

# INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT

## LINKING RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

by

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This Discussion Paper reports on a workshop on 'Linking Relief and Development', held at IDS, Sussex in March 1994. Development and relief often operate at cross-purposes, with different objectives, cultures and modes of operation. Change which leads to mutual reinforcement of the two is an attractive, even a necessary idea; though problematic in the growing number of cases where emergencies are related to conflict. A simple linear sequence, 'relief-rehabilitation-development' is not appropriate: more dynamic models are required, which recognize the complexity and diversity of livelihood strategies. And in selecting interventions, analysis is needed of cost, sequencing and institutional issues.

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## LINKING RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Linking relief and development is an umbrella term which covers a multitude of ideas: 'the relief-development continuum', 'the interface between relief and development', 'relief-development strategies' and 'famine mitigation'. 'Rehabilitation' is another popular and related subject. A workshop was held at IDS on 28 and 29 March 1994, to investigate these ideas, review experience, examine policy implications and indicate areas for research.<sup>1</sup>

The justification and substantive theme of the workshop were summarized at the outset as follows:

The basic idea is simple and sensible. Emergencies are costly in terms of human life and resources. They are disruptive of development. They demand a long period of rehabilitation. And they have spawned bureaucratic structures, lines of communication and organizational cultures which duplicate development institutions and sometimes cut across them. By the same token, development policy and administration are often insensitive to the risk of drought and to the importance of protecting vulnerable households against risk. If relief and development can be 'linked', so the theory goes, these deficiencies can be overcome. Better 'development' can reduce the need for emergency relief; better 'relief' can contribute to development; and better 'rehabilitation' can ease any remaining transition between the two.

(Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell 1994)

In discussing linking relief and development, the workshop was continually challenged to come to terms with the changing nature of emergencies. There had been a rapid rise in the number and proportion of emergencies related to conflict. And many emergencies were now of a seemingly permanent nature, caused as much by chronic poverty as by unanticipated shocks. There was still scope for linking relief and development in conflict situations, but often in non-traditional ways.

The workshop also insisted on new approaches to understanding drought and other shocks, which gave prominence to ongoing risk management by poor people seeking long term livelihood security. There was a strong feeling that 'relief-rehabilitation-development' could not be considered as a simple, linear sequence: more dynamic models were required, which recognized the complexity and diversity of livelihood strategies.

### 2 SETTING THE SCENE

Participants found that linking relief and development had been forced higher onto the international agenda by the sharply rising trend in the number, scale, complexity and public visibility of emergencies. As already noted, two new factors were especially important: first, the prevalence of conflict-related emergencies (Somalia, Angola, Liberia, former Yugoslavia and many others); and, second, the impact of development failure, which left some countries and communities in almost permanent need of emergency relief. (Ethiopia

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<sup>1</sup> Ten papers were presented, covering conceptual or thematic issues and four case studies: Botswana, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Zambia. The 40 participants included academics, aid administrators and NGO representatives, from Europe, North America and Africa. The workshop was financed by the UK Overseas Development Administration, to whom grateful acknowledgement is made. The authors are members of the Food Security Unit at the IDS. Correspondence should be addressed to Simon Maxwell

and Sudan were obvious cases, but many other countries had large numbers in poverty who needed permanent relief - Zambia was cited as a case in point. (Eele 1994))

Donor expenditure on emergency relief provided one indicator of the growth in emergencies: in the context of stagnation of aid overall, relief expenditure had increased and currently accounted for more than 7 per cent of total official development assistance (Duffield 1994). For some donors, the figure was higher: for UK ODA, for example, the share of emergency assistance had risen from under 2 per cent to nearly 10 per cent between 1982 and 1992; for the World Food Programme, the share had risen to over half of all disbursements. (Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell *ibid.*) Significantly, 80 per cent of WFP emergency aid was for man-made rather than natural disasters. Similar data were reported by NGOs: the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, for example, had seen a trebling of relief funding since the late 1980s, with nearly all the growth accounted for by conflict-related emergencies in Eastern Europe. Many agencies had set up new, dedicated emergency departments: the ODA and the European Union were examples.

National-level data on the costs of emergencies were not generally available. However, the costs were agreed to be high. In Botswana, 20 of the last 30 years had been declared drought years and, during the 1980s, relief had accounted for between 14 per cent and 18 per cent of government expenditure (Buchanan-Smith 1994). In Ethiopia, the cost of the relief operation in 1984/85, largely borne by donors, had amounted to 36 per cent of total government revenue, or 94 per cent of capital expenditure (Maxwell 1994). The cost of macroeconomic dislocation associated with drought was also large and had frequently been neglected: in Zimbabwe, for example, the 1992 drought led directly to a 25 per cent reduction in the volume of manufacturing output, mainly because of shortages of water and electricity, combined with shortages of inputs and reductions in demand (Benson *et al.* 1994).

The picture was not universally gloomy. Mozambique and Ethiopia were two examples of countries where the ending of civil war had made rehabilitation practicable. Rehabilitation after internal war, however, raised many special problems, especially associated with the return and resettlement of displaced people, the rehabilitation of infrastructure and the re-establishment of civil order. Some of these problems were being tackled: USAID, for example, had taken up police training and de-mining through a new Office of Transition Initiatives. Nevertheless, rehabilitation was generally described as an 'unserved limbo' in development (Green 1994).

The picture presented by the many cases considered was of great heterogeneity: countries or communities at different levels of development, affected by different types of shock, sometimes by violence, and at different stages of decline or recovery. Participants found it impossible to generalize across cases as diverse as Somalia and Botswana, Bosnia and Zimbabwe.

The inevitable response to heterogeneity was to try and classify countries and disasters in different ways: by the nature of the disaster (Green 1994), the complexity of the economy (Benson *et al.* 1994) or the interaction between those factors and the policy environment (Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell 1994). One classification distinguished between four different types of emergency (Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell 1994):

- i Rapid onset emergencies, such as earthquakes or floods;
- ii Slow onset emergencies triggered by natural disasters, such as drought;
- iii 'Permanent' emergencies, characterized by widespread structural poverty; and
- iv Complex political emergencies, associated with conflict.

The detailed case studies were all African and were mostly drawn from categories (ii) and (iii), though Mozambique and Ethiopia were both emerging from (iv). This geographical and

topical bias was recognized as leaving many important cases unexplored, particularly those in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, but also the many conflict situations in Africa. The paper by Duffield (1994) was an attempt to fill the gap and indicate some issues for linking relief and development in these neglected areas: he pointed particularly to the prevalence in conflict areas of what he called 'non-conventional social and economic formations', often of a predatory kind, and to the rapidly changing relationship between the UN and the voluntary sector.

When the different kinds of cases were considered, it became apparent that the scope for and importance of linking relief and development also varied. In some cases, linking relief and development was an unnecessary idea: a cyclone in Bangladesh, for example, did not require elaborate linkages, but rather immediate relief and then the resumption and perhaps intensification of normal development programmes (Seaman 1994). In many other cases, NGOs found themselves operating programmes which contained elements of both relief and development, with the balance changing according to circumstance (ACORD 1991). In extreme cases, especially those associated with development failure, the distinction between relief and development was entirely arbitrary and reflected mainly the ideology or the budgetary procedures of donors (Seaman 1994). Angola was cited as a case where relief and development policies seemed to conflict. In areas targeted and accessible for relief, food had been supplied. In other areas, safety nets had been eroded by structural adjustment policies. As a result, the nutritional status of populations covered by relief was higher than that of the poor in non-relief areas (*ibid.*).

Nevertheless, it remained the case that relief and development often operated at cross-purposes. Many participants recognized the picture drawn by Buchanan-Smith (1990): whereas development was long term, evolutionary, and emphasized decentralized and participatory approaches, relief was short-term and tended to be top down, donor dependent, inflexible and hierarchical. Cases were reported where relief had actively undermined development, and others where inappropriate development had caused emergencies.

### 3 DROUGHT AND LIVELIHOOD

The detailed discussion focused mostly on drought in Africa. Here, the most important conclusion was that for poor people, 'relief' and 'development' were inextricably bound together in the complex and day-to-day business of managing risk and securing livelihood. Whereas donor budgets and planning procedures treated the two as conceptually separate and temporally sequential, this was not the case for those actually affected. In the phrase of Mortimore (1989), poor people plan for 'uncertainty as norm'; in Africa in the 1990s, it was suggested that many plan for 'emergency as norm' (Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell 1994).

In reaching this conclusion, the workshop drew on recent research analysing livelihood and coping strategies. Poor people were exposed to multiple risks, some policy-induced (Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell, 1994); and they adopted resource management and livelihood strategies which aimed to reduce vulnerability and sustain capacity in the face of shocks (Longhurst 1994; Davies 1994). Sometimes, these strategies failed and 'individuals, communities, regions and nations experience a shock such that they pass a threshold whereby their behaviour is changed in some significant manner' (Longhurst 1994). There may then be a 'ratchet' effect, leaving people worse off than before the shock (Longhurst *ibid.*): 'coping' strategies, used only in exceptional years, could become 'adaptive' strategies, used more regularly (Davies 1994). In the extreme case, people were subject to 'catastrophic disempowerment' (Green 1994). Of course, the extent to which a given shock had these effects depended on circumstances. It was pointed out that some people or livelihood systems were more 'sensitive' than others, in the sense that they were more susceptible to shocks; and that some were more 'resilient' than others, in the sense that they would recover more quickly (Davies 1994). There was a general feeling that sensitivity was increasing and resilience decreasing in Africa.

At national level, also, shocks could have long term effects. Benson *et al.* (1994) showed that drought shocks affected income distribution and had other long term macroeconomic effects. It was pointed out at the workshop that similar consequences had been noted from terms of trade shocks associated with changes in commodity prices: these often had permanent welfare depressing effects. The impact of falling copper prices on the Zambian economy was a good example.

This conceptualization of shocks represented a challenge to conventional models of linking relief and development. The conventional sequence 'relief-rehabilitation-development' was linear. It applied to situations in which the status quo was disturbed by a shock, necessitating relief; but ones also in which rehabilitation could re-establish the status quo ante and enable development to begin again. The evidence presented to the workshop was not consistent with this model. There was not necessarily a 'return to normal' after a disaster. Sometimes crises could have positive effects in the long term, like the improved position of women in Eritrea which accompanied the liberation struggle. More often, shocks were likely to deplete assets, exacerbate reliance on erosive coping strategies and contribute to destitution and inequality. It was not a matter then of looking for 'sequences' and 'cycles', but rather for 'ratchets' and 'spirals'. Some argued that in turbulent situations, even a spiral model of change had limited utility. These situations required an approach based on identifying (with local participation as far as possible) the most appropriate form of assistance for these people in this particular context, rather than one defined by externally determined categories of disaster or type of intervention.

#### **4 LINKING RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT**

Taking as its starting point the idea of increasing capacities and reducing vulnerability, the workshop considered how development models should be modified to take account of the risk of adverse shocks. In so doing, it effectively considered proposals for famine mitigation. Examples were drawn from case study countries, but also from India and Bangladesh, as well as other countries in Africa (Longhurst 1994). The bias was again to countries affected by drought, rather than by conflict.

There was no shortage of good ideas: reinforcing a poverty focus in national planning; redirecting resources to low potential areas (Ethiopia); 'drought-proofing' the agricultural sector with research into drought-resistant crops and investment in irrigation and agricultural diversification (India and Botswana); market development and market stabilization, to reduce price shocks (Zambia); public works to develop road and other infrastructure (Mozambique); stabilization funds at national level. The unifying themes were that more attention should be paid to providing poor people with the means to maintain secure and sustainable non-erosive livelihoods; and to stabilising national and local economies.

It was surprising that planners did not take more account of the possibility of shocks. Benson *et al.* (1994), for example, showed that the risk of drought had not been considered explicitly in structural adjustment programmes in Africa: in Zimbabwe, political and institutional constraints to liberalization had been considered as risks associated with structural adjustment, but drought had not. Yet, in a study of crises forcing the adoption of IMF stabilization programmes in Africa, drought or other natural disasters had been 'an important, perhaps dominant' factor in over one third (Killick and Malik 1991). The impact of taxation had also rarely been studied, although Botswana has used a policy of tax holidays at abattoirs during drought to encourage off-take (Buchanan-Smith 1994).

Following this discussion, the workshop considered ways in which relief could be planned taking development principles into account and implemented so as to contribute more directly to long term development. A large change was required here, since top-down and centrally-managed relief programmes had often undermined locally-planned and bottom-up development (Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell 1994). Yet there were, again, many good ideas:



employment-based safety nets, to offer jobs rather than relief (Botswana, Ethiopia); accelerated public investment programmes (India); improvement of economic opportunities in drought through tent/pallet making and sales of dried meat to feeding programmes (Port Sudan, Mali); fodder or livestock programmes to support markets (India, Sudan); child-care and nutrition programmes through existing clinics (Zambia, Botswana); even Balance of Payments support to stabilize the macroeconomy (Southern Africa in 1992). A recurrent theme was that successful relief programmes strengthened markets and supported local institutions.

Finally, despite its orphan status, rehabilitation could also boast a substantial tool box. Green (1994) presented a programme check-list which included transport home, food until harvest, input supply, secure access to land, rehabilitation of health, water and education, and restoration of physical infrastructure and market access. Other ideas included loans for working capital, restocking of shops, mine clearance and national institutional development. In the best cases, these were again designed to strengthen indigenous institutional capacity.

## **5 ISSUES IN LINKING RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT**

Cutting across the many practical suggestions, were five main issues:

### **5.1 CONFLICT-RELATED EMERGENCIES**

First, it was emphasized throughout that conflict situations involved a distinct set of problems for linking relief and development. The political economy of complex emergencies, including the violent targeting of humanitarian relief and aid workers, and the role of relief in sustaining combat without resolving it, made it inappropriate to apply similar approaches to conflict as to drought. As Duffield (1994) showed, humanitarian relief had increasingly been accompanied by military protection, with NGOs employing armed guards and the UN pursuing active forms of military support for humanitarian relief since the Gulf War. These developments had in turn compromised the impartiality and safety of aid workers, and had revealed the urgent need for a new ethics to guide conflict interventions.

Nevertheless, the experience of NGOs involved in relief in conflict situations did provide some examples of linking relief and development, especially where relief organizations tried to work with local organizations and empower local people. In Somalia, for example, the UN had appeared to assume that there was no indigenous institutional base. Some NGOs, on the other hand, had explicitly set out to work with local groups, for example in hospitals, and thereby sustain and build capacity for the longer term (Seaman 1994).

There was also more scope for linking relief and development if the scope of relief itself could be broadened. In many conflict situations, relief was restricted to life-sustaining services in health, nutrition, shelter, protection and water/sanitation (the so-called 'five essentials'). New initiatives were concerned with social institutions, psychological health, legitimate political formations and demilitarization. Both approaches offered scope for relief and development linkages, but the latter set offered greater opportunities.

### **5.2 COSTS AND TRADE-OFFS**

Participants recognized that linking relief and development was not cost-free and could not necessarily be achieved without cost to other development objectives. Two examples were mainly discussed: the idea of an employment-based safety net and the frequent recommendation to redirect resources from high potential to low potential areas. In neither case had the opportunity costs of these initiatives been systematically considered.

Thus, employment-based safety nets (EBSN) were attractive to policymakers because they could absorb labour thought to be released from agriculture during drought and contribute to building assets which would reduce vulnerability in the future. Though some disputed that drought caused 'enforced idleness' (Green 1994), and others worried that EBSN would create a new class of landless labourers, public works had been used successfully as drought relief in many countries, including India (Templer and Payne 1994), Botswana (Buchanan-Smith 1994) and Zambia (Eele 1994). Yet, as Maxwell (1994) argued for Ethiopia, EBSN entailed incremental costs over and above relief, estimated to be at least 40 per cent of the wage costs, and in addition beneficiaries had to be paid enough to cover the additional calorie cost of hard, physical work. Furthermore, productivity was often low on EBSN, the quality of output doubtful and the enterprise especially demanding for women with child-care and domestic responsibilities (Buchanan-Smith 1994). The costs remained relatively low compared to traditional public works, but the net benefit should not be taken for granted.

Similarly, strategies for linking relief and development often recommended greater investment in low potential areas, in order to reduce the sensitivity and increase the resilience of vulnerable livelihood systems. Yet, the opportunity cost was investment in high potential areas, which by definition would be higher. Government strategy was sometimes to encourage migration out of low potential areas rather than invest in them. So long as people stayed in low potential areas, the saving on relief costs might change the calculation, but as Maxwell (1994) showed with a worked example for Ethiopia, this was again an empirical question: if the cost of 'drought-proofing' were high or drought itself infrequent, the additional investment might not be justified in pure cost-benefit terms. Of course, there were other reasons for redirecting investment to low potential areas, including inter-regional equity; and sometimes low potential areas could be transformed into high potential areas with the right investment in infrastructure. However, the point remained, that the costs and trade-offs should be made explicit.

Other examples cited included a possible trade-off between faster growth of agricultural output and greater stability of output and farm income, and a similar trade off for national GDP. It was also pointed out that keeping animals alive during a drought, to protect short term entitlement, might entail long term environmental costs in the form of over-grazing. In some of the case study countries, there was a trade-off in staff time between development and relief (Maxwell 1994, Buchanan-Smith 1994). One of the costs of integrating relief and development under the same institutional umbrella was that development staff could be diverted into relief: this had happened in Botswana (Buchanan-Smith *ibid.*).

### 5.3 THE PACE AND SEQUENCING OF RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT LINKAGES

The discussion of country types and classifications had already suggested that linking relief and development strategies needed to be situation specific. As Maxwell (1994) pointed out: 'what is feasible in Botswana, which is peaceful, well-administered and relatively rich, may not be feasible in Southern Sudan, which has none of these attributes'. The workshop was very aware of the constraints to successful relief/development linkages in many situations.

Four principles were suggested for the appropriate sequencing of linking relief and development (Maxwell 1994): first, the top priority should be to see that a basic, relief safety net was operational throughout the country; secondly, a bottom-up process was required, to produce appropriate plans through regional and district-level food security analysis and planning; thirdly, a process of experimentation was called for, with many pilot projects, intensive evaluation and sharing of ideas; and, finally, a high priority should be given to improved functioning of markets, with minimal administrative intervention.

## 5.4 STATE VERSUS CIVIL SOCIETY

A related point had to do with the balance between state and non-state institutions in linking relief and development, including particularly the NGOs. Participants noted again how rapidly the scope of NGOs had grown, especially in African countries with weak states: NGOs had often been pushed (illegitimately some thought) to assume responsibilities for social security or service provision that properly belonged to the state. This role was described as being a 'holding operation' until longer-term development programmes were possible. NGOs had also been sucked into conflict situations. In Georgia, for example, NGOs were said to be feeding 40 per cent of the population.

There seemed to be competing paradigms for the role of NGOs. In one set of cases (Zambia being the best example), governments had explicitly set out to strengthen local NGOs during drought, as channels for relief and rehabilitation activities (Eele 1994). In other cases (Mozambique, Ethiopia), international NGOs were regarded as having been too powerful, and the current priority was to restrict their scope and persuade them to work more closely with the state (Green 1994; Maxwell 1994). In Botswana, where government and national finances were strong, NGOs had played a very small role in drought relief (Buchanan-Smith 1994).

The debate was not resolved, though it was recognized that the cases were very different. In Zambia, already weak state capacity had been undermined by political influence during the First and Second Republics, so that strengthening alternative channels was a valid strategy: the Programme for the Prevention of Malnutrition was set up as a partnership between government, donors and NGOs, and eventually spawned a new, non-governmental institution to continue its work, the Programme Against Malnutrition. In Ethiopia, by contrast, NGOs had been the channel for over 80 per cent of relief during emergencies in the 1980s, reflecting donor distrust of the Mengistu regime. New aid relationships following the change of government in 1991 required a better balance and a stronger co-ordinating role for government.

As a general principle, it was suggested that 'the state should do what others cannot'. It was also proposed that central units like the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission should aim to become less implementing agencies and resource controllers, more mobilising and co-ordinating agencies and resource monitors (Maxwell 1994). NGOs might properly concentrate on their traditional strengths: advocacy, training, capacity building and leverage.

## 5.5 INSTITUTIONS AND POLITICS

Institutional and political questions featured strongly in discussions at the workshop. There were cases of good and bad practice in linking relief and development. On the one hand, there were positive examples, such as India, or the Drought Relief Programme in Botswana (Buchanan-Smith 1994), although even this was politicized. On the other hand, there were many obstacles and constraints, which went beyond simple 'bad practice'. These derived from the different conceptual models (Maxwell 1994), the different mind-set of relief and development practitioners (Longhurst 1994), or high politics associated with the political economy of drought (Davies 1994; Buchanan-Smith 1994).

The institutional problems were reviewed by Davies who identified a dozen issues, including over-centralization of planning and resources, institutional amnesia, lack of synchronization between domestic and international relief systems and lack of consultation with vulnerable people. Other factors included the weakness of local government (Eele 1994, Maxwell 1994). A practical example of institutional amnesia was not holding economic planning data for sufficiently long periods to identify the probability and impact of drought.

To begin to resolve institutional problems, Green (1994) recommended an approach of 'iterative flexibility', building strategic capacity and provincial and district capacity and reversing past donor decapacitation of the government and the domestic social sector. Davies (1994) also produced a practical agenda, focusing on reinforcement of existing economically and environmentally sustainable local strategies in the context of government decentralization. To complement this perspective, Benson *et al.*'s case study showed that attention was also needed to macroeconomic levers. And at the supra-national level, the example of Southern Africa in 1992 showed how valuable regional coordination could be. Though other cases (like IGADD) had been less successful, a regional food security fund was being considered in Southern Africa, to build on SADC's success in drought management in 1992.

The analysis of institutional factors had much to say about the role of aid donors. The most successful cases of linking relief and development appeared to be those with least donor involvement (India, Botswana). Within donor agencies, the different procedures, budgets and organizational cultures of relief and development all acted as obstacles to linking them. It was pointed out that the resources needed for linking relief and development were often especially hard to obtain: food aid was much more readily available, for example, than cash for EBSN, or even tools and seeds for rehabilitation.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Linking relief and development was described at the outset of the workshop as 'an attractive, even a necessary idea' (Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell 1994). At the end of the workshop, this statement had to be qualified. There were some cases where linking relief and development was not a high priority and in many conflict situations it was difficult to bring about. Nevertheless, the disjuncture between relief and development was wide, growing and damaging: linking relief and development was a worthwhile objective.

The biggest fault-line concerned conflict, which many felt had come to dominate emergency situations. Beyond that, the workshop concluded that linear 'relief-rehabilitation-development' models were inappropriate. It insisted strongly on alternative models which recognized the erosive effect of repeated shocks and the need for vulnerable households to plan for uncertainty, if not emergency, as norm. Strategies for linking relief and development should aim to reduce sensitivity to shocks and increase resilience.

The toolbox was large and varied: investment in low potential areas, 'drought-proofing' of farming systems, economic opportunities for local people in relief programmes, employment-based safety nets, innovative approaches to rehabilitation, and many others. At the same time, there were costs and trade-offs to be assessed. The workshop did not consider all these ideas to be equally attractive, and called for more detailed analysis of choices.

Furthermore, the practicality of individual components for linking relief and development and their design was highly situation specific. In some circumstances, a minimal safety net operated by NGOs might be appropriate; in others, a wider programme implemented by strengthened government agencies. In general, the workshop was sympathetic to NGOs, but urged them to contribute wherever possible to re-building and sustaining local community and government capacity. This stricture applied also to conflict situations.

The workshop recognized a multitude of institutional barriers to effective linking of relief and development, many located in donor agencies. An approach of 'iterative flexibility' was recommended to build strategic planning and implementation capacity in developing countries.

Finally, the workshop called for more analysis of the issues at the interface between relief and development, particularly:

- i the perceptions of the people involved in relief and development programmes, the so-called 'beneficiaries', of the respective merits and problems of different programmes;
- ii relief management in conflict and immediate post-conflict situations, including ways of facilitating the eventual transition to peace and reconstruction;
- iii costs and trade-offs inherent in measures to link relief and development, both famine mitigation and development-oriented relief;
- iv institutional constraints to linking relief and development, especially among donors.

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