

**SAVING LIVES
AND
LIVELIHOODS**

**THE FUNDAMENTALS OF
A LIVELIHOODS STRATEGY**

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Forward

The Feinstein International Famine Center is pleased to inaugurate its Saving Lives Series with this important work by Sue Lautze who now directs the Livelihoods Initiatives Program at our Center. This paper is based on original work done by Sue for the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in 1996, entitled “Lives vs. Livelihoods: How to Foster Self-sufficiency and Productivity of Disaster Victims”. The strategy presented here has been revised and honed to address issues facing the broader humanitarian relief community. This work lays out the major concepts underpinning a livelihoods strategy and outlines specific actions that agencies can take. The one-page table found on page three is an excellent overview of these principles, strategies and actions, and could well serve agencies as a checklist to guide responses to complex emergencies. Make a copy. Put it on your bulletin board. Whatever you do, do not file it away out of sight.

The Feinstein International Famine Center, housed in the School of Nutrition Science and Policy of Tufts University, is committed to preventing famine and improving organizations’ responses to emergencies. The Center is primarily focused on working with international and local operational agencies to build their capacity to do innovative work in a changing world. To this end, the Center provides technical assistance, training, workshops and publications aimed at the practitioner. The Center is also committed to impacting the academic world by changing the nature of interactions among academics and practitioners. The Center is working with graduate students at the School of Nutrition, Science and Policy and at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy to advance research in pertinent fields. It is sponsoring internships for graduate students and preparing both a one year professional masters degree program in food security and international humanitarianism, as well as a short-term “practitioners experts in residence” program for practitioners returning from the field. The Center also develops policy positions on important issues in the area of international famine prevention directed towards policy makers and the media, as appropriate.

The world is undergoing profound transformation. The Feinstein International Famine Center brings together academics and practitioners, visionaries and operational experts to develop new models and new approaches to famine and complex emergencies. “The Fundamentals of a Livelihoods Strategy” is an exciting beginning for our publication series that will explore these complex issues.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Complex emergencies are characterized, in part, by the deliberate exploitation of civilians. Undermining self-sufficiency and productivity are not merely by-products of conflict, but also are the intended consequences of war. In complex emergencies, systems of production are particularly vulnerable, rendering these types of disasters fundamentally different from natural disasters. Consequently, innovative approaches to providing relief and recovery assistance are essential. Tools for analyzing the critical trade-offs between implementing more immediate survival interventions and fostering self-sufficiency to ensure longer-term survival, i.e., saving lives and livelihoods, are much-needed by the international humanitarian relief community.

In any complex emergency, there are at least three options: a) not intervening because conditions of operations are untenable, there is a significant risk of causing more harm than good or relief resources not reaching intended beneficiaries, etc.; b) rapidly distributing free relief goods; or, c) strategically intervening to save lives through more “livelihood-oriented” relief interventions. Relief operations are currently a combination of these options. During every complex emergency, these routes should be frequently revisited and programs modified according to changing conditions. The aim is to minimize the number of disaster-affected people who must do without, while maximizing the effectiveness of limited humanitarian relief resources.

Eight basic principles of self-sufficiency and productivity in complex emergencies form the foundation of the fundamentals of a livelihoods strategy presented in this paper. These principles emphasize the importance of 1) rigorous assessment, 2) aggressive capacity building, 3) appropriate market support, 4) protecting essential assets, 5) easing vulnerables’ burdens, 6) timely interventions, 7) limiting harmful population displacement, and, 8) establishing sustainable systems. They, in turn, inform eight components of a strategy to wisely intervene in complex emergencies, as outlined in the table on the following page. The bulk of this paper analyzes these principles and their corresponding strategies and actions. Aside from the first principle, “Complex emergencies require strategic assessment, analysis and intervention”, the principles are not listed in order of importance. Rather, what is presented here is a toolbox, of sorts. The context of each emergency will determine which of these tools will be most useful.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF A LIVELIHOODS STRATEGY

Principles	Strategies	Actions
Complex emergencies require strategic assessment, analysis and interventions.	Assess the political, military, social and economic aspects of each crisis in complex emergencies and respond accordingly.	Prepare relief workers to act strategically. Move beyond distributing free relief. Formulate country strategies. Improve coordination.
The key is capacity building.	Integrate capacity building aspects into all relief interventions.	Define capacity building. Do capacity assessments. Avoid creating dependency. Weigh the pros and cons of capacity building. Rethink neutrality.
Markets are necessary to facilitate productivity and self-sufficiency.	Use markets to maximum advantage.	Monitor markets. Protect the poorest. Strengthen key infrastructure. Understand the community's tax base.
Asset bases are fundamental to livelihoods.	Protect essential assets.	Estimate order of asset depletion and re-accumulation. Keep markets open and competitive. Facilitate the acquisition of highly mobile assets.
Social dynamics influence the success of relief responses.	Intervene to ease the impact of complex emergencies on civilians by enhancing the coping strategies of women, children and the elderly.	View people not as victims but as proactive survivors. Avoid burdening the vulnerable. Strengthen women's capacities to provide for dependents. Design health programs with women's responsibilities in mind.
Timing is everything: The earlier the better.	Design interventions according to the cycles of disasters and development.	Use social, political and economic early warning indicators. Focus on consumption strategies. Develop sub-national early warning systems. Monitor and evaluate prevention, mitigation and preparedness interventions. Link development with relief.
Stress migration undermines productivity and self-sufficiency.	Analyze the source of migration and minimize stress migration and its effects.	Determine if migration is harmful. Understand urban migration. Counter dependency of forcibly displaced populations. Provide jobs and economic opportunities.
Poorly designed interventions undermine self-sufficiency and increase vulnerability.	Establish sustainable systems .	Understand the underlying system. Meet emergency needs. Ensure a return to pre-crisis intervention level of services.

II. WHAT AND WHY SELF-SUFFICIENCY?

A. SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS' MANDATE TO SAVE LIVES

Complex emergencies are aptly named. They involve an intricate web of often opposing and hostile political, economic, military and social forces. Unlike natural disasters, complex emergencies entail the *deliberate* creation of crises. Complex emergencies are highly destructive because they radically increase the demands placed on fragile political, economic, environmental and social systems while simultaneously destroying these same systems. Given the nature of the political, military and economic assaults that are typical of complex emergencies, self-sufficiency is a critical survival strategy for many people in complex emergencies. Hence, organizations that provide survival assistance should design interventions that encourage self-sufficiency.

This point is not widely accepted and deserves elaboration. It is important to note that, except in genocide, most people survive crisis.¹ Even in the worst of disasters, decisions made by disaster-affected groups reflect an awareness of life beyond the emergency. These groups (e.g. families, households, clans) make trade-offs between the uncertain but immediate survival of all and the more certain, longer-term survival of the majority.² If a group seeks to ensure the survival of all in the short run, it can reduce the likelihood of its own longer-term survival by increasing the size of its vulnerable population beyond its capacity, especially where crises are expected to be lengthy or frequently repeated.

Despite this, relief interventions are currently aimed at maximizing the survival of the greatest number of disaster-affected people in only one time period: the present. This may only further burden weakened communities. In complex emergencies, a focus solely on saving lives in the very short term is insufficient because *disaster-affected populations pursue their own strategies to maximize the trade-off between both lives and livelihoods in order to save the most lives over several time periods, not just the present*. These realities should motivate relief organization to prioritize some of their limited resources to foster self-sufficiency and productivity in disaster-affected populations, rather than the current near-exclusive focus on the short-term survival of the most vulnerable.

In addition, emergency interventions to foster self-sufficiency and productivity may be necessary to ensure that the most vulnerable survive. For example, even in the face of frank starvation of its weakest members, a group's decision-makers (i.e., its power center such as the patriarch, matriarch or village elders) may determine that the highest priority is to protect assets, such as oxen, even at the expense of some of its members. In this case, the sole provision of emergency food aid may be less effective than the establishment of cattle camps, emergency animal vaccination programs or the negotiation of "cease-stealing" agreements to halt cattle raids. Despite obvious nutritional stress, distributed emergency food aid may be converted, instead, to cash (on grossly unfavorable terms for the seller) or traded for other resources needed to save

the oxen, such as vaccines or weaponry to protect herds. Only after the group's main priority is met will the group invest in its lower priorities, including feeding its weaker members.

It is essential that relief workers be equipped to understand social and intertemporal dynamics in complex emergencies. Although Western organizations usually place the highest priority on meeting the immediate needs of the most vulnerable, usually women and children, it cannot always be assumed that disaster-affected communities share this value structure. Interventions need to be tailored to reflect the decision-making dynamics of disaster-affected groups; otherwise, it can be expected that beneficiaries will convert relief resources to meet their own priorities, an inefficient process at best.

B. DEFINITION OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY FOR RELIEF WORKERS

With respect to complex emergencies, self-sufficiency is *the capacity of a community to either produce, exchange or lay claim to resources necessary to ensure both survival through and resilience against life-threatening stresses*. This definition has three parts.

1. Self-sufficiency is community-wide. Not everyone is expected to be self-sufficient, but it is the primary responsibility of communities to take care of their own.
2. Resources to achieve self-sufficiency are produced, exchanged or claimed. This precludes autarky (freedom from imports) or “we eat what we grow” mentalities while highlighting the crucial role of local markets. “Lay claim” recognizes that public goods (roads, schools, clinics, etc.) diminish or disappear in complex emergencies.
3. Self-sufficiency entails equipping communities to ensure both survival through and resilience against life-threatening stresses. Expectations about laying foundations for economic growth or facilitating a “return to development” may be unrealistic, but interventions to strengthen a community's capacity to prevent or mitigate disasters are essential to ensure survival over the course of repeated crises.

III. UNDERSTANDING COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

Complex emergencies directly threaten self-sufficiency. Like natural disasters, they damage social services, market networks and agriculture enterprises while at the same time increasing demands for the essential services they provide. Unlike natural disasters, however, complex emergencies are also characterized by the deliberate destruction of political, economic, social and environmental systems, rendering complex emergencies fundamentally more devastating than other disasters.

CIVILIANS AS TARGETS. In complex emergencies, there are no distinctions between civilians and combatants in the eyes of aggressors. Displacing populations, sniping civilians, destroying market systems, raping women and destroying fragile eco-systems are blunt but highly destructive instruments of intra-state conflict. An age-old military strategy is the destruction of the adversary's supply lines. In civil conflict, the "supply lines" are agriculture systems that feed enemy soldiers and their families; health systems that keep families together and productive; political systems that foster stability; and, economic systems that provide employment, credit bases, insurance schemes, and markets for produce, services and household items.

DESTROYING SOCIAL NETWORKS. The deliberate destruction of society (including raping, massacring, razing villages, displacing populations and disrupting herd migration and trade routes) fragments communities. School systems are often destroyed in conflict. Entire generations can be uneducated, leaving them ill-prepared to help their families survive crises, keep a fragile peace or supervise the development of their countries through post-conflict transitions. These are important strategies for not only military but also economic and political ends. Militarily, disrupted communities cannot defend themselves. Economically, desperately poor displaced people are willing to work for pitifully low wages. Politically, weak civil societies are associated with weak political opposition.

Bombing Of Civilians, Southern Sudan

Annually, the Government of Sudan randomly bombs civilian populations living in rebel-controlled areas of Sudan. The rebel SPLA regularly retaliates by shelling civilian populations living in government-controlled garrisons. According to Africa Watch:³

Indiscriminate government aerial bombardment has produced tens if not hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees...Before the government offensive, Western Equatoria had regained a semblance of economic normalcy and crops had been planted. Now the economy is disrupted and the towns...are deserted and looted.

ECONOMIC CHAOS. Economic assets, infrastructure and networks are targets of war and exploitation. Some have noted that "famine is functional"⁴ and serves to enrich the few at the cost of many. Complex emergencies are marked by extreme impoverishment of vulnerable groups ("losers") and massive accumulation by those with power ("winners"). Famine prices minimize returns on the sale of assets, thereby increasing the attractiveness of rationing consumption of food, water and medical care, and inducing migration for minimum wage labor. "Losers" sell livestock, pledge farms, incur debt and borrow grain at high interest rates.⁵ "Winners" gain by forcing increased reliance on market transactions with prices depressed/inflated to their advantage. In addition, war entails radical shifts in the division of labor, with considerable changes in the roles of women, men, children and the elderly. This has significant implications, as those who remain behind assume additional productive responsibilities

but may not have commensurate access to key inputs, e.g. credit, land tenure, technology, watering rights, etc. Emergency interventions are required to ensure access to inputs by the most relevant producers, the majority of whom are likely to be women, children and the elderly.

LOCALIZED FAILED STATES. Conflict forces administrations to redirect their priorities and funding, usually away from social services to military budgets. Thus, the structures of government in general and social services in particular often collapse or are severely weakened. Residents can then no longer make claims on the state and must seek alternatives. However, conflict disrupts public goods and services not only once provided by recognized authorities but also those available through the “moral economy”, including kinship networks, informal reciprocal agreements, ethnic customs, etc. In protracted complex emergencies, publicly provided goods and services (e.g. health, labor exchange, credit and insurance) can be completely destroyed, creating a *de facto* “failed state”.

Dismantling the Eritrean Health System⁶

Ethiopian occupation of Eritrea in 1952 led rapidly to the deterioration of the health care system in Eritrea...One of the earliest signs was the sudden closure of most clinics run by religious and humanitarian organizations...By 1962, the health budget for Eritrea was cut by about 50%...As in other sectors, the health services were deliberately crippled to weaken the Eritrean people’s enthusiasm for self-rule.

MANIPULATION OF RELIEF. In tightly controlled markets, relief supplies can be viewed by “winners” as fair game for direct appropriation or taxation, or as unwelcomed supply shocks that undermine profits. Interventions to rehabilitate asset bases and infrastructure may become targets of destruction by those powerful interests that are threatened by the creation of self-sufficient, productive populations. Targets can include strategic emergency interventions that are designed to convert relief-dependent populations into viable communities (e.g. transportation, emergency resettlement/land tenure, livestock restocking/vaccination, seeds/tools/seed banks, emergency credit or agriculture extension). Programs to foster “relief-free” communities should be designed to challenge and outright counteract economic processes of impoverishment, especially in besieged towns and among disenfranchised, displaced laborers.

POLITICAL UPHEAVAL. Conflict is often a last resort to define new political structures. Access to political resources and representation is essential for productive communities. Complex humanitarian emergencies are characterized by fluid shifts in political power, a dynamic that necessitates that relief interventions reflect the changing nature of political landscapes. This may entail empowering communities that were heretofore not political actors, equipping them to claim the political resources they lacked in pre-conflict times.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL TRAUMA. Conflict-related death and disability change the nature and composition of a community’s work force and social structure for generations. The protracted nature of some complex emergencies results in historic, cultural and social amnesia, in addition

to a damaging loss of a generation of skills. The trauma of experiencing or witnessing violence is known to generate a range of debilitating emotional and mental disorders, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION. From the burning of villages to the denuding of forests to the decimation of wildlife, both armed conflicts and the coping mechanisms employed by surviving populations can destroy the productive capacity of land. Cropping patterns, herd size and composition, or industrial systems may no longer be sustainable in the wake of conflict. Emergency interventions are required to protect and restore productive bases, radically alter livelihood patterns, or relocate affected populations.

IV. THE FUNDAMENTALS OF A LIVELIHOODS STRATEGY

PRINCIPLE ONE: COMPLEX EMERGENCIES REQUIRE STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT, ANALYSIS AND INTERVENTIONS

Effective emergency responses to complex emergencies require sophisticated analysis of highly dynamic military, economic, social and political systems. Today's relief worker must be part political scientist, part economist, part anthropologist, part military analyst, part historian, part peace negotiator, part logistician. Given the brutal realities of civil conflict, failed economies, illegitimate and undemocratic political systems, today's relief worker must also be part -- *but only part* -- humanitarian. Well-intended, but poorly designed relief operations only serve to exacerbate the plight of the vulnerable by creating dependency, enriching those with monopolistic market power or protracting conflict. Effectively providing basic humanitarian assistance can be ultimately political and frequently controversial. Relief workers must understand and then design interventions grounded in these difficult realities.

STRATEGY: ASSESS THE POLITICAL, MILITARY, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF EACH CRISIS IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES AND RESPOND ACCORDINGLY

ACTION A: PREPARE RELIEF WORKERS TO THINK AND ACT STRATEGICALLY

Disaster relief has not enjoyed the same career rewards and status as international development. It is difficult to attract qualified individuals to the profession. A common expression from the field claims that disasters attract three kinds of people: missionaries, mercenaries and misfits. Disaster relief work is extremely demanding. Days are long and stressful. Relief workers are expected to be highly mobile. Decisions involving massive resources are made with insufficient information. Field work is dangerous and often emotionally disturbing. Finally, few relief organizations invest adequately in their staff. Staff turnover and "burnout" are relatively high. As a consequence, institutional memories are shallow, leaving the most experienced with the

least time to train and educate other staff. In order to respond strategically to complex emergencies, a stronger cadre of qualified relief professionals needs to be developed by:

- requiring longer-term contracts for field- and headquarters-based staff;
- training staff in the theories, practices and assessment methodologies;
- recruiting exiled, talented individuals from disaster-prone countries;
- (as donors) requiring basic educational and experiential qualifications of funded NGO and UN staff, not only in vocational areas (agriculture, health, water), but also in areas of economics, anthropology, political science, development, language or international relations;
- appealing to universities to provide training in complex emergencies, including the establishment of a certificate course in disaster relief management;
- hiring individuals with broad backgrounds and relevant overseas experience.

ACTION B: IDENTIFY HOW TO MOVE BEYOND THE DISTRIBUTION OF FREE RELIEF

The basic tool used to inform the relief response is the emergency assessment. Despite the overarching importance of the assessment tool, it is underutilized in the disaster situation. In too many instances, the emergency assessment comprises only the roughest of estimates of population size and nutritional status of the most vulnerable groups. Based on this, relief food requirements are calculated, plans for feeding centers and health units are drawn and submitted for funding, transportation is arranged, etc.

Assessments of complex emergencies must delve beyond the observable, beyond physical appearances. This requires drawing information from a variety of sources in the disaster areas, as well as those on the outside, such as national and international anthropologists, historians, sociologists and economists. Importantly, former development workers who were previously assigned to the country can provide a contextual understanding of the social, political and economic relations among affected populations.

Assessors must seek to comprehend the economic system that is providing essential supplies to disaster-affected populations in the absence, lateness or inadequacies of free relief distributions. All too often these life-saving mechanisms are ignored. Restrictions on access to non-market goods (firewood, water and wild foods) must also be examined. Assessments of intra- and inter-communal tensions, such as cattle raiding, should highlight both potential problem areas as well as opportunities for local peace initiatives.

Analysis should include consideration of economic, military and political systems to identify “winners” and “winner strategies”. Potential targets of economic appropriation should be assessed, and alternatives to counter the threat of appropriation should be designed, e.g. interventions to create markets for surplus production, negotiated access to communal natural resources, etc. Such investigations will reveal the extent of a community’s vulnerabilities as they

relate to priorities for assistance. They will also identify functioning coping strategies and available capacity that can be strengthened.

ACTION C: FORMULATE COUNTRY STRATEGIES EARLY IN THE EMERGENCY

Pressure from the media, often referred to as the “CNN Factor”, forces relief organizations to react at break-neck speed. In the rush to “do something” relief workers understandably leave detailed analysis necessary for the formulation of country strategies until “later”. In the heat of crisis, such as the first weeks or even months of a crisis, this *modus operandi* is unavoidable. In the case of the Khartoum displaced persons emergency, however, this “later” has been nearly a decade in coming. Those currently working on the Somalia crisis look back and recognize that a transition to improve productivity and reduce dependency could have commenced as early as 1993. A more rapid transition to strategic planning, once response mechanisms are in place, will greatly increase the effectiveness of relief interventions. There comes a time when “don’t just do something, stand there”⁷ is the appropriate action for all staff. The keys are

- to identify the earliest opportunity for initiating a country strategy process by charging one member of the response team to plan such a transition from the initial phase of the emergency response;
- to equip staff to incorporate rigorous political, economic and military analysis in their assessments and funding decisions by providing training, requiring comprehensive analytical situation reports, and authorizing more frequent field travel for relief personnel in the field and at headquarters;
- to include development specialists in the planning of relief operations in extended complex emergencies;
- to form a policy spelling out the practical means of dealing with media pressure at the onset of emergencies; and,
- to strive for a high level of effective coordination with host authorities, donors, non-government organizations, and UN agencies.

ACTION D: IMPROVE COORDINATION IN THE DISASTER RELIEF COMMUNITY

Donors must support creative interventions to foster self-sufficiency in complex emergencies and each must work in concert with other major donors, host authorities, the United Nations and NGO implementing partners. An individual donor’s efforts to improve the effectiveness of emergency interventions can be easily compromised by others who readily fund less strategically designed relief interventions. Indeed, relief organizations have an important motive for seeking funds elsewhere. In times of budget crises, donors will be asking project implementors to do a lot more with a lot less.

The UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) was created to address problems of coordination in disaster situations. To date, it has but a few successes. This is a time of

apparently low donor confidence. However, effective coordination of strategic interventions, especially those that are required in protracted complex emergencies, is the only way donors, as a group, can systematically and effectively support interventions to foster self-sufficiency and productivity on a wide scale.

PRINCIPLE TWO: THE KEY IS CAPACITY BUILDING

There are at least three options for relief agencies seeking to assist crisis-affected populations, including, a) intervening to promote livelihoods, including strengthening local initiatives through capacity building, b) providing free and general distributions of relief assistance, or, c) not assisting. There is a pressing need for the international humanitarian relief community to learn to support coping mechanisms through capacity building in all complex emergencies, especially as awareness grows of the potential for humanitarian assistance to directly harm the most vulnerable and indirectly hinder the recovery process. There is a clear relationship between how people cope with crisis and related opportunities for building local capacity.

In response to disasters, such as military attacks, floods or economic collapse, people cope. Displaced persons seek shelter with extended families. Merchants provide short-term loans. Parents send their children to live with relatives in safer, more productive areas. In response to repeated shocks, the ways people cope become systematic and refined. Over time, these coping responses become *coping mechanisms*. For example, in an atmosphere of frequent raiding by armed factions, farmers reduce production and diversify storage techniques. Women living in displaced camps convert relief grain to alcohol to generate income. The purpose of coping mechanisms is to protect the disaster-affected populations' fundamental means of livelihood.

By their very origin, all coping mechanisms are sub-optimal and are employed only as second- (or third-) best options to the community's preferred way of life. These mechanisms are imperfect and can become more exploitative as the crisis intensifies. Nevertheless, they represent the best informed response to crisis, as they are developed by those whose lives and livelihoods are most vulnerable. Understanding these trade-offs requires thorough assessment of the whole range of coping strategies employed by the affected group. These coping mechanisms can be highly diverse and complex, including changing grazing, cropping and planting practices, migrating in search of employment, increasing petty commodity production, collecting wild foods, using inter-household transfers and loans, obtaining credit from merchants and money lenders, selling possessions, firewood and charcoal, or breaking up the household.⁸

Groups experiencing the collapse of coping mechanisms may be very limited in their trade-offs between lives and livelihoods. It is widely accepted that long-term reliance on coping mechanisms is unsustainable and ultimately counterproductive.⁹ Strategic emergency

interventions in communities affected by protracted conflict or so-called “permanent” emergencies may need to be longer-term in nature (e.g. training, education, road rehabilitation/construction, seed bank restoration, etc.) As was observed in Mozambique:

lost assets (whether blown up bridges or drought-dead cattle) do not restore themselves; the speed of dislocated households’ ability to rehabilitate their livelihoods is significantly dependent on appropriate supporting measures and resource allocations; restoring human capacity and building service and market access is a complex, tedious and expensive process.¹⁰

STRATEGY: INTEGRATE CAPACITY BUILDING ASPECTS INTO ALL RELIEF INTERVENTIONS

ACTION A: ADOPT A WORKING DEFINITION OF CAPACITY BUILDING

Emergency relief interventions can prevent the erosion of a community’s ability to employ its coping mechanisms (*capacity damming*), strengthen the better aspects of adopted coping mechanisms (*capacity building*) or assist communities to derive better alternatives, a process known as *capacity seeding*. Capacity building interventions are deliberate attempts to assist communities to better cope in the face or wake of a disaster. The term “capacity building” derives from the observation that, although crises occur periodically, they only escalate into disaster situations when they outstrip the *capacity* of a community to cope with them. Where vulnerabilities are the weaknesses that make communities prone to disasters, capacities are the identifiable strengths upon which communities can draw to avert, mitigate or recover from disasters. It follows, then, that *capacity building is any intervention designed to reinforce or create strengths upon which communities can draw to offset disaster-related vulnerability*.

ACTION B: INCORPORATE CAPACITY ASSESSMENTS IN THE DISASTER RESPONSE

Both vulnerability assessments and capacity assessments are necessary to determine appropriate interventions. Since various social strata have unique experiences, assessments of both the capacities and vulnerabilities of affected populations need to be disaggregated along relevant lines, e.g. gender, class, ethnicity, lineage, etc. Assessments should consider the physical/material, social/organizational and motivational/attitudinal strengths of a disaster-affected community.¹¹ However, capacity assessments are rarely conducted, even though potential and existing capacities can be identified early in emergencies. Although experts have prepared vulnerability assessment guidelines, practical field tools for capacity assessments have yet to be developed adequately.

As with vulnerabilities, interventions can either strengthen or undermine capacities. Unwise capacity building interventions can not only destroy local capacity they can reinforce coping mechanisms that, though promising in the short-term, have long-term harmful effects. All coping

mechanisms employed by an affected community must be evaluated on two criteria: Is the community *capable* (with or without outside assistance) of reinforcing them? Are the coping mechanisms *worthy* of being reinforced? This could be called the “C&W Test” (i.e., capable and worthy) for coping mechanisms. Once a coping mechanism passes the C&W test, it becomes a candidate for capacity building.

ACTION C: AVOID CREATING DEPENDENCY

Capacity building entails far more than the channeling of emergency resources through local organizations. As the name implies, it is a highly involved process of building relationships at the local/national/international level to more effectively respond to crisis. Properly executed, capacity building interventions can reduce the cost of relief operations, meet emergency relief needs without generating dependency or capitalize on available local talent without creating a “brain drain”. Internationally, however, the current trend is toward *increasing* dependency on international agencies, as one NGO worker predicted:

international agencies will become increasingly locked into providing relief in disasters which involve the total breakdown of states, economies and norms of behavior (e.g. Somalia, Rwanda, Afghanistan). In such situations, there is very little prospect of a return to normality, let alone an improvement upon normality, for years to come. Agencies will increasingly find themselves providing long-term welfare support, doing the job which one might have expected a government to do in the past.¹²

It is often correctly perceived that working through local systems can slow the initial emergency response. Relief agencies tend to pursue the most expedient route in responding to disasters, often not taking time to examine what communities are capable of doing for themselves. The primary response of the donor community has been to fund parallel services (health, water, sanitation, education, transportation, etc.) provided by international NGOs. In the rush to meet the perceived needs of disaster-affected populations, this parallel structure by-passes local capacities, missing critical opportunities to strengthen or create coping systems. This parallel NGO structure weakens civil society as international agencies (understandably) seek to maximize their performance in emergencies. Unintentionally, international organizations tend to maintain control over resources, minimize participation in the decision-making process, siphon off the best and brightest local staff, escalate local salaries, etc. To avoid generating long-term dependency on relief resources, agencies should improve the mix of indigenous and international efforts, and resist creating parallel service delivery structures. This must be accomplished despite pressure generated by the media and others that cause relief agencies and donors alike to be caught up in the “myth of speed”.¹³ Staff must recognize that the pressure of the “media factor” or the “fundraising factor” can lead to the emergence of a parallel international NGO response mechanism which, in turn, generates long-term dependency.

The parallel international NGO response mechanism is based on the fallacy that relief operations are a temporary interruption in the development process. While this system has saved countless lives at the height of crisis, its effectiveness has declined markedly in protracted emergencies. This parallel system, with its genesis in natural disasters, was not designed to meet survival needs for extended periods of time. A different system of rehabilitation is supposed to take over after the temporary crisis has subsided. In complex emergencies, however, the “temporary” crisis can take years to pass. Further, as development funds continue to dwindle, humanitarian relief is, increasingly, the only substantial channel of external assistance to many disaster-prone countries.

ACTION D: WEIGH THE PROS AND CONS OF CAPACITY BUILDING IN EACH COMPLEX EMERGENCY

The benefits and drawbacks of pursuing capacity building interventions must be weighed against two other alternatives: supporting a parallel, international NGO-dominated system or not providing assistance at all. Currently, disaster relief responses are a mixture of these options. Most resources are delivered through parallel international NGO/UN structures. In some areas, assistance is not provided when access is blocked or conditions of operation are untenable. Elsewhere, limited resources are channeled to and through indigenous organizations or are generated within crisis-affected areas. None of these options is cost-less or apolitical. The advantages and disadvantages of each must be evaluated within the context of each emergency. Every case will be different, depending on the underlying capacities and vulnerabilities of the disaster-affected community.

Efforts to build the capacity of local organizations have contributed to laying the foundations of civil society in Angola and southern Sudan. Outside agencies can assist communities to capitalize on nascent pro-peace interests by providing space and an opportunity for a number of voices to be heard.¹⁴ Support for local organizations to maintain accountability to the populations they serve and to gain access to donors increases a society’s absorptive capacity for external resources. In addition to increasing the effectiveness of disaster relief responses, this has profound implications for the rehabilitation process. From the West Bank and Gaza to Mozambique and Bosnia, recovery efforts have been dramatically slowed because of limited absorptive capacity. In northern Iraq, Kurdish organizations in a USAID-funded resettlement program have produced quality projects because these organizations understand local practices and preferences. This has been especially important for determining the appropriateness of sanitation interventions.¹⁵ In Sudan, where rehabilitating local capacity is a key element of USAID’s country strategy, capacity building interventions have jump-started economic cooperative structures, revitalized a destroyed market economy and reduced long-term dependence on emergency relief resources.

Just as there are benefits to capacity building, there are potentially negative aspects that deserve attention. Successful capacity building is a daunting and heretofore mostly elusive task. It is difficult to identify, understand and enhance coping strategies. In Angola, northern Iraq and

Sudan, capacity building interventions have required extensive administrative and managerial investments by donors, the UN and NGOs. Project inputs can also create destructive competition for resources, a process that further weakens marginalized social groups. In protracted emergencies, community organization might be nearly or completely destroyed, requiring longer-term efforts to reorganize fragmented social groups. Rejuvenating traditional socioeconomic structures can unintentionally reinforce bias against women. In addition, local organizations are usually as impoverished as the populations they seek to serve. Yet, most donors are not equipped to provide even modest cash advances directly to such groups.

ACTION E: RETHINK NEUTRALITY IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

In seeking to maintain neutrality in complex emergencies, organizations have focused on the perceived “apolitical” tasks of delivering nutrition, health, water or sanitation services through channels that limit the involvement of local actors to technical aspects. Working to identify, utilize and strengthen local capacities for, say, organizing community groups or empowering marginal producers is largely perceived as “too political” by relief organizations and authorities. These views are not unfounded. In war, working with some organizations can grant legitimacy to inappropriate factions. Ignoring the political tensions inherent in complex emergencies, however, does not create neutral humanitarian space. To the contrary, it leaves agencies open to gross exploitation and manipulation. It is difficult to intervene with a minimum of naiveté and a maximum of neutrality, a combination that can be accomplished only with extensive contributions from local communities. For agencies that confuse detachment from disaster-affected communities with neutrality, however, local capacities to offset the worst effects of complex emergencies will continue to be missed or worse, exploited or undermined altogether.

**PRINCIPLE THREE: MARKETS ARE NECESSARY TO FACILITATE PRODUCTIVITY
AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

Humanitarianism has a long and proud tradition of providing free relief to people in their most vulnerable hour; therefore, using market channels to deliver relief assistance is controversial. However, when functioning, markets smooth intertemporal and spatial risks by providing, for example, credit and insurance. Most of these arrangements in poorer countries are informal. Active trading in local markets keeps transportation networks open, including information systems that maintain rationality of prices across regions and limit exploitation. Village markets provide a forum for petty trading of food and non-food goods, thereby encouraging farmers to produce above minimum subsistence levels while also reducing outmigration. Because they are more responsive to consumer demands than are relief organizations, markets provide diversity in diets, productive inputs and essential items. Merchants’ stocks serve as one form of local reserve (e.g. grain stores).

The Wider Role Of Markets

Beyond goods and services, village markets are a critical arena for information, political exchange and socializing, all of which are important for maintaining kinship ties, increasing efficiency in markets and bringing together groups with common economic interests. Some SCF/UK staff in Ethiopia observed:

*Markets are not only commodity exchanges; they also play an important social and political role as centers for exchange of all kinds of information on the surrounding region and beyond. They are occasions when friends and kin beyond the village meet, when encounters take place between country-people and townspeople, and enemies congregate in peace...*¹⁶

Experience in complex emergencies indicates that strong and functioning markets serve communities far better than those either dominated by monopolistic powers or by markets that have failed completely. “Winners” manipulate markets in times of crisis, much to the detriment of the poorest people. Markets and merchants are usually perceived as part of the problem in complex disasters because merchant’s hoarding behaviors contribute to exorbitant prices. In Somalia, merchants and warlords masterminded the systematic theft of huge quantities of relief food. However, they were also useful and effective for the monetization of relief food and contracted relief food delivery. Productive market potential remains largely untapped by the international relief community.^A Indeed, some do not consider market-based interventions as appropriate actions for relief groups. One program officer working in Sarajevo was asked if they managed any market-based programs. “No,” he said, “we’re a humanitarian organization.”

In reality, markets are a mixed bag. They play a crucial role in supporting a community’s capacity to maintain productivity while also serving as a key source of increased vulnerability, especially for the most marginalized members of a community. Those with resources and market power are motivated to pursue exploitative economic strategies. Incorporated into a larger strategy of relief, however, markets and merchants can effectively provide goods and services to many vulnerable communities.

STRATEGY: USE MARKETS TO MAXIMUM ADVANTAGE

ACTION A: MONITOR MARKETS IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

Since relief efforts rarely meet the full needs of crisis-affected populations, markets serve as an alternative source of food and non-food items. This important function limits dependence on relief distributions by those with purchasing power. Active markets also provide a tax base to fund local social services and to offset random looting of local crops and stocks. Further,

^A One notable exception, however, is the work of Fred Cuny.

markets have a close relationship with the informal economy, serving as the forum where claims staked are recovered or extended, e.g. in-kind repayment of loans and labor, credit, etc. Importantly, price movements and terms of trade in local markets can be powerful crisis early warning indicators. In communities where markets have failed, vulnerability is increased in the absence of these market functions.

Market activities signal the appropriateness of distributed relief commodities. The market behavior of intended recipients should be routinely investigated to determine how distributed relief items are utilized. The appearance of relief items on markets can be an indication of a high demand for cash. Sales of relief items can also indicate a pressing need for consumption items not furnished by relief agencies. The need to protect livelihoods may also cause beneficiaries to dispose of distributed goods in the market. Despite serving as powerful signals of the (in)appropriate nature of relief distributions, such market sales are routinely dismissed as signs of poor monitoring by the implementing agency or simply accepted as inevitable “beneficiary monetization”.

ACTION B: ENSURE THAT MARKETS ARE NOT WORSENING VULNERABILITY

Especially in complex emergencies, markets exploit those who lack purchasing power. In times of crisis, collusion among the wealthy and the empowered forces reliance on markets by limiting access to non-market resources or other markets. Because of the increased risks associated with disasters, credit terms are usurious, with particularly acute consequences for women, the poor or the socially marginalized. “Winners” seek to maximize “famine prices,” thereby minimizing returns on distress sales of assets. Profit motives can work against the interests of the most vulnerable because those with market power deliberately keep wages low or limit competition to inflate prices. Relief organizations should counteract the negative aspects of exploitative market behavior by increasing competition within and between markets and removing barriers to non-market resources. This may be accomplished if

- the number of economic actors is increased through revitalized producer or consumer cooperation (e.g. growers co-ops, consumer organizations);
- access to natural resources is restored by negotiating safe passage or de-mining water sheds, forests, common grazing areas, etc.;
- fair emergency credit rates are guaranteed for the most vulnerable; and,
- transportation routes are kept open between markets (e.g. de-mining and rehabilitating roads, increasing the availability of basic modes of transportation including mules, bicycles and draft animals).

ACTION C: DETERMINE IF MARKETS CAN BE STRENGTHENED THROUGH SELECTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT

Markets fail or perform poorly when infrastructure is damaged and destroyed by war. Strategic military targets include transportation (road, rail, river or air networks) and communication (radio, television, newspapers and courier) systems. As the threat of conflict increases, some merchants relocate to safer areas, reducing competition in the market and increasing opportunities for monopolistic exploitation. Informal insurance and credit markets, two important forms of managing risk across time periods, cannot withstand protracted crisis because of limits on communal resources. In addition, these risk markets collapse when the institutions that enforce contracts break down, e.g. elders councils whose authority is usurped by military powers, herders' associations that dissolve due to increased competition for limited grazing land, villages that are destroyed, etc. Concomitant with other initial emergency interventions, the state and function of market infrastructure should be assessed. Where market functions are inhibited, emergency interventions to repair vital infrastructure should be considered.

ACTION D: UNDERSTAND THE COMMUNITY'S TAX BASE

Incentives for surplus production diminish when markets fail, increasing the risk of food insecurity as farmers resort to subsistence production. Formal and informal tax bases erode in the face of declining production, threatening social services and increasing the likelihood of random appropriation by military armies and insurgent factions. International organizations routinely decry attempts by local authorities to re-establish tax systems to rationalize appropriation or to gain self-sufficiency in local administration and social services. Under some circumstances, however, responsible taxation should be encouraged. In order for communities to overcome dependency on relief resources, they need tax structures balanced between the outrageous banditry of Somalia's warlords and the absolute "no new tax" stand of the international community.

"Taxation" In Yambio, Western Equatoria, Sudan

Yambio is a naturally fertile area deep in rebel-held territory in southern Sudan. Prior to 1993, farmers maintained only subsistence production due to the combined disincentives of a defunct market, destroyed transportation systems that cut off trade with nearby Uganda, and random appropriation by rebels. With USAID funding, a barter shop was stocked with blankets, cooking pots and farming tools -- "relief" items that, under other circumstances, would have been freely distributed. In response to the barter incentives, farmers produced surplus cereals far exceeding expectations, and the local market revived due to surplus production and other OFDA-funded activities, including road rehabilitation and the re-establishment of productive cooperatives for bicycle repair and tailoring.

Despite the renewed market activity, social services, including the primary health clinic, remain dependent on emergency funding, primarily because of a lack of an effective local taxation structure. In response, CRS provided vegetable seeds and tools to local organizations in Yambio for the establishment of community

gardens. The produce (the “tax receipts”) will support teachers so that education can resume in Yambio. In this fashion, an alternative tax structure is emerging that will, it is hoped, see Yambio become self-sufficient in social services, despite the ongoing war.

PRINCIPLE FOUR: ASSET BASES ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO LIVELIHOODS

Assets, such as farming tools, land, jewelry, livestock or outstanding loans, serve as a buffer from starvation in times of emergency. Assets, however, are also essential for households and communities to sustain livelihoods. In times of stress, the pressure to preserve assets needed for production is diametrically opposed to the pressure to prevent starvation. Actions to preserve assets are production strategies that save lives in the longer run; actions to dispose of assets are consumption strategies that save lives in the very short term only.

Households and communities hold different types and values of assets. Generally, women tend to hold more liquid assets, such as jewelry, while men control more “lumpy” assets (i.e., those that are more difficult to sell quickly), such as camels. Understanding the composition of asset bases held by disaster-affected populations is key for both vulnerability and capacity assessments. Importantly, however, relief workers should not confuse availability of assets with access to assets, for even within households access is likely to be highly gender-specific.

Disaster-affected populations dispose of productive assets only as a last resort prior to permanent outmigration, an indication of the importance of such assets to rural populations. Productive assets represent the future stream of income or produce that will sustain the household over time; they are essential for rural livelihoods. The opportunity cost of giving up these assets and thereby becoming destitute is very high. In disasters, these costs are weighed against other strategies to protect key assets, such as incurring debt, selling liquid assets or reducing the intake of food. There is a clear link between nutrition and asset protection strategies in emergencies. In some instances, disaster-affected populations will choose to go hungry in order to preserve their assets and future livelihoods.¹⁷

Those who must dispose of their assets in order to survive will realize only a fraction of their value due to desperation to sell and depressed famine prices, and will face both significant impoverishment and high vulnerability. Asset prices are depressed in emergencies because the market becomes flooded when populations dispose of similar assets in a short period of time. When the crisis passes, asset prices are inflated because these same populations seek to re-establish their lost asset bases. In this fashion, they lose twice.

The above model of asset disposition is based on observations of household behavior in natural disasters, especially drought. In complex emergencies, pro-active “winner” strategies for accumulation complicate the model. In areas experiencing a long-term decline of the formal economy, such as the Horn of Africa, opportunities for legitimate wealth creation, e.g. export of staples, have decreased significantly. In response, the politically, militarily and economically

strong have generated a deliberate system of asset transfer from the vulnerable to the dominant. In permanent emergencies, the assets of the poor and humanitarian relief supplies are some of the few opportunities for accumulation by the powerful. To date, relief operations have been unsuccessful in countering this exploitation.¹⁸

The problem here is that one is not dealing with a temporary emergency involving a normally robust and self-sustaining population which can eventually resume its former life. Relief operations may, to varying degrees, help keep people alive but, at best, this is all they do. The way such programs are conceived and resourced means they are usually unable to tackle the process of resource depletion which is equated with famine.

As with other predatory economic strategies in complex emergencies, humanitarian agencies will find themselves in the unenviable position of negotiating strategies to counter this “asset stripping” with those same individuals and institutions that are actively seeking to impoverish disaster-affected populations. Agencies may face difficulty gaining access to populations, problems winning counterpart approval for programs or outright hostility.

STRATEGY: PROTECT ESSENTIAL ASSETS

ACTION A: ESTIMATE SEQUENCING OF ASSET DEPLETION AND RE-ACCUMULATION

The fewer assets one has, the relatively more precious those assets become. Likewise, the weaker the asset base, the more attractive rationing becomes as an alternative to the disposal of livelihood-sustaining assets. Using available information, relief workers can get rough estimates of the order of disposition of assets. These serve as important early warning indicators as well as informing appropriate project design.

Calculating Internal Rates of Return to Estimate The Order of Asset Sales¹⁹

In this example based on a food crisis in Ghana, although the sale of bullocks and plows would realize the greatest amount of cash, their sales were postponed because of their importance in maintaining productivity, as indicated by their relatively higher rates of return. This type of readily available, easily calculated information can be used to improve the design of interventions to protect the most important of productive assets.

Asset	Number Owned (N)	Selling Price/Unit (a)	Income Per Annum (b)	Rate of Return (c = b/a)	Selling Sequence
Radio	1	6,000	0	0.00	1
Goat	8	4,000	200	0.05	2
Bicycle	1	18,000	3,000	0.17	3
Bullock	2	50,000	15,000	0.30	4
Plow	1	25,000	30,000	1.20	5

Likewise, relief workers can determine the household's priority for asset re-accumulation. For example, after the Nuba of Sudan were driven from their hills and rendered devoid of assets in the early 1990's, their main priority was to rebuild their cattle herds. However, they did not seek assistance purchasing cattle but, rather, asked for goats. Relief workers later learned that the restocking of cattle herds was accomplished by first accumulating goats, selling these for sheep and, later, selling sheep for cattle. Purchasing a goat was therefore akin to purchasing about 1/8 of a cow. Based on this information, goats were provided to key vulnerable households.

ACTION B: KEEP MARKETS OPEN AND COMPETITIVE

In disasters, people's ability to sell assets of all kinds is an important coping mechanism. Functioning markets limit depressed famine prices of assets and facilitate the restocking/re-accumulation of assets better than tightly-controlled markets. For example, livestock herders in southern Somalia have not suffered from the civil conflict as much as others due to their access to cross-border markets in Kenya. The difference is significant. One recent estimate indicates that stocking rates in the Lower Jubba regions are probably no less than 80 percent of pre-1991 levels while agro-pastoralists and sedentary farmers in this region have faced famine.²⁰

To avoid monopolistic exploitation, markets should be kept as open and competitive as disaster conditions permit. Markets in complex emergencies will be imperfect due to excessive risk. Relief organizations should design countervailing market interventions to offset negative market forces. Interventions include the establishment of barter shops or parallel markets to ensure minimum floor prices for assets. While temporary and artificial, these market interventions are important strategies for supporting coping mechanisms aimed at maximizing household food availability.

ACTION C: FACILITATE THE ACQUISITION OF MOBILE ASSETS

Livestock are recognized as one of the most important forms of mobile assets as they are a major form of savings, old age and health insurance and inheritance. Unlike many other forms of rural investment, livestock can be moved quickly when conflict erupts. Innovative emergency livestock programs are geared toward protecting the essential asset base of pastoralists.²¹ For sedentary populations, the challenge of protecting assets is more complicated because any form of unexpected displacement will result in the abandonment of key assets. Cash, however, is portable. Relief workers should weigh the pros and cons of cash-for-work vs. food-for-work programs, especially where food is available on markets. Cash-for-work directly protects assets by precluding their sale. On the other hand, food-for-work can stabilize the terms of trade between food and assets by decreasing the demand for food from the market. Likewise, emergency credit schemes can preclude or delay the sale of assets. Importantly, these types of programs are not linked with the nutritional status of a vulnerable population; rather, they are intended to strengthen the position of the weak *vis a vis* the strong.

**PRINCIPLE FIVE: SOCIAL DYNAMICS INFLUENCE THE SUCCESS OF
RELIEF RESPONSES**

Crises can have wildly varying effects on subsets of communities, and indeed, within households. While this may represent opportunities for some to assume new roles of leadership, it generally means that the vulnerable must further exploit their limited resources simply to survive. The effects of complex emergencies are not gender^B or age neutral. This section will focus on women of reproductive age, but similar analysis should be conducted for a variety of sex and age combinations. Complex emergencies affect men differently than women, the elderly differently than children, the married differently than the unmarried. Importantly, complex emergencies impact children's lives differently than women's lives, yet "women and children" are usually grouped together in sweeping generalizations of vulnerable populations. Women, especially poor women, get caught in a vicious cycle of rising prices, increased threats to weak capital bases and reduced access to natural resources. Children, once innocent bystanders, can become integral forces in conflict.

STRATEGY: INTERVENE TO EASE THE IMPACT OF COMPLEX EMERGENCIES ON CIVILIANS BY ENHANCING THE COPING STRATEGIES OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND THE ELDERLY

ACTION A: UNDERSTAND THAT TRADITIONAL VULNERABLE GROUPS ARE PROACTIVE SURVIVORS

One donor's guiding principles²² state that

within the affected population, first priority will be placed on meeting the needs of children, then women of childbearing age, then other vulnerables including the elderly...Assessments will consider particularly the unique status and problems of children, women and the elderly and recommend means to address their welfare.

While highest priority is placed on providing assistance to women and children, it is with the underlying assumption that these constitute the most helpless victims in complex emergencies. Women and children are often chief providers whose primary responsibility is to manage the delicate trade-off between short-term survival and longer-term self-sufficiency and productivity. In this capacity, they are not helpless victims but, rather, are proactive survivors. Nevertheless, the additional stresses placed on women and children as a result of their expanded productive

^B Gender is a social construct, as opposed to sex, which is a biological determinant. According to Papanek, "Gender differences, based on the social construction of biological sex distinctions, are one of the great "fault lines" of societies -- those marks of difference among categories of persons that govern the allocation of power, authority and resources. But gender differences are not the only such fault line; they operate within a larger matrix of other socially constructed distinctions, such as class, race, ethnicity, religion and nationality, which give them their specific dynamics in a given time and place." ❁

roles in crisis do, indeed, make them a highly vulnerable group. It is critical that relief workers delve into gender and power dynamics to understand the nature and genesis of vulnerability and capacity in complex emergencies.

ACTION B: AVOID FURTHER BURDENING THE VULNERABLE

War directly disrupts the livelihoods of adult men and women. This process has distinct economic, social and political consequences for other members of the household. In addition to direct conscription, war forces men and sometimes women away from their homes as they evade conscription, migrate to safer areas or search for employment.²³ Those who do not leave may find it necessary to hide to avoid conscription or arrest, rendering them unproductive and costly for the remaining family members. Thus, in war zones, conflict is associated with labor shortages at a time of increased productive responsibilities. This profoundly alters the work load of the remaining able-bodied adults, the majority of whom are, by default, women. Relief interventions should be designed so that they, at least, do not further burden the work load of the busiest of disaster survivors. This point should be considered especially in the design of food-for-work or cash-for-work schemes that employ so-called surplus labor or the distribution of cereals without facilitating milling.

ACTION C: DESIGN INTERVENTIONS TO PROTECT AND STRENGTHEN WOMEN'S CAPACITIES TO PROVIDE FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR DEPENDENTS

Women are usually responsible for the collection of common property resources essential for self-sufficiency.²⁴ This may include gathering firewood, producing charcoal, fetching water or collecting wild foods. Given increased disaster-related risks of production failure (e.g. when crops or food stocks are burned or looted), women intensify their exploitation of natural resources to meet basic consumption needs. This dynamic has been observed in most drought emergencies. Unlike drought emergencies, however, complex emergencies are characterized by decreased access to common property resources. Land mines make ventures “off the beaten track” especially dangerous, as in Cambodia or Angola.²⁵ Curfews and other restrictions on movement imposed to protect communities unintentionally hinder the collection of common property resources. Those imposed to intentionally increase reliance on market transactions are deliberate “winner” strategies for accumulation. Regardless of intent, such restrictions undermine a woman’s efforts to provide household essentials at the lowest possible fiscal cost. In these circumstances, donors should support agencies that provide targeted distributions of natural resources (e.g. water, fuel, wild foods, etc.) while facilitating increased public access to common property resources (e.g. demining, negotiating limited cease-fires, road improvement, etc.)

Especially in poorer nations, women form the backbone of the rural economy. Generally, however, women lack adequate access to land, capital, credit, technology and training.²⁶ Availability of productive inputs is likely to be limited to the male partner. His unavailability in

times of crisis further reduces a women's access to key inputs, thereby increasing the risk of production failure. The most direct consequence of a lack of inputs is increased food insecurity in the household, a situation that can be redressed in the very short run by free food distributions. Emergency seeds, tools and credit projects, as well as projects to assist producers to form cooperatives, can help to ease dependency on food aid and increase food security. However, interventions must target the most relevant producers, the majority of whom are likely to be women.

Indirectly, women respond to risks of production failure and the loss of any male-generated cash income by diversifying their economic and consumption strategies. Because women do not have full access to commodity and labor markets even in the best of times, diversification in periods of crisis entails increased reliance on illicit or dangerous economic activities, accelerated exploitation of natural resources and disproportionate reductions of food intake. For example, women are heavily involved in *khat* drug trading in Somalia and control the brewing of *marissa* in the Khartoum displaced camps. Women increase charcoal production in drought-affected areas, despite their awareness of the damaging, long-term effects of such practices. Nutritional surveillance in Bangladesh shows that females more than males tended to reduce their food consumption in times of food shortages.²⁷ In addition to monitoring women's nutritional status, relief agencies should ensure that foodstuffs are available in sufficient quantities to assure adequate consumption by productive women.

Where women do have access to markets, it is often in the form of trading petty goods or supplying basic food services. Women's assets are shallow and are susceptible to destructive economic forces, resulting in the "cannibalization" of their assets in times of disaster. For example, a woman who prepares tea in the market may need to divest her "capital" (a small stock of charcoal, one cooking pot, a kilogram of sugar and tea) to meet the immediate consumption needs of her family. As food input prices increase due to food shortages, such women can be easily driven out of business, resulting in the loss of a key source of cash income.

Gender Differences In Market Access

Differences between male and female access to markets as a coping strategy was studied in the Mandara Mountains of northern Cameroon.²⁸ Of note, 70% of men and only 33% of women relied on markets to cope with regular seasonal hunger. A remarkable 21% of women and only 1% of men reduced their food intake. Even following extremely poor harvests, only 37% of women could rely on commodity or labor markets for relief, compared to 53% of men.

ACTION D: DESIGN EMERGENCY HEALTH INTERVENTIONS KEEPING THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF WOMEN IN MIND

In complex emergencies, women are invariably left with not only additional productive responsibilities but an increased care-taking burden as well. Where formal and informal health systems fail, women are forced to fulfill the added tasks of health care for the household at a

time when their own work burdens have increased markedly and their consumption has fallen dramatically. This has serious ramifications for the vulnerability of the entire household. The careful design of emergency health interventions can greatly ease women's burdens, reduce vulnerability and strengthen the family's capacity to cope.

PRINCIPLE SIX: TIMING IS EVERYTHING - - THE EARLIER THE BETTER

The best way to foster self-sufficiency and productivity in complex emergencies is to intervene early, wisely, appropriately and effectively. Time of exposure to crisis is one critical determinant of a community's eventual capacity to recover. Well-targeted, well-timed interventions enable people to retain essential assets and limit the irreversible effects of extreme food rationing. Despite the importance of early warning, however, only a portion of the work done by experts in disaster preparedness, mitigation and prevention (PMP) is currently operationally relevant to relief workers in complex emergencies. From the late 1980's to the present, PMP specialists have produced a wealth of useful research and practical frameworks that directly address issues of mitigating natural disaster and fostering recovery.²⁹ However, with respect to complex emergencies, there are critical shortcomings with this work, e.g. most disaster relief workers in the field neither see nor use much of this information; PMP work has focused on natural disasters and few attempts have been made to adapt PMP work to complex emergencies, etc.³⁰

Attempts to modify PMP work based on natural disasters to fit the realities of complex emergencies have been inadequate. Issues of PMP in complex emergencies are different from those in natural disasters. Rapid or short onset natural disasters are external (exogenous) shocks. In short onset natural disasters, such as earthquakes or hurricanes, interventions to mitigate disaster aim primarily for rapid recovery to the *status quo ante*. Natural disaster prevention strategies focus on physical construction (e.g. housing designs) and preparedness strategies include the establishment of early warning and response mechanisms, usually within the organizational structure of a recognized government. The greatest achievements of PMP specialists are in this area, especially in Latin America.

In the case of slow onset natural disasters, such as drought, mitigation is achieved through the direct and free distribution of relief commodities while prevention efforts focus on stabilizing production. The shocks associated with slow onset emergencies are inherent (endogenous) and therefore require permanent modification of livelihood practices and patterns. Disaster preparedness includes, for example, the establishment of national and regional early warning systems (EWS), or measures to improve grain storage techniques.

By contrast, complex emergencies are a perverse hybrid of both rapid and slow onset disasters. There are localized rapid onset emergencies nested in widespread, slow onset disasters. The resulting shocks are both inherent (endogenous) and external (exogenous) to the affected community.

The Current State Of PMP

Type of Disaster	Type of Relief/ Mitigation	Type of Preparedness	Type of Prevention
Rapid onset natural disaster	Reconstruction and general distribution of relief items.	Establishment of EWS and response mechanisms at national and regional level.	Improvements to physical structures at local level.
Slow onset natural disaster	General distribution of relief items, e.g. provision of food, water, shelter, or interventions to save livestock.	Establishment of EWS and response mechanisms at national and regional level; improvement of crop storage techniques.	Improvements to cropping and livestock patterns to maximize stability in production.
Complex emergency	Not well established, but includes general distribution of relief items and distribution through market channels, emergency loans and other measures to maximize availability of cash.	Not well established, but includes capacity building and organization of consumer/ producer associations; capacity building at sub-national level.	Not well established, but includes conflict resolution and measures to maximize stability of consumption (ensuring cash availability, maintaining herd sizes, promoting functioning markets).

STRATEGY: DESIGN INTERVENTIONS ACCORDING TO THE CYCLES OF DISASTERS AND DEVELOPMENT***ACTION A: DEVELOP SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EWS INDICATORS***

Natural disaster forecasting has evolved into a technologically-based art. While complex emergencies are often exacerbated by natural disasters, predicting (and therefore acting to prevent) complex emergencies is not possible using existing computer models. “Softer” indicators of social, political and economic change need to be identified and incorporated into early warning models for complex emergencies.

ACTION B: FOCUS ON CONSUMPTION RATHER THAN PRODUCTION STRATEGIES

The initial premise for PMP in complex emergencies should be that, unlike communities stricken by natural disasters, people trying to survive complex emergencies are primarily concerned with stabilizing consumption, not necessarily production. This premise alone can lead to very different PMP interventions. For example, while holding stocks of cereals may be an effective drought mitigation strategy, such stocks may invite attack by armed groups in complex emergencies. In the latter, functioning markets and a ready supply of cash or other forms of mobile assets are far more effective mitigation strategies.

ACTION C: FOCUS ON SUB-NATIONAL LEVELS OF PMP IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

Complex emergencies are almost universally characterized by the collapse of national political systems, precluding reasonable attempts to establish EWS within government structures and requiring considerable more focus on local PMP interventions. Specialists should pay special attention to local (versus national) interventions, e.g. how to perform cost-benefit analysis at the project level or how to strengthen merchant networks to improve local food stocks or how to capitalize on markets for pharmaceuticals.

ACTION D: CONSISTENTLY MONITOR AND EVALUATE PMP INTERVENTIONS IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

A PMP intervention is successful if it either reduces vulnerability or enhances the capacity of a community to withstand the vagaries of complex emergencies over time. Since the concept of PMP interventions in complex emergencies is still evolving, it is imperative that systems of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) be included in all PMP projects. All project proposals should include measurable, realistic and useful indicators of project impact on both vulnerabilities and capacities. In addition, a system of continuous, accurate and timely reporting must be established from the outset and maintained throughout and beyond project life. It is important that M&E systems determine the relationship between PMP interventions and their impact on the probability that relief assistance will be needed in the future. This means that areas must be monitored after the initial crisis has passed.

ACTION E: LINK DEVELOPMENT WITH RELIEF

The linkages between development programs and relief interventions are complex and bi-directional. Development agencies need to incorporate the cycles of disasters into their programs for all countries. This includes estimating the social and economic risks and costs associated with complex emergencies as part of the standard cost-benefit calculus currently used in development project formulation, approval and evaluation. Development organizations also need to focus their efforts on creating the civil institutions necessary to respond locally and effectively to crisis. This includes developing civil institutions that represent and serve women and children. While development interventions currently aim to improve the services available to women and children, they do not necessarily strive to build institutions and organizations that can function when the majority of men are unavailable, such as in times of war.

**PRINCIPLE SEVEN: STRESS MIGRATION UNDERMINES PRODUCTIVITY
AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

Stress migration,^c including displacement, heightens vulnerability in complex emergencies. Aside from military operations that generate sudden migration, most decisions to migrate are made after consideration of alternative options. This takes time. Potential migrants weigh the benefits/risks of staying against the perceived benefits/risks of migrating. People in crisis-affected areas will choose to leave if the expected benefits of migrating are higher than the expected benefits of staying. This equation may be as simple as certain death or extreme suffering in one's home versus less certain death or suffering elsewhere. Interventions to discourage migration must increase the benefit or lower the cost of staying. Often, there exists a window of opportunity to prevent stress migration or crisis-induced displacement before it starts.

STRATEGY: ANALYZE THE SOURCE OF MIGRATION AND MINIMIZE STRESS MIGRATION AND ITS EFFECTS

ACTION A: DETERMINE IF MIGRATION IS BENEFICIAL OR HARMFUL TO THE MOST VULNERABLE

While stress migration from rural areas is generally viewed as detrimental to both sending communities and migrants alike, not all crisis-induced migration is bad. Sometimes, outmigration is essential to reduce competition for limited resources, e.g. in drought-affected areas. The first step in designing interventions to reduce outmigration is to determine if the migration will be beneficial or harmful to the most vulnerable population. If determined harmful, stress migration should be stopped before it starts.

In complex emergencies, migration under duress can grossly undermine self-sufficiency and productivity by reducing the quantity and quality of labor available in the sending household/community. Often, migrants are heads of household or key laborers. Their departure can have particularly deleterious effects on agricultural production. Those of the most vulnerable population who are left behind may be denied water rights, credit, land tenure, labor-sharing arrangements, etc. Remittances are usually negligible and do not offset losses to the sending household, especially among the poorest households. Likewise, stress migration can burden the receiving community by fueling cultural or ethnic conflicts or by contributing to wage-depressing competition in labor markets.

Unseasonable migration raises uncertainty and signals crisis. As migrants are usually male, their absence can mean reduced participation by their households in the community's political processes, depending upon cultural norms and gender roles. Male out-migration can also disrupt the family's access to non-market community resources because the recognized head of household is not present either to make claims or fulfill them, e.g. extended family labor arrangements, intra-clan credit agreements, etc. Further, the effects of stress migration on the

^c The term "stress migration" is used here to refer to any outmigration from a community threatened by or experiencing the effects of a complex emergency.

migrants themselves are rarely considered. Working conditions are associated with extreme poverty and elevated morbidity and mortality among migrants. Obviously, if the migrant can/will not return, all of these effects can become permanent.

ACTION B: UNDERSTAND THE DYNAMICS OF URBAN MIGRATION

Urbanization is a global phenomenon. Growth in urban cities in Africa, for example, is due more to rural-urban migration than to the rate of natural increase among urban residents. In times of conflict, trends towards urbanization can increase, often in the guise of displacement. Urban areas may be perceived to be safer than rural areas because they are more likely to be protected (e.g. Mozambique). They often offer better opportunities in the casual labor market while also serving as bastions of relief operations (e.g. Monrovia).

Relief operations in urban garrison towns^D have different objectives than relief programs in urban areas where movement is unrestricted. In the former, self-sufficiency is often not a realistic aim.

When a city is completely surrounded, for all practical purposes it becomes entirely dependent on outside aid and because the economy inside has only restricted access to new sources of currency, more emphasis must be given to free distribution of relief items than would normally be advocated in other relief situations.³¹

By contrast, in cities where there is relative freedom of movement, self-sufficiency is achievable because of special employment opportunities and desirable because of the strongly negative consequences of dependency in urban settings. Especially in cities, social networks decrease the fiscal and psychic costs of migration by providing, for example, information, a familiar face, transitory accommodation or contacts in the job market. The provision of long-term relief assistance to displaced persons can create additional incentives for rural to urban migration. When relief agencies provide assistance to displaced in cities, this can increase the benefits of migrating, thereby generating further displacement from sending communities or discouraging voluntary repatriation. News of such relief assistance invariably reaches sending communities. It follows then that dependency in urban settings can generate ever-increasing demands for relief assistance.

ACTION C: COUNTER THE DEPENDENCY OF FORCIBLY RELOCATED COMMUNITIES

Thus far, migration and displacement have been presented as a rational response to crisis. Situations involving involuntary migration, forced displacement and forced repatriation do not fit this model. Victims of involuntary relocation are the most vulnerable of all disaster-affected populations. They have the weakest asset bases because they are unable to organize in

^D Garrison towns are those where access or egress has been blocked by occupying or surrounding forces.

advance of the relocation and are often forced to abandon rather than sell assets. Of all forms of migration, involuntary relocation is hardest on self-sufficiency and productivity.

The international relief community tends to respond only after forced displacement has begun. Campaigns of forced migration, however, should be prevented at all costs unless they are motivated by strains on natural resources. Given that the ultimate aim of forced migration is deliberate impoverishment or total marginalization, interventions to counter dependency must be highly strategic. Communities that are relocated usually attempt to reestablish community organization almost immediately after being displaced. These efforts should be identified and nurtured by relief agencies that provide assistance.

Once immediate survival needs are met, relief interventions to provide jobs and other economic opportunities are more important than investing in basic infrastructure in artificial and unsustainable settlements (aside from water, shelter and sanitation programs necessary for public health). Cash earned or allotted, as opposed to food aid, will enable migrants and their families to relocate out of the settlement, either to return to their home communities or somewhere else of their own choosing.

Forcible relocations are often associated with egregious human rights violations and are, therefore, highly political. It can be difficult to distinguish between human rights obligations and humanitarian imperatives. Issues of relief agency responsibility and culpability are particularly sensitive. On-the-ground relief interventions must be accompanied by a concomitant political effort to address human rights issues. This can serve the ends of the humanitarian operation if political interventions ultimately slow the pace of relocation.

ACTION D: PROVIDE JOBS AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STRESS MIGRANTS

In the absence of casual employment to provide food for migrants and their families, recurrent nutritional emergencies will oblige relief agencies to regularly intervene. Migrants need to be involved in some form of economic activity in order to avoid dependency on relief supplies. A balanced approach to providing economic opportunities to displaced populations³² may include:

- Lowering the cost of living by providing short-term assistance with land for gardens for home food production, establishing production or consumption cooperatives or providing free basic social services.
- Subsidizing the cost of living through targeted feeding for small children or the establishment of cheap, effective transportation systems.
- Creating direct job opportunities, bearing in mind that artificial settlements require the creation of artificial jobs.
- Locating development projects near displaced settlements to create demand for labor, and reserving such jobs for displaced persons.

- Promoting micro-enterprise development in the settlements, especially through the establishment of small, community-based, revolving loans.
- Providing access to new markets by facilitating transportation and communication.
- Training displaced persons, especially those with agrarian backgrounds, for urban-oriented employment.

PRINCIPLE EIGHT: POORLY DESIGNED RELIEF INTERVENTIONS UNDERMINE SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND INCREASE VULNERABILITY

In complex emergencies, to be effective (or at least to limit potential harm), relief workers must understand the underlying systems of production, social services, politics and markets because some relief interventions can unintentionally undermine self-sufficiency and increase vulnerability.³³ While this principle is applicable across all sectors of production, service and public goods, this section focuses on examples and possible actions in only one - - health.

While agricultural production is clearly linked to food security, it is less obvious what it means to be self-sufficient in health. In all countries, rich or poor, economic growth and efficient markets do not, on their own, solve basic welfare problems. Direct action is required to sustain an adequate safety net.³⁴ In the poorest countries, especially those torn by civil strife, safety nets are inadequate. Most of the world's poor do not have access to state-funded basic medical services. According to the World Bank, "in low-income countries the poor often lose out in health because public spending in the sector is heavily skewed toward high-cost hospital services that disproportionately benefit better-off urban groups."³⁵

In Sub-Saharan Africa, one-third to one-half of all those who fall ill do not seek care at modern health facilities but rather draw on home remedies, locally purchased drugs, or traditional healers.³⁶ This is due to a combination of a lack of facilities and cultural beliefs about the effectiveness of traditional healers.³⁷ Where the state has provided health facilities, they are often insufficient. According to MSF, "medical facilities are fragile, insufficiently equipped, badly funded, often serviced by personnel of doubtful competence who are generally poorly paid and, as a consequence, not very motivated."³⁸

STRATEGY: ESTABLISH SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS

ACTION A: UNDERSTAND THE UNDERLYING HEALTH SYSTEM

In times of disaster, both formal and informal health systems are badly stressed. Where the state once provided basic health care, services can disappear due to military attack or as national funds are diverted to "war chests". Traders who provide pharmaceuticals to markets may relocate as transportation networks, informal credit systems and other basic infrastructure are

threatened. Health professionals, including local healers, are prime targets for conscription into armed forces, further eroding health systems in rural areas.

Non-western medical systems are damaged when access to wild herbs and roots or physical mobility is restricted by conflict, including land mines. The design of emergency relief health interventions can also undermine informal health systems. Local healers, recruited and trained by NGOs and paid “fair” cash wages, find it more profitable to abandon their private practices. NGO health clinics that provide free curative care may bankrupt community-based healers. The emergency provision of free essential drugs can lower market demand for pharmaceuticals and can have serious long-term ramifications if commercial pharmaceutical traders relocate to other markets. In short, what few health services existed pre-crisis may be destroyed by well-intended emergency health interventions implemented in response to disaster.

This is not to suggest that relief agencies should stop supporting emergency health interventions but, rather, is to encourage the careful design of health programs. Using available market systems can greatly improve the short- and medium-term impact of emergency health interventions by strengthening rather than undermining the key role markets play in health care. To stabilize underlying informal health systems, donors and NGOs should explore monetization of pharmaceuticals.

ACTION B: ABOVE ALL, MEET EMERGENCY NEEDS

Relief workers need to differentiate between the emergency health needs of a community (that are often escalated in times of war, drought, famine, etc., such as rape, abuse, wounds and opportunistic infections) and the longer-term health problems that communities face and address in times of stability. Obviously, in order to minimize mortality and morbidity, emergency relief programs must ensure the provision of adequate food, water, shelter, sanitation. Public health programs that prevent mortality due to measles, diarrhea, and other communicable diseases are equally important.³⁹ This includes community outreach and, in the case of diarrhea disease epidemics, the effective case management of ill patients.⁴⁰

ACTION C: INCLUDE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN EMERGENCY PUBLIC HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

Stress migration, conscription, and war-related death and disability change the structure of households. This shift in the division of labor coincides with the collapse of limited health services and has particularly ill-effects for women. To partially redress this, reproductive health should be considered as an emergency public health issue for at least three reasons.

1. Historic demographic analysis indicates that women reduce their fertility in advance of crisis as a deliberate strategy to decrease maternal and child vulnerability. Emergency family planning services can facilitate this temporary fertility suppression and thereby increase the survivability of key producers.

2. Genocidal campaigns, rape and malnutrition-induced infertility seriously undermine a community's ability to reproduce itself. These same forces also generate a strong demand for children in affected populations (e.g. lineages, clans, tribes) whose very survival as a unit depends upon restoring the size of its population. This creates pressure to increase fertility in highly vulnerable women.
3. Just as land mines keep killing long after the fighting stops, so HIV/AIDS continues to indiscriminately besiege communities. Rape, demobilization of soldiers and migration increases the incidence of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Research indicates that in areas of high STD prevalence, treatment of STDs (other than HIV) can significantly decrease the transmission rate of HIV from infected to uninfected partner.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

With aggressive acts of mankind superseding accidental acts of nature as the primary source of human suffering in disasters, survival of the most vulnerable is threatened now more than ever. In the coming months and years, relief workers can be certain of two facts: first, emergency relief resources will be further limited and, second, demand for disaster relief assistance in complex emergencies will increase. The fundamentals of a livelihoods strategy presented here is grounded in these realities. Productivity and self-sufficiency are important components of any relief organization's response to complex emergencies. There are times when we must save livelihoods in order to save lives.

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