Volume 24
Number 2
June 2000

From Holy War to Opium War? A Case Study of the Opium Economy in North-eastern Afghanistan
Jonathan Goodhand

Uncovering Local Perspectives on Humanitarian Assistance and Its Outcomes
Oliver Bakewell

Coping Strategies Developed as a Result of Social Structure and Conflict: Kosovo in the 1990s
Kate Ogden

Making Exchange Entitlements Operational: The Food Economy Approach to Famine Prediction and the RiskMap Computer Program
John Seaman

How is Household Vulnerability Gendered? Female-headed Households in the Collectives of Suleimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan
Louise White

Book Reviews
**Editors**  
Joanna Macrae & Helen Young  
Overseas Development Institute  
Assistant Editor  
Corwen McCutcheon  
Overseas Development Institute  

**Editorial Board**  
David Alexander  
University of Massachusetts at Amherst  
Margaret Buchanan-Smith  
Overseas Development Institute  
Jean Dreze  
Delhi School of Economics  
David Hollister  
Asian Disaster Preparedness Center,  
Bangkok  
Terry Jeggle  
IDNDR International Secretariat,  
Geneva  
Sue Lautez  
Tufts University  
M F Lechat  
Catholic University of Louvain, Brussels  
Larry Minnor  
Brown University, Providence  
Alain Mourey  
International Committee of the Red Cross  
Eric Noji  
World Health Organisation, Geneva  
Raymundo Punongbayan  
Philippine Institute of Volcanology and  
Seismology, Manila  
John Seaman  
Save the Children Fund, London  
Robin Stephenson  
Independent Consultant, London  
Katerina Tomaševski  
University of Lund  
David Turton  
Refugee Studies Programme, University of  
Oxford  
Alexander de Waal  
Inter-Africa Group, Addis Ababa

**Disasters** is a major quarterly journal reporting on all aspects of disaster studies, policy and management. It aims to provide a forum for academics, policy-makers and practitioners on high quality research and practice related to natural disasters and complex political emergencies around the world. The journal promotes the interchange of ideas and experience between academics, practitioners and policy-makers, maintaining a balance between field reports from relief workers, case study articles of general interest and academic papers. It also contains book reviews and conference reports. Letters and discussion are welcomed.

**Information for subscribers:** *Disasters* is published four times a year in March, June, September and December by Blackwell Publishers Limited, 108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JF, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148 USA. New orders and sample copy requests should be addressed to the University Marketing Manager at the publisher’s address (by e-mail to journals@blackwellpublishers.com quoting the name of the journal). Renewals, claims and all other correspondence relating to subscriptions should be addressed to Blackwell Publishers Journals PO Box 80, 108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1HJ, UK (tel. +44 (0) 1865 244883; fax +44 (0) 1865 381381 or e-mail journals@blackwellpublishers.co.uk). Cheques should be made payable to Blackwell Publishers Ltd 2000 subscription prices are as follows: (Canadian customers/residents please add 7% for GST)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N America</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Rest of World</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>US$242.00</td>
<td>£151.00</td>
<td>£151.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US$35.00</td>
<td>£26.00</td>
<td>£26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student rates</td>
<td>US$45.00</td>
<td>£26.00</td>
<td>£26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing World Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£76.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Copyright:** All rights reserved. Apart from fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the UK Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission in writing of the Publisher, or in accordance with the terms of photocopying licences issued by organisations authorised by the Publisher to administer reprographic reproduction rights. Further information is available at http://www.copyright.com. Institutions with a paid subscription to this journal may make photocopies for teaching purposes free of charge provided such copies are not resold.

Printed on acid-free paper and bound in Great Britain by Whitstable Litho. Whitstable, Kent  
© 2000 Overseas Development Institute  
ISSN 0361 3666
# Contents

**Papers**

From Holy War to Opium War? A Case Study of the Opium Economy in North-eastern Afghanistan  
Jonathan Goodhand  87

Uncovering Local Perspectives on Humanitarian Assistance and Its Outcomes  
Oliver Bakewell  103

Coping Strategies Developed as a Result of Social Structure and Conflict: Kosovo in the 1990s  
Kate Ogden  117

Making Exchange Entitlements Operational: The Food Economy Approach to Famine Prediction and the RiskMap Computer Program  
John Seaman  133

How is Household Vulnerability Gendered? Female-headed Households in the Collectives of Suleimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan  
Louise Waite  153

**Book Reviews**

Disaster induced Employee Evacuation  
(Edited by Thomas Drabek)  
David Alexander  173

Agricultural Disaster Management in Bangladesh  
(Edited by Hugh Brammer)  
David Alexander  174

Disaster Planning and Emergency Management in Russia  
(Edited by Boris Porfiriev)  
David Alexander  176

Rethinking the Trauma of War  
(Edited by Patrick Bracken and Celia Petty)  
Willem van de Put  178

The Forsaken People: Case Studies of the Internally Displaced  
(Edited by R. Cohen and F. M. Deng)  
Louise Ludlam-Taylor  179

Conflict and Forced Displacement in the Caucasus: Perspectives, Challenges and Responses  
(Edited by Tom Trier and Lars Funch Hansen)  
Fred Spielberg  180
From Holy War to Opium War? A Case Study of the Opium Economy in North-eastern Afghanistan

Jonathan Goodhand
INTRAC

This paper examines the recent growth of the opium economy in north-eastern Afghanistan. A detailed analysis of one village in Badakhshan Province reveals profound changes in the local economy and social institutions. The paper describes two major shifts in the local economy; first, the switch from wheat to poppy cultivation, and second, the shift from the livestock trade to the opium trade. It then examines the underlying causes and impacts of the opium economy on social relations in the village. Although a case study of a community living on the margins of the global economy, it is argued that these changes have important implications for international policymakers. The emergence of the opium economy in north-eastern Afghanistan is symptomatic of new and expanding forms of trans-border trade associated with the restructuring of the global political economy.

Keywords Afghanistan, narcotics, drug trade, war economy

Introduction

Globalisation and conflict

Traditional neoclassical analysis of conflicts viewed them as irrational. Since aggregate consumption and production declines, comparative advantages are lost and capital destroyed, why do people behave so inexplicably (Goodhand and Hulme, 1999)? Recent writings on conflict, however, have developed new insights through the analysis of global processes that contribute to systemic conflict. Duffield (1998) argues that protracted conflict is symptomatic of new and expanding forms of political economy. Today’s conflicts are characterised by long-term innovative adaptations to globalisation, linked to expanding networks of parallel (illegal) and grey (semi-legal) economic activity.

As Keen notes, conflict is not the irrational breaking down of societies and economies rather ‘it is the re-ordering of society in particular ways. In wars we see the creation of a new type of political economy, not simply a destruction of the old one’ (Keen, 1997). Elite strategies in war economies may for example involve the control and export of high-value commodities, such as narcotics and precious stones.
(Duffield, 1999a) The opium and lapis lazuli trades in northern Afghanistan are just two examples. Afghanistan may be on the periphery of the global economy, yet elites within that country profit from state breakdown and the de-regulated environment at a local and global level. It has created the space and linkages for local assets like opium and lapis to be realised on global markets.

Clausewitz characterised traditional nation-state-based war as the continuation of politics by other means. However, in many conflicts today it may not be so much about winning the war as maintaining one’s sphere of influence. As Keen concludes, internal forms of war may now better be understood as the continuation of economics by other means (Keen, 1998). This analysis has important implications in terms of our understanding of contemporary conflicts and policy aimed at preventing or resolving endemic insecurity.

In conflicts where violence is decentralised and economically motivated, war cannot simply be ‘declared’ or ‘declared over.’ A lasting end to violence is likely to depend on meeting many of the needs of those carrying out acts of violence as well as the needs and interests of some of the more highly developed actors, orchestrating and perhaps funding violence (Berdal and Keen, 1997: 795).

We will return to the policy implications of this analysis at the end of the paper. The next section examines a case study of the opium economy in north-eastern Afghanistan. It is an attempt to present the ‘view from the village’ in terms of changes brought about by the opium economy and its impact on social relations within the village. An analysis of these changes then follows, conducted in the light of the recent writing and analysis on complex political emergencies (CPEs) as outlined above. Although there is an emerging body of writing on conflict and insecurity, which helps map out the broad terrain of the new world disorder, there is a lack of ‘fine-grained’ case studies (Richards, 1996) which examine how global processes affect local actors and communities. A key conclusion of the work in north-eastern Afghanistan is that action has got ahead of understanding and more detailed contextual analysis is important for both improved understanding and policy.

Before, looking at the case of Afghanistan it was important to highlight the methodological challenge of conducting research on war economies. One of the reasons why local perspectives are often missing from current analyses of CPEs may be because research in ‘live’ war zones is so sensitive and dangerous, both for the researchers and the communities themselves. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine in detail the methodological and ethical dilemmas associated with research in war zones, but one should recognise the real constraints that prevent local voices from being heard.

We cannot point to any methodological ‘magic bullets’ based on our experience in Afghanistan. However, three points are worth emphasising. First, safety for communities and researchers was always the primary consideration. Second, we found that in many instances neither traditional survey techniques nor participatory group-based activities were appropriate, because they attracted too much attention and often suspicion. For the most part, the research team adopted a low profile, interviewing a range of individuals within a community (including women, children, farmers, shopkeepers and opium traders) and through their oral histories.
incrementally and indirectly building up a picture of the war economy. Third, our entry point was not the opium economy, but an analysis of people's coping strategies and the impact of war on social institutions.

There are weaknesses in this methodology. It represents only a snapshot of one part of the opium economy at one point in time. Our analysis would be strengthened for instance by interviews with Afghan commanders and other links in the drugs chain, like the central Asia mafia. It would also be useful to track changes in the village over time to corroborate and verify our evidence. However, the key point is that in spite of the difficulties and constraints, it is possible to ‘capture’ local voices, leading to more informed analysis and policy formulation.

Background

The Afghan conflict

The Afghan conflict is a potent example of contemporary conflict resulting from a complex mix of factors, caused by years of bad development, Cold War politics, militarisation and tribal and ethnic schisms. The conflict has been going on for 20 years. In the 1980s one-third of the population was displaced and rural subsistence economies were deliberately destroyed. The withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1988 did not signal the end of the conflict. A process of ‘lebamsation’ (Roy, 1989) followed during which the contradictions within the resistance movement surfaced. The conflict thus mutated from a counter-insurgency war with an ostensibly ideological basis into one characterised by warlordism and banditry. Since 1995 the war entered a new phase with the emergence of the Taliban which now controls around 80 per cent of the Afghanistan, with the remaining area controlled by an alliance of opposition leaders from the previous government.

It is beyond the scope of the paper to examine in detail the history and dynamics of the Afghan conflict. However the following points are relevant to our analysis later.

Conflict as process

Conflict is a social process in which the original structural tensions are themselves profoundly reshaped by the massive disruptions of CPEs. As Tilly argues, 'war is a form of contention which creates new forms of contention' (Keen, 1998). The Afghan conflict needs to be seen as less the outcome of a predictable pattern of causes and effects and more as a result of combinations of contingent factors. During the course of the conflict there have been periods and regions of stability mixed with instability, and the boundaries of the conflict are constantly changing.

Systemic nature of the conflict

Received wisdom has it that Afghanistan has changed from a holy war into a civil war. The reality, however, is far more complex; Afghanistan is part of a multi-layered and inter-dependent conflict system, in much the same way as the Great Lakes region is part of a wider zone of instability (Jones, 1999). This conflict system is characterised by great volatility and constantly shifting alliances which have a ripple effect on the
whole system. This applies externally in terms of the competing interests of the surrounding countries and internally in terms of the fluid and shifting alliances between the warring groups.

Far from being anarchic and irrational the conflict system is being directed and influenced by actors with clear strategic objectives. This applies at all levels whether we are talking about the interests of Pakistan and Iran, warlords like Dostam and Massoud or local-level commanders. All have a stake in the current system.

The war economy

A war economy has developed in Afghanistan which means there are strong vested interests in the continuation of the current situation. As noted above, to a great extent non-state entities are competing with one another for the control of spheres of influence and resources, leading to the fragmentation of Afghanistan. Hard facts about how this economy functions are difficult to ascertain, although one can outline a number of broad defining features.

Kabul has become an economic and political backwater, Kandahar is now the Taliban’s centre of power and most of the important transport and trading links of the provincial cities now radiate outwards to the neighbouring countries rather than inwards to Kabul. Cross-border trade has been a strong centrifugal influence leading to the peripheralisation of the Afghan economy. The largest source of official revenue for the warring groups is customs duties from the smuggling trade between Pakistan, Iran and Central Asia which uses Afghanistan as a land bridge. The war is now affecting the economies of all Afghanistan’s neighbours.

Another important factor in the equation has been the competition between two oil companies, Bridas of Argentina and the US company UNOCAL to build a gas pipeline across Afghanistan from Turkmenistan to Pakistan. UNOCAL, however, recently pulled out of the initiative in response to US pressure.

The main source of unofficial revenue in Afghanistan is the drugs trade. Afghanistan has become the biggest producer of opium in the world. In 1998 opium production in Afghanistan rose by 9 per cent. The area under poppy cultivation was approximately 63,674 hectares while it is estimated that dry opium produce was 3,269 tonnes (UN, 1998). Many of the Afghan warlords have used drugs money to fund their military campaigns, however, approximately 90 per cent of drugs production is currently taking place in Taliban-held areas.

Finally, it has been estimated that upwards of half a million people are directly dependent on war-related activities for their livelihoods (Ostrom, 1997). This includes men enlisted as soldiers in the main regional factions, as well as those operating at the district level under local commanders.

Badakshan Province

Badakshan Province is one of the few areas left under the control of the opposition forces of the Northern alliance. It is a mountainous region bordering Tajikistan and has traditionally been peripheral — geographically, politically and economically — to Kabul. Badakshan has always been one of the poorest areas in Afghanistan relying on subsistence agriculture and trading. The main crops are wheat and barley. In most areas only one crop a year is possible, inputs are rarely used and yields are very low.
Historically Badakhshan has been a food-deficit area and vulnerable to food insecurity. Before the war local food production met only one-half of the province’s needs and at present it only meets one-third. The conflict has disrupted agricultural production and markets and destroyed basic infrastructure. During the Soviet period this area benefited from subsidised cereal import but this was withdrawn in the early 1990s.

Tajiks are the majority ethnic group, however, there are also significant numbers of Uzbeks (who came from central Asia in successive migrations in the last two centuries) and Pashtoons (who were resettled in northern Afghanistan in the 1930s). At the time of writing, Badakhshan is one of the only remaining areas under the control of the forces of the Northern Alliance. The province comes under the remit of Ahmad Shah Masoud’s administration, the shura-e-nizar, which has military and civil functions. The political context in Afghanistan has however always been characterised by shifting alliances and extreme fluidity (Kapila et al., 1995). This means that the situation on the ground varies from district to district and from village to village. The level of security depends to a great extent on the status and power of the local commander and his relationship with the shura-e-nizar and other commanders in the area.

Deh Dehi village

Deh Dehi is a village of 138 households situated 20km from the district centre of Faizabad. The road to the village was washed away by flash floods last year and villagers travel to Faizabad by donkey or on foot. Deh Dehi was settled 300 years ago by Uzbeks from Bukhara (now Uzbekistan). ‘We belong to the same fathers, the same relatives and the same religion’ (old man from Deh Dehi).

It is still an Uzbek village although the area is ethnically mixed with Uzbeks and Tajik villagers scattered around the district. Traditionally the economy of Deh Dehi has centred around agriculture — mainly wheat and barley — and livestock. However, the local economy and the social structure of the village have been transformed by 20 years of conflict.

Violent conflict began in the area when the communists came to power in Kabul in 1978. Events in Badakhshan mirrored the growing divisions between the Islamicists and communists at the national level. An uprising among the intellectuals in Faizabad was put down ruthlessly by the government and fighting spread when the Russian forces came into the area in the early 1980s. A Russian camp was located on the hill behind Deh Dehi and there was often shelling and firing at the village as the mujahadeen fought with the communist forces. Many of the people in the village were conscripted to fight with the mujahadeen.

The villagers were caught between the warring parties, during the day, the army demanded water and food from the village while at night the mujahadeen would come and ask for fighting men and food. The communist forces eventually retreated from the area and then followed a period of infighting between the two political parties of the Hezb-i Islami and Jamiat. The last five years, however, have been relatively peaceful with the area now under the control of the local Hezb-i commander.

‘Now that the Russians have left, we have a good life. We can walk around outside at midnight and move from village to village without any problems’ (mullah in Deh Dehi).
Poppy cultivation and the opium trade

Although wheat farming and livestock trading are still important sources of livelihood, over the last seven years, poppy cultivation and the opium trade have become the key economic activities in the village. Now virtually all the irrigated land is given over to poppy cultivation, and most of the men who would previously have been involved in the livestock trade are either involved in the opium trade or working overseas.

One farmer estimated that he could get 1,000 to 2,000 lakhs annual profit from poppy cultivation compared to 20 lakhs if he grew wheat. 'Just recently, people's lives have improved because of the cultivation of opium. Now people have two to three sets of clothes and many household goods.' (woman from Deh Deh)

Shopkeepers from Deh Deh or traders from outside buy resin from farmers and then transport it to the border of Tajikistan. Here the resin is sold to dealers linked into the central Asian mafia networks. The journey to the Tajik border is very arduous and dangerous, therefore the trade is monopolised by young men. Although the dangers are real (one man from the village recently had $1,500 stolen) the profits are great; it is estimated that opium which is sold at the farm gate for $25 per kg, has a value of $3,000 by the time it reaches the border with central Asia (Johnson, 1998). With the capital gained from the trade many of these men have invested in small shops and businesses in Deh Deh. Ten years before, there were only four shops in Deh Deh but now there are over 20, and many of them are seasonal, based upon a currency of opium resin.

The opium economy is controlled and taxed by local commanders. Villagers have traditionally paid two forms of Islamic tax. zakat which is a tax of 2.5 per cent on capital and given to the poor and ushr which is a tithe, or tax on income that goes to the state. Both of these taxes now go to the local militia or jaba.

'Before the war everyone gave ushr and zakat directly to poor people. During the war we cooked food and sent it to the mujahdeen and now our ushr and zakat go directly to the jaba' (villager from Deh Deh).

The following article from the Itar Tass news agency gives an indication of the scale and quasi-feudal nature of the opium economy in Badakshan.

A stable rise in illegal drug trafficking across the Tajik-Afghan border to smuggle narcotics to other CIS countries and western Europe is a serious threat to the common interests of the Russian Federation and Tajikistan, Lieutenant-General Nikolai Reznichenko, commander of Russian border troops in Tajikistan, told a news conference here on Sunday.

To substantiate his words, the Russian general noted that 135 attempts at crossing the border, mostly by smugglers, were thwarted by border guards. The number of armed clashes increased as compared with 1998. That year, 35 transgressors were killed and seven wounded as a result of 40 armed clashes with smugglers.

According to Reznichenko, the Moskovsky and Pyandzh sections of the Tajik-Afghan border remain the favoured areas for smuggling narcotics. According to border guards, several dozen tonnes of drugs, including about two tonnes of pure heroin, are hoarded at these sections on the Afghan side. The general stressed that border guards detain smugglers at these sections almost every day.

Afghan drug barons now send threats to commanders of border posts, promising to murder them if border guards continue to seal off smuggling paths (DUSHANBE, 24 January 1998 (Itar-Tass)).
Factors behind the emergence of the opium economy

Badakshan has a long tradition of poppy cultivation which came from China and Bukhara via the silk route. Parts of Badakshan have a high rate of drug dependency, although this does not appear to be the case in Deh Dehi. Why then has opium only in recent years become a central part of the local economy? The answer to this question lies in processes at the international, national and local levels.

International level

The end of the Cold War and the final collapse of the communist government in Kabul marked an important shift in the Afghan conflict. Declining levels of external patronage (in comparison to the mid-1980s) forced the warring parties increasingly to develop their own means of economic sustainability. This meant moving beyond the Afghan state in pursuit of wider alternative networks in the regional or global market. Similar strategies have been employed by non-state warring groups elsewhere, from UNITA in Angola to Charles Taylor in Liberia. ‘While globalisation and liberalisation have not caused these new forms of instability, market deregulation has made it easier for warring parties to develop the parallel or grey international linkages necessary for survival’ (Duffield, 1999b: 8).

The drug trade, which now accounts for an estimated 8 per cent of world trade (ibid.), can to some extent be linked to the breakdown of superpower patronage and control. In spite of a Northern consensus for elimination, the trade is growing and benefiting from a deregulated global environment (ibid.).

At a regional level, the opium trade in north-eastern Afghanistan has profited from the erosion of strong central authority in neighbouring Tajikistan. The increased porosity of the border with central Asia and the growth of mafia networks have created the space and links necessary for the trade to flourish. In recent years, border controls with Pakistan and Iran have been tightened up, so much of the trade now uses routes through central Asia.

National level

A number of factors which encouraged the growth of the opium economy are a direct consequence of the conflict, while others are rooted in long-term processes that preceded the war.

The most notable factor is that of the collapsed state. Although one should not exaggerate the power and reach of the pre-war Afghan state, it did play an important law and order function. ‘Life was peaceful in Zahir Shah’s and Daoud’s time. In that time the doors of our houses were never closed, even at night’ (woman from Deh Dehi).

Villagers talked about the periods of King Zahir Shah and Daoud in the 1960s and 1970s as a time when the state was more powerful. They claimed to remember government soldiers burning poppy crops. Some described strategies they employed to avoid detection, for example, planting wheat around the edges of fields and poppies in the middle. In general, therefore, the state appears to have played an important law-enforcement role in relation to poppy cultivation.

A second important factor was the removal of state subsidies for wheat in
Badakshan with the collapse of the Najibullah government in 1992. This, combined with the disruption of the wheat supply from neighbouring Kunduz Province, led to sharp rises in wheat prices and probably precipitated the switch by poor farmers from wheat to high-value poppy production (Clarke, 1998).

The collapse of the state created a power vacuum, which has been filled at the provincial and local level by alternative military and political structures. Political parties and commanders have emerged as the new leadership during the course of the war. The military structure created by the commanders is known locally as the jaba and it depends on recruitment of local men (about 30 per cent of the young men from Deh Deh are involved with the jaba) and taxation of the population. Leadership has come with the gun (as opposed to consent) and commanders have a vested interest in the continuation of weak central authority in which there are few restraining influences on their local ‘fiefdoms’.

Although in Badakshan there is a provincial administration of sorts — the shura-e-nizam — in practice it lacks any legitimacy or finance to perform public functions. In reality, spheres of influence are franchised out to local-level commanders who are responsible for generating much of their own income locally; the opium economy is an important source of revenue. The Hezbi commander, for instance, who controls Deh Deh and the surrounding district benefits directly from the opium trade, through taxation of the farmers and traders. Far from being actively discouraged, as in the past, farmers are now encouraged to grow poppy with the provision of softer loans from moneylenders.

Village level

At the village level, two important factors behind the development of poppy cultivation are economic and environmental pressure which pre-date, but have been aggravated by, the conflict. The population of Deh Deh has increased steadily from around 40 households at the beginning of the century to a present population of 138.

"When our children become bigger, the land will not be enough for us all. There are no other jobs for our sons, what will they do?" (woman from Deh Deh)

Land scarcity (about one-third of the population is landless) is a growing problem and source of conflict. For example, six months ago there was armed conflict with a neighbouring village over the use of pasture land. Common property resources have been eroded due to intense competition for scarce resources and the breakdown of traditional rules and regulations for managing these resources. Destructive floods in the spring have contributed to severe soil erosion and decreased productivity of the land. All these factors have contributed to growing poverty in the village. Conflict has further increased people’s vulnerability because they can no longer take their livestock to Kabul, the animal trade had been a major source of income before the war. ‘Livestock used to be a good source of income but now the pastures and markets have been destroyed’ (villager).

Villagers have few economic options beyond labour migration (about 25 per cent of the young men are involved in labouring work outside the village), joining the jaba or cultivating poppies. Moneylenders are prepared to provide loans on relatively good terms for opium production. Moreover poppies require less irrigation than wheat, the residue provides fuel for the winter. It has medicinal value, the oil is used for cooking and oil cake for winter fodder and finally the opium resin is high value and easily
Transportable — an important factor considering the bottleneck on the road from Deh Deh.

The poppy has evidently been an important factor in mitigating the impacts of conflict, poverty and environmental degradation, at least in the short term. It is doubtful, given the advantage of the poppy compared to other crops, that farmers could be persuaded to switch back to say improved varieties of wheat. Farm gate prices for poppies have a great deal of elasticity; if an NGO tried to introduce improved varieties of wheat, the traders, would simply increase the buying price for poppies because their profit margins are so great already.

Another factor behind the growth of the opium trade in Deh Deh, is the widespread displacement and migration caused by the war and economic stress. Many of the villagers of Deh Deh were refugees or had been economic migrants in Pakistan and Iran. In Pakistan, in particular, through contact with other refugees and Pakistani businessmen, they saw the potential and profitability of poppy cultivation. Many of the younger men came back to the village and started poppy cultivation. Though still in many ways an isolated, inward-looking village, the conflict has increasingly opened the doors of the village to the outside world. ‘We have more contacts with outsiders now. We feel like a silkworm coming out of its cocoon’ (white beard, or village elder). ‘When I came back I compared my village to Pakistan, where I saw good conditions and developments like roads and big buildings. I looked at my village and it was like a graveyard’ (young religious leader).

Impact on the village

The transition to the opium economy has played an important role in transforming social relations in the village. ‘Before the population was much lower and people relied on agriculture. Money was less and there was no trade or business. Now the population is high, agriculture is not enough and trade has developed’ (villager)

Wealth distribution

The opium economy has created new tensions within the village in terms of how wealth is produced and distributed. It has created a ‘new rich’ of young men involved in the opium trade and the commanders who tax and control it. ‘Some of our relatives have become rich through trade and smuggling and their lives have changed. My husband is old and he can’t do these things. Some of them were our shepherds but now they won’t even invite us to social occasions because we are so poor’ (woman in Deh Deh).

The conflict and the opium economy have therefore restructured economic and social relationships.

Village leadership and institutions

In many respects village institutions and leadership have proven to be remarkably resilient and adaptable to the changing context. It has been argued that civil society in Afghanistan has reasserted itself during the course of the conflict. ‘As a result of the decade and a half of successful local community-based resistance struggles, civil society, especially in non-Pashtun territories of northern, central and western
Afghanistan has been re-established and is today much stronger than ever before' 

Afghan civil society is not made up of formal, rule-based organisations à la Putnam 
(Putnam et al., 1993), but consists of a complex web of informal, norm-based 
networks. 'Power in Afghan peasant society resides neither in a specific locality nor in 
a person, but in an elusive network which needs constant maintenance and 
reconstruction' (Roy, 1986: 22).

In Deh Deh traditional leadership and networks still function effectively. The 
white beards and the nomandu (village representative) are still the gatekeepers 
between the village and the outside world. They are responsible for collecting taxes 
and organising recruitment for the jaba. They also resolve disputes and organise the 
community for public works, like road construction. On the face of it the survival 
of these institutions indicates that social fabric has not been a casualty of the conflict, 
relationships of trust and reciprocity and local associational life have been sufficiently 
resilient to adapt to the new environment.

However, as already mentioned, it is mainly the young men who control the opium 
trade and who own the shops in the village. Although this, as yet, has not led to 
conflict with the traditional leaders in the village — the white beards — it is evident 
that tensions are likely to increase. Not surprisingly, the young and the old have very 
different perceptions of recent changes in the village (see box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of change in the village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What the old men said ...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Life was simple then. The only food was bread, quront and tea. Everyone worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on their own land.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Before if the elders said something, everyone would listen but now the young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>men don't respect them. If they want something, they do it even if that means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>killing someone. It's everyone for themselves now.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What the young men said ...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'People have been to other places and they are more broad-minded and educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>now.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Life is better now than in the past. People are working and trading. Before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people just grew wheat and led simple lives.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Money was scarce before, but now people have money because of poppy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultivation.'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The opium economy has also consolidated the position of the local commanders. It 
has enabled them to pay for the jaba and to maintain and extend their patronage 
networks. There is, however, little respect for this local leadership since it lacks 
accountability and reciprocity.
Sometimes the people are asked to work to build a school or bridge or something and then the money goes into the pocket of the commanders or one or two of the elders who are close to the commanders (young man).

Although at the time of the research, leaders from the Northern Alliance were in the area trying to mobilise anti-Taliban support, the response from villagers was very sceptical “People feel that when we start fighting, all the leaders will run away to Tajikistan.”

**Social capital**

Redistributive mechanisms have been and still are very important in mitigating the effects of the conflict. Interviews with villagers, particularly with women, present a consistent picture of sharing within the extended family. Redistribution within the extended family is a risk-spreading strategy that has been adapted to the conflict. Many families, during the jihadi years for example, might have one family member with the mujahideen, another with the communists, while others stayed in Deh Deh or went to Pakistan as refugees or migrant labour (Glatzer, 1998) This helped spread risk in both economic and political terms. Therefore, interviews with villagers indicate the persistence of family and kin-based loyalties and the strength of Afghan systems of mutual support and informal social security.

The resilience of village institutions and networks also indicates that levels of cooperation, trust and reciprocity may not have been adversely affected by the war. The communal irrigation system, for example, organised by the mirah (controller of the water system) still functions effectively. This demonstrates that there are still sufficient endowments of social capital for community action, when it is clearly in everyone’s economic interest to cooperate. Also the mosque remains very much the heart of the village; it constitutes a place for religious worship, a meeting-place to swap news, a space where elders come to discuss problems and resolve conflicts, and finally, somewhere to accommodate strangers.

Although on the one hand there is evidence of resilient coping mechanisms and continuity with the past, there are also signs that these institutions and relationships are beginning to show the strain.

Before the war there was respect and we helped our neighbours. But now if your neighbours die, no one will even acknowledge it. Everybody is out for themselves these days. The war has also had a bad effect on relations between fathers and sons (villager).

A number of respondents mentioned changes in the relationships between fathers and sons; sons who had been to Pakistan or Iran or fought in the jaba were less inclined to listen to their fathers. Now it was becoming more common for sons, once married, to move into separate houses with their own families. Villagers also talked about the decline of haskar — voluntary communal activity such as helping with a farmer’s harvest, or building a house. People are now either too poor or those who have worked outside the village are used to being paid for their labour.

Other indicators of the move from co-operative to more self-interested, if not predatory, forms of behaviour include the payment of *ursho* and *zakat* directly to the
commander rather than redistributing it to the poor. Also the erosion of common property resources like grazing lands indicates the breakdown of traditional rules and rights of use.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, contact with the outside world has had an impact on people’s attitudes and behaviour. Young boys trained in the madrasas (religious schools) in Pakistan, have brought back ideas about Islam that are often at odds with the ‘folk Islam’ of traditional Afghan villages. The present mullah is one such boy. This again has increased inter-generational tensions. ‘I went to the mosque to pray this morning and I could see that the children didn’t feel comfortable with the way I was praying’ (old man from Deh Deh).

Gender relations

Existing gender roles are very resistant to change. However, there are contradictory forces at play in terms of gender relations: on the one hand there appears to be a ‘Taliban effect’ even in areas which are not under the control of the Taliban. This is manifest in more conservative attitudes towards religion and freedom for women. On the other hand, as already mentioned, the conflict has opened the doors of the village to the outside world. Women have moved with their families to Pakistan and taken on new economic roles. Poppy cultivation, for example, is a very labour-intensive crop and women now play an important role in its cultivation.

Implications for policy and practice

This paper has attempted to explore the development of the opium economy in north-eastern Afghanistan from the perspective of Afghan villagers living in Deh Deh. This, we hope, is an early response to the need for more fine-grained case studies which link the emerging thinking on the political economy of war with an analysis of what is happening on the ground. The voice and agency of communities living in the thrall of conflict are frequently missing from analysis and policy.

This research is based on ‘the view from the village’, which is both its strength and its weakness. On the one hand we may have been able, at least partially, to penetrate the ‘mud curtain’ (Dupree, 1980). This has provided insights into how a community has adapted to and responded to war and new forms of political economy. On the other hand, the focus on one individual village means that one should be wary of drawing hasty conclusions, particularly in Afghanistan where every valley has its own unique history and micro-climate. However, we still feel that it is possible to map out four tentative conclusions which are pertinent to the emerging discourse on the political economy of conflict.

Conclusion 1. There has been a systemic change in the economy of Badakshan. Based on the evidence of Deh Deh, the drug economy clearly provides many livelihoods and incomes in the context of an enduring conflict. The shift from wheat to opium cultivation and from the livestock trade to the opium trade has been a remarkably rapid transition and a large number of people now have an important stake in this economy, from the poor farmer, to the opium trader and shopkeeper, to the commander who controls and taxes the trade. Their involvement in this economy is perfectly rational given the lack of alternatives and the lucrative nature of the opium trade.
Conclusion 2. The growth of the opium economy is linked to processes of globalisation and the collapse of the nation-state. This systemic shift in the local political economy is symbiotically linked to the processes of globalisation and the collapse of the nation-state. The collapse of the Afghan state has created a power vacuum that has been filled at the local level by commanders. At the same time the decline of superpower patronage has meant two things. First, controls on non-state entities have declined. Second, these non-state entities have increasingly had to generate their own resources to service their military activities and maintain their patronage networks. These processes have coincided with the erosion of state authority in Tajikistan, the rise of central Asian mafia networks and the increased porosity of the border with Tajikistan. All these factors have enabled Afghan drug barons to link into and profit from the global drugs trade. As Duffield notes, warlords may act locally but they think globally (1999b).

Conclusion 3. This is not just a transitional phase. ‘Normal service will not be resumed shortly’ Afghanistan is in many ways the archetypal intra-state conflict, characterised by its longevity, socially divisive nature and its external support and trade networks. The opium economy in Badakhshan is a classic example of the growth of parallel or trans-border trade in zones of instability. Duffield characterises trans-border trade in the following way:

- It is a mercantalist activity which is largely uninterested in long-term productive investment
- It is involved with controlling and apportioning wealth
- Profit depends on maintaining differences and discrete forms of control
- The dynamics of trans-border trade are likely to encourage informal protectionism

In many respects it has illiberal, quasi-feudal tendencies.

These points all clearly characterise the opium trade in Afghanistan. An important point to make here is that peace would disrupt the systems of production and exchange that provide such warlords and their followers with livelihoods. Peace is neither in their interest, nor is it a viable option.

Conclusion 4. Implications for policymakers, the need for coherence. Although there is a growing body of writing on the political economy and functions of conflict systems, there is limited evidence that this has been absorbed into mainstream analysis and policy. As Duffield notes policy and thinking still appears to be based on a ‘breakdown’ model of conflict which assumes that war is somehow irrational and chaotic. This is particularly the case in Afghanistan. Kaplan’s apocalyptic vision of the ‘coming anarchy’ is frequently invoked with regard to Afghanistan (1994). Similarly media coverage of the Taliban reinforces the view that the country has descended into barbarism.

While most policymakers and practitioners involved with Afghanistan have a more nuanced analysis of the problem than Kaplan or the tabloid press, important gaps in understanding are manifest at different levels and locations within the aid system, whether it is UN diplomats frustrated at their inability to get warring factions round the negotiating table to iron out their differences, or the UNDP official wondering why poor Afghan farmers will not switch from growing poppies to improved wheat.
there is a lack of analysis of the incentive systems and structures which support violence and the war economy.

We still hear a familiar refrain from the international community of the need for the ‘set-piece response’ of calling a cease-fire, forming a broad-based government and holding elections. This would be accompanied by a ‘developmental fix’ of social reconstruction assistance. How this peace package will address the interests of the non-state entities is not clear however, since these have little interest in or need of a unitary Afghan state.

**Action has got ahead of understanding**

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, in many respects action has got ahead of understanding. There are a number of ‘black holes’ in our understanding and analysis. These include an understanding of the coping strategies of the perpetrators of violence as well as those of the victims. We have limited knowledge, for example, about the operation of parallel and grey economies and the political economy of warlordism. This paper would have benefited from additional information and direct interviews with commanders in Afghanistan and the drug mafia in central Asia, these are areas about which very little is known or written, yet they are critical to a full understanding of contemporary conflict.

In the aid world there is more of a premium attached to doing rather than on knowing or understanding (Duffield, 1998). This is partly because careers in aid work tend to be broad (emergency services in Nicaragua last year, monitoring in Kosovo this year, refugee camps in Pakistan next year) rather than deep (learning a language, knowing the history, having long-term personal networks). Interestingly (and at the risk of being politically incorrect), the first fine-grained studies of Afghans living on what is now the Afghan-Pakistan border were conducted by British colonialists. The British army offered higher salaries to those officers who could learn local languages and culture, in the nineteenth century this incentive led to social descriptions, collections of folk tales and proverbs and numerous grammars and dictionaries (Grima, 1992, Duffield, 1998).

A key conclusion of our work in north-eastern Afghanistan is that action has got ahead of understanding and more detailed contextual analysis is important for both improved understanding and policy.

**Acknowledgements**

The research in Afghanistan was part of a wider DFID-funded project conducted by the University of Manchester/INTRAC on the role of NGOs in complex political emergencies. The findings in this paper are based on a field trip to the village of Deh Dehi in north-eastern Afghanistan. A team of international and Afghan researchers spent five days in the area interviewing villagers before having to evacuate because of nearby fighting.

**Notes**

1. Pashtoones are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, constituting 40 per cent of the
The Opium Economy in North-eastern Afghanistan

population The Tajiks and Uzbeks are 20 and 6 per cent, respectively, of the total population of 20.1 million

At the time of writing, Badakhshan was still under the control of the forces of the Northern Alliance. In other parts of the country where the Taliban are in control, the power of local-level commanders has been circumscribed.

One farmer interviewed said that the dried poppy stalks from his fields provided fuel for up to six months of the year, an important consideration since fuel takes up one-quarter of the family income.

We use Putnam's definition of social capital as 'features of social organisation, such as networks, norms and trust, that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit' (Putnam, 1993). Such norms and networks constitute endowments of capital for societies. Conversely, where norms and networks of civic engagement are lacking, as is often the case in internal wars, the potential for collective action would appear to be limited.

Dupree coined the phrase 'the mud curtain' to describe how Afghan villagers managed to protect themselves from the incursions of the state.

A donor cautiously remarked, 'We don't need a broad-based government, just a broad-minded one.'

References


Clarke, P (1998) Interview with Paul Clarke of World Food Programme, 15 November


Jonathan Goodhand


Address for correspondence: INTRAC, PO Box 563, Oxford OX2 6RZ. E-mail <intrac@gpn.org.uk>
Uncovering Local Perspectives on Humanitarian Assistance and Its Outcomes

Oliver Bakewell

This paper draws on a study of Angolan refugees in Zambia to suggest ways that the perspectives and interests of the local population can be included in the assessment of relief interventions. Taking an actor-oriented approach, the paper suggests stepping back from the categorisation of the situation as an emergency and particular groups of people as the beneficiaries. Such categories are imposed from outside and may not reflect local people’s outlook on the situation. In the case of Angolans in Zambia, the category of refugees had dissolved in the border villages to the extent that it was practically impossible to distinguish between refugees and hosts. This was in contrast to the official settlements where people were marked out as refugees and the label was maintained and reproduced over many years. Investigating outcomes in the border villagers in terms of refugees and the refugee problem would have been futile. The paper calls for evaluations of humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies to look beyond the ‘beneficiaries’ and to investigate the wider context of ‘normality’. Neglecting the life and world of local people will make it impossible to understand the process by which external interventions are mediated at the local level to give particular outcomes, and valuable lessons which could help alleviate suffering will be lost.

Keywords Zambian, Angolan refugees, relief interventions, humanitarian assistance

Introduction

In large-scale emergencies, individual people disappear into the crowd and humanitarian assistance becomes targeted towards groups of people on the basis of how they fit some set criteria. This process appears inevitable as a mechanism for controlling access to limited resources, and the resultant labels become the defining terms for aid agencies under-fives, unaccompanied minors, widows, elderly, chronically sick, refugees, internally displaced people (IDP) or the all-encompassing ‘vulnerable’. As has long been pointed out, the labelling process reduces people to ‘cases’ which draws attention to the aspect of their lives by which they are categorised while their wider ‘story’ fades and is neglected (Wood, 1985).

Although this background may fade in the light of the emergency, it is essential to recognise its role when assessing the impact of any external humanitarian intervention. Aid programmes are not imposed on passive beneficiaries, but exist in an arena of
social actors with competing interests and strategies. Even if there is a common goal to relieve suffering, the actual outcome of any intervention will critically depend on the behaviour of those whose suffering is to be lessened. The expectations of aid workers are frequently frustrated by the failure of those targeted to perform according to plan, often resulting in the complaint of people ‘cheating’ the system.

Once the labels are established and the aid system is in place, it becomes more difficult to uncover the perspective of local people caught up in the emergency. The roles in the game are assigned by powerful outsiders, but local people are extremely skilled at playing to the audience. However, it is increasingly recognised that the evaluation of any emergency aid programme should include the voice of ‘beneficiaries’ and other affected people, not only on the grounds of improving practice but also as an ethical stance which recognises the rights and capacity of people affected.

These principles are much easier to develop than to practice and evaluations often struggle to live up to their aspirations (Apthorpe and Atkinson, 1999). External researchers undertaking an evaluation, funded by donors and working with the help of aid agencies, cannot separate themselves from the aid programmes. This will affect how they are perceived by local people as well as their own interests in making recommendations. Moreover, they face the difficult task of situating their respondents, working out their position, how they are linked to each other and what status they hold (Pottier, 1996).

In this paper, these issues are approached by means of a case study of Angolan refugees in Zambia carried out in 1997 — over 10 years since the emergency which sparked humanitarian intervention (Bakewell, 1999). The study set out to investigate the process of repatriation of refugees, which was being planned before Angola’s renewed descent into full-scale war once more in 1998. At this distance it was still possible to see the effects of emergency aid, especially where it had evolved into a care and maintenance programme for a refugee settlement. Moreover, the old labels were being dusted off by aid agencies in preparation for repatriation and this highlighted the extent to which they were alien to the people to whom they were applied.

Although the study did not explicitly set out to evaluate emergency aid interventions, it was concerned with understanding how villagers had been affected by the emergency operation launched when refugees first fled and how they were responding to the aid programme now being launched to support refugee repatriation. The key to gaining access to local people’s perspectives was to put down the lens of the emergency, which portrayed the world starkly in terms of refugees and hosts, and use a more fuzzy lens which allowed boundaries to be blurred between refugees and hosts, or emergency and normality. By looking somewhat indirectly at the picture, the background came into focus (perhaps an analogy with the way of viewing ‘magic eye’ 3-D images is appropriate). The rest of this paper details the approach used and how some of its lessons may be relevant to evaluations carried out closer to an emergency.

Complex emergencies and refugees

The focus of this paper is complex emergencies. This term has been used over the last decade to describe a series of seemingly intractable situations in which a range of political, social and economic factors combine to create conditions of widespread military conflict over a long period, involving multiple, fractured groups of
combatants. Such conflicts inevitably cause immense hardship for all involved and periodically reach a peak of destructive force, either directly through increased military action (as in Angola today), or by so destabilising the area that people’s livelihoods are completely shattered and they cannot meet their most basic needs (as in southern Sudan in 1998). Although it is only at such peak times that the death and suffering caused by such emergencies may be headline news in the rest of the world, the distinctive characteristic of complex emergencies is that the conditions of violence, insecurity and extreme vulnerability continue over many years and form the backdrop for people’s lives. The emergency may become ‘normal’, especially for children who may never have known a stable peace. Sadly Africa hosts more than its fair share of countries affected by the longest and most destructive conflicts that have created the conditions of complex emergencies, these include Sudan, Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo (Kinshasa) and Sierra Leone.

Although complex emergencies may continue for many years, as the conditions change, the focus of emergency humanitarian response is likely to shift within the countries involved, or possibly even to disappear altogether. This may reflect an improvement in the situation in countries affected or the changing priorities of donor countries whose interest moves elsewhere (Bradbury, 1998). The end of the emergency in programme terms does not mean the end of the complex emergency. In this paper, the term emergency unqualified is used to mean an object of humanitarian aid, and complex emergency refers to much larger, longer-lasting set of circumstances.

Complex emergencies force many people to leave their homes and move either to another area within the same state or to cross an international border. In the latter case they become refugees, and, assuming the host state is willing to accept their claim for asylum, they come under the protection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A range of humanitarian responses may be launched to help refugees as they arrive in the host country, settle or possibly repatriate. The resources available for such emergency responses vary enormously and reflect political interests, logistical constraints and timing (depending on what other demands are being made in the world at the same time) as much as the needs of the refugees. For internally displaced people there is no equivalent protection regime and any humanitarian response is often very limited, especially where governments have caused the displacement.

An underlying concern of humanitarian assistance for refugees is to find durable solutions to their plight. In the UNHCR statute voluntary repatriation and assimilation are put forward as ‘permanent solutions’. The latter of these has since been refined to distinguish between permanent settlement in the country of first asylum and resettlement in a third country. Together with voluntary repatriation, these make the three solutions that are seen as both desirable and durable. None of these is easily achieved but voluntary repatriation has come to be seen by governments, international organisations and many academics as the optimal solution of these three, both in terms of desirability and feasibility (Rogge, 1994; UNHCR, 1980, 1987).

The OAU Convention only discusses voluntary repatriation as a solution without any mention of assimilation, integration or naturalisation of refugees. In sub-Saharan Africa only Tanzania and Botswana have offered citizenship to refugees and only to small numbers. For the most part, refugees in Africa have been generously granted asylum, but they have retained their refugee status and the expectation is that they will
repatriate once the conflict is over. As noted above, complex emergencies do not finish neatly and quickly and many refugees in Africa have been in exile for over 10 years without any resolution to the conflict in sight.

**Background to the case study of Angolan refugee repatriation**

This paper is concerned with the outcome of humanitarian interventions for refugees over the whole time of their exile. Assuming that the desired outcome of intervention is to bring about durable solutions for the refugees, it focuses on the refugees' perspective of these solutions. It is based on the results of doctoral research carried out in Zambia, which set out to investigate the views of Angolan refugees towards repatriation as it was planned in 1995–8. It arose from questioning the assumption that as the end of the Angolan conflict approached, those people who fled into Zambia as refugees, mostly between 1970 and 1990, would necessarily wish to return to Angola.

When Angolan refugees started arriving in Zambia in the 1960s, they followed a pattern of migration which had been well established over the previous century (Hansen, 1977). The extreme violence, scale and speed of movement may have been new but the idea of moving to escape violence certainly was not. In earlier migrations many such journeys were one way and newcomers settled to become indistinguishable from those already there. For those who came after Zambian independence, this avenue of settlement was formally closed in the government's eyes, but following the historical precedent many have travelled it with the full collaboration of villagers and chiefs. Moreover, migration has become a norm among the people of the upper Zambezi, who formed the majority of the refugees, thus individuals and whole villages frequently relocate.

In the initial crisis of a large-scale refugee influx to north-western Zambia, there were enormous problems to be solved and emergency supplies of food, kitchen utensils, blankets and so forth were essential. Villagers were overwhelmed and welcomed external intervention from both government and the international community. However, once external actors came on to the scene, they defined the situation in their own terms and brought their own views of how it should be dealt with. At the time Zambia was virtually surrounded by hostile states and the presence of refugees on the border represented a threat to national security. The concerns of national sovereignty and security, and UNHCR's mandate focused on refugees resulted in policies to identify Angolans, register them and move them into segregated refugee settlements well away from the border (the main settlement Mchaba is about 300km from the border).

An underlying assumption of this policy was that refugees constitute a chronic problem in three ways. First, the refugees have to make new livelihoods, adjust to life in exile and they may continue to yearn for the time when they can return to their homes. Second, the host population has to adjust to the additional pressure of refugees living in their midst, perhaps putting a strain on the local environment, economy and services such as schools and clinics. Finally, refugees represent a problem for the world of nation-states. They are people who do not belong and require temporary status until such time as they can be reattached to a state either through repatriation to their country of origin or permanent settlement elsewhere. Relocating refugees to settlements where they could cultivate land and become 'self-reliant' during their exile...
offered a temporary solution, as it prevented them being a burden to host villagers and allowed them to have some sort of livelihood. Special settlements also maintained the profile of the refugee populations and drew in international support. However, this temporary solution always had in prospect the eventual durable solution of voluntary repatriation at the end of the Angolan war.

From the beginning this policy was resisted by both the refugees and their hosts in the villages. When Angolan refugees arrived in Zambia, the majority were able to stay with people of their own ethnic group who had been separated by the colonial border. People were welcomed as kinsfolk and allowed to stay in the villages where they were given access to land for cultivation. The increase in population was welcomed as it brought prestige to the chiefs and opened up new land; 'it was good when they came as they turned the bush into villages.' The area of Zambia bordering Angola had very low population densities and in many parts there was abundant land and other natural resources. From the local perspective additional population also brought the benefit of a stronger claim on central government services such as schools and clinics. Only 30% of the estimated Angolan refugee population of 100,000 moved into the settlements and the majority have remained in border villages. Here they have become fully integrated into Zambian life, and many have even acquired de facto Zambian citizenship by obtaining national registration cards.

The parallel worlds of officially recognised refugees living in the settlements and those who have settled themselves in border villages has continued for 30 years. UNHCR and the Zambian government refer to large numbers of 'spontaneously settled' refugees living on the border and assume that, like those in the settlements, they will want to repatriate (albeit spontaneously). This study set out to investigate whether that would be the case, especially in the light of research which suggests that self-settled refugees have very little interest in repatriation (Hansen, 1990).

During the 1990s there have been growing numbers of studies of repatriation, but the majority focus on the factors which influence the results of repatriation more than their role in determining if it happens at all (Allen and Morsink, 1994; Allen, 1996). For example, the issue of livelihoods and employment is raised as a critical problem for those who have returned from exile but rarely as a factor which determines whether the refugees return at all (although Kibreab (1996) is a recent exception).

The underlying question seems to be: How do refugees return home? rather than Why do refugees return home? Repatriation is often seen as the optimal outcome for refugee situations as it by definition and the 'obvious' thing for refugees to do. The fact of their wanting to return is taken for granted so their motivation for repatriating does not necessarily arise as a question. It is assumed that once the root causes that prompt population movements are eliminated the affected population 'vote with their feet' homewards in order to re-establish themselves in their former areas of origin or habitual residence. Thus, since repatriation is expected to happen automatically in response to changed political and social conditions in countries of origin, research into the factors that influence refugees' decisions concerning repatriation has not been considered worthwhile (Kibreab, 1996).

This is of critical importance given the tortured use of the term 'voluntary' as applied to repatriation. The fact that refugees sign a voluntary repatriation form is not
sufficient grounds to believe that people are exercising their free will in moving if that move reflects their desperation at their conditions in exile rather than any desire to go to their country of origin, is it really voluntary? In a refugee family, who decides about the move — the head of household, or individuals? In a community where most of the people are refugees, what choices are left to the minority if the majority repatriate? Can they resist the social and political pressure to conform? Where repatriation is promoted by UNHCR and governments, what about the pressure exerted to fulfill the needs of programmes, budgets and other measures of policy success? If we make some progress about understanding why people may want to repatriate, we may be in a better position to understand how voluntary their movement is Who exercises the choices?

An actor-oriented approach

Such questions have been asked about other forms of voluntary migration in countless studies over many years in many disciplines including anthropology, sociology, economics and geography. Much of this research into migration has focused on urbanisation and labour migration to cities but there has been less work on migration between rural areas (Hill, 1986; Mollett, 1991), or the links between city dwellers and their rural origins (van Velsen, 1960, Potter, 1988). Much of the debate in migration theory has centered on the extent to which different actors have room to manoeuvre in any decisions about migration. At one extreme, neo-classical models present the migration decision as resting with individuals based on their analysis of the costs and benefits of moving. At the other, structuralist models suggest that labour migration systems were established to serve the interests of capitalism and the individual has little choice in the matter.

In recent years, some promising middle ground has been opened up with the application of Giddens’s concept of structuration to migration (Wright, 1995, Richmond, 1993, Giddens, 1984). This suggests that migrants should be viewed as social actors working with some room for manoeuvre while constrained by the wider social context in which they exist. From this perspective, refugees can be seen as migrants who have particular constraints placed upon them (for example, limited access to jobs) but use their own social skills and resources to subvert these constraints and bring about their preferred outcome. With this approach, the analytical separation of migration and repatriation as social processes can be seen as a reflection of the different assumptions brought to them, rather than a result of an inherent difference between the processes.

This theoretical outlook has been used to develop an ‘actor-oriented approach’ to research. Long defines agency as the ‘capacity to process social experience and devise ways of coping with life’ (1992: 22), and defines a social actor as a social entity to which agency can be attributed. Social actors are not powerless constrained by the larger structures within which they operate, but their actions influence and modify these larger structures. This is not to accept that the wider structures simply reflect the aggregate of the individuals who are involved in them, as their actions bring into play unintended consequences, as each person operates with imperfect knowledge or capacity to process it (Knorr-Cetina, 1988, Giddens, 1984). The outcome is the result of the messy interaction of social actors struggling, negotiating and at times guessing in
order to further their own interests. In the case study of Angolan refugees in Zambia, refugees and other villagers are looked at as social actors along with UNHCR, the government and other organisations, all in an arena of struggle to bring about a favourable outcome.

To understand the outcome, it was vital to understand something of the perspective of the social actors, to know their interests, how they are changing and how much room for manoeuvre they have. Thus, the study needed to focus throughout on the practices of the various social actors and their discourses and actions, which are constrained by, and produce, the context in which they operate in other words an actor-oriented approach. A positivist stance of proving hypotheses was rejected as it demands that one enters the research project having already fixed a crucial parameter, the range of variables to be studied (de Vries, 1992 68). An actor-oriented approach must also be distinguished from individualist frameworks, which would look to explain the different outcomes of events and processes in terms of the actions of individuals or individual programmes, and may neglect the ‘larger frames of meaning and action’ (Long, 1992). The unintended consequences which appear in the wider picture apart from the plans of the actors involved.

**Field methodology**

In order to step outside the refugee and repatriation discourse, this paper attempts to examine the whole process of movement to Angola set in the context of the historical, social and economic changes in the area, rather than necessarily as a special event to occur once the war ends. Thus the study became concerned with the wider impact of the improving situation in Angola on cross-border movement from Zambia. It was assumed from the outset that understanding something of the history, culture and resources of social actors whether they be individuals or organisations, such as UNHCR, would yield a fruitful description of the context of cross-border movement. An important aspect of the study was to understand the nature of people’s resource base, within the context of the culture and history of the area, how it changes and is changed by migration patterns; and to draw up a ‘resource profile’ (Lewis et al., 1993). The war in Angola and people’s background as refugees were important elements of the resultant picture, but they did not cover the whole canvas.

An actor-oriented approach required an investigation of the interface between interests and events from the international policy arena to the village level. In order to achieve this, efforts were concentrated on a focus village, while developing peripheral vision of other areas. The district for the study was selected because it is one of the major crossing points to Angola and also lies near the planned repatriation route for refugees being transported from Meheba. After some preliminary meetings with headmen and village communities when the objective of the study was explained, one village was identified which was known to have many inhabitants originating from Angola, and where I was welcomed to set up my base. This was done by renting a village house from a farmer who had moved to more distant fields and over the next 10 months, I spent a considerable portion of my time living in the village.

While there I used a range of methods, including structured and semi-structured interviews, collected life histories and other narratives, carried out participant
observation and some PRA techniques. Since the research set out to question the assumption that refugees will ‘naturally’ return home, it was important to avoid embedding them in the research methods. To try to identify refugees and then ask them about their interest (or lack of it) in moving to Angola, would presuppose, first, that it is possible to differentiate a refugee from the others, and second, that they would have a special interest in moving compared to others who may fall outside the refugee category with which I started. Therefore in this study I put to one side the term repatriation, loaded as it is with connotations of return and resumption of normality, and talked to all villagers about their interests in Angola, without distinguishing refugees from others.

As my understanding of the local society and its links with Angola grew, I discussed my developing analysis with key informants and at village meetings. People were keen to discuss the issues raised, correct my misconceptions and offer new insights. Before leaving I held a village workshop to present preliminary results. From this base I visited neighbouring villages (within a 10km radius) and then other border areas to gain some impression of how much they had in common with the situation in the focus village. During these visits I used semi-structured interviews with key informants and more informal discussions with households as I came across them. I complemented this village-level work with visits to the Meheba refugee settlement and interviews with officials from UNHCR, the Zambian government and NGOs. I also visited Mexico Province in Angola, which borders Zambia, to see the destination of cross-border movements and how repatriation plans were put into practice. Thus I attempted to look across the interface between individual lives and international aid programmes.

**Challenging labels**

Having abandoned the externally defined label ‘refugee’, I found that it was largely irrelevant within the border villages. People were acknowledged to have been refugees when they first arrived over 10 years previously, but since then they had established new livelihoods, built new homes, and in many cases managed to acquire Zambian identity papers. Those who had fled from Angola did not see themselves as refugees and similarly the Zambians among whom they had settled did not describe them as such. The term refugee was reserved for those who had gone to live ‘within the fence’ at the official refugee settlement, Meheba, where they continued to be recipients of international aid from UNHCR and NGOs.

As repatriation was planned for Angolan refugees in 1997, UNHCR made an important distinction between ‘returnees’ who received assistance to settle back into Angola, and ‘economic migrants’ who were ineligible for help. This research project showed that such labels were completely alien to the local people. People’s presentation of themselves as returning refugees did not necessarily say anything about whether they had ever been a refugee in Zambia or not. As a result, people would use the appropriate label to gain access to the resources, UNHCR, NGOs and others would record numbers of returning refugees, and the repatriation programme was guaranteed to be a success in terms of indicators such as the numbers of people resettled.

Today in the border villages the distinction between refugees and hosts has blurred to the point of virtual invisibility (at least to external observers) and there is no
perception of a refugee problem. In contrast, in Meheba, the refugee problem has been preserved by all stakeholders including the refugees themselves. As a European researcher visiting Meheba, people presented me with a litany of suffering (lack of cash, poor harvests, shortage of meat) which they attributed to their position as refugees. In the villages, the same problems were present and in many cases were more severe than Meheba, but a person’s status as a refugee was never cited as a relevant factor. The same problems affected all.

The labels are not only used to categorize people and the stereotypical expectations of their behavior but also the whole situation and the required responses. The definition of the refugee problem in the emergency brought with it the assumption of the solution of repatriation. The underlying processes of cross-border movement and the culture of mobility were not recognized at the time of the emergency when refugees first arrived, nor at the time when repatriation plans were being made. All actors agree that large numbers of people will move from Zambia into Angola when the latter is peaceful, however, external agencies understand such movements as repatriation of refugees, whereas villagers see them as migration, which will include people who arrived as refugees as well as Zambians.

Lessons for evaluation

In this study of Angolans in Zambia, the primary objective was to look at the process of repatriation as a form of migration, and understanding the outcome of humanitarian assistance turned out to be a necessary step along the way. As a result, any evaluation activities were approached somewhat obliquely and this raised some interesting points which may be of significance in other contexts.

The actor-oriented approach has direct implications for the scope and focus of a study of outcomes. First, evaluation must consider the interface between micro-level village events and institutions, and macro-level international institutions. Individual actors are embedded in institutional structures which use particular discourses to reach decisions (Long, 1992). For example, the international refugee regime uses the discourse of refugees and solving problems to determine what intervention is required and how to apply it. This does not necessarily coincide with the discourse of the villagers and they may be excluded from the decision-making process. For all the rhetoric about participation, as they do not have the appropriate discourse available. However, as social actors they are actively engaged in practices to take advantage of the context in which they live to improve their lives. Plans may be made by others but the actual outcome is mediated through the action of the villagers, who will look to subvert the plans to their own ends.

Second, the focus of an evaluation must be on the life and world of social actors if we are to understand the processes which are happening and their causes. This is particularly important in emergencies, where the ‘victims’ are too often assumed to have very limited agency and are subject to external intervention over which they have little or no control. To a large extent this may be true as far as their direct participation in aid programmes is concerned, but this often reflects the systems of power and control of the programme rather than the capacity of the ‘beneficiaries’. However, they hold the key to understanding the impact of these programmes and building up lessons for the future. Although their agency may be so limited as to be almost
undetectable (McGregor, 1998), what little there is will certainly be unnoticed if it is assumed away.

**Problematic labelling**

The design of an evaluation also needs to take into account the problems of labelling raised in this study. The most obvious difficulty is to decide who should be considered as stakeholders in assessing the impact of any humanitarian assistance. In some cases, where beneficiaries (refugees) and others are segregated in some way, devising the categories for analysis may be straightforward. For example, identifying Rwandan refugees and their hosts as two distinct groups of stakeholders in Tanzania and Zaire from 1994-6 was relatively simple, as for the most part refugees stayed in the camps and received aid, whereas the hosts lived in their villages and received very little (Borton et al., 1996). However, such distinctions are less easy in areas where refugees have settled among their hosts, as they have in many parts of Africa where a large proportion of refugees are self-settled (Kibreab, 1991). In such cases, as illustrated in this study, the distinction between those who are targets of intervention and others is often based on labels derived from international conventions.

The process of labelling will have an impact on the outcome of any humanitarian aid programme and this needs to be recognised during evaluation. As described above, it was the emergency intervention which introduced the bureaucratic registration and segregation of refugees from hosts but the majority refused to co-operate and remained outside the settlements. As this case illustrates, these labels used for good reason in an emergency can ossify over time and inhibit the development of local solutions. Labels such as refugees, internally displaced, unaccompanied minors, demobilised soldiers, or other such targets for emergency assistance may become self-perpetuating. Those labelled are encouraged to continue describing themselves in terms of the particular aspect of their life — refugee and so on — as a strategy to gain resources. This is not evidence for any 'dependency syndrome', so much as an active response by people to strengthen their resource base. In the same way I describe myself as an academic when I want a job, or a student if I want a discount. The problem lies with the way the resources are delivered.

In a crisis situation where external humanitarian assistance is required, the labelling of beneficiaries is usually preceded by the labelling of the emergency: a refugee crisis, famine, war or earthquake. With each category of crisis comes a set of institutional responses, often headed by the appropriate UN agency and supported by the appropriate NGOs. As an NGO worker who has worked with a variety of refugee groups, I can be considered to be experienced and competent to work in new situations where refugees are involved. It is certainly the case that the personnel, agencies and discourses used are common to many crises. For example, during my research in Zambia, I was greatly helped in my contact with UNHCR and NGOs by being able to refer to other contexts in which I had worked and to catch up on gossip about old friends. With each type of emergency is associated a set of expectations of what needs there are and how they should be met. The most obvious example is that of food where similar ration scales are used from Sudan to Angola. Security, health-care, water, sanitation, education and a range of other standards are increasingly laid down in manuals and guidelines even within smaller NGOs.
Such guidelines inevitably include the point that they must be adapted to the local contexts and they usually are, especially after the first rush of an emergency as external agencies come to understand the local context better and, perhaps more critically, resource constraints bite. However, the focus on the emergency and the expected needs and problems may have a more subtle effect of submerging the underlying context and processes of social change. Much as every aspect of individuals’ lives may come to be defined in terms of their condition as refugees or other ‘victim’ group; every aspect of the society may similarly be seen in terms of the emergency. Any continuity between ‘normality’ and ‘emergency’ is ignored or sometimes suppressed.

An emergency needs to be set within a wider context and recognised as laid upon the underlying patterns and processes of social change. If the impact of emergency humanitarian assistance is to be assessed, the shifting background against which it is set must be understood. This makes it essential for any evaluation study not only to look at the beneficiaries, which as noted above is problematic in itself, but it must also consider the situation of those seemingly not affected. In this way it may be possible to see how far the emergency adds to the existing chronic development issues in the area rather than assuming everything is related to the emergency. If long-term malnutrition rates among the ‘normal’ population are similar to those directly affected by the emergency, will it be any more appropriate to establish feeding centres in the emergency when they may be deemed unacceptable as a development intervention? Asking such uncomfortable questions may expose underlying issues, which the end of the emergency is not going to solve, and demand a different approach to intervention. Focusing solely on the emergency response may leave an even more uncomfortable set of questions, as donors justify their withdrawal by the ‘end’ of the emergency, while conditions for local people remain unchanged (Bradbury, 1998).

In other respects relief programmes tend to be conservative in their outlook as they look to restore ‘normality’ and the status quo ante. Complex emergencies are part of a process of massive and violent social change and going back to how things were may be impossible and also undesirable. Out of the crisis new initiatives and solutions may emerge and it is important that humanitarian aid does not smother them. In the case of refugees, Zolberg et al. have observed

refugees are a by-product of social change, and only one item on a much broader canvas of suffering and progress. To avert flows would be the equivalent of trying to oppose social change. In the aggregate, this is impossible, and in particular cases this may be undesirable. To stifle change may freeze a repressive social order or contribute to systemic social inequalities (1989, 262).

**Practical constraints**

In the study of Angolan refugees in Zambia, it was found that stepping outside the discourse of refugees and repatriation revealed a very different discourse operating in the border villages. Among villagers, there are no refugees and migration to Angola is a strategy to enhance livelihood. It may solve some problems for those who move and are successful, but it may also create others, such as depopulation in a region of Zambia which is already under-populated. In such circumstances, interventions to help refugees
to repatriate appear somewhat arbitrary as they aim to solve a non-existent refugee problem, rather than address problems for all villagers caused by over 30 years of war in Angola. In the villages the locus of the problem shifted from the refugees to the war.

Similar insights may perhaps be gained by stepping outside the discourse of other emergencies in other contexts. However, is it reasonable to claim that such points raised during an oblique investigation of outcomes will be relevant to evaluations taking place during an emergency? In many cases the answer may well be no, as the conditions of the emergency are such that getting access to the social worlds of the local population may be impossible. While I was working in Angola in 1994 landmines were so common that some people used them within neighbourhoods to mark out their plots, making visiting households a very risky business. Borton et al. (1996 §7.2) describe the difficulties in eliciting the views of beneficiaries (refugees and internally displaced people) with problems of access, privacy for interviews and evaluators’ perceived association with the ongoing relief effort.

Another major constraint on the wide-ranging evaluation activities suggested here is that of funding. If an evaluation is commissioned to look at a particular humanitarian intervention, its terms of reference may restrict the extent to which it can look into the ‘normal’ world. In the study of humanitarian aid interventions and their effects in the Rwanda crisis, the focus remains clearly on donors, UN, NGOs and governments (480 interviews) rather than beneficiaries (140 interviews). To look at the impact of the refugee crisis on hosts, the study had to step outside the terms of reference which did not address these issues (Borton et al., 1996).

In Zambia, my research proceeded over 12 months’ fieldwork in a calm environment where I was free to move wherever I wanted without danger. I could stay in villages and I was not surrounded by the noise of an emergency programme. I also had the luxury of deciding my own terms of reference. These conditions were very different to those likely to be found in the evaluation of an emergency.

However, in complex emergencies, humanitarian assistance is likely to be provided over a relatively long time (one to two years upwards) compared to more circumscribed disasters. If the impact of the assistance is to be understood, it is important to understand the strategies adopted by the affected population, which will shape their response to the assistance and also be changed by that assistance. If evaluation focuses on the performance of the agencies delivering aid, many valuable lessons about how to alleviate the suffering of those caught up in the complex emergency may be lost. In many situations, it should be feasible to carry out in-depth studies of small areas which work across the lines drawn between beneficiaries and others, if there is a will to do it.

**Conclusion**

Defining a particular set of circumstances as an emergency can be a trigger for external intervention that brings with it a set of labels and assumptions which re-define the situation in their own terms. The discourse of aid agencies becomes dominant as it is through that discourse that categories of beneficiaries are identified, policies made and resources transferred. The discourse of local people may be submerged under the noise of the emergency, but as the crisis passes it will reassert itself at the local level. In this case study the discourse of refugees as a problem dominated in the emergency, but as the focus shifted to providing aid to the refugee settlements and agencies...
withdrew from border villages, the local discourse of refugees as new villagers took over. However, in any further intervention, such as that for repatriation, the external discourse will prevail in the policy and planning process.

At the peak of an emergency, when saving lives or other critical short-term objectives necessarily dominate, programmes are inevitably implemented without the level of appraisal and participatory planning which might be expected (perhaps optimistically) for development programmes. As shown above, programmes implemented in an emergency may have long-term consequences and the sooner the shortcomings can be identified, the more likely it is that harm caused by intervention can be mitigated. An evaluation may be the first chance for this research to be undertaken, but to perform this role it is necessary for it look beyond the world of the emergency and the existing interventions.

The arguments against emergency relief programmes adopting development goals of sustainability are convincingly put forward by Bradbury (1998). Demanding that the solution to local problems lies with the local population, who must moreover be able to pay for them, is unacceptable. However, although scepticism about the mantra of community participation in emergency relief may be healthy, it is important to recognise that, however top-down, externally driven or otherwise non-participatory an emergency programme may be, the benefits or services will not be received passively by the targeted community. They exert agency to mould what is on offer to their particular interests and incorporate it within their coping strategies. An evaluation of outcomes which uncovers the perspectives of local people may have more chance of understanding the impact of humanitarian assistance and highlight ways that interventions can build on these local strategies rather than ignore them.

Note

1 This paper is an edited version of a paper presented at the international workshop, Evaluation of Humanitarian Assistance in Emergency Situations, Wageningen University, The Netherlands, June 1999. It draws on research funded by a PhD studentship from the University of Bath. I am grateful to Dr. Alister McGregor for encouragement and advice in preparing this paper.

References


UNHCR (1980) *Conclusion No 18 (XXXI) Voluntary Repatriation*. UNHCR Executive Committee 31st Session, Geneva


**Address for correspondence:** 8 Lorne Road, Forest Gate, London E7 0LJ E-mail: <colin@bakewell.fsnet.co.uk>
Coping Strategies Developed as a Result of Social Structure and Conflict: Kosovo in the 1990s

Kate Ogden
Action Against Hunger

The end of 1989 brought with it political and economic decisions which resulted in Kosovo being stripped of its autonomy and the Albanian population being expelled from their jobs. These facts combined with ethnic tensions created a decade of conflict and oppression affecting hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. Thousands of Kosovars moved overseas to seek work to support families at home, altering the way of life of the population of Kosovo irredeemably. The loss of income had serious repercussions on food security throughout the 1990s: possibilities of purchasing food were diminished, control on goods in 1998 reduced availability of foodstuffs, conflict affected accessibility to markets and shops and consequently food intake and nutritional status was compromised. The most vulnerable were those who had no family members overseas. Mass displacement of population due to ethnic cleansing during the war of spring 1999, further jeopardised food security status. Destruction at this time rendered large parts of Kosovo useless and resulted in a shift in the determinant of vulnerability in the post-war period. Destruction of houses, land, livestock and agricultural products as well as loss of family members, became a far more pertinent indicator of food insecurity. The strong and clear links between conflict, socio-economic issues and food security are highlighted and discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Kosovo, Albanians, Serbs, ethnic conflict, war, Diaspora, embargo, displacement, destruction

Background

Kosovo covers a small area of 100km². It is bordered by high mountains to the south, south-west and west, medium-height mountains to the north and south and low mountains to the east. The Republic of Serbia lies to the east and north, the Republic of Montenegro to the west, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the south and south-east and Albania to the south and south-west.

Tensions in Kosovo have a long history, but the current troubles began in March 1989 when the province was forcibly stripped of its autonomy, after which the government of Serbia ran Kosovo with the aid of police and a military presence. The population of just under two million inhabitants comprised around 90 per cent Albanians (mainly Muslim and known as Kosovars), and 10 per cent Serb (mainly...
orthodox Christian). Smaller ethnic minorities included Roma, Croats and Bosnians. 80 per cent of the total population lived in rural areas, and 37 per cent were urban dwellers.

In the summer of 1990 Kosovo Albanians proclaimed a 'Declaration of Independence', and in May 1992 organised semi-clandestine elections for a president and parliament (Malcolm, 1998). At the same time there were two other significant events:

- Medical and educational facilities entirely separate from the Serbian institutions were set up, and
- Albanian workers in public or state occupations and positions of power in Kosovo were dismissed from their employment. This affected 70 per cent of the working population. The key industries, metallurgical mines and food manufacturing, were subsequently required to operate at a much-reduced capacity or closed completely.

These were the main factors which led to the huge increase in the Diaspora throughout the 1990s. Kosovars left to work in the West in an attempt to support their families in Kosovo and also to help fund the Kosovar medical and educational institutions through contributing 3 per cent income tax.

A cold war between the two communities co-habiting the same soil ensued. The cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic differences brought with them a deterioration in stability resulting in Serbian attacks on villages throughout 1998. Massacres, torture, rape, arbitrary arrest and other human rights abuses then followed laying the foundation for conflict. In May 1998, Serbian authorities banned 27 of the most essential household items from Albanian shops including flour, oil, sugar, milk, soap and fuel.

Intense fighting over summer 1998 was a point of grave concern for the UN Security Council in addition to the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Serbian security forces and the Yugoslav army. The rapid deterioration in the humanitarian situation and reports of increasing violations of human rights and international humanitarian law throughout Kosovo also gave deep concern (UN, 1998).

In October of the same year Milosevic agreed to the deployment of a 2,000-strong verification mission (KVM) assembled by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and this month also brought a cease-fire agreement (the Holbrooke agreement) which was clearly breached by December 1998. At this same time there was an increase in the number of incidents between the Serbian security forces, armed Albanian elements (Kosovo Liberation Army — UCK) and civilians, heightening tension once more and resulting in the Rambouillet peace talks in February 1999. In the light of unsuccessful negotiations OSCE decided to withdraw its mission from Kosovo immediately (then 1,400 verifiers). They left on 20 March 1999 along with the majority of the humanitarian organisations which had remained.

The collapse of the talks led to NATO air strikes beginning on 24 March 1999. The 71 days of air strikes were finally brought to an end with the signing of the peace agreement on 10 June 1999 at which time Kosovo was placed under international civil administration and military protection. NATO troops were deployed throughout Kosovo acting as peacekeepers, along with the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) responsible for civil administration, humanitarian assistance, institution building and reconstruction. An OSCE mission was once again established on 1 July 1999 forming a distinct component within UNMIK.
Effects on the population

Events during 1998 resulted in the displacement of around 175,000 people both within and out of Kosovo (UNHCR, December 1998) and a deterioration in living conditions, safety and food security which continued to worsen throughout the winter of 1998 and into early 1999. The withdrawal of KVM and the humanitarian organisations in March 1999 had a major impact not only on individuals’ security but also on their access to humanitarian aid and consequently food security.

The beginning of the air strikes in March 1999, brought an escalation in movement of Kosovars due to fear — the atrocities committed on Kosovars intensified during this period — or through mass expulsion from rural areas and from towns following the Serbian tactic of ethnic cleansing. The KLA fought fiercely in order to protect the civilians living close to its strongholds, during which clashes many lives were lost. Hundreds of thousands were internally displaced and almost a half of the Kosovar population poured over borders to safety in the neighbouring countries of Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro.

The retreat of Serb forces and the entry of NATO troops in June 1999, saw an unprecedented return of hundreds of thousands resolve Kosovars coming back to the disastrous aftermath of the war, damaged houses and land, chaos and destruction in rural and urban areas, lost livelihoods and limited opportunities for employment. The trauma of coming to terms with the loss of family members and the sheer scale and horror of atrocities committed throughout the period cannot be underestimated. Despite having been stripped of all forms of identity during the exodus into neighbouring countries and after their trials during displacement and throughout the previous decade, the Kosovars were optimistic that now they could rebuild their lives without imposed restrictions.

At this time too there was a movement of thousands of the Serb civilian populations from Kosovo into Serbia, many feeling too uncomfortable to stay in the face of the violence and abuses committed — regardless of guilt or innocence. A substantial number of Roma also left fearing for their safety as Serb collaborators. The opposing parties in Kosovo now vent their anger and hatred through reprisals and retribution killings and burning of each others’ and their own property.

Survey context and methodology

The events of the decade meant that livelihood strategies and thus food security — ‘access by all people at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life’ (World Bank, 1986), were continually jeopardised. The attempt to obtain a holistic view of food security over this period began in December 1998 (Ogden, 1998) and was followed up in July 1999 (Ogden and Hoxta, 1999; see notes). Prior to December 1998 there was no documented information on the food security situation in Kosovo and therefore the results of the December 1998 survey served as a baseline for the report being used for comparative purposes to examine the effects of the war on the food security situation.

The July 1999 survey had the main objectives of investigating food availability and accessibility for the population, understanding the livelihood mechanisms in place and examining the possible causes of food insecurity and the subsequent impact on the
nutritional status of the population through a causal analysis approach. This was undertaken by Action Against Hunger teams throughout Kosovo.

The food security survey was carried out as a complementary component of a simultaneous nutritional anthropometric survey conducted by Action Against Hunger (Wilkinson et al., 1999). The cluster sampling methodology of the nutritional survey was respected for the food security aspect, with adjustments being made for macro-zonation criteria according to geographical location, degree of war damage and pre-war economic activity. This resulted in the selection of 30 rural clusters in 20 municipalities of which 26 were surveyed by the locally trained food security teams. An additional two urban areas were included to allow the macro-analysis to be complete. The original sample included villages with exclusively Serbian populations. However, owing to the severe restrictions it was impossible to visit these villages and thus the survey results represent mostly the Kosovar communities although Serbs, Roma and Croats were present and interviewed in some villages. A similar attempt was made to complete the macro-analysis by visiting the predominantly Serbian northern municipalities but again security measures prevented this.

The survey comprised four basic parts.

- A semi-structured household questionnaire conducted in 55 households considered to be vulnerable
- A community-level key informant discussion totalling 28 interviews with a minimum of one-and-a-half hours of discussion
- A price market monitoring and a retailer interview with data analysed from 12 rural shops and two urban markets
- Macro data and information collection from a variety of sources: local, national and international

The findings of the nutritional anthropometric surveys had an important contribution to the analysis of the food security aspect of the survey.

This paper examines food security for the population of Kosovo, with specific emphasis on the vulnerable population, in the pre-conflict period prior to March 1999, during the conflict from March to June and post-conflict June to July 1999 and specifically highlights the situation as it was in July. This is followed by a discussion which analyses for the future and supplies a causal analysis of food insecurity in Kosovo.

**Accessibility and availability of foodstuffs**

**Pre-conflict**

The biggest effect on circulation of products within Kosovo had its beginnings with the control of goods in May 1998 imposed by the Milosevic government. This resulted in the high-risk black market trade in order to furnish Albanian shops with a small range of goods commanding high prices. It became extremely difficult to supply shops partly due to roadblocks forcing some shopkeepers to pass through the mountains by tractor to get supplies, partly due to heavy bribes paid to Serbian security forces and partly due to the risk of imprisonment.
Travel from the village to the closest town for shopping was inhibited by fear of leaving the village, lack of efficient (or any) transport system and the high price of bus fares. In very tense areas the only option was for women to go to the town as men risked arrest from the police.

Money received from abroad was ever more erratic in timing and quantity increasing the hardship of families reliant on this source of income. Borrowing from neighbours or credit offered by certain shops was the only way that some customers could obtain their daily requirements. Despite extended repayment periods this facility became less available as security decreased and the burden on family resources increased.

Agriculture suffered a great deal through reduced access to land for cultivation and harvesting and left not only the agricultural population facing a more difficult food security situation but had resultant consequences on Kosovo as a whole — bread made from wheat flour had been the staple

**During the conflict**

With shops and markets closed, no humanitarian aid organisations present and extremely high levels of insecurity over the months March–June, and remembering the prevailing conditions in Kosovo since early 1998, the consequences on the nutritional status and food security of the population as a whole could have been enormous. Yet nutritional anthropometric surveys concluded that the global acute malnutrition rate (defined as weight/height below -2 Z-scores (80 per cent median) and/or oedema) was only marginally higher in July 1999 than it had been in December 1998 and these figures were in no way alarming (McBain and Ogden, 1998; Wilkinson et al., 1999). This was a clear indication that effective coping mechanisms were in place in Kosovo during the conflict.

Coping strategies were adopted as a consequence of geographical location of the individual. Accessibility and availability of food for the population was strongly linked to location and to the pattern of movement during displacement, the less damaged south-east still had food stocks and livestock whereas heavily damaged central and western areas severely lacked foodstuffs.

The overall situation in Kosovo during spring 1999 was helped immensely by the increasingly popular habit, developed over the previous decade, of storing large quantities of food as the population lived in an ever more insecure environment.

The normal pattern of food consumption was markedly different during the conflict when the usual three meals per day was reduced to two or even just one meal daily. The priority given to children is so strong among the Kosovars that children continued to eat at least two meals per day even if it meant an adult going without, affording a degree of protection to the nutritional status of the child. This trend was also seen during the Bosnian crisis when the idea of children missing meals was only considered as a last resort (Curtis, 1995), and contrasts with coping strategies in famine when children begin to miss meals earlier (Derevex, 1993).

Some families voluntarily split up to improve access to food, the women and children evacuating to nearby countries and the men escaping to the mountains or leaving to join the KLA. The men often stayed close to the village in order to protect their property or livestock with other members of the family moving in with relatives in locations where the security risk was less and where food availability was greater, for example where food stocks or animals had not been destroyed.
Families in tense areas close to the mountains pre-positioned food and cooking stoves or _saç_ (special pans for baking bread) to be ready in case of evacuation. When there was no time to pre-position, families escaped with food and _saç_, with men returning to the village after dark to take more supplies from their own homes or from the stocks of other empty houses. The KLA provided escorts or distributed food themselves from stocks they had found. Items distributed for agricultural purposes prior to the war were utilised; seed potatoes being taken, boiled and eaten in the mountains, despite the knowledge they were not for consumption; plastic sheeting for greenhouses was used as shelter for families; wheat was taken from stocks and boiled although this diet resulted in many digestive problems for those who ate it. Other than this, there were very few reports of consumption of wild foods such as fruit and berries or yellow maize (usually used as fodder for animals), contrasting with their use in times of food shortage in African contexts (ACF, 1996).

In the northern mountains, the villagers evacuated to _stane_ (small wooden huts on higher ground) struggling through the snow with their cows to reach safety, the cows then provided milk for the family. Traders took flour and cigarettes to sell in the mountains. Wood found in the mountains was the source of fuel and food was cooked only once a day at dusk when the chances of smoke from the fire being seen were reduced.

For those moving from village to village, food stocks were taken with families. Some host families provided everything. Distribution warehouses used by local aid groups had considerable amounts of humanitarian aid food supplies donated by national and international sources. Empty houses, shops and schools were looted for food and wood, although these sources also fed the military forces. In villages that received many displaced, residents shared food stocks between themselves, the families they were hosting and the displaced living in public buildings. They also gave stoves to the latter and collective cooking was encouraged. Some wealthier individuals brought large quantities of food items for the population.

The cultural habits of sharing and solidarity were strongly evident during the time of hardship. Excess harvest stored centrally was distributed to those less well off. Villagers borrowed from each other — milk for babies was mentioned.

In the urban areas, state shops continued to trade but were mostly frequented by the Serb population. Some of the Albanian population were able to visit these state shops, if security allowed, but the food items available to them were limited and priority was given to Serb shoppers, who were also able to purchase a greater range of goods. Similar ethnic-based distinctions were made in Bosnia where Muslims were not allowed to purchase basic items (Curtis, 1995). Markets were forced to close after direct grenade attacks or mass looting of goods and equipment. A small number of Serb traders remained. Shopping became a very difficult task, heatings were common as was taking of money. It was almost exclusively the women who went to the shops in urban areas as the risks of leaving the house were much higher for men. Contingency stocks of elementary items were bought just prior to the conflict after which access to fresh items was very limited. There were long queues for bread and again Serbs had priority. Conversely, in some areas, meat was widely available and cheap due to many killed animals being sold — often by members of the Roma community. As the war heightened, Kosovar risked leaving their homes to search for food in empty houses, schools and abandoned shops.
The biggest shortages appeared to be suffered on the road while moving around the country during forced displacement. Obtaining food became more difficult or more likely to result in confiscation when people were more visible and the territory more controlled. At the border crossings into Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro, people complained to aid workers of having been unable to get milk for their children and of not having eaten for several days.

Food items most commonly stated to be unavailable were flour, sugar and oil. In some areas flour stolen from villagers was being resold to them at greatly inflated prices.

In the host country some people said that they had been able to take food with them especially biscuits and powdered milk for babies. Sometimes this was confiscated during the journey. The most common source of food was from humanitarian aid, and for those staying in their tractor trailers or in tented camps, this was often their only source. Conversely, those refugees who managed to secure a place in a local home were additionally catered for by the host families who often provided a high proportion of food. Food from the home country or purchased items were also sources.

**Post-conflict**

The end of the conflict in June 1999 did not greatly improve the lot of the inhabitants. The food security situation for many was dire and expected to remain so for at least the following 12 months. Forty per cent of cultivable land was not planted in October 1998 (Ferrand, 1999) due to insecurity and much of what was planted was lost — at least for those in the heavily war-affected zones and those areas of central Kosovo which were traditionally poorer.

Not all families were able to resume consumption of three meals per day. Exchanges and sales were made — pasta for bread, a car for flour, televisions for food — to provide food for the family. Sharing continued but the availability of the items to share was much diminished.

The destruction of food stocks was very significant and in the worst-affected areas was total. Stocks were either eaten during the crisis or were burned in houses and shops or deliberately on bonfires. Fears that food stocks had been poisoned forced villagers to destroy them themselves. Less war-affected areas still had good food supplies, especially animal products.

Many returnees from Albania and Macedonia brought with them stocks of food which they had received from distributions in those countries or which they were able to buy. These lasted for roughly the first two weeks of return, improving slightly the food security of the family until the general humanitarian food distribution was able to begin in Kosovo.

The 1999 wheat harvest was expected to be almost nothing in the most war-affected areas. Less-affected areas were expected to have between 30 and 80 per cent of the harvest of a normal year (FAO, 1999). There are numerous explanations for this: the amount of wheat planted in the previous year was reduced because of the 1998 conflict, the growing crop was damaged during the conflict by burning, bombing, grazing animals and lack of fertilisation and pest control. Where the wheat was undamaged, mines had been planted to prevent harvesting or the fields were full of cluster bombs. Farm machinery — tractors, ploughs, hand-tools — was damaged, burned or looted. Horses used by some families for ploughing were killed or lost. Plans for cultivation were
impossible without the help of humanitarian assistance with necessary items and with de-
milling of fields. All these factors seriously affected food security status.

The vegetable harvest, too, was significantly affected as the planting season con-
ccluded with the start of air attacks. Some families managed to do some late planting
in gardens on their return although the quantity and quality of the crop would be
drastically reduced from normal years with the yield only being sufficient for direct
consumption by the family. Significantly there would have been no excess for winter
preserves — a traditional habit in Kosovo which provides vegetables throughout the
winter. Those vegetables for preservation would have had to be purchased affecting
further the quality of the already poor winter diet.

The loss of animals was significant. Loss was more or less total for the majority,
areas where there had been heavy fighting and destruction were the hardest hit.
Virtually all chickens had either run away, been deliberately killed or trucked into
Serbia, similarly with cows and sheep, some died simply through lack of fodder,
others were injured or killed by mines. For those fortunate enough to live, poor feeding
resulted in low milk production and thinner animals which brought a lower price in the
market, having a financial impact on the family.

Wood remained a very important fuel source for the people of Kosovo, especially
with electricity supply problems after their return in summer 1999. There was much
more reliance on wood for cooking and for heating in the winter; electricity was not
restored. Some communities and individuals whose livelihoods were based on
collection and selling of wood faced serious problems. Many forests, especially those
in strategic points on the eastern and south-western borders, had been mined or the
means of transporting the wood had been destroyed.

Fuel supplies into Kosovo quickly became regular and prices dropped after the end
of the conflict. However, outside the main towns the prices were much higher and the
fuel was only available in bottles. Fuel supply and price were initially inhibiting
factors for the villagers in gaining accessibility to markets.

**Trade and circulation**

*Urban areas*

The revival of the trading chain was remarkably rapid after the return of the population
in June 1999, even in towns where shopping areas were wiped out. Free movement of
goods, no taxes and no more bribes to pay kept prices low and helped the market to
thrive. The hundreds of international staff in Pristina contributed to high sales of
many items, particularly soft drinks and beer.

The majority of goods entering Kosovo throughout the 1990s were manufactured in
and supplied from Serbia. At the time of the July survey, trade with Serbia was limited
for most goods although the majority of certain products, for example flour and milk,
did actually derive from Serbia as there was excess available. Trading was not direct
but through a ‘neutral’ third party, for example Bosnians in Novi Pazar.

Lack of home-produced goods meant that imports were high with fresh products
supplied from neighbouring countries whose borders were open once again. Some
traders both large and small dealt directly with a business partner in a neighbouring
country for their supplies, for the majority though, trade came through a wholesale in
the main towns. Trade with other countries developed, Bulgaria became a key player, trading in processed foods and household furnishings.

**Rural areas**

In the rural areas trading began at a very low level with Albanian shopkeepers trading small quantities of goods in front of their damaged or destroyed shops using previous savings, loans or donations from overseas to facilitate revival. Daily turnover was however less than one-quarter that of the pre-March period despite the credit facilities offered to customers.

Storage of goods posed a major problem. Refrigerators had been looted or were non-operational because of the inadequate power supply. Damaged or stolen transport meant that traders used taxis to bring their supplies back to the shop. A trip to the market was essential for various goods such as fresh fruit and vegetables, beans, rice, milk or eggs and certainly for flour. Financial and transport constraints, however, limited the frequency of visits and fewer customers spent less money on a more limited range of goods from a greater number of traders. Despite these difficulties access to markets was on the whole, much easier than pre-March 1999.

**Loss of livelihood**

Loss of livelihood and thus financial security for some families has been total. Death in the family, or missing members, results in loss of potential to resume livelihood patterns. If the breadwinner is no longer alive or missing, the family is more vulnerable. Extreme trauma and psychological disturbance contribute to increased vulnerability.

The destruction of identity documents precluded some people from travelling out of Kosovo to purchase goods for re-opening their businesses. The impact on food security was immense and is summarised in Table 1.

**Humanitarian aid and its constraints**

A huge proportion of the population was totally reliant on humanitarian aid: many received their only supplies of flour, sugar and oil through distributions, although this did not necessarily meet their needs. For tens of thousands this was also the case during 1998. From the return in June 1999 until the implementation of targeted food aid in September 1999, it was intended that there would be general distribution to all members of the population, supported by donors, implementing partners and distribution partners.

However, numerous problems with supplies of food into Kosovo affected the planned frequency and timing of distributions and the type and quantities of food available for distribution. A two-week ration (based on 2,200 kilocalories per person per day) without its full quota of commodities (flour, sugar, oil and beans) had to last for one month. The implications on food security and nutritional status, especially for the most vulnerable were obvious.

In villages the number of households targeted for food distribution remained relatively stable, changes were easy to assess and thus the likelihood of receiving
Table 1 Summary of livelihood strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Livelihood strategy</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal rearing</td>
<td>Loss of animals leads to no eggs, no meat, reduced quantities of milk, less cheese and yogurt production, less or no sales of home-produced dairy items. Effect on availability of home-produced goods and more reliance on external markets. Significant reduction in number of live animals for sale. No horse to plough land, no income from rental of horse to neighbour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop production</td>
<td>No cultivation means no produce to sell. Heavy mining of vineyards has serious repercussions on the family income. No sales of home-grown vegetables due to displacement at the crucial planting season.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members overseas</td>
<td>Drain on resources during the conflict means reserves only sufficient to purchase essential items. Stolen or destroyed documents prohibits return to West.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black market</td>
<td>Free borders mean no black market and destruction of livelihood of black market traders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

adequate supplies greater. In the towns and especially Pristina, however, population migration from outlying villages was expected to increase in winter as families moved into town in the search for shelter and warmth during the severest weather. The difficulty of keeping up to date with these changes would have consequences on the amount of food aid available for distribution to these families and subsequently on their food intake.

Distribution to minority ethnic groups particularly in urban areas, was fraught with tension and danger because of reprisals. A large number of Serbs who remained in Pristina were elderly or disabled with limited access to food and, with an increasingly precarious personal security situation, they faced extreme food insecurity.

Food consumption

Patterns of food consumption changed during the 1990s in light of the prevailing economic situation. These changes reduced the quality, quantity, variety, type and freshness of foods consumed by the family. In concrete terms this meant a limited consumption of high-quality protein products with a subsequent increase in carbohydrate-rich foods to maintain calories. Combined with the decrease in fresh fruit and vegetables and milk products, micro-nutrient and protein intakes were seriously compromised and would be even more so during the winter months. Consumption of low quality and quantity of food combined with poor food storage conditions, compounded the health risks of a population living in a poor environment with possible manifestations of nutrient deficiencies.

It was of paramount importance that the vulnerable continued to receive humanitarian aid on a regular basis throughout the autumn and winter of 1999, with the appropriate ration, if they were to maintain nutrient intake and avoid malnutrition. Table 2 summarises the main issues which affected the availability of food for the population as a result of the spring 1999 conflict.
### Table 2  Main issues affecting the availability of food as a result of the conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food group</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cereals</td>
<td>Lack of wheat harvest reduced individual capacity to be self-sufficient. Inability to plant beans and maize had the same effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>Inability to plant vegetables this year resulted in lower consumption, less available for sale or exchange and less available for preservation for the winter period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal products</td>
<td>Total loss of chickens and high percentage loss of livestock equated to a reduction in consumption of meat, milk, cheese, yogurt and eggs and less available for sale or exchange</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Income and expenditure**

Accessibility of food is in part related to income sources which have changed dramatically from the pre-March 1999 period to July 1999 and are outlined in Table 3.

The small amount of money available to many families was sufficient only for the purchase of basic food and hygiene items, for others their income did not sustain them even in these items. Purchase of clothing and shoes for the children in winter remained a high priority.

On another level, construction costs were expected to be very high and for many families outside help would be essential in order to reconstruct the home especially before the forthcoming winter. Any ‘spare’ money would be spent on household items replacing the cookers, refrigerators, televisions and washing-machines that were destroyed or stolen during the conflict.

**Conclusion**

**Destruction**

The major factor which affected the family’s ability to obtain food and thus the household food security in July 1999, was destruction as a result of the conflict. The effect of destruction is not only physical resulting in the loss of the home and land but also has its effects on the mental health of the individual and the family, undermining the ability to cope effectively with life and increasing health problems (Palmer and Zwi, 1998). This was a major shift from the situation reported in December 1998 when one of the main factors affecting the food security of the family was the control of goods which made it very difficult and even risky, for the householder to provide adequate food for the family.

**Vulnerability**

Assessment of the vulnerability of individual households cannot simply be limited to the socio-economic characteristics of that household as it was in the pre-conflict period. It is crucial to examine the wider social and political context, in particular how
Table 3 Income sources before and after the conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income sources before the conflict (pre-March 1999)</th>
<th>Income sources after the conflict (July 1999)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money from Diaspora abroad</td>
<td>Money from Diaspora abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale of own production including corn, fruit, beans, grapes, vegetables</td>
<td>Trading in goods from overseas — food, household goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid full-time employment — driver, doorkeeper, factory, teacher, health worker, trader</td>
<td>Jobs with international organisations (Job opportunities are greatest in the city and larger towns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary and seasonal work — for money or food, for example agriculture, building</td>
<td>Mmmal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts from neighbours, relatives, local business people</td>
<td>Diminished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans as above including credit from village stores</td>
<td>Reduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension payments</td>
<td>Not being paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales of assets — including livestock, household goods (white), jewellery</td>
<td>Limited, if any, assets remaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings — from above</td>
<td>Savings, if not stolen or spent during displacement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the area and more specifically the community, were affected by the war. Whole municipalities have been destroyed — houses, fields, crops, machines, and it is those which have been damaged the most which have become the most vulnerable. Many of the previously wealthy are living in tents in the yards of their old homes reliant on humanitarian distributions.

Agriculture (crops, livestock, machinery, tools and irrigation) suffered immensely throughout 1998 and more specifically in the spring of 1999, which has therefore left the agricultural population facing a very poor food security situation with important consequences for Kosovo as a whole. Agricultural inputs are of paramount importance in helping to restore self-sufficiency and the economy of the people of Kosovo. The distribution going on during early autumn 1999 would have helped to ensure a good harvest in July 2000, but it is estimated that it will be July 2001 before ‘normal’ harvest yields return.

A desire to return to the agricultural co-operative system which had existed until the early 1990s was expressed as a means of support and re-development.

Before March 1999, the wealth of a family had been primarily determined by the number of workers abroad, the more wealthy being those families with one or more members abroad for a long period of time with a subsequent build-up of assets. A family falling into the medium-income bracket would have had one member abroad with proportionally fewer assets. The poor would have had no family member abroad.

This definition was not so relevant as a measure of vulnerability for the post-conflict period (July 1999). Destruction of houses, land, livestock and agricultural products became a far more pertinent indicator of vulnerable categories.
Humanitarian aid

It is only through effective monitoring in co-ordination with donors, implementing partners and distribution partners that it can be ensured that targeted vulnerable groups receive the required amount of aid. Effective integrated monitoring systems needed to be implemented to help improve the food security status of the family throughout the winter period following the survey. With the correct amount of food aid distributed to the household, any small cash reserves could be spent on fresh food items. Each organisation involved in the distribution had a responsibility to advise partners on any changes in vulnerability status, thus targeting could be more effective and take place at the appropriate time including contingency stocks for isolated villages before access during the winter became a big issue.

The future

The speed of the return in June 1999 and the short time available to re-start trading and other activities points to the resilience and motivation of the Kosovars. From predictions made by key informants in the survey in July 1999, it was suggested that the country would rebuild its wide range of economic activity — sugar refining, leather goods, bicycles, vehicle spare parts, mining — but the timing of this was uncertain (there were estimates of between five and 10 years before production factories and other industries could be established), and it was unlikely to happen without huge financial contributions from overseas aid. Some factories were quick to resume production after the conflict, manufacturing edible oils, milk products and beer.

The main hopes for families were to repair their houses in time for winter, find work and cultivate the land. A small number wanted to leave the village and settle in town. Others were waiting for the return of husbands currently in Serbian jails. The physical damage which has been caused throughout the whole crisis, not only in 1999 but also over the last 10 years, will take a long time to repair. Economic regeneration must occur if families are to be food secure in the long term.

Summary

Households are food secure when their livelihoods are sustainable. If the livelihood strategies are not functional, populations become vulnerable and face food insecurity. Such has been the case for the population of Kosovo during the last decade. Events which began in 1989 with the loss of autonomy for Kosovo had dire socio-economic consequences. Mass dismissal of Kosovars from their jobs forced households to send members overseas to seek work in order to support the family as employment opportunities at home were steadily reduced, changing the family’s status. The main income source for the majority of the population has been money from the Diaspora with many dependent on loans and supports for their livelihoods.

The 1998 controls on goods limited the availability of food for the Kosovar population. Fighting and restrictions on movement later in the same year restricted access even further. These limitations resulted in a poor quality and quantity of diet putting the most vulnerable at risk of undernutrition or even malnutrition.
Figure 1  Causal analysis of undernutrition
Source: Action against Hunger
The diagram illustrates the impact of post-conflict destruction on household food security and dietary intake. Key factors include the destruction of houses and loss of assets, mines in fields and forests, and the reduction in agricultural production. The availability of food, especially locally sources, is also a critical factor. Less capacity for sale or exchange, reduced food sources, and less food for consumption contribute to reduced dietary intake. The diagram underscores the interrelatedness of these factors in the context of post-conflict scenarios.

ernutrition in the Kosovo context.

ger, Pristina July 1999.
The war of spring 1999, which brought death for some family members, detentions or total disappearance, decreased the chances of households achieving livelihoods which can support their families. All of these events have had a severe impact on food security and thus nutritional status throughout the last decade, leaving a population in a very insecure environment.

The issues raised throughout the course of this paper can be summarised in the following causal analysis diagram of undernutrition in the Kosovo context specifically focusing on the post-conflict period (see Figure 1, based on the UNICEF Conceptual Framework, 1990).

It suggests that the political and economic structure results in certain events or external shocks with subsequent effects. These effects have consequences on household food security, which has its impact on inadequate dietary intake resulting finally in undernutrition with a potential for malnutrition. The main focus is on the key pathways leading to food insecurity as the network of issues affecting food security is complex. Health and care are considered only in relation to their impact on food security and not in terms of their immediate impact on food intake and the health status of individuals.

Notes


2 Full details of the results of the survey questionnaires and interviews are not given here but can be seen in the reports named above and available from Action Against Hunger (UK), London or Prishtina offices.

References


Ferrand, C (1999) Agricultural Study in the Province of Kosovo, FRY Action Against Hunger (UK), Kosovo.


Feeding and Weaning Survey, Kosovo 15 June 2 July Action Against Hunger (UK) Kosovo

Address for correspondence: 35 Castle Road Colne Lancashire BB8 7AR E mail <kate ogden@virgin.net>
Making Exchange Entitlements Operational: The Food Economy Approach to Famine Prediction and the RiskMap Computer Program

John Seaman
Save the Children Fund (UK)

The effect of production failure or some other shock on household income and food supply depends upon (a) the pattern of household income, and (b) its ability to compensate for any deficit which may have occurred, for example, by the sale of assets or finding additional paid employment. The corollary is that the prediction of the likely effect of some event on the future state of the economy or food supply of a population of households requires an understanding of the economy of the households concerned and the economic context to which these relate. This paper describes an attempt to develop an approach to prediction using a dynamic model of economy based on quantitative descriptions of household economy obtained by systematic rapid field-work and summarises the experience of the use of this approach to date.

Keywords. famine prediction, entitlements, RiskMap computer program.

Introduction

Although in hindsight it is usually clear why specific famines occurred, it is often by no means clear what effect current crop failure or some other shock is likely to have on the future food supply of a population. There are three main sources of practical difficulty.

The first is that the ability of a household to maintain its food supply in the face of some shock depends not on the supply of food as such, but on the ability of the household to get access to such food as is available. A household's ability to acquire food will depend upon what has been termed its 'entitlement set' — in this context essentially the sum of its income and the exchange value of its labour and other assets (Sen, 1981). The corollary is that the prediction of the likely effect of some event on future food supply requires an understanding of the economy of the households concerned (Desai, 1988).

In practice this understanding is difficult to achieve. The operational interest is often in populations of diverse economies living in large, sometimes remote and insecure locations. Rural households are often organised in a way that tends to minimise the risk to their food supply. A household may have several income sources, which reduces the risk from any specific event to any one. In the event of income...
failure a household may be able to fall back on food stocks, cash savings, livestock and other assets or find additional income from paid employment, wild foods or gifts from kin. Risk may also be shared between households by the redistribution of food, livestock or other resources by gift, credit and other arrangements (Corbett, 1988, Buchanan Smith 1995, Rahmato, 1988, de Souza 1989).

The second is that shocks are rarely simple. Although a single year of production failure may be enough to compromise household food supply in practice we are often faced with situations where production failure of fluctuating intensity has occurred over a period of several years, for example in the northern highlands of Ethiopia in the early 1980s, or with combinations of events: the long standing breakdown of trade, compounded by drought, conflict and displacement in Bahr el-Ghazal, Sudan in 1998. More rarely, exogenous events may trigger or contribute to famine, for example the generalised and severe rise in food prices in Bangladesh in 1974, triggered by a market panic, secondary to localised flooding and uncertainty about cereal imports (Seaman and Holt 1980, Sen, 1981).

The third is with the objective of early warning. Most economic shocks do not lead to starvation. People survive, but only at the cost of impoverishment from the sale of assets, the risks of migration to find work, a reduction in food intake and the inability to meet education, health and other non food costs. The need to anticipate starvation remains but there is also a need for information that will allow the economic effects of shocks to be anticipated, and the most appropriate interventions identified. There is often scope for the prevention of impoverishment and hunger through the stabilisation of food prices, work creation or a reduction in taxation and other household costs, which may be cheaper and more practical than the provision of food aid.

This paper describes an attempt to overcome these difficulties and to use an 'entitlement' approach to develop a practical system for the prediction and assessment of famine and food crisis. This approach was developed from 1992 by SCI (UK) in collaboration with the FAO/Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) for use at a national scale. The initial aim was to allow GIEWS to identify areas thought to be at risk of food shortage from drought or other shock. Since then the approach has also found application in the assessment of more local crises in establishing the food and needs of refugees and in the assessment of urban populations. The paper describes the rationale for the approach, the approach itself, and summarises the experience of its use to date.

The approach

At the outset, an operationally useful approach was defined as one that would do the following four things. First, be capable of responding to economic shocks in the terms in which these are actually experienced, for example, combinations of shocks to production and trade. Second, provide output not only in terms of the risk of starvation, but in terms which might be of wider practical use including estimates of the sequence and timing of asset sales and other events which might result. Third, give some indication of the part and proportion of the population most likely to be affected. Fourth, produce output of a quality that would be likely to be accepted by operational agencies, and therefore command action. Any practical method would, of course, also
have to be capable of being applied in a routine way at reasonable cost at an appropriately large geographical scale, that is, often national. The approach was based on the following rationale

- Any method which would be capable of meeting the criteria outlined would necessarily be based on a description of household economy, the way in which household economy varies within and between populations of households, and the economic context, for example, of markets, to which those households relate. The household would be the logical unit for analysis, as it is the smallest coherent economic unit.

- The method would have to use imprecise information. The need for detailed information on many populations required that the information be gathered at low cost, precluding the use of sample surveys. The method would also have to be capable of responding to low-quality information. Routinely collected statistics on food crop production are often no more than rough estimates of cereal production, and do not always include production of root and other crops. Rangeland conditions are rarely routinely monitored, and data on the price of staples and other commodities, although now fairly widely available, tend to be only from larger market centres.

- The method would have to be capable of giving not just a static description of rural economy, but also insight into its dynamics. Households often depend on the market exchange of labour and assets to purchase food and on the transfer of food and cash on non-market terms between households. In crisis, the terms of these transactions may change, sometimes profoundly (such as, crashes in livestock prices when many people attempt to sell livestock). Clearly there are sharp theoretical limits to what can be achieved. We cannot predict the future state of a complex system, at least with known accuracy.

The attempt to reconcile these three requirements suggested the development of a dynamic model of rural economy based on quantitative descriptions of household economy obtained by systematic rapid field-work. At the outset, it was accepted that this would, for the reasons given, produce less than completely accurate output. The aim of modelling is, however, not only to make accurate predictions. The fact of modelling is an attempt to construct a clear argument or hypothesis not just about what result might occur, but importantly, why it is thought that this might occur.

The approach was therefore designed with the primary aim of facilitating the development of well-informed arguments about the most likely effect that a particular shock or combination of shocks would be likely to have on the economy and food supply of a population. However, the expectation was that this approach would be likely to produce at least as accurate a forecast as was possible within the limitations of data quality and the understanding of the relationships between the variables.

This approach appeared to offer several potential benefits. In the author’s experience, a repeated and central difficulty with famine prediction has been that in practice each of the organisations involved (national governments, various UN organisations, governmental and non-governmental donors) has different information available to it. Each organisation forms its own view of the significance of this and it is rare for the reasons for these views to be clearly stated. A formally argued case seemed to offer five advantages.
First, it raises the question about what information is sufficient to construct an adequate argument and might force the collection of that information where it is otherwise unavailable. For example, as it is known that in some locations, people have survived crises or augmented their food supply by collecting wild foods — for example, in parts of South Sudan — to predict famine in any location, it is necessary to know about the potential availability of wild foods, their types and toxicity. If the information is unavailable, and it is agreed that it is required, no firm view can be established until it is obtained.

Second, it is predictive of events which should be observed if the argument is to be sustained. For instance, if we believe that crop failure should have certain effects and evoke certain responses from particular categories of household, for example that people will have to sell assets to survive then we should be able to observe the sale, or the change in price which should result. If this is not observed, the prediction must be revised. The system might therefore provide pointers to the variables — increased livestock sales, a fall in livestock price — which should be monitored, and allow for systematic revision in the light of events.

Third, it is explanatory and might allow consideration of alternative intervention strategies. For example, if it was thought that a population would sell livestock in order to survive, and for policy reasons this was considered undesirable, market intervention or food distribution might be arranged in a sufficiently timely way to make this unnecessary.

Fourth, as it is structured, an argument might provide a basis for communication between various agencies concerned. There might still be disagreement, but the basis of the disagreement might become clear.

Finally, it should be more convincing to decision-makers than a bald statement of the numbers of people thought to be in need or the general expectation of starvation.

The approach is described in two parts. First, the information required to describe household economy and to characterise defined populations of households and the way in which this is obtained. Second, the approach to analysis.

In the collaboration between SCI and FAO/GIFWS, where national systems were the primary interest, it was clear that the data sets would be large and that a practical system would require the use of a computer. A Windows-based computer program ("RiskMap") was developed for this purpose. A computer-based system appeared to have the further advantages that first, the fact of coding the model would force clarity on the analytical steps involved, and second, it would allow scenarios, such as arguments, to be quickly developed in the case.

Subsequent description is confined to the RiskMap computer program although it should be noted that where the data quantity is small, and with some provisos, discussed later, essentially the same analytic approach can be used manually or by using a spreadsheet.

**Describing household economy**

A household is defined as a group of people who contribute to a common economy and rely on the income from that economy for at least the greater part of their food. In different areas a household may be a nuclear family or a much larger group.

The chief practical difficulty in describing household economy is the large number
of variables that could be included in the description. A household may obtain its income from a range of sources, including agriculture, livestock, local and distant paid employment, wild foods and other sources. It may have more or less savings and assets held in a variety of forms, including cash and different types and mixed livestock, it may be located in an area which offers more or less opportunity to find additional employment or wild foods, and its ability to exploit these will depend on its demographic composition. The difficulty is increased by variation in economy between poor and better-off households.

The challenge was to find a simplified description of household economy, which was nevertheless 'complete' i.e. omitted no variable critical to the argument. was sufficiently simple to allow the necessary data to be acquired in a reasonably economical way, and analysed without the introduction of gross distortions; retained sufficient detail to allow useful operational output.

The description requires two steps. First, the identification of populations with similar economic characteristics. Second, the description of households within each population. The aim, it is emphasised, is not to describe the economy of a population precisely in any statistical sense, but to characterise it sufficiently well for the purpose to hand.

Standardised definitions have been developed for all the terms used. For instance 'wealth' is defined as internal to the population under enquiry, and in different economies may relate to land ownership, livestock holdings or labour availability. Wild foods exclude 'famine foods' or wild foods which are toxic or for other reasons eaten only in desperation.

**Defining populations**

A population is defined as a population of households that share similar economic characteristics. The size of a population (and therefore the definition of the word 'similar') will depend on the specific perspective and interest of the user. For example, FAO/GIEWS were primarily interested in an initial prioritisation of populations at a coarse level of geographical disaggregation, or roughly provincial, with the aim of prioritising areas which might be of concern and should be further investigated. From a national or sub-national perspective this is generally too coarse to be useful and a finer disaggregation may be required — the district level has been used in Mozambique. As some populations are mobile, or two or more populations may co-exist within the same area, a population is typically, but not necessarily, related to a single geographical area, a 'food economy area'. Census information usually relates to administrative divisions. Where the food economy area does not coincide with the administrative area, the population of the food economy area is established by estimate.

**Describing households**

The variables used to describe a household are of two broad types (see Table 1). There are variables which describe the pattern of normal household income, that is sources of cash income and an estimate of cash income above that normally spent on food, sources of food income and food income above that normally consumed by the household. 'Non-food production' refers to activities such as charcoal, firewood and
Table 1 Data from the RiskMap database for the Wolla Southern Highlands of (poor, modal and rich), the normal pattern of employment, the specific employment of wild foods and the extent to which redistribution of foc

### i. Income:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of cash income</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Rich</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid employment</td>
<td>65–70</td>
<td>45–50</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock sales</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10–15</td>
<td>50–60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash crops</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10–15</td>
<td>20–30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-food production</td>
<td>5–10</td>
<td>0–5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other trade</td>
<td>15–25</td>
<td>10–20</td>
<td>20–30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>85–105</td>
<td>75–105</td>
<td>90–120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash income &gt; food purchase</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60–70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ii. Capital and savings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Rich</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food stocks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10–20</td>
<td>60–70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock holdings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10–20</td>
<td>90–100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash savings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40–60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ethiopia, describing the income and reserves of three categories of household, livestock and other markets used and their rank importance, the availability and other goods is likely to occur between households.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of food income</th>
<th>Poor (55–65)</th>
<th>Mode (70–80)</th>
<th>Rich (90–95)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food crops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk/meat</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0–5</td>
<td>5–10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild foods</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift/relief</td>
<td>5–10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food purchase</td>
<td>30–40</td>
<td>10–20</td>
<td>0–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90–115</td>
<td>80–105</td>
<td>95–110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food prod &gt; consumption</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Rich</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30–40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
iii. Markets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of normal paid employment at</th>
<th>Local markets</th>
<th>Within country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>60–70</td>
<td>30–40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>60–70</td>
<td>30–40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employment markets normally used and rank importance:
- Wollo Southern Highlands 1
- Debre 1 W and Central Highlands 2 Were Ilu 2

Markets used for livestock and rank importance:
- Debre 1
- Were Ilu 1

iv. Wild foods and redistribution:

Wild food availability (scale 0–4) 0–1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Markets</th>
<th>Neighbouring country markets</th>
<th>Distant country markets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other trade
- Jesse 1
- Were Ilu 1

Non-food production
- Jesse 1
- Were Ilu 2

Redistribution (scale 0-4) 1-2
handicraft production, "other trade" essentially to self-employment, for example, petty trade, pack transport services. Relief (gifts/relief in Table 1) refers to relief as food aid, where this is a normal source of income. In the example shown relief had been routinely distributed for many years before the data were collected.

There are other variables which (subject to some assumptions, see discussion below) determine the household's access to food when income is in deficit. These include household food stocks, other assets (cash savings and livestock holdings) which might be sold to acquire food, the names and relative (ranked) importance of the markets normally used for paid employment, livestock sales, the sale of non-food production and 'other trade', the potential availability of wild foods, and an estimate is obtained of the likely propensity of the population to redistribute food between households in time of deficit, by gift, reciprocity or obligation from surplus to deficit households.

For each population the description is repeated for each of three types of household: poor, modal and rich in order to capture some of the variation within each population.

Information collection

The information required is rarely available from documentary sources. As it is required for large geographical areas and diverse economies which impose the need for speed and low-cost rapid enquiry techniques are used, including the use of key informants and direct enquiry in the community. The techniques used are especially those of household budgeting and rapid and 'participatory' rural appraisal although some additional techniques and modifications of existing techniques are employed, for example, "proportional piloting" to establish the relative size of different wealth groups within a population. Enquiry into sources of household income, expenditure and exchange is conducted systematically and in considerable detail. For the computer simulation this is then reduced to the summary data shown in Table 1. A field manual is currently in preparation and SCF has begun a field training course in East Africa.

The veracity of the information is established from the internal consistency of the responses received. For example, the food supply of a household should be reasonably consistent with the likely level of household requirement, and by "triangulation", seeking the same information from several sometimes many, sources.

The density of observation varies from case to case. In cases where access and time are not severe constraints interviews may be done with key informants and information collected directly from a number of households and groups of informants at household level. At an extreme, when there is no access to an area a picture of the economy may be built up entirely from interviews with key informants from outside the area.

The 'normal' baseline year

A fundamental difficulty in describing household economy is that a variable of central interest, the normal level of household food consumption, is not open to accurate measurement. The adequacy of household food consumption clearly varies between (for example, as judged by the large variation in human growth), and within locations, the poor generally having less food than the better off. However, except within broad physiological limits and the rough estimates that can be obtained from estimates of
household income and consumption, we do not know the actual level in any place.

This difficulty is overcome by the use of a 'normal' benchmark year, which is used as a point of comparison when conditions have changed. The 'normal' year is an actual or notional 'normal' year in which there was, by the standards of that place, neither plenty nor want. There is of course no normal year in any location, all years being in some respect different from all others, and in some locations it may be said that by this definition many normal years are distinctly abnormal, for example in semi-arid areas where the cycle is of large swings in production, with reserves being built in good years and consumed in bad. In practice the normal year may be a single 'benchmark' year or a compound of the average of several years which has been agreed with the informants.

The use of a normal baseline year allows information in the database to be expressed in terms of the relative proportion of normal income which is derived from different sources (see Table 1, income) and removes the need for absolute income estimates. This of course does not eliminate the question of normal levels of food consumption, but merely postpones it, as the use of proportions leads to the situation where the output obtained from the simulation in terms relative to normal. This is discussed below.

The concept of 'normal' should not be seen to connote that the situation is either stable or acceptable, merely that it is the norm. In some locations the poor normally live, at least seasonally, in a state of semi-starvation and in others such as southern Sudan, the most frequently occurring 'normal' year is a year of economic blockade and war.

**Units**

The units used are absolute or relative (Table 1) food energy units. For field enquiry responses on income and consumption for a household of a defined size are reconciled in terms of their food energy equivalent (kcal). For the simulation relative food energy units are used. The normal household food requirement is defined as 100 per cent, and other variables are defined with respect to this, in terms of 'normal household food supply equivalents' (NHFFSE). For instance, livestock holdings of 400 to 600 per cent NHFFSE is a level of livestock holding which, if sold at normal prices, and the money used to buy food at normal prices would be sufficient to feed the household for 4–6 years. This allows common units to be used in the data set. Money cannot be used as in some locations milk products, meat and some other commodities are consumed or given away but are not traded, and therefore no monetary value can be attached to them.

**Interval estimates**

Rapid field enquiry does not yield exact quantitative responses. Responses tend to be in terms of estimates, for example that a household in a specified category in a normal year tends to obtain 4–6 bags of cereals of a specified weight, or holds 200–300 head of cattle. The interval has several components, including differences in the opinions of different respondents and the estimate recorded by the observer, or measurement error, actual variation between years (a 'normal' year, as already said, representing one or more years which might be considered to be not abnormal) and actual variation between households in the population concerned. The aim is to establish an interval
where the observer is satisfied that the true value is not less than the lower estimate, and not greater than the upper. In some cases, such as estimates of larger livestock holdings, these estimates may be very broad, say 500 to 1,000 NHHFSF.

Indexes

Estimates of the availability of wild foods are reduced to an estimate on a scale of nought to four. To retain consistency, these index numbers, nought excluded, are used as intervals; thus index one is used as an interval 1–2, two interval 2–3 etc. An index of nought indicates that there are no wild foods or none that should be eaten, while four is defined as a supply potentially sufficient to meet most or all of a household’s food requirement. The likely level of redistribution from surplus to deficit households within a population in time of shortage on non-market terms, say through gift or obligation, is also an estimate on a scale of 0–4 and is defined in similar terms to wild foods. Redistribution may in practice include a wide range of actual arrangements including gifts of uncooked or cooked food, money gifts or loans of lactating animals, and temporary fostering — where a household member is sent to live with, and is fed by, another household.

Analysis

The RiskMap computer program

The program has three main parts. The database which describes the economy of a series of defined populations in the terms already outlined (see Table 1). A system which allows the user to enter a problem, say production failure for a given year (see Table 2). Third, a system for resolving the problem and the database into a result.

The problem specification

The program allows the user to enter a change in economic context (a 'problem') (see Table 2) for each population individually, in terms of

<p>| Table 2 Changes in economic context permitted in the RiskMap problem specification |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in context allowed</th>
<th>Range of change allowed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in estimated production or supply of food crops, wild foods, fishing, animal products, cash crops, relief (as a normal source of income)</td>
<td>Change from 0–300% of normal production (normal production = 100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in access to livestock/cash crop/non-food production/other trade markets</td>
<td>Reduction from normal (100%) to 0% in steps i.e., 75, 50–75, 25–50, 0–25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in food price relative to index price = 100 for each market</td>
<td>40–200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• A change (increase or decrease) in the production of crop, livestock or other source of household production relative to normal (100 per cent).

• A physical obstruction to market access. This was included as a proxy for conflict, as in most modern conflicts where conflict has been a factor, households have been chiefly affected through the inhibition of free movement, rather than directly by warfare. Five levels are allowed (normal, followed by 25 per cent steps to complete obstruction of access) as it is a common operational experience that obstruction to market access is partial, for example in the Bosnian enclaves, parts of Somalia.

• A change in estimated real food prices, relative to the normal price index of 100. For each food economy area, any combination of these can be entered, allowing complex changes in context to be developed.

As with the database, information on the current economic context is supplied in terms of interval estimates. For example, crop production may be entered as 40–60 per cent (or some other interval) of normal, the aim being to provide a method of entering data in the form in which they are typically available in practice, usually as rough estimates. This was adopted as in many countries current estimates of production and the other variables required to describe the current economic context are lacking, and the use of the method often depends on informal estimates.

The model: combining the database and the problem

The structure of the model was designed to meet the criterion that a user should be able to understand, at least intuitively, the calculations taking place, or as a system which would allow the user to think through, and develop hypotheses about, a complex multivariate problem, not an automated system of famine prediction. The algorithms were chosen on the basis that these were reasonably realistic descriptions of the particular transaction taking place, for example the consumption of additional wild foods and easily comprehensible. Linear relationships were used throughout, even where a non-linear solution might have produced a more elegant visual result.

Steps in calculation

For each population, a wealth distribution, in terms of population deciles is derived from the poor, modal and rich household data by interpolation with straight lines (see Figure 1).

Calculations take place in two stages. Stage 1. Calculation of the expected household income deficit which will result directly from the problem. This is a simple arithmetic calculation on the income data of each wealth group of each population. For example, if crop failure is estimated at 50 per cent, and the proportion of normal income derived from crops (in the database) is 40 per cent and all crops are normally consumed (that is, no crops are normally produced above those consumed), the calculated deficit would be 20 per cent of normal food availability. Stage 2. Estimating the likely ability of the household to compensate for any estimated deficit in stage 1. This may be by consuming food stocks, by the use of cash savings, the sale of livestock, obtaining additional paid employment, increased self-employment, increased non-food production (firewood sales), the increased consumption of wild foods and by gift from surplus to deficit households. Three types of algorithm are used.
Figure 1 Method used to create a complete distribution of food income from three observed points (poor, modal and rich)

The first is simple addition. If (in the database) the household is estimated to have food stocks, this food is used to meet the deficit in current income, up to the level of the food stocks available. Food stocks are decremented (or if production is above normal, incremented) by the equivalent amount.

The second is a simple linear supply/demand: price model for all steps involving market transactions (the purchase of food with cash savings, livestock sales, employment, non-food production and other trade). This simulates the sale by deficit households of livestock and labour at the named markets normally used by that population for that commodity, and the use of the proceeds to purchase food, until either the food deficit is overcome or the supply of the asset fails. As in practice when people are making additional asset sales and food purchases, asset prices may fall and food prices rise, each transaction leads to an adjustment of the price of the commodity at that market. As different populations may share the same markets, areas that normally use the same named markets complete with each other as prices change.

The market model requires a figure for the normal volume of sales at that market, an estimate of the elasticity of each market (in terms of the way in which the price of a commodity will vary with changes in supply or demand) and a floor price, below which transactions cease. For example, people will generally not sell their labour below a subsistence-level return; livestock may be sold for the price of the skin, even when they have no value for meat.

An estimate of the normal volume of sales at each market for each commodity is derived from the database, or the sum of all normal sales at a given market from the population or populations using that market. As a population may use several markets for the same commodity, normal sales are allocated to these according to the ranked importance of those markets (that is, where the least important market is ranked 1, in
the proportion rank/sum of all ranks used by that population), weighted for population size. The elasticity of supply/demand and the floor price for each market and commodity are user-defined.

The starting price is taken to be 100 at a normal volume of sales (except when a higher value for food prices is specified as part of the problem specification).

The third algorithm covers wild foods and non-market redistribution between households. Each index point in the database meets 20 per cent of any deficit for that category of household. For example, given an estimated deficit of 20 per cent for a "poor household", living in an area that scored one in terms of wild food availability, the deficit would be reduced to 0 per cent. This is really no more than to say that the greater the estimated availability of wild foods, the more people will be able to consume. Similarly, redistribution within a population by gift or reciprocity, is calculated by redistributing 20 per cent of any surplus which is available to the richer population deciles for each index point to deficit households, in proportion to the deficit.

Reconciling interval estimates

The collection of data in terms of interval estimates leads to a situation where the lower and upper intervals of estimated food and cash income do not add up to 100 per cent or 'normal' (see Table 1). In the program, intervals are reconciled by selecting the two sets of values within these intervals which both sum to 100 per cent, and when combined with the current problem specification, which is also expressed as an interval (for example, crop production is reduced to 50–50 per cent of normal) yield the largest range of deficit estimates. Subsequent steps follow this principle, each data interval being used such as to maximise the interval derived from each calculation, that is the program produces the least certain output, given the uncertainties in the input data. These are not statements of probability.

Flexibility

The program allows the user to

- Run steps in any order, or exclude any step. In reality households make judgements about the optimal timing and order of additional steps which may be taken to overcome an income deficit (Rahmato, 1988; Devereux, 1993)
- Alter the characteristics of any named market for any commodity in terms of its price elasticity of supply/demand and a floor price. This can be used to simulate the effect of possible interventions, say by government intervention, to stabilise the price of cereals.
- Allow for panic livestock sales below a set threshold of grazing even when the population has no food deficit. This simulates a situation, usually due to a failure of grazing, where livestock cannot be fed and their owners will sell them to realise some value, regardless of any requirement to make up a human food deficit.
- Run simulations for up to three successive years. Food production and cash income in excess of consumption need (e.g. where the problem entered includes a year of above-average production) are rolled over between years to make up food stocks and cash savings. The limit was set at three years, as the model does not replace livestock when these have been sold in earlier years.
In the model time is an implicit variable. It does not therefore allow for knock-on effects between areas. An area that has not itself suffered a 'problem' (in the problem specification) might suffer indirectly if the response of neighbouring areas is sufficient to change the price of commodities on which that area depends. The program allows this to be approximated by running the simulation twice. The first run is used to estimate the expected pattern of price changes; the second run includes the expected price changes as part of the problem specification.

**Output**

The output from a simulation is available in a variety of formats (pie charts for poor, modal and rich households, histograms of the complete distribution used in calculation, maps of market output and a text report) which allow the user to follow the estimated effect of an entered problem on each population, by household category, in terms of three steps. First, the estimated household income deficit which will result directly from the entered problem. Second, the steps which households may take to overcome this and the estimated effect of each in making up any deficit calculated in

**Figure 2** Maps showing an entered problem (Map 1), the deficit in household income caused by this (Map 2) and the estimated outcome after household steps to compensate for the deficit (Map 3). In each box, the first figure is the percentage of the population of the area which is estimated to be in deficit, the second the estimated mean deficit (relative to normal, 100%) for the deficit population within that area.
Figure 3  Output from a RiskMap simulation based on an estimated reduction in food availability. The x-axis indicates an estimated income greater than normal requirement, below normal income above normal for three deciles as this includes 'surplus production'. Subsequent steps show the estimated effect of each additional household activity. Steps are cumulative, i.e. step 5.
n of 20–40 per cent in livestock products and crop production. Bars above the the X-axis less than normal requirement. Histogram 1 (normal values) shows Histogram 2 shows the estimated effect of the problem on normal income. on (consuming food stocks, using additional wild foods) on food availability. includes the effect of steps 2–4
step 1. Third, a map of the likely pattern of market price changes that may result (see Figures 2 and 3). Output is usually presented to users as a narrative.

The simulation output allows an estimate to be made for a defined population of the food deficit, as a percentage of ‘normal’ consumption. This can be converted to a quantity of food only if we have an estimate of the normal level of food consumption of each household type. This, as already outlined, is known only in general terms. The actual food deficit can be established only if either an estimate is made of the normal level of good consumption or a level of consumption is established which we think the population should have — the World Food Programme currently uses a figure of 2,100 kcal/person/day. The simulation allows the calculation of tonnage under different user assumptions of requirement/person and time.

Table 2 shows an entered problem (a reduction in crop production and income from livestock products by 20–40 per cent for an area of eastern Ethiopia) it also shows the estimated initial deficit by area and the final result after all steps in the simulation. It can be seen that although the problem affects a wide area of eastern Ethiopia for only one area is the final result estimated to be that part of the population would be in deficit. In all other areas it is estimated that the population would be able to compensate for the effect of the shock on their income.

Table 3 Food needs of the Ethiopian Wollo Southern Highlands for each step of a RiskMap computer simulation and the simulated effect on food stocks, livestock holdings and cash savings. Simulation 1 Food prices in the Wollo Southern Highlands increase by approximately 300 per cent. Simulation 2 Food price rises limited to a 50 per cent increase. The steps are cumulative i.e. step 4 includes the effect of steps 1–3. Estimates based on a population of 1.29 million and a requirement/person of 500g of cereal/day for 365 days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step Description</th>
<th>Simulation 1</th>
<th>Simulation 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deficit</td>
<td>44(28–59)</td>
<td>38(21–54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 + Consumption of food stocks</td>
<td>28(12–45)</td>
<td>21(5–38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 + Increased consumption of wild foods</td>
<td>28(12–45)</td>
<td>21(5 38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 + Use of cash savings</td>
<td>28(12–45)</td>
<td>21(5 38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 + Increased paid employment</td>
<td>26(10–40)</td>
<td>19(2–35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 + Livestock sales</td>
<td>21(7–35)</td>
<td>14(0 28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 + Other trade</td>
<td>18(2 10)</td>
<td>11(0 21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 + Non-food production</td>
<td>14(0 26)</td>
<td>7(0 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 + Redistribution</td>
<td>0(0 0)</td>
<td>0(0 0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Estimated % reduction in original holdings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simulation 1</th>
<th>Simulation 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>45(12–79)</td>
<td>29(5–53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>39(4–72)</td>
<td>20(2–38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food stocks</td>
<td>59(37–81)</td>
<td>42(23–62)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows the simulation output, step by step, for one area, the Wololo Southern Highlands in terms of the population wealth distribution. The size of the estimated deficit and the proportion of the population affected falls with each additional step in calculation (with the exception of wild foods which are not available) and cash savings (which only the better-off groups, who are not in deficit, have). Table 3 (simulation 1) shows the estimated food deficit at each stage and the costs of survival in terms of the estimated reduction in livestock holdings, food stocks and cash savings that are estimated to result. In this simulation food prices are estimated to have risen approximately threefold (roughly that observed in the 1985 famine in this region (Webb et al., 1992)). Table 3 (simulation 2) also shows the effect of re-running the same simulation, but stabilising food prices such that these rise by only approximately 50 per cent. The result, unsurprising in an area where in bad years the poor depend heavily on market exchange for survival, is a marked reduction in both food needs and in asset depletion.

**Discussion**

**Limitations of the current model**

The model is based on the primary assumption that a population faced with a deficit will respond to this by intensifying attempts to exploit existing sources of income, rather than engaging in completely new activities (which are by definition unknown). Although this is largely consistent with experience it is implicit that if a new activity — say, labour migration to a completely new location — were to occur that this would not be taken into account.

The model does not include any information on the seasonality of income or activity. Therefore it

- can give no indication of the timing of a predicted event within the year,
- assumes that some events will occur simultaneously where this may not be so, for example the sale of a commodity at the same market by different populations,
- does not allow for knock-on effects between areas. Although as noted this can be approximated by running the simulation twice, an extension to the model, to include a seasonal analysis, including harvest times, patterns of labour migration, is required.

No data are included on household labour availability. Labour availability is therefore set arbitrarily high, with the assumption made that the demand for labour is limiting.

Although the model was designed with the aim of making this simple, accessible and flexible, its use on a multi-population level is quite complex, the user being confronted with a large number of options, each requiring a judgement, for example trading conditions at each of a number of markets which can usually be defined only on the basis of knowledge of the type of market and its likely behaviour. Users do need to be reasonably experienced to use the simulation to get a confident result. Some features of earlier prototypes — a facility to allow market integration, and the capacity to engage in compensation strategies simultaneously, like selling livestock and seeking additional work at the same time — were removed, partly because the range of choices was
becoming too great. In complex emergencies the user will also have to set the economic argument developed by the model in a wider political and operational context.

A question arises about the quality of the data obtained by RRA techniques and its relationship to simulation output. This is a substantial topic in its own right and beyond the scope of this paper but two points may be made:

- The techniques used to obtain estimates of variables in specific locations are in widespread use, and for some of these variables like food stocks and livestock holdings where these are not open to inspection it is difficult to see that any better practical technique is available. The only test of veracity is, as already noted, in terms of the internal consistency of responses from independent sources.
- In practice sites for enquiry are not randomly selected. It is therefore impossible to demonstrate to a third party (as with the error estimates of a random sample) that the data are representative of the area concerned. This is not a major limitation as long as the user keeps in mind that the information is being used to construct a hypothesis — or often a range of hypotheses — about the most likely outcome. If the user has doubts about the information and the operational implications are sufficiently great further data collection may be required. For completeness it may be added that in many locations, the pattern and density of observations used have been such as to amount to a quasi-random sample and that it is not an intrinsic limitation of the approach. Were it not for problems of time cost and access a more representative sample could be used.

The simulation produces output in terms of the number of households in defined categories that are likely to experience particular economic effects. Where food distribution is the aim it is generally not possible to target precisely specific categories of households and additional information will be required to establish the actual amount of food required. It may also be necessary to supply food to a larger group to reach the target.

**Using the approach without RiskMap**

On smaller data sets (typically single populations) very similar calculations can be done either manually or using a spreadsheet. Practically the steps in calculation are identical although it is more difficult to resolve interval data in a completely satisfactory way. Market steps can only be managed by assuming a particular price outcome for each commodity, although it is sometimes the case that these assumptions can be based on prior recent experience of actual price behaviour (Boudreau, 1998). It is more difficult to run multiple scenarios.

**Potential uses**

The model also gives a way of estimating household vulnerability, if vulnerability is defined in terms of the effect of a stated change in economic context on household economy or food supply. The data provide a detailed description of household economy by defined wealth group which is a useful resource. One possibility which is yet to be tested is the relationship between the simulation and measured nutritional status. The simulation should broadly predict or explain observed nutritional status.
Experience to date

Does it work? The approach has been widely tested both with and without RiskMap, on a large and small scale and on current experience, the answer has to be a qualified yes — in terms of the original objectives.

The accuracy of predictions can be known only by formal prospective testing. The best which can be said is that in our hands the model produces entirely plausible output from historical input, and that in prospective use the impression is that the results are in keeping with subsequent observed events.

In terms of the other objectives, we can be more confident. Within SCF the approach has allowed (at reasonable cost) the introduction of a common framework for data collection, the development of systematic causal arguments and the identification of interventions. Many proposals arising from analysis have been in terms of food aid; as this is still the most frequent method of donor intervention, but some settings, like Rwanda, also include proposals to suspend household taxation and user service charges for restocking and other non food aid interventions. Examples of the use of the technique are available. The approach has proved to be an effective framework for teaching the basic facts and dynamics of rural economic systems, and users have subsequently proved to be more confident and expert in their acquisition and use of information, even in an informal way, this was seen in the cases of South Sudan, Mozambique and SCF staff. The sense is also that the accessibility of the argument together with the fact that it is open to discussion, are more convincing to donors and others involved in decision-making on relief intervention than the more general indications of crisis and need which are currently available

Notes

1. The EU supported the work. The model and (with Penny Allen, Malcolm Newdick and Eric Pitman) RiskMap were developed by the author Tanya Boulleau, Jennifer Bush, Paul Clarke, Julia Earl, William Fielding, Caroline Gullick, Abdoulave Ag Hattulayay, Julius Holt, Alex King, Camilla Knox-Peebles, Mark Lawrence, Nihat Majid, Bill Mosely, Lola Nathanial and Tom Sibale conducted the field-work and developed the data collection techniques.

2. Copies of the RiskMap program are available from Malcolm Newdick, Riverbank IT Management Manor Cottage, 11 Little Milton, Oxford OX44 7QB (Mail@riverbank.co.uk). Examples of reports, details on the field manual and future field training can be obtained from Christina Archer, Food Security Unit, SCF (UK), 17 Grove Lane, Camberwell, London SE5 8RD (c.archer@scfuk.org.uk)

3. RiskMap has been used by SCF (UK) in Ethiopia and northern Sudan, as part of national programmes in Mozambique and Swaziland, for district level training in Zimbabwe, and has been used for prospective studies of the possible effects of Famine in Malawi and Zimbabwe. The approach, the ‘food economy method’ without the RiskMap program has been widely used in east and southern Africa for area assessments and in east Africa, Nepal and Pakistan for the assessment of refugee economy and food needs. The approach is used by WFP VAM in Afghanistan, as part of the information system for ‘Operation Lifeline Sudan’ and the Food Security Assessment Unit for Somalia, with WFP Burundi and contributes to the assessments of the USAID Famine Early Warning System in east Africa.
References


Corbett J (1988) Famine and Household Coping Strategies World Development 16(9) 1099–112


Address for correspondence: Save the Children Fund (UK), Food Security Unit, 17 Grove Lane, London SW8 8RD. E-mail: <j.seaman@cefuk.org.uk>
How Is Household Vulnerability Gendered? Female-headed Households in the Collectives of Suleimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan

Louise Waite
School of Development Studies
University of East Anglia

This research tries to reach an understanding of the well-being of female headed household members through a comparison to male-headed household members in the collectives of the Suleimaniyah governorate in Iraqi Kurdistan. Research was undertaken in five collectives in Suleimaniyah during the summer of 1998. The research contributes to the current gender and development debates which are concerned with improving the understanding of the specific gendered forms of disadvantage faced by female-headed households rather than assuming the universal poverty of this group. An understanding of well-being is approached through a broad conceptualisation of vulnerability in preference to a narrow poverty definition. That the findings of this research are complex attests to the multi-dimensional and mutually constitutive gendered experiences of vulnerability. The definitive conclusion to emerge from this research is a refuting of the rhetoric-fuelled stereotype that households headed by women are at a disadvantage in all the dimensions of vulnerability in comparison to households headed by men. The research also establishes the methodological necessity of examining intra-household distributive mechanisms that determine individuals’ well-being.

Keywords: gender, vulnerability, female-headed households, male-headed households, material assets, human capital, social capital

Introduction

The material for this research comes from my participation in Durham University Research Team’s work in Iraqi Kurdistan. Semi-structured interview questions were carefully devised and conducted on 100 households in five different collectives. Seventy-five female-headed households and 25 male-headed households were randomly (and informally) selected. Local questioners were hired and the people posing the questions were always women in an attempt to minimise the effect of cultural restrictions on women talking freely.

‘Kurdistan’ remains a geographically disputed area, but is commonly regarded as the area where most Kurds live which spreads across the mountainous region where
the borders of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey meet. Figures estimate that the greatest number of Kurds live in Turkey, but it is in Iraq that they constitute the highest proportion of the overall population, making up 25 percent of this country’s population (McDowall 1996). Although perhaps cosmetic, the Kurds in Iraq have actually secured much greater advances towards autonomy that any of their brethren elsewhere founded on the international intervention in 1991 and the democratic elections of 1992. However, they have also endured some of the worst repression by a government whose clear intention is to keep them submissive and firmly under its control.

The period of Iraqi Kurdish history that is relevant to this study is the post-1991 period. The defeat of Iraq in the Gulf War following its invasion of Kuwait in 1990 created an astonishingly spontaneous uprising in the south and then the north of Iraq in March 1991. The characteristically ruthless response from Baghdad was a military offensive which prompted almost two million Kurds to flee towards and across the borders of Iran and Turkey. Embarrassed by the public outrage at the plight of the Kurds, the UN Security Council, adopted Resolution 688 on 5 April 1991 which allowed the allied governments to establish a safe haven inside Iraq near the Turkish border to allow the Kurds to return. Simultaneously with withdrawing their troops in October 1991, the Government of Iraq (GOI) imposed a severe punitive economic embargo on the area which has been maintained and progressively tightened ever since leaving the Iraqi Kurds living under a ‘double embargo’ from both the UN sanctions and from Baghdad.

In the context of a double economic blockade from the UN and the GOI, international assistance became all the more important. Despite the initial relief effort for the Kurds in 1991 being judged as contributing to the immediate welfare of the Iraqi Kurds (Keen 1993), the accumulation of reports attesting to a deterioration of the nutritional and health situation in Iraq led the UN Security Council to adopt Resolution 986 (SCR 986) the so-called food-for-oil deal on 14 April 1995. Although the economy in Iraqi Kurdistan is essentially agriculturally intensive, the population in the collectives cannot rely on this as people’s lands are usually far away in their villages of origin. The local livelihoods are therefore comprised of quite a diverse mix of activities ranging from reliance on agricultural labour for wealthier landowners to employment in the small collective markets. Indeed, Ward and Rimmer (1994) suggest that local economies are so strained in at least some of the collective villages that they are intrinsically unstable in the sense that households would be unable to meet basic needs without SCR 986 support.

The tumultuous recent history of this region has created many war widows, and it is these along with other widows, divorced women, and women with disabled husbands who make up the female-headed households of Iraqi Kurdistan. It is estimated that individuals in female-headed households number roughly 6 percent of the total population (ECHO 1996). However, female-headed households make up a far more significant proportion of the population in the collectives, as these areas were the focused location for many women who lost their husbands through GOI campaigns. For the 34 collectives in Sulaimaniya governorate, the average number of families headed by women runs at 18 percent.

Female-headed households have emerged into the policy arena of social sciences for a variety of reasons (such as concern regarding the well-being of children in such units) and especially since the statement that one third of households in the world are headed by women entered popular rhetoric (see, for example, Moore 1994)
1997, O’Laughlin, 1998)⁵ Tinker (1990) has said that the increased numbers of female-headed households globally can be interpreted as women rejecting the patriarchal constraints on their lives by ‘opting out’ of the nuclear family. Although this is not universally relevant, other writers have usefully attenuated this notion by remarking that the emergence of female-headed households can sometimes be associated with women’s greater assertiveness and autonomy (as with Jackson’s 1996 example from Zimbabwe) which may grow in conjunction with the formation of women’s groups and an awareness of ‘class consciousness’ among women (Chant, 1997).

Although this is crucial to recognise, it is also important to understand that female-headed households are not entities operating in a vacuum away from the broader social, economic and political institutions in which they are embedded. Members of female-headed households may gain autonomy at the household level, but is this complemented by more power obtained at the supra-household level? The key factor of importance for this research is the degree of voluntarism with regard to a female-headed household’s status. In Iraqi Kurdistan not only is the weight of socio-cultural expectation biased towards marriage expectations, but also the majority of female-headed households were formed in an involuntary manner through widowhood associated with the region’s conflict.

The rhetoric of a burgeoning global group of female-headed households seems to have provided the springboard for concern that female-headed households are disproportionately represented in poor sections of society and consequently that ‘women are the poorest of the poor’ (the so-called ‘ feminisation of poverty’). This understanding has often led to pathological discourses of female headship (Chant 1997) with the concurrent representation of a neat target group which can be ‘packaged’ for development assistance (Lewis, 1993). Such a policy trajectory ignores complex realities (such as some de facto female headships receiving remittances) not to mention the implication that women in male headed households could not be equally disadvantaged along with poor, single men.

Jackson (1996 1998) expresses concern with the ‘feminisation of poverty’ term which suggests that the poor are mostly women. To subsume ‘gender’ into ‘women’ is something to be avoided along with premising gender over all other social inequalities. Women’s heterogeneity means that female-headed households are more than just the gender of their head and having multiple social identities. Jackson asserts that rather than submitting to the feminisation of poverty discourse, for policy implications we should be addressing the gendered experience of poverty which aims to understand accurately the lived experiences of women’s and men’s poverty. Thus, the issue of how to conceptualise ‘poverty becomes relevant. Poverty measurement was initially based on devising a ‘poverty line’ according to levels of income and consumption that were deemed acceptable. Lipton (1997) argues that private consumption poverty (PCP)⁶ is the most useful way of understanding material deprivation. A gendered analysis of PCP raises concerns that different gendered allocations and uses of material resources are being ignored and also that poverty is being conceptualised in a materialistic and static ‘ends’ manner only, without due recognition that poverty is a process and not a condition. Baulch and McCulloch’s (1998) study in rural Pakistan using panel data reveals that the groups falling beneath the poverty line were not static but very dynamic as turnover among the poor was found to be very rapid, between 46 to 51 per cent of the sampled poor
households exited from poverty from one year to the next. Human poverty (as it is referred to in UNDP’s Human Development Report, 1997) is too multi dimensional in character to be reduced to a single factor such as income. This has spawned greater interest in poverty as a lived and subjective experience (for example, Beck, 1994) with the emphasis on understanding poverty from the point of view of the poor.

Sen’s concept of entitlements (1982, 1990) initially captured the wider set of needs, relationships and activities aside from the material ones. Sen advanced his work on entitlements over commodities by arguing they cannot, in themselves, guarantee well-being. The distinction was therefore made between the potential for well-being (capabilities) and the actual achievement of well-being (functionings). This distinction is important for it goes beyond assuming capabilities provision ensures well-being achievement, which is dependent on a person’s functionings. These could be subject to a myriad of socially constructed identities, interests, divisions of labour, power and resources. For gender analysts, Sen’s concepts have been important conceptual progressions from household to individual assessments and from resources themselves to command over commodities. Although an advance for analysts concerned to understand the gendered experience of poverty, Sen’s concepts have been criticised for providing an individualised framework with little attention to gender relations and for an overly dichotomous distinction between legal rules of entitlement outside the household and moral rules of entitlement within it (Gore, 1993).

So how can the gendered experience of poverty be understood at the ground level in order for us to formulate appropriate policies? Since well-being has many dimensions, the use of one method of assessment is likely to detract from a gendered understanding which reflects the multi-faceted nature of well-being. It is for this reason that I seek to incorporate a gendered concept of ‘vulnerability’ alongside more conventional poverty assessments.

**The focus on poverty with vulnerability**

This paper focuses on vulnerability alongside poverty as elements of well-being because first focusing exclusively on a narrow poverty conceptualisation carries notions of the poor, often with an accompanying ‘victim’ perspective. Second, poverty is generally a static concept whereas vulnerability is a more fluid and dynamic concept which is more suitable for a life course perspective that better captures processes of change (Moser, 1998). Third, a focus on vulnerability is desirable because a gendered understanding of vulnerability remains a relatively unexplored area. Well-being is often used juxtaposed to poverty (for example, Razavi, 1997), but Chambers (1989) argues that poverty is only one dimension of deprivation with others being for example physical weakness, isolation, powerlessness and vulnerability. Therefore well-being is the generic category which aims to exclude poverty and vulnerability along with other aspects of ill-being.

The concept of vulnerability is defined by Chambers (1989) as defencelessness, insecurity, and exposure to risks, shocks and stress which can all be experienced without actually being ‘poor’. For example, poverty in the sense of low income can be reduced by borrowing and investing but this debt renders household more vulnerable. This distinction is important for policy implementation as an anti-poverty programme is not necessarily an anti-vulnerability programme. Blakie et al (1994) explain why
poverty and vulnerability should not be regarded as synonymous by stating that vulnerability is a combination of characteristics of a person or group derived from their social and economic condition, so is the complex and multifaceted. Poverty, however, is less complex and aims to be a descriptive measure of people's lack or need; there are not varying 'poverties' for any one individual or family as there can be with vulnerabilities.

Razavi (1997) uses the concept of vulnerability in her micro study of an Iranian community. She uses the term to refer to the complex bundles of risk that harm women in and make them more dependent on male incomes. Razavi prefers to use the vulnerability concept rather than 'objective' measures of well-being focused directly on the individual. She acknowledges that while conventional well-being indicators (such as the poverty-line approach) are more conducive to obtaining a gender differentiated picture of deprivation, she finds they fall short of capturing different aspects of gender discrimination.

The concept of vulnerability is also key to Blaikie et al. (1994) account of 'at risk' individuals. Although their analytical focus is to explore the connections between the risks people face and the reasons for their vulnerability to hazards (primarily natural), their framework can be extended to any situation of social, economic or political stress where people experience vulnerabilities, for example, Iraqi Kurdistan in the post-Gulf war period. A close correlation of vulnerability with socio-economic position and access to resources is found. Gender is seen to be a pervasive division in all societies, and Blaikie et al. make the (somewhat generalising) statement that it 'channels' access to social and economic resources away from women and towards men (Blaikie et al., 1994: 48).

Rather than talking of resources, Swift (1989) focuses on assets as critical indicators of vulnerability and security, and classifies them into investments, stores and claims. Investments can be personal (for example, education) or material (for example, housing, land); stores can be of food or cash, and claims can be on a spectrum from other individuals up to the international community. It is important not to see a household's 'portfolio' of investments, stores and claims as static as it is variable over time. Such an asset portfolio assessment will be more meaningful for a gender analysis if intangible assets such as kinship-based entitlements or claims are incorporated. This awareness implicates intra- and inter-household dynamics and an appreciation of these may contribute particularly to a heightened understanding of the well-being of female-headed households.

Moser's study of household responses to poverty and vulnerability in four poor urban communities uses the concept of vulnerability to mean 'the insecurity of the well-being of individuals, households or communities in the face of a changing environment' (1996: 2). It states that because people move into and out of poverty, vulnerability better captures processes of change than more static measures of poverty. Vulnerability is again seen as closely linked to asset ownership, the more assets people have, the less vulnerable they are, while the greater the erosion of their assets, the greater their insecurity. Moser's 'asset vulnerability framework' (1998) includes both tangible assets (labour, human capital, housing) and intangible assets (household relationships and social capital). The ability of individuals to avoid or reduce vulnerability depends not only on their initial assets, but also on their ability to transform those assets into income, food or other basic necessities (capacities into functionings).
This heightened awareness of agency has drawn attention to people's individual and collective abilities to exercise their own agency in the form of resistance, compliance or more subtle behavioural tactics. Scott's (1985) "Weapons of the weak" is an example of a study of resistance strategies open to poor people who lack the power of grand opposition. The notion of power is of central importance here and although the nuances of power should really be viewed as an ever changing process resistant to characterisation, the lack of women's power is often attested to. Razavi (1997) also highlights the potential of coping strategies in mitigating vulnerability. A conceptualisation of vulnerability to include ephemeral coping strategies will be a more dynamic tool than reliance on concepts like poverty and exclusion which are descriptions of end states in which people have lost out (Hewitt de Alcantara, 1996 cited in Razavi, 1997).

Frameworks such as those of Moser (1998) and Booth et al. (1998) (the latter brings natural and produced capital, human capital, social capital and political capital into a framework) should be extended. Throughout the discussion of the findings I will be integrating an analysis of household vulnerability with gender as a key concern alongside more conventional poverty indicators. The extent to which vulnerability for female headed household members and male headed household members is linked to material assets, human capital and social capital will be explored.

Vulnerability and material assets

Material assets are acknowledged to be critical in the mitigation of vulnerability, both in their ability to contribute directly to household consumption needs and also through the security of knowing assets can be mobilised in times of severe stress. Due to the inter-connectedness of vulnerabilities, it should not be assumed that household material asset ownership precludes household vulnerability, any more than absence equates to insecurity but their tangibility renders them a visible indicator through which to begin to assess vulnerability.

The benefit of household assets should not be assumed to be equitably distributed within households. An exposure of the myth of the 'unitary household', with its Beckerian 'benevolent dictator' has been attributed to gender analysts who have raised concerns that such a model hides the subordination of individuals (especially women) within the household. Consideration of intra-household relations are therefore relevant for this discussion of material assets. Are assets pooled within the household for joint welfare maximisation or does ownership have a systematic effect on resource allocation resulting from material assets? If patterns of gender differentiated intra-household behaviours in Iraqi Kurdistan conform to the altruism reported elsewhere then female headship may result in more efficient uses of material assets to maximise well-being. In order to see past the unified household, speculation will occasionally be made beyond the available data which will simultaneously indicate the methodological limitations of household-based research and future directions for improved lines of enquiry.
**Household possessions**

Respondents were asked to list the possessions that they currently own. Most mentioned were goods used collectively (refrigerators, fans, radios, television sets) rather than personally such as women's jewelry. Female-headed households are more likely to have a complete absence of possessions (26 per cent) than male-headed households (16 per cent) and although their average number of possessions per household adult is similar to the male-headed households, the mean value of their possessions (ID (Iraqi dinars) 3,108) is considerably lower than those of the male-headed households (ID 4,844).

In order to investigate the disposal of possessions as symptomatic of household vulnerability, the respondents were asked if any possessions had been sold in the last six months. Of those households that owned one or more possession, it was a slightly higher proportion of male-headed households that had sold possessions in the last six months compared to female-headed households. This figure indicates that the present situation of female-headed households owning less valuable possessions than male-headed households is unlikely to result from the recent erosion of their more lucrative possessions to cope with livelihood hardships, but is more likely to be a prior situation of weaker asset ownership, perhaps contributed to through the absence of a male breadwinner.

**Land**

Agarwal (1994) postulates that the institutional absence of command over property (and especially land in south Asia) is the single most important economic factor influencing women's frequently disempowered position. For female-headed households, the issue of legal land ownership is all the more crucial. Does the absence of a male household head preclude the possibility of increasing a female household head’s material asset base through land? Conversely, the complex system of entitlements and exchanges through intra-household relations in a male-headed household that does possess land may render the women in such a household just as vulnerable (if not more so) than women in a female-headed household that has no land.

The initial point of interest in this study is that only 20 per cent of the total sample group possesses any land so it is clearly not generally an important contributory aspect of a household's material asset portfolio. When the results are disaggregated by female- and male-headed households, it reveals that 22 per cent of the female-headed households own land in comparison to a slightly smaller proportion of male-headed households at 16 per cent. Further, the average area of land owned is larger for the female-headed households at 775 donums. A following question was asked regarding the legal ownership of land to see if this caused female-headed households any discrimination. All the male-headed households who owned land responded that they are the legal owner, whereas the legal ownership of the female-headed households' land is split fairly evenly between the female head herself and her missing husband. It appears that legal ownership of a female-headed household's land has little influence on the ability of that household to cultivate the land for even if legal ownership resides with the missing husband the female head is generally accepted as the de facto owner. If anything, this data hints at male-headed households facing slightly worse in land asset terms compared to female-headed households.
Livestock

There has not been an Agarwal to exalt the potential of livestock ownership in empowering women, but although Iraqi Kurdistan is agriculturally rich the specific situation of households in the land deficient collectives means that livestock has the potential to be of greater importance to a household’s material resource base. This is reflected by the data that show just over 70 per cent of both female- and male-headed households own livestock.

However, there are differentials by household headship. Female-headed households own an average number of livestock per household greater than double the number of livestock compared to male-headed households when the figure is adjusted to per household adult. Furthermore, the value of female-headed households’ livestock is considerably greater than male-headed households’ livestock. In general, the male-headed households are in a more vulnerable position than female-headed households with regard to livestock assets.

Home ownership

The most significant material asset a household may hold is often a property to live in. It is frequently said that home ownership greatly contributes to household security and security is often considered the antithetical condition to vulnerability (20). It is for this reason that the respondents were asked to indicate the type of house they lived in. Gendered differentials here are not great, but they do suggest that female-headed households are more likely to be living in the vulnerable situation of renting their house (48 per cent) as opposed to male-headed households (36 per cent) being more likely to have a secure material asset base through home ownership.

This section has shown that female- and male-headed households experience different vulnerabilities with regard to material assets. The research indicates that whereas female-headed households are more likely to be vulnerable in terms of household possessions and home ownership, male-headed households experience greater vulnerabilities in their land and livestock assets. This relative lack of vulnerability for female-headed households in their land and livestock asset portfolios is perhaps surprising given that the paucity of these assets for women is often the focus of theories to explain female subordination (Agarwal, 1994). Explanations are to do with the maintenance of livestock traditionally being a ‘female activity’ along with the mobility of livestock during resettlement, and also that female-headed households rely on these material assets to a greater degree owing to a shortage of other productive alternatives compared to male-headed households.

Vulnerability and human capital

If the main asset of most poor people is their body this is because body capital is a principal endowment enabling work in the typical ‘more labour intensive livelihoods of poor communities (Jackson and Palmer Jones, 1999). This section will look at human capital dynamics through examining dependency ratios, waged labour power and corollary income levels. However, Elson (1998) cautions that mainstream analyses using only indicators such as these ignore the process of social reproduction.
with evidence indicating a ‘greater propensity on the part of women than on the part of men to invest in the maintenance and enhancement of human capacities’ (Elson 1998: 165). Social reproduction can thus be viewed as necessary for reducing vulnerability of human capital alongside other traditionally defined ‘productive’ activities. Some of the dynamics of these social reproductive activities will be discussed here using information collected on education and domestic labour tasks.

Dependency ratios

Child-dependency ratios were calculated and reveal that female- and male-headed households have virtually identical levels of child dependency but the disaggregated data by household size do show some differentials. Of households with 1–4 members, the female-headed households are in a more vulnerable position regarding child dependency and this is due to the conjugal unit in the male-headed households comprising a minimum of 50 per cent of the total household number. Households sized 9–12 display greater child-dependency levels for the male-headed households, and this figure is the only one where children outnumber adults in the household.

A critique of this ratio reveals its constraints of obscuring both children under 16 who may not be fully dependent if they are wage earners and also grouping all adults as non-dependents when some may be unable to do waged work due to illness, disability or old age. A further calculation undertaken to distinguish between adults in the household working for wages regularly and the remaining household adults shows that female-headed households are consistently slightly more vulnerable than male-headed households in that they have a lower percentage of their household members bringing home money to support the remaining dependent members.

Waged labour power

Although female-headed households have a slightly lower percentage of adult household members working regularly and a higher percentage of adult members not working for wages in comparison to male-headed households, this information is insufficient to draw conclusions about likely productive activities. For example, those usually categorised as unemployed are more liable to be productive contributors to the household if they are actively seeking work or unable to work for wages due to household responsibilities rather than those who are unable to work due to illness, disability or old age. For both female- and male-headed households the majority of adults not working state they are unable to because of household responsibilities and although not bringing home money, these people are likely to be significant productive contributors to household well-being through enhancing human capital. Female-headed households have a slightly greater proportion of their household adults in this category in comparison to male-headed households.

Wage earners’ occupations were looked at in order to see which are the most important to the livelihoods of collective households. There is no great difference between the occupations of female- and male-headed households other than that ‘labouring’ seems to be more important for the female headed households. For both types of household ‘farm labouring’ and ‘labouring’ are the most significant waged occupations. The vulnerability of collective households is shown by the greatest wage reliance resting on jobs that are seasonally variable and non-guaranteed in nature.
also notable that all the respondents specifying multi activities were female perhaps indicating that they are under greater time constraints in their livelihoods.

**Income levels**

Despite warnings against using income level as the only measurement of well-being, it is acknowledged that income is an especially important indicator of vulnerability in a monetised society as it has the potential to increase security in other areas of well being such as nutrition and health (although this is not guaranteed because of the complex mechanisms of capabilities becoming functionings). It is for this reason that household weekly incomes and average money per capita per week are looked at.

The average household weekly income for male headed households is found to be greater than for female headed households, but when this is adjusted for household size it appears that members of male-headed households are actually more vulnerable monetarily than members of female headed households. A more detailed disaggregation by household size reveals a rather complex picture. While female headed households are only marginally worse off than male headed ones in the 1-4 size bracket, the situation is not only reversed at a greater degree in the mid sized households (5-8) but also their average weekly money per capita levels are the lowest of the three household size divisions. It is in the largest sized households (9-12), however, that the greatest disparity between female and male-headed households is seen with female headed households faring much worse in weekly income per person terms.

**Being educated**

Education of both females and males is an important human capital-enhancing asset aimed at reducing vulnerability. To gauge levels of schooling, each of the five collectives was looked at separately as the levels in individual collectives will vary according to the particular provision of schools. A consistent gender gap in attendance in favour of boys is found in all five collectives with the average percentage gap being 18 per cent, although this obscures a 40 per cent gender gap in Piramagnun, while Bazyan has low attendance overall but a small gender gap. In the case of Bazyan, especially a gender aware analysis should recognise that the issue of importance is the non attendance of girls and boys.

An understanding of this pattern of collective schooling is enhanced through a question as to the sex of any children withdrawn from school. Of those respondents who answered there is a negligible difference in the sexes of withdrawn children between female- and male headed households. More households indicated that a male rather than a female child had been withdrawn which is indicative of household economic stress as the household is forced to draw on a boy’s wage-earning capacity. When a girl is indicated, this is likely to be due to increasing domestic workloads as more household members are forced to gain waged employment. Child withdrawal as a coping response to reduce vulnerability is both symptomatic of household economic vulnerability and also enhances human capital vulnerability for the withdrawn individual. This response can be seen not only to be “both a result of vulnerability and a strategy to reduce vulnerability” (Moser 1996: 1) and will exacerbate other vulnerabilities.
Domestic labour

To assess the contribution of social reproduction to the maintenance of human capital, the respondents were asked to give details on domestic tasks together with the time taken to perform them and the numbers, ages and sexes of those involved. Only marginal differences are revealed between female- and male-headed households. Domestic chores and cooking are the two most time-consuming tasks with the former involving the most people. The total average daily time spent on domestic labour is slightly greater for female-headed households than for male-headed ones. This is perhaps surprising considering the larger average household size of male-headed households by nearly two members. Elson's (1998) 'information asymmetries' may be responsible as men's lack of involvement in the day-to-day domestic labour means they are not as well informed regarding the details.

Domestic tasks are almost exclusively undertaken by women and tend to either be done by the female head herself or the wife with the assistance of a daughter if the work requires more than one person. If the female head is unable to undertake the domestic tasks because of outside employment or illness, then her daughter is entirely responsible. Even if they are of school age, they are still reported as spending up to 10 hours a day fulfilling social reproductive tasks.

Daughters shoulder more of the domestic task responsibility in female-headed households as the female adults in these households are more likely to doing paid work than females in male-headed households. It has already been found that female-headed households are actually slightly better off in income per person terms than male-headed households, so this pattern is unlikely to be due to economic necessity. It might, instead, be the result of women in female-headed households experiencing greater autonomy to work for wages outside the household in comparison to their counterparts in male-headed households. However, the trade-off from this suggests that the fulfillment of domestic tasks may be placed under stress rendering female-headed household members either more at risk of neglecting the maintenance of their human capital, or to an erosion of human capital as children are withdrawn from school.

The UNDP Human Development Report (1997: 62) states that 'lack of time is an important factor in the vulnerability of poor people and in their access to opportunities'. The triple burden that Moser writes that many women bear (1993) means they suffer especially from a shortage of time, and this may be exacerbated for women in female-headed households who have to take an increased responsibility for income generation in the absence of a male breadwinner. An erosion of this 'time asset' may cause additional vulnerabilities in other areas of women's lives, for example, women who have to spend more time working for wages have less time for community activities which may erode social capital. This spiral of related vulnerabilities is always important to consider and highlights the mutually constitutive nature.

This section has demonstrated the mutually reinforcing nature of human capital vulnerabilities and their associated complexities. It is not only impossible to conclude that either female-headed households or male-headed households are more vulnerable in human capital terms, but discussion has also revealed the importance of recognising intra-household gendered patterns of vulnerabilities. The vulnerabilities examined so far have a weakness in shifting the focus away from supra-household social
interactions as contributory to household livelihood mechanisms. It is to this omission that the attention of the next section turns.

Vulnerability and social capital

The limitations of seeing vulnerability only through the lens of material assets and human capital is that there is little acknowledgement of the relational nature of existence or what is increasingly being referred to in policy circles as social capital. Despite defining social capital being a discursively problematic task, Pattie et al. (1995) write that it is an expanded form of human capital, broadened to consider its social and cultural dimensions and it thus augments human capital.

In attempting to conceptualise social capital, Morris (1998) draws parallels between how poverty can be conceived of in a narrow (income/consumption) or in a broad (vulnerability, dignity, assets) sense. Similarly, social capital can be conceptualised at various levels with a distinction made between formal (narrow) and informal (broad) social capital. Formal social capital refers to formally defined patterns of behaviour norms of exchange, networks and institutions. Informal social capital refers to those networks which operate outside this formal system. It refers to things such as kinship, informal networks between individuals, families and groups. (Morris, 1998: 6) This assessment of social capital and vulnerability will be focusing on one coping response that households are currently using. The discussion will first analyse the coping response of drawing on relationships with other people in order to access money, before a brief look at targeting within the humanitarian assistance programme (HAP).

How is social capital implicated in the coping response of borrowing?

Rose (1996 cited in Morris 1998: 4) writes of the importance of social capital for coping in societies. The ability of a household to employ a coping response may be dependent on informal social capital. Although not meant to disregard other coping responses, the focus here is on the ability of households to mobilise kinship based entitlements or claims in the form of money borrowing. The ability of a household to borrow money through informal social networks indicates social capital mobilised for the purpose of social protection.

This area provides an interesting perspective on household vulnerability in that it juxtaposes an indication of social capital, which Narayan and Pritchett (1997, cited in Morris 1998: 6) conclude is associated with higher levels of income and is broadly regarded as a positive feature of society, alongside the accruing of debt, which Chambers (1989) asserts increases vulnerability. Similarly, Moser (1996) writes that the pressures of economic crisis can exert opposing forces on social capital, both strengthening it, as reciprocity networks increase, and eroding it, as households ability to cope deteriorates and community trust breaks down.

Results show that a gender disaggregation by household head reveals virtually no difference in household ability to borrow money. The feature of note is that the average male-headed household borrows a much larger amount of money than the average female-headed household which indicates the greater capability of male-headed households to mobilise social networks to gain access to money lending. But,
although the female-headed households appear to be in a more vulnerable position with regard to access to social capital, this relative paucity of informal social capital (or possibly financial prudence) results in the female-headed households being considerably less vulnerable in terms of debt repayment. As shown earlier, the male-headed households are not better off in terms of income per capita to repay the debt so they plunge themselves ever deeper into the spiral of vulnerability irrespective of their greater access to informal social capital. As regards household size, the larger households are more likely to borrow money and they predictably incur larger amounts of debt. Only two out of 100 respondents said they borrowed money to invest in productive, rather than consumptive, activities which shows that few collective households have the 'luxury' of investing in such activities.

The respondents were further asked from where they borrowed money in order to illuminate the particular social networks most important to household coping responses. The greatest proportion of both female- and male-headed households indicated that money was borrowed from relatives, demonstrating that kinship-based entitlements are strongly grounded in the Iraqi Kurdish social fabric. Interestingly, it was only members of some female-headed households who said they had borrowed money from market moneymakers (usually at exorbitant interest rates). This further shows female-headed households' more vulnerable position with regard to informal social capital. No set of respondents indicated any access to institutional credit.

A full discussion of the effectiveness of the current 'hand-out-oriented' HAP that ostensibly appears to create dependency is outside the scope of this paper. However, there are some features of the targeting of assistance that have gender significance. Although food distribution is commonly described as 'blanket', with regard to groups deemed vulnerable by the World Food Programme, extra rations have been made available resulting in a 'blanket-plus' situation. HelpAge International also targets female-headed households by giving more 'points' in vulnerability and eligibility measurements to those households headed by women.

Such targeting is of concern in that the rhetoric of female-headed households being the 'poorest of the poor' seems to be dictating a special concern for this group. This study indicates female-headed household members are more vulnerable than their male-headed counterparts in certain areas, but in other areas it is the male-headed household members who are more vulnerable. Although not dismissing the likely extra costs associated with more sophisticated targeting methods, using surveys such as this one to identify which particular vulnerabilities different households are subject to would be a useful means of countering simplistic targeting based on the gender of household heads.

This section has revealed that despite relative levels of benevolent informal social capital implicated in the coping response of borrowing, members of male-headed households appear to be more vulnerable both through actual levels of indebtedness and also through being more likely to have their household decision-maker as the male head. With possibly inequitable intra-household distributive mechanisms in operation (Dwyer and Bruce, 1988) a final concern is that targeting of supplements concurs with the 'feminisation of poverty' rhetoric to the exclusion of a gendered understanding of vulnerabilities to recognise the needs and interests of male-headed household members as well as female-headed ones.
Conclusions

The aim of this research was to approach an understanding of the well-being of female-headed household members through a comparison with male-headed household members using the conceptual framework of gendered vulnerability. That the findings are complex (see Table 1) attests to the multi-dimensional nature of vulnerability leading to fluid and fluctuating gendered experiences of vulnerabilities. The definitive conclusion to emerge is a refuting of the rhetoric fuelled stereotype that households headed by women are at a disadvantage in all the dimensions of vulnerability in comparison to those headed by men.

At the household level, in comparison to male-headed households, the female-headed households of Iraqi Kurdistan are more vulnerable in terms of household possessions and house ownership assets, in the ratio of wage-earning adults to dependents and with regard to mobilising informal social capital to gain access to money. In addition and in comparison to the mid and large-sized households, the smaller sized female-headed households have greater child-adult dependency ratios.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material assets</th>
<th>Female headed households</th>
<th>Male headed households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household possessions</td>
<td>More vulnerable</td>
<td>Less vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Less vulnerable</td>
<td>More vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Less vulnerable</td>
<td>More vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House ownership</td>
<td>More vulnerable</td>
<td>Less vulnerable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human capital</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependency ratios</td>
<td>Smaller sized, more</td>
<td>Larger sized more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vulnerable</td>
<td>vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waged labour power</td>
<td>More vulnerable (total</td>
<td>Less vulnerable (total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>not in paid work greater)</td>
<td>not in paid work less)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less vulnerable (adult</td>
<td>Smaller sized more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>women more likely to be</td>
<td>vulnerable than smaller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in paid work, but possible</td>
<td>sized female headed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>extra burden problems)</td>
<td>households (more not in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>paid work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income levels</td>
<td>Less vulnerable</td>
<td>More vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being educated</td>
<td>Equally vulnerable to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>non-attendance for girls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic labour</td>
<td>and recent withdrawal of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>boys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females universally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>responsible in both</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>households but</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>due to more adult women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>working in female-headed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>households possible greater</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>burdens for girls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social capital</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Borrowing</td>
<td>More vulnerable (in terms</td>
<td>More vulnerable (in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of mobilising informal</td>
<td>terms of being more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>social capital to access</td>
<td>indebted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>money)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAP</td>
<td>Less vulnerable</td>
<td>More vulnerable (receive no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and a higher unemployment level, whereas the larger sized households are the most vulnerable in weekly income per capita terms. Male-headed households are relatively more vulnerable with regard to land and livestock assets, to having less weekly money per household member, to being more indebted and to receiving no supplements to the standard food basket (despite similarly scarce alternative productive activities). The smaller sized male-headed households also display greater vulnerability in having an even higher unemployment level than the small-sized female-headed households.

The next set of conclusions breach the household as a unit of analysis and, although some are based on informed speculation and should not be regarded as conclusive, they are nevertheless relevant to consider.

In comparison to their counterparts in male-headed households, members of female-headed households have been found to be more vulnerable in that adult women of this household type are more likely to be in paid work, which despite perhaps demonstrating greater autonomy and wage-earning capacity has negative implications in requiring other household members to pick up the social reproduction slack. The conclusions regarding the vulnerabilities of male-headed household members all stem from the conjecture of adult men being less inclined to altruism and intra-household welfare maximization. If this is the case in the collective male households, then a combination of these households being more vulnerable in weekly income terms and the decision-maker being likely to be the male head could render household members more vulnerable in well-being terms.

Two final conclusions show certain features of individual vulnerability to be apparent regardless of the gender of the head. The first is that domestic tasks are virtually exclusively undertaken by women and girls in collective households which frequently leaves them more vulnerable in terms of time being an asset. Second, both household sets display significant levels of non-school attendance for girls and recent withdrawal seems to be affecting boys particularly.

This study raises several interesting conceptual themes. First, the discussed complexities of intra-household allocation patterns have precluded coherent conclusions and perhaps render the concept of household vulnerability obsolete. Although data collected at the household level are often practically desirable, they are constrained by the notion of ‘household vulnerability’ partially existing as an academic misnomer due to it being no greater than the sum of its individual members’ vulnerability and therefore composite in nature. However, we should be cautious of subsuming the concept of household vulnerability entirely into measurements of individual vulnerability. While it is unwise to assume a reduction of household vulnerability necessarily translates into a reduction of each household members’ vulnerability, it is also implausible to suggest that efforts to abate vulnerability at the household level have no beneficial effect at the level of any household members’ vulnerability. The household as a unit may not be framed around ‘perfect’ intra-household welfare maximization, but there must be some individual well-being advantage to living in a communal resource-pooling arrangement that potentially facilitates ‘trickle-across’.

Second, the increased concern with ‘female headed households’ in the social science arena has been shown to be translated into targeting at the policy level in Iraqi Kurdistan. Blind targeting of female-headed households that are perceived to be vulnerable is not appropriate due to both female- and male-headed households experiencing vulnerabilities, but experiencing them in different gendered ways.
Further, the disaggregation of data by the gender of the household head may not suffice. It appears in the collectives of Iraqi Kurdistan that household size can also be a critical indicator of vulnerability. It is difficult to recommend a more suitable method of targeting (rather than, for example, the gender of the household head or geographic location targeting of collectives) as choice will obviously depend to a great extent on the particular type of assistance being implemented. If this paper can contribute to a raising of awareness of how vulnerabilities differ for female and male headed households then targeting aimed at reducing these vulnerabilities may be more successful.

The usefulness to policy of this research is to highlight the particular gendered vulnerabilities that women and men face in an effort to understand how such households may move in and out of poverty. For example, knowing that male headed households are more vulnerable to land and livestock shortages would be useful if a programme was aimed at increasing these household material assets in order to build up resource bases and reduce vulnerabilities in this area. It is acknowledged that more information is required on the consequences of the discussed household vulnerabilities, that is the 'end stage' indicators such as malnutrition, morbidity and mortality. Collection of current anthropometric data has been problematic in Iraqi Kurdistan (see Hill, 1999) and future lines of enquiry would aim to integrate the discussed fuller understanding of gendered household vulnerabilities with such indicators of ill-being. The way vulnerabilities have been shown to influence each other demonstrates their mutually constitutive nature and the spiral that can plunge individuals deeper into ill-being or, more optimistically, into a greater level of security and well-being.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Iwan Anderson, Edward Twiddy, Gareth Southgate, Housam Latif and Roise Ballon for their help throughout the research process. Grateful thanks also go to Cecile Jackson for her assistance and support during the writing period.

Notes

1 The report together with the full data set can be obtained by contacting the Western Asia Department at DFID London
2 Collectives in the region were first built after the hugely destructive conflict in 1974/5 for the purpose of forcibly resettling thousands of Iraqi Kurds. They are typically faceless concrete settlements built close to main roads for easy surveillance by the GOI
3 The definition of 'eating from the same pot' is employed in this study but an awareness is urged of other important household dynamics such as extra household relations deriving from wider family and friends. It is important not to assume the homogeneity of the group labelled 'female-headed households' which perhaps leads to the obiterative nature of the whole concept yet a philosophical rejection of the concept of the head of household is accompanied by a pragmatic need for more information about the headship' (Varley, 1996: 506)
4 Source: parallel survey to my questionnaire carried out in all collectives by Durham University research team 1998
Despite Varley's (1996) conclusion that this statement is methodologically flawed and thus dubiously accurate, the point at which private consumption per person falls below a poverty line of income has been the subject of debate. Sen has in part responded to this criticism by formulating his 'co-operative conflict' model to understand intra-household gendered processes and relations which convert, or do not convert, capabilities to functionings. Beck (1994) has argued that too often the representation of the poor implies their passivity which can lead to undesirable 'top-down' interventions. This has interesting resonances with the frequently made criticism of the humanitarian assistance programme in Iraqi Kurdistan that it was originally formulated in a top down fashion and has still not yet managed to throw off accusations of fostering an over-dependent population. This is dependent, of course, on Chambers' particular definition of poverty. In many ways it is inappropriate to classify different vulnerabilities into the sections that follow. Complex realities ('social messiness', Kabcer, 1994) seldom concur with the neat pigeon-holes we devise for the purpose of academic coherence and 'readability'. I do not intend to imply from my segregation of vulnerabilities into material assets, human capital and social capital that they are not mutually constitutive and in need of being read as a 'whole'. It is merely for the purpose of writing organisation that the segregation occurs and this is not meant to obviate a holistic reading of the different aspects of vulnerability. See, for example, Galbraith, 1974, Sen, 1984, Folbre, 1986, Wolf 1990, Young, 1992, Handa, 1994. As Kabcer writes, 'if altruism exists in the household [it] appears to be generally more associated with one parent, rather than both, and with maternal, rather than paternal preferences' (1994:104).

In order to make useful comparisons between female- and male-headed households, it is essential to be aware of structural dynamics displayed in Table 2, although per-capita calculations do make direct comparisons possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Average household numbers of female- and male-headed households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$	ext{fhh (n=75)}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average household numbers</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average household adult numbers</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a deliberate absence of further explanation as to what exactly a possession (household asset) was, so as not to impose the researcher's definition of what should be classified as an asset. Moser (1996) concludes that the greater the erosion of household assets, the greater the insecurity. The specific situation of the collectives in Iraqi Kurdistan needs to be understood. However, as nearly all the farms re-located to the collectives will have owned land in their places of origin. Forced re-location to the collective brought most families no compensation for loss of land and only a few fortunate families got allocated small amounts of land near to their collective. 1 donum = 50 x 50m or 0.25 hectares. Although the influence legal ownership has on the ability of a household to sell its land in times of stress is unclear, and it should be acknowledged that this could discriminate against female-headed households.
For example Movers' (1996) study found that vulnerability is increased when households lack a formal legal home ownership title.

Despite the earlier discussed criticisms of well being measurements based on income alone, an inclusion of income alongside other measurements is justified as income is also a means with human development the end (UNDP 1997: 14).

Using the cut off age of 16 as is customary in Iraqi surveys.

The calculations are slightly constrained in that they do not consider some respondents who indicated primary and secondary activities for example a housewife who also bakes bread at home to sell.

Caution should be taken however in making confident generalisations as this group only has a small sample size.

Child withdrawal from school is different from non-attendance. For example, non-attendance rates for girls can be higher than for boys yet a household may indicate more boys being withdrawn as this is a response to a specific household vulnerability whereas girls non-attendance is perceived as culturally acceptable so not considered child withdrawal.

Although a high proportion of non-answers to this question perhaps indicates either the ubiquitousness of child withdrawal (as I was informed was the case by a field worker) or the nonsense nature of the question or an unwillingness to inform a perceived authority that child withdrawal occurs.

Although an awareness of other dimensions of livelihood work is urged for example work that is arduous and energy intensive may not necessarily be time consuming time should not be taken as as proxy for burden (Jackson and Palmer Jones 1999).

Social capital itself might be considered a component of a broader conception of well being with a lack of social capital being a facet of ill being.

The term ‘response’ is used in recognition of Howell’s (1996) observation that this more realistically indicates the middle ground between the implied passivity of coping mechanisms’ and the over-deterministic implied rationality and forward planning of coping ‘strategies’

Two coping responses encountered in a similar vein to Scott’s weapons of the weak (1985) are: 1 one respondent indicating households employing the coping response of bending the truth as regards household numbers or ages of children (as babies receive supplementary rations) in order to gain extra rations and 2 the actions of a group of widows who threw stones at the questioners vehicle at one location as they thought not being interviewed was an indication of their exclusion from obtaining extra humanitarian assistance.

In the absence of quantifiable impact indicators such as the prevalence of wasting and stunting in children or Body Mass Index in adults Hill selected the variable ‘ever eaten less than wanted’ from his questionnaire to illustrate the perception of hunger as a result of inadequate food security. The results revealed a slightly greater proportion of female headed households than male headed households replying in the affirmative to this question but the differential was not very great.

References


Booth, D J Holland, J Hetnischel, P Langouw and A Herbert (1998) Participation and
Social Development Division, DFID, London
20(2) 1–7
World. St Martin’s Press, London
World. Stanford University Press, Palo Alto
on request of the European Community Humanitarian Office
Routledge, London
Development. Journal of Development Economics 22 5–40
Development 22(10) 1535–47
prepared for Durham University Research Team and Western Asia Department, DFID,
London
Quarterly 17(1) 57–68
Jackson, C (1996) Rescuing Gender from the Poverty Trap. World Development 22(3)
489–504
Affairs 52(1) 67–81
and Change 30 557–83
Verso, London
Keen, D (1993) The Kurds in Iraq: How Safe is Their Haven now? Save the Children,
London
Lewis, D (1993) Going It Alone: Female-headed Households, Rights and Resources in
Rural Bangladesh. European Journal of Development Research 5(2) 23–42
Development 25(7) 1003–07
Moore, H (1994) Is There a Crisis in the Family? Occasional Paper No 3 UNRISD,
Geneva
of Development Studies, Brighton
Routledge, London
—— (1996) Confronting Crisis: A Summary of Household Responses to Poverty and
Vulnerability in Poor Urban Communities. Environmentally Sustainable
Development Monograph Series No 7. The World Bank, Washington
Strategies. World Development 26(1) 1–19
Households in Southern Africa. The Journal of Peasant Studies 25(2) 1–48


Address for correspondence: School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ. E-mail: l.waite@uea.ac.uk.
Book Reviews

Disaster Induced Employee Evacuation by Thomas E Drabek. Program on Environment and Behavior Monograph no 60 Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado, Boulder, 1999, 246 pages, £24.99

This book is the third of Tom Drabek’s extended reports on his research in the field of evacuation behaviour (see Drabek, Disaster evacuation and the Tourist Industry, 1994, Disaster Evacuation Behaviour - Tourists and Other Transients, 1996, both published in the same monograph series). Drabek has been studying evacuation from a sociological perspective since the 1960s and is responsible for many of the principal advances in knowledge of this important phenomenon. He is also one of the leading experts on warning processes and organisational responses to disaster, both of which are fundamental influences on evacuation.

The latest monograph uses data collected after two hurricanes and seven floods which affected parts of the continental United States between 1995 and 1997. In order to find out how employees reacted to the need to evacuate their workplaces, Drabek visited 12 different communities and interviewed 406 employees of 118 businesses, as well as 23 emergency managers. The data he collected have enabled him to build up a very detailed perspective of how employees reacted to the need to evacuate before disaster how prepared the businesses they worked for were, and how evacuation affected various aspects of their lives, such as morale, family responsibilities and wages. The picture was compiled, not merely by collating responses to interview questions, but also by statistically testing several hundred hypotheses about how employees viewed evacuation and participated in it when the need arose. The book closes with a series of practical and policy recommendations to improve evacuation behaviour when businesses are threatened by impending disaster.

Not surprisingly, Drabek finds a strong correlation between prior preparedness and the success of evacuations. The latter is defined in this study by employees’ satisfaction with arrangements rather than by the life-saving potential of evacuation (Drabek did not study workers who failed to evacuate). The most satisfied were employees of organisations that had taken the trouble to plan for disaster and had made them participate in practice drills. In many cases, larger organisations were more sensitive to the issue of disasters than were small businesses. Unsatisfactory arrangements most commonly affected low-paid workers (especially where these were also members of racial or ethnic minorities). Disadvantages noted by respondents included fewer and shorter warnings, less leave time and lack of financial compensation for time taken off work as a result of the disaster.

One important aspect of evacuation that Drabek studied in detail involved the tension that arises between the demands of work and family. He found that larger families, children and elderly relatives (an often neglected component of disasters) and large property losses all added to the tension of evacuees who felt torn between their need to safeguard home and family and their responsibilities as workers. Interestingly, he also found that prior experience of disasters (and of the bureaucracy that follows them) added to the tension of many evacuees.

Interviewers’ levels of satisfaction with their employers’ responses to disaster were quite varied. One is not sure whether to take the fact that one-third of respondents were happy with their bosses’ actions as an encouraging figure or a sign of negligence on the part of many organisational leaders. The employees’ reactions to the way that local
governments handled the disasters were similarly mixed and the most negative reactions came from places where warning messages had been most vague and disaster plans least satisfactory. However one strong regularity that permeates the study is the sense of grievance among employees who felt that not enough had been done to create and implement evacuation policies when these were demonstrably necessary. It is difficult to determine how much of this attitude was conditioned by hindsight which is a common bugbear of post-disaster enquiries.

In this brief review it is impossible to discuss many of the regularities brought to light by such a thorough meticulous and detailed study. For instance Drakeb looked at evacuation in the context of people’s roles within organisations, the size and position of businesses within economic sections, and the relationship of workplace to home in people’s lives. Hence few of the hurricane evacuees regarded their work sites as safe places to be during the storm; through more of the flood evacuees did. Social class status at work and gender all figured in the analysis. For example there were generally quicker to evacuate than were men. In the end 30-40 per cent of the employees interviewed during the study rated their employers’ disaster preparedness as quite poor. Between two thirds and four fifths demanded better emergency planning at work.

As Drakeb states in his introductory statement this book provides the first glimpse into a highly varied and complex behavioral reality. Understanding this reality is the first step toward informed policy development. As with his other books (for example Emergency Management Principles and Practice for Local Government edited by J I Drakeb and G J Hoerner 1991) it is 11 Drakeb maintains the strongly applied nature of his work. In fact he proposes (214-15) an action agenda and urges employees to use the monograph as a resource for better emergency planning which it undoubtedly is. In this context the reader is struck by the conclusion remark that when he offered to feed back the results of the study to the interviewees many said that they had never previously been allowed to see the results of such projects.

My only quibble with this volume concerns the lack of an index and the shortage of page numbers in the table of contents. A small matter perhaps but a book like this is an encyclopedia of information on evacuation (Drakeb in fact has a major reputation as the encyclopedia of disaster sociology) and it demands more ease of access to the detailed findings. Fortunately the problem is somewhat mitigated by the very clear eight page executive summary that appears in the front matter.

David Alexander
University of Massachusetts at Amherst

Agricultural Disaster Management in Bangladesh By Hugh Brommer, University Press, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1999, 427 pages, Tk 750.00. (Available in the UK from Apex Books Concern, Littlehampton, West Sussex.)

I recall meeting Hugh Brommer while touring rural Bangladesh in a bus full of scientists. I was immediately impressed by the quiet authority with which he explained that country’s flood problems and the extraordinary insights he gave to his listeners. Fortunately there is no risk that Mr Brommer’s unparalleled expertise will be lost now that he is retired from the major organisations he once represented in the field. His 1987 articles in The Geographical Magazine are essential summaries of the Bangladesh flood problem. Now his latest book is out and it synthesises his many writings on agricultural disaster management (which otherwise might have been lost as ‘grey literature’) in an accessible and highly readable form. He has chosen to have it published in Dhaka so that it is available as readily and as cheaply as possible to people who will need it to help solve the practical problems of managing one of the world’s most densely populated and hazardous environments.

The book begins with a short chapter on the environment of Bangladesh into which information on agricultural practices and natural hazards is skilfully woven. Particularly valuable is the very clear diagram (Figure 13) of cropping patterns in relation to
climate and physiography, for these are complex questions that can easily confuse the outsider. This is followed by a brief description of the methods of planning for disaster as they are used with respect to agriculture in Bangladesh. This topic is then treated in more detail in chapters on the roles of institutions and organs of government at the national and local (thana) administrative levels. Particular emphasis is placed on the methods of preparing contingency plans.

Two chapters describe the process of setting up and operating an observatory of agricultural disasters, the control room, under the aegis of the Bangladesh Department of Agricultural Extension. The information contained in these sections is lucidly presented and very well organised. The author takes care to define concepts (for example, those relating to the statistical interpretation of meteorological data) and to explain in detail the consequences of particular conditions, for example, the impact of heavy rainfall on particular topographies and phases of crop growth. Although 80 per cent of Bangladesh consists of deltaic floodplain, this nevertheless masks a considerable variety of topography and a large number of possible impacts of meteorological and hydrological hazards. It is a tribute to Mr Brammer’s skill as a writer that the reader never feels lost among the huge amount of information that he presents, which instead renders the book invaluable as a manual of experience and practice.

The sheer relentlessness of natural hazard events in Bangladesh makes it one of the two or three worst-affected countries in the world from this point of view. One aspect of this is the constant and extremely serious damage suffered by the nation’s infrastructure, including the part of this that relates directly to agriculture (embankments, drains, culverts, pumps and so on). One of the longer central chapters of this book deals with measures that can be taken to protect capital investments against floods, which are the principal hazard that threatens them. To a greater or lesser degree the 1988 floods affected almost all of the island local authorities of deltaic Bangladesh and perhaps 50-60 per cent of the country’s land area. Lesser flood damage occurs every year sometimes in several episodes. The chapter on infrastructure describes the uneasy cohabitation with such hazards and details some very hard choices that must be made concerning how to face up to them. For example, Mr Brammer writes:

> What value can be imputed for human life? What, even, is the value of quality of life? It could be argued that in a country such as Bangladesh flood protection should be considered a social service which it is government’s responsibility to provide. It then becomes a question of how will such a service be paid for if the government demands it government must find the means, internally or externally, with which to provide it. Very probably, that will entail sacrifices being made in other development or welfare expenditure (277).

Given the context of poverty, vulnerability and population density, these are monumentally large questions to which there are no easy solutions, perhaps no solutions at all under current constraints. The chapter ends, however, with a summary of what can be done and what measures have been implemented to limit the damage.

The third part of the book covers the 12 types of disaster that affect Bangladesh naturally with an emphasis on flood, drought and cyclone. Readers who are familiar with these will nevertheless appreciate Mr Brammer’s comprehensive treatment and emphasis on the agricultural effects. They may also welcome his further chapters on tornadoes, convective storms, hurricanes, accelerated erosion, sedimentation salination and crop diseases. In Bangladesh the relationship between agriculture and flooding is far more intimate and complex than the straightforward distinction between barsha (normal seasonal floods) and bona (damaging floods) might suggest. Seldom has a country been so betrayed by its life blood — water — yet seldom have farmers exhibited such ingenuity in their attempts to manage the risk. As a minor point, I would have liked to see a little more in this section on uncertainty a low probability but high
consequence hazard that is capable of causing major disruption to the land and drainage systems of Bangladesh albeit at very infrequent intervals.

The last section, entitled 'Experience', offers some lessons from major disasters of the past, namely the devastating tropical cyclone of 1970 and the major drought of 1978-9, as well as a summary chapter on how to approach agricultural disasters systematically. This provides an opportunity to survey trends in the vulnerability of Bangladesh's agriculture using the major disasters as starting-points and to evaluate the mitigation measures taken in the wake of these events.

In synthesis, Agricultural Disaster Management in Bangladesh is a superb collection of information derived from decades of research and field experience in Bangladesh. It is thorough, well-organised and lucid. Though it does help if one has some familiarity with the agricultural systems and institutions of the Ganges-Ganges delta, it can nevertheless be read with profit by anyone who has a basic understanding of the environmental sciences. As Bangladesh bears a truly exceptional vulnerability to natural hazards, particularly floods, droughts and cyclonic storm surges — the book has a far greater significance than that of a purely local study. Indeed it offers an object lesson for anyone who is seriously interested in small scale farming in hazardous environments, especially those with monsoon climates. Very sensibly, the author divides mitigation measures into prevention, preparedness, relief and rehabilitation. He offers sound practical advice with respect to each of these phases, advice that could profitably be taken in many similar areas. In summary, I thoroughly recommend this book as a compendium on natural hazards to agriculture and a manual of best practices designed to combat them.

David Alexander
University of Massachusetts at Amherst


Little information reached the West on how the Soviet Union managed its disasters, and it is clear that this book makes up for this gap in knowledge. It is written by an eminent researcher from the Russian Academy of Science who has written a comprehensive book on how the Russian Federation tackles emergencies of all kinds — fires, earthquakes, radiation emissions and so on — in the light of the previous total secrecy. The level of detail in this book is amazing.

Russia's vast land area and diverse physical settings would naturally make it susceptible to a rich catalogue of hazards. Yet the main causes seem to be elsewhere. Portnirsky reveals the huge extent to which social, economic and political factors determined vulnerability throughout the second half of the twentieth century. When it emerged from the Cold War, Russia was heir to distinct forms of vulnerability that stemmed from issues of state security, rigid bureaucracies, bungled attempts to modernise, and industrialisation and a pervasive culture of negligence. Portnirsky's case histories demonstrate that these could combine with hazards to produce some of the most spectacular disasters in human history.

The book begins with a chapter on trends in hazards, disasters and losses. First the author develops his theme on a global scale, and then he focuses on Russia. On the one hand, in recent decades the US has suffered 31 per cent of the world's major technological accidents (and 41 per cent of total economic losses), whereas Russia suffered about twice the rate in the Soviet Union and Russia. But the latter is catching up each year in the early 1990s, Russia suffered some 1,400 'emergencies' (events with casualties or major economic losses) with the loss of 2,600 lives. Though Portnirsky does not shy away from discussing the earlier disasters such as the major radiation accident at Chernobyl in 1986, it is clear that data remain much more abundant for recent
events, especially those in the 1990s, than for earlier ones.

The first section of the book ends with a theoretical discussion of disaster taxonomy, on which the author is an acknowledged expert. This serves as a framework for the subsequent case histories. The second chapter brings this analysis to bear upon the elements of the emergency management cycle. Porfiriev has a predilection for the systems approach and this helps him to model the relationships between the various elements of his classification scheme. He divides disaster planning and management strategies into prevention, mitigation, and alleviation. His analysis of the impact of technocratic thinking is especially interesting when viewed in the light of failures to prevent, mitigate and sufficiently alleviate some of the nuclear and industrial risks of the Soviet Union.

The third chapter deals with the legal basis of emergency management in Russia and how the latter is organised. The discussion here is specifically focused on the 1990s, with emphasis on post-Soviet changes. In legal terms, these involve diversification and homogenisation of civil protection laws, and their extension beyond emergency management to environmental protection and disaster prevention. Porfiriev deftly guides the reader through the welter of laws and discusses their relationship with the Russian constitutional Organisation, dominated at the national level by the State Emergency Management Agency (MEDS, formerly EMERCOM) and the State System of Disaster Prevention (RUSPRE). The reader is impressed by how rapidly the Russian emergency management system has come to resemble that of other countries. One is also struck by the apparent continuing emphasis on centralisation, which in a country that spans 11 time zones is perhaps worrying.

The final chapter offers some case studies of disasters and how they have been managed. It begins with a comparison between the Tomsk-7 radiation emergency of 1993 and the Chernobyl disaster of 1986. Tomsk (now Seversk) did not even appear on maps circulated in the USSR, so secret was it. But secrecy was only one ingredient in the disaster equation. Weakness of legal instruments, organisational shortcomings and failure to manage and train personnel were all important. In this respect the smaller accident at Tomsk-7 did resemble the much larger disaster at Chernobyl. Porfiriev's analysis of the event and its wider context is thorough.

The second case study describes the fire which burned for a week in the Kamzhi car factory in Tatarstan in 1993 and decimated production at one of the world's largest engine assembly plants. The immediate causes were the presence of huge quantities of highly flammable polystyrene insulation material and the inadequacy of fire-fighting resources and procedures. Ten thousand square metres of roof burned in only 32 minutes. Porfiriev traces this back to ministerial decisions taken in the early 1970s which deregulated the use of inflammable insulating materials. He also describes a wide variety of fire disasters with similar causes that occurred in the USSR and its successor states.

The final case study is that of the tragic earthquake of 1995 at Neftegorsk (Sakhalin Island) in Russia's Far East. Almost 2,000 people died, and the high toll reflected not only some very unfortunate circumstances regarding timing but also high vulnerability in every respect: unsafe buildings, poor seismic zoning, inadequate emergency response, lack of scientific initiatives and failure of communication. A remarkably small number of occupied structures collapsed completely but in those 24 buildings nearly 3,000 people were trapped. In such a remote location, the death of most medical personnel in the collapse of the local hospital was especially unfortunate. As in Armenia, scene of a major earthquake in 1988, it is probable that in Neftegorsk construction workers stole cement and other materials destined for the buildings they were working on, thus further increasing vulnerability. This chapter also refers to disasters that were far longer totally unknown, even in Russia itself, such as the major earthquake of 1948 in Turkmenistan and the devastating Severnaya Kurya tsunami of 1952.

Porfiriev sums up by noting that for ideological reasons the problem of disaster reduction was ignored for many decades in the USSR, while momentary political considerations have caused it to be similarly neglected in modern Russia. One fears that
the continuing degradation of the social and economic fabric may increase the already high levels of vulnerability in Russia and prevent further normalisation of disaster planning and management. Hence this excellent book may soon need a second edition.

David Alexander
University of Massachusetts at Amherst


When working in the north of Uganda in 1992 trying to think of a way in which to deal with the apparent psychological consequences of the brutal civil war and the AIDS crisis, poverty, and more I met several young men who showed me a dilemma. These men told me horrific stories of atrocities that were committed by rebels and soldiers alike. It took me some time to realise that they were talking of their own deeds. Many of them had been just boys at the time of the atrocities, and now they referred to these deeds as done by 'my former self' Being reborn Christians had allowed them to take a safe distance from the past.

A number of Christian churches had come to the north of Uganda and their presence had offered these young men an effective coping style. It left me confused. Here was what seemed to be an example of a way to help these men cope with their horrific experiences. But at the same time something about this coping style seemed not right to me.

Over the last 10 years, humanitarian relief organisations have put the psychological consequences of traumatic events on their agenda. This has been the effect of the growing attention to mental well being in the West. Yet my change in the problems seen in the populations in danger. The increasingly hostile environment in which relief workers do their work helps many realise psychological stress must also be a problem for their target population. Consequently, psycho-social interventions were introduced and the Western origin of the concern for mental health was reflected in the Western concepts that guided many of these interventions. Over the years a whole range of psycho-social projects have been designed ranging from games for children, sports activities, group discussions, lots of counselling all the way to hard core psychiatry. Many more interventions have been applied without a clear design and very few have been tested for their effects.

Rethinking the Trauma of War. Edited by Patrick Bracken and Celia Petts is a book written by people who have been involved in humanitarian efforts to help traumatised survivors in non-Western settings. The authors share a scepticism about the appropriateness of applying Western concepts in non-Western settings. That in itself is not new, but already is a considerable body of literature on trans-cultural psychiatric. This book aims to present a critique on the current discourse of trauma based on field-based efforts rather than theoretical constraints and should be a much-wanted contribution to the development of useful interventions. What the authors do in their different ways is to share their concern for the value of the context the cultural and social appropriateness of the interventions. Examples are given of how internationally gathered experience and Western concepts do not match up with local beliefs or more importantly, local needs.

The different essays approach the problem from different angles and there is a nice balance between the focus on the Western origins of the trauma discourse and the local context of suffering. Some authors offer theoretical perspectives that address the construction of the concept of PTSD (Bracken) or of the relevance of linguistically conventional Western approaches to trauma (Richards). Others demonstrate the importance of a real understanding of the social and cultural setting in which people may be labelled as traumatised (Summerville and Richards).

Interviews in the essays of Peters and Richards show the perspective of young combatants in Sierra Leone while Joan Gilker offers a gripping tale of the problems faced by the expatriate expert.

Some authors criticise projects they developed themselves. This scepticism is welcome and sympathetic, but at some point...
one begins to feel uneasy. Doubt may be the beginning of wisdom, but then again measuring is the beginning of knowledge, as someone must have said.

The uneasiness must come from the lack of data that underlie the scepticism of the authors. The authors make many philosophically valid points on the limitations of trans-cultural validity of the concepts used in Western-style interventions. However, these considerations are not new, and they do not rule out the possibility of measuring the effect of the interventions however careful one needs to be in the design of effectiveness studies. The outcomes of such studies would help to turn scepticism into constructive alternatives. We may then be able to offer another perspective to the young men in Uganda who now need to be reborn.

Willem van de Put
Amsterdam


The Forsaken People should be read in conjunction with Masses in Flight: The Global Crisis of Internal Displacement, which was co-written by Deng, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and Cohen, a long-time campaigner on behalf of IDPs and colleague of Deng at Brookings. Masses in Flight gives a comprehensive overview of the global IDP problem as well as recommendations about how to overcome the shortcomings of the international community in response to this growing phenomenon.

In The Forsaken People, different authors, including some of the leading commentators on humanitarianism, discuss internal displacement in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Burundi, Colombia, the Former Yugoslavia, Georgia, Liberia, the north Caucasus, Peru, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, the Sudan and Tajikistan. The authors highlight the historical context, root causes and the conditions of internal displacement as well as national, regional and international efforts undertaken to deal with the IDP problem. Each case study concludes with recommendations for further action.

The case studies underscore the fact that the main cause of displacement is conflict among different ethnic groups or between governments and minorities of a different race, language, culture or religion. In today's internal armed conflicts, displacement is often an explicit political and military aim. Given the unwillingness or inability of states to provide the desperately needed assistance or protection to their displaced populations, it falls to the international community to provide protection and assistance. The ability of regional and international organisations to intervene, however, is hampered by state sovereignty and related principles of territorial integrity and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states. The case studies highlight that the provision of effective protection, especially in today's internal conflicts where civilians are actively targeted, remains the key problem.

To overcome existing shortcomings, the authors stress that the international community should 'avoid the tragic conflation and confusion of humanitarian and political issues' and not use humanitarian assistance as a substitute for durable political solutions (175). The authors recommend that effective coordination between the humanitarian actors and where possible the appointment of a lead agency, such as UNHCR, could ensure that gaps in protection, assistance, and rehabilitation are minimised. They also call for more preventive action (Rwanda sadly being the most obvious example where the early warning signals were ignored) and proactive mediation. In addition, dispute settlements should serve to strengthen democratic institutions, promote and ensure the respect of human rights and address economic disparities.

The case studies provide the reader with a welcome insight into the complex issue of internal displacement, although at times the richness of contextual information obscures the IDP issue. It is also regrettable that there is little mention of the coping strategies of IDPs and how the international community could strengthen these. Policymakers and humanitarian actors alike should read these
timely and authoritative publications to ensure that more appropriate responses to crises of internal displacement are implemented.

Louise Ludlam-Taylor
Bath

Conflict and Forced Displacement in the Caucasus Perspectives, Challenges and Responses: Edited by Tom Trier and Lars Funch Hansen, Danish Refugee Council, Copenhagen, 1999, 212 pages, free of charge

Since 1988, the dozen de facto nations sandwiched between the Caspian and Black seas have suffered a vicious circle of economic collapse, insecurity, organised crime, donor fatigue, rekindled nationalism (often the result of historical ethnic rejection) and xenophobia. This process has been intensified by a series of bloody unresolved conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia-Abkhazia-Pridnestrovia (North Ossetia-Shatia) Chechnya and most recently Dagestan. Millions of internally displaced persons and refugees have become hostages to stalled political negotiations and no-win, no-peace status.

The Danish Refugee Council sponsored International Conference on the Caucasus Region held on 28–30 September 1998 in Copenhagen was the first major conference on the region since the Conflicts in the Caucasus forum of Oslo in November 1995. Unlike so many tepid proceedings from international meetings characterised by the utility of bung-wraps and all the invocation of a better future, this slim volume is both thought-provoking and timely in light of renewed Russo-Chechen warfare.

Here are some of the more thoughtful researchers and practitioners at their best. Swedish anthropologist Steven Sampson argues for utilising ethnic, national identity as a valuable tool in society building, rather than stigmatising it. Yuri Kolesnikov, economist at Boston State University, shows how market reforms have increased ethno-agrarian ethnic economies intensifying ethnic based competition and reducing prospects for peaceful resolution of regional conflicts. Greg Hansen of Brown University's Humanitarian and War Project presents strategies for facilitating the return home of displaced people, including psycho-social support, conflict resolution training, information dissemination and participatory rural appraisals (PRAs) to mobilise community involvement. Several articulate pieces by UN officials outline prospects for development and peace building in the region.

Lars Funch Hansen's summary of conference discussions provides a refreshing, outspoken analysis of the underlying factors that condition humanitarian assistance. The West bears great responsibility for the isolation of conflict zones, he notes, since it trades almost exclusively with host-countries and almost never with the de facto independent territories.

The 1990s have been characterised by a view of potential refugees as a security issue rather than a humanitarian issue. A similar situation concerns the xenophobia and Islamophobia that is now causing trouble for refugees and migrants throughout the territory of the former Soviet Union. These issues are also high on the public and political agendas of many Western nations.

Fred Spielberg
Buenos Aires

One could quibble with a few of the editors' decisions. The views of local NGOs from the region are conspicuously absent. Only a handful of local NGO representatives figured among the 113 participants. An unfortunate reflection on the difficulty of Western agencies to reach the voices of the many civil society organisations which they earnestly call upon to lead the process of reconciliation and society building. The inclusion of a fact sheet on each of the nations or ethnic communities mentioned would have been a valuable reference tool. Likewise, a map showing principal flows of human displacement but these are minor faults. The value of this book lies in its serious attempt to grapple with and identify human consequences of frequently overlooked frozen conflicts.
Manuscripts are considered for publication on the understanding that they have not been submitted elsewhere and that if accepted for publication in *Disasters* they will not be published elsewhere without the written consent of the Editors. *Disasters* is a fully refereed journal. It is the responsibility of the author to obtain permission for using any previously published material. The publication of a paper does not necessarily imply that the Editorial Board accepts the views or opinions expressed in it.

A distinction is drawn between academic or research papers, which should not normally exceed 8,000 words, and field studies or situation reports, which should not exceed 5,000 words. Shorter articles, such as conference reports, comments, letters and items of information are also welcomed. Each named author of papers and reports will receive one complimentary copy of the issue of the Journal in which their work is published. Book reviews or offers of book reviews on works relevant to disaster studies should be addressed to the Book Reviews Assistant at the address below.

**Submission procedures**

Three copies of any paper or field report, together with a 3.5" diskette in WordPerfect 5.1 or 6.0, or Word 6.0, should be submitted to the Editors, *Disasters*, Overseas Development Institute, Portland House, Stag Place, London SW1E 5DP. All material should be in English. Each copy must be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the paper only (including any notes and references). Papers should be accompanied by an abstract of not more than 150 words. Bibliographical references should be incorporated into the text, using the author-date system, with page numbers where appropriate. All references cited should be listed alphabetically at the end of the paper, in the style used in this issue, i.e.:


Notes should be kept to a minimum and presented on a separate page at the end of the paper, before the References. The title page should include the name and affiliation of the author(s) and the full address (including e-mail, if possible) to which proofs and editorial correspondence should be sent.

Illustration must be submitted with the text, and with captions on a separate sheet. The originals of all illustrations will be required after the contribution has been accepted. Photographs should be glossy, black and white prints only, and clearly labelled on the back with the name of the author, the title of the paper and the figure number.

**Back issues:** Single issues from the current and previous volumes are available from Blackwell Publishers Journals. Earlier issues may be obtained from Swets & Zeitlinger, Back Sets, Heereweg 347, PO Box 810, 2160 SZ Lisse, Holland.

**Microform:** The journal is available on microfilm (16mm or 35mm) or 105mm microfiche from the Serials Acquisitions Department, Bell & Howell Information and Learning, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346, USA.

**US mailing:** Periodicals postage paid at Rahway, NJ Postmaster send address corrections to Disasters, c/o Mercury Transport International Ltd Inc., 365 Blair Road, Avenel, NJ 07001, USA (US mailing agent).

**Advertising:** For details contact Andy Patterson, Wheatsheaf House, Woolpit Heath, Bury St Edmunds IP30 9RN, UK (tel: +44 (1359) 242375, fax: +44 (1359) 242837) or write to the Publishers.

**Internet:** For information on all Blackwell Publishers books, journals and services log on to URL: http://www.blackwellpublishers.co.uk