinghe, K.** (1994) *Advancing Preventive Diplomacy in a Post-Cold War Era: Suggested Roles for Governments and NGOs*.
- Rupesinghe, K. & Rubio** (nd) *The Culture of Violence*, International Alert
- Sahley, C.** (1995) *Strengthening the Capacity of NGOs: Cases of Small Enterprise Development Agencies in Africa*, INTRAC, Oxford, UK.
- Slim, H.** (1994) *The Continuing Metamorphosis of the Humanitarian Practitioner: Some New Colours for an Endangered Chameleon*, Oxford Brookes University.
- Slim, H.** (1996) *Planning Between Danger and Opportunity: NGO Situation Analysis in Conflict Related Emergencies*, CENDEP, Oxford Brookes University.
- Van Brabant, K.** (1994) *Bad Borders Make Bad Neighbours. The Political Economy of Relief and Rehabilitation in the Somali Region 5, Eastern Ethiopia*, RRN paper, No.4, ODI, London, September.
- Voutira and Whitshaw-Brown, S.** (1995) *Conflict Resolution: A Review of Some Non-Governmental Practices*, Report for ESCOR from Refugees Studies Programme, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford.