

CONFLICT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION: SOCIAL PROTECTION IN SITUATIONS OF VIOLENT CONFLICT AND ITS AFTERMATH

Theme paper 5

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Content

1	Introduction	2
2	Social protection in contexts of violent insecurity	6
3	Social protection in 'post-conflict' and transitional states	12
4	Conclusions	18
5	Bibliography	19

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose, scope and definitions

The purpose of this paper is to supplement and inform the DfID social protection position paper in relation to situations of armed conflict or violent insecurity. It considers in particular the role of social protection in the aftermath of war, in what are commonly referred to (sometimes misleadingly) as ‘post-conflict’ contexts.

This can be seen as part of a wider discussion about people’s ability to withstand and recover from severe shocks. Apart from the effects of conflict, this includes the human impact of natural hazards of various kinds, including drought; and the impact on the household of severe macro-economic shocks, including the collapse of national economies or of commodity prices in world markets. The human impact of such events may be catastrophic, resulting in the kinds of acute deprivation that are the subject of international humanitarian responses. For many, these ‘extraordinary’ events or processes are in fact a recurrent feature of life. Together with the gradual erosion of livelihoods that may already be marginal, such events contribute to levels of impoverishment that lead to chronic vulnerability. One of the results is the perpetuation of levels of infant and maternal mortality that are chronically high, a concern central to the Millennium Development Goals. In the case of chronically conflict-affected areas, what would otherwise be considered abnormally high mortality rates and levels of acute malnutrition may have become the norm rather the exception – and so may not be accorded the priority they deserve.

The concept of *social protection* implies some prior notion of social (*in*)*security* – in other words, it demands some understanding of the range of risks against which people are said to require protection. Definitions of social protection tend to centre on economic risks, particularly those relating to loss of income¹. Yet loss of income or wage earning opportunities and other economic shocks are part of a range of factors that bear on the security of the family, particularly in conflict situations. The concept of *human security* – ‘freedom from fear and freedom from want’ – captures this idea, though in itself it is too broad and ill-defined to provide a conceptual basis for social protection. Human security demands a concept of protection that encompasses threats of violence and persecution, coercion and deliberate deprivation, as well as protection against loss of entitlement and economic vicissitudes. Fear and want are often closely linked, most obviously in cases of forced displacement. In situations of violent insecurity, and in the aftermath of conflict, *social protection* must be understood in relation to this wider domain of risk.

For the purposes of this paper, social protection is understood to involve acts and measures designed to protect people against socially unacceptable levels of risk and deprivation (adapted from Conway *et al.*, 2000). This paper focuses on the welfare aspect of social protection, rather than the socially ‘transformative’ aspects. It considers in particular measures designed to ensure people’s sustained access to basic needs (universally or socially defined) in unstable or disrupted environments, including adequate food and water, clothing, health care and housing; and for children, access to primary education. Some of the diverse means of achieving are considered below, ranging from targeted or general transfers (e.g. of cash, food), and provision of free or subsidised services, to public works and other employment schemes, and income or livelihood support schemes more generally. The question of formal and non-formal roles and responsibilities for social protection is discussed in relation to conflict and post-conflict environments. Finally, the paper considers the relationship between social protection measures and post-conflict transition and recovery.

¹ See for example Holzmann, R. and Jorgensen, S. (1999). For a range of definitions, see main paper.

Given the focus on conflict-related forms of insecurity and the response to them, some further working definitions are needed here.

- ‘Violent insecurity’ is used here as an umbrella term to describe all situations involving levels of violence or coercion that significantly affect the security of the civilian population (or parts of it) in the area concerned. This may be a localised phenomenon or more extensive, and may be the result of armed conflict, state repression, criminal activity or general lawlessness.
- ‘Conflict’ is used here as shorthand for any situation involving extensive and protracted violent conflict between competing parties. It constitutes one form of violent insecurity.
- ‘War’ and ‘armed conflict’ are used more specifically, to denote situations to which the provisions of international humanitarian law (IHL) apply.² These involve a certain level of armed hostilities between a state and other state(s); between a state and organised faction(s) within the state; or between such factions.

A situation described as ‘post-war’ or ‘post-conflict’ may yet involve a high degree of violent insecurity. Experience suggests that a simple distinction between ‘conflict’ and ‘post-conflict’ (or, *pace* Tolstoy, between ‘war’ and ‘peace’) cuts across the reality of differential insecurity that characterises many of the situations under discussion. It is this reality that largely determines both the need for social protection and the conditions under which it is provided.

The paper considers the following questions in particular:

1.1.1 Social protection during conflict

- What constitutes ‘social insecurity’ and ‘social protection’ in conflict situations?
- What forms of social protection are possible in the course of armed conflict?
- To what extent is the social protection agenda in these contexts necessarily a basic *welfare* agenda, and what are its key constituents?
- What is the role of non-state (civil society) actors in social protection? To what extent does the international humanitarian apparatus fulfil the necessary role of basic service and commodity provision?

1.1.2 Social protection in the aftermath of conflict

- What characterises social insecurity in post-conflict situations? What does this imply for social protection strategies?
- What role does social protection play in a post-conflict recovery process? How does it relate to economic recovery more broadly?
- What are the implications for the role of the governing authorities?

The rest of the paper attempts to sketch the likely answers to these questions, or to suggest the range of options within which the answers might lie, based on a (non-exhaustive) review of existing research and other evidence.

² Whether a situation constitutes ‘armed conflict’ such that it is covered by the provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 or of the Additional Protocols of 1977 depends on whether it involves a certain (undefined) level and intensity of violence. Such situations are distinguished in international humanitarian law from ‘internal disturbances and tensions’, including riots and situations involving sporadic and isolated acts of violence (Protocol II, Art. 1.2). ‘War’ itself has no legal definition.

1.2 Applying the concept of social protection to contexts of violent insecurity and the aftermath of war

The concept of social protection implies a notion of security that, as commonly understood, refers to security of income and livelihood – both in the sense of their adequacy to meet basic needs, and resilience to shocks. When applied to conflict situations or violently insecure environments, this concept needs some adaptation. Indeed, its value as an organising concept may be limited in such circumstances, where the language of ‘crisis’ and relief assistance, and of emergency service provision, implies a generalised and catastrophic loss of coping capacity affecting whole communities. In the most extreme cases of conflict-related crisis, such as Rwanda in 1994 or Darfur today, where the primary concern is with protection from the threat of mass killings, rape, ‘ethnic cleansing’ and forced displacement – and the consequent risk of starvation and epidemic – social protection takes on a different connotation again. Even in less extreme circumstances, people are exposed to multiple forms of insecurity, and that insecurity may cut across the social spectrum in the areas affected.³

There are several aspects to this. First, as noted above, conflict creates a range of risks that extends well beyond the economic. Vulnerability to threats of violence and coercion themselves arguably forms a necessary part of the social protection agenda, especially where that vulnerability is itself a function of poverty and marginalisation. Second, such threats have a significant bearing on people’s ability to meet their subsistence needs. Conflict impoverishes people in both the short and the longer term, and commonly prevents people from pursuing their normal livelihoods: fields and markets may become inaccessible, normal trade patterns are disrupted, employment opportunities vanish, assets are lost, and so on.⁴ Third, the society against which social security is judged is often in turmoil. Communities and families are torn apart, separated, even at war with each other. This damage to the social fabric results in generalised ‘social insecurity’ of the kind seen in the Balkans recent years, in which social exclusion may take extreme forms such as forced ethnic separation. Against this backdrop, a narrow definition of social protection has limited application.

Given the persistence of such effects in the aftermath of war this caveat must be extended to the ‘post-conflict’ period as well. The social protection agenda has to take account of conflict-related forms of insecurity; and must be seen as part of a wider human security agenda that encompasses protection from intimidation and coercion.

Some have analysed the causes and effects of conflict in terms of the loss *social capital* and the consequent breakdown of *social cohesion*. It is argued that building social capital is a prerequisite both of conflict prevention and of social and economic development (Colletta & Cullen, 2000:4). Social capital is understood as having roughly two dimensions: a ‘horizontal’ dimension representing the bonds that unite people within and between different social groups, and a ‘vertical’ dimension representing the relationship between state, markets and laws on the one hand, and communities and individuals on the other. The extent of social cohesion is seen primarily as a function of these two factors. On the horizontal axis, *trust* in particular is seen as a key determinant of social cohesion (Fukuyama, 1995) and an extreme loss of trust is seen as characteristic of conflict and its aftermath. The corollary is that re-establishing trust in various forms of relationship is essential to the process of recovery.

³ In this regard, it should be noted that the relatively wealthier may have more, and better, flight options than poorer people; and more generally, that wealth can in some circumstances buy protection.

⁴ These propositions need to be tested in each case. As Longley and Christopolos point out (2004), the extent of disruption may be less than expected in any given context.

Nee (1996, pp.21-3) writes from personal experience in Cambodia:

In the Khmer Rouge time trust was systematically destroyed. A friend would be asked to spy upon a friend... As trust was broken we reached a time when we could think only of ourselves and our great needs; the dignity and pride in our identity, formerly an important part of our lives, entirely disappeared.'

There is clearly a relationship between social protection and social capital/cohesion. Broadly speaking, a state that has high levels of social cohesion in the sense described above will have low levels of social exclusion, will be relatively equitable, and will provide high levels of access and opportunity. The need for social protection will be relatively less, and the climate for providing it relatively favourable. Conversely, in the situations under consideration here, with often very low levels of social cohesion, the need for protection is likely to be high but the conditions for providing may be very unfavourable. Devereux (2003:5) describes this as the 'Catch 22 of social protection'.

This paper considers those situations in which the threats posed to human security are often generalised threats. It is important to distinguish:

1. Systems designed to help vulnerable individuals /households within a community cope with loss of income or other shocks.
2. Systems designed to assist whole populations, communities or groups within them survive and recover from catastrophic co-variant shocks

In some cases, the social protection agenda in conflict or transitional situations may include the restoration of access to basic commodities and services for whole communities. This is not to ignore the issue of specific vulnerabilities, but to recognise that the relevant 'unit of analysis' in thinking about social protection may need to be bigger than the individual or household – and that access to services, in particular, depends on there being services to access.

2 Social protection in contexts of violent insecurity

2.1 Forms and determinants of conflict-related human insecurity

The concern here is with people's ability to withstand the often extreme forms of risk and vulnerability related to violent insecurity. There are two main dimensions to this:

(i) Vulnerability to relatively acute shocks, e.g. a sudden mass displacement of people fleeing actual or anticipated violence. Apart from the immediate effects of violence and terror (death, injury, trauma, flight), the symptoms may include loss of assets (including land), temporary loss of access to essential commodities and services, increased risk of epidemic disease, disruption or loss of livelihoods, and a short to medium-term crisis of food security. There may also be a high incidence of psycho-social trauma.

(ii) Vulnerability to the effects of prolonged crisis, in the form of chronic conflict and displacement extending over many years.⁵ This may be precipitated by and interspersed with sudden shocks followed by periods, not necessarily of recovery, but of adaptation to changed circumstances. Chronic food insecurity, nutritional deficits and associated increases in mortality and morbidity may all be symptoms. Education and health services are likely to be massively disrupted in the affected regions. Livelihoods are adapted and may incorporate unsustainable survival strategies. Dependency on external assistance (food aid or other) is often high, and chronic.

Both forms of vulnerability are likely entail high levels of extreme impoverishment. The state itself is often weak in such circumstances and its capacity to provide services drastically curtailed or non-existent. Depending on the precipitating event(s), infrastructure (locally, nationally) may be largely destroyed, and large numbers displaced from their homes. As the cases of Angola and the DR Congo show, prolonged internal displacement can have catastrophic effects on people's survival chances (Roberts *et al.*, 2003). In some cases (e.g. Afghanistan, Sudan), conflict and environmental factors may combine to compound people's vulnerability. The Kuchi in Afghanistan are one example of a group for whom the combined effects of war and drought made a previously viable livelihood untenable.

More generally, there are a number of demographic effects that typically result from the effects of armed conflict. In particular, an increase in numbers of female-headed households and of orphaned children, as well as the loss of male labour capacity, is common. These factors have a direct bearing on household dependency ratios, on form of vulnerability, and on the social protection agenda generally.

In short, the need for protection in a broader sense relates both to the threat of violence and coercion, and to the consequences of these, including acute impoverishment and social exclusion. The determinants of social insecurity at a time of major social upheaval range well beyond income poverty, and may have as much to do with (say) ethnicity as with economics.

The issue of civil status and identity can have a major bearing on social security. A loss or alteration of status is a common characteristic of people who have been displaced from their homes. This is often compounded by lost or contested property rights. Lost or destroyed identity cards may make accessing services difficult, and may render the individuals concerned vulnerable to harassment by the security services. Many of the most vulnerable lack full citizenship rights, and may even be stateless (as for example the

⁵ On the social impact of war, see Lewis, N. in Harris (1999). On the more general cost of armed conflict, see paper by Harris in the same collection.

Rohingyas in Burma). This has clear implications for social protection strategies: lack of status or inferior status not only limits opportunity and can result in high degrees of vulnerability and discrimination.

2.2 Defining responsibilities for social protection during conflict

At the national and sub-national level, the responsibilities of the state and its institutions may be more or less clearly defined in legal and policy terms. The formal legal and normative framework for social protection in conflict-related situations consists of elements of international law (human rights law, international humanitarian law, refugee law); elements of national constitutional, statutory and common law; and existing national or sub-national policy and regulatory frameworks. To the list of formally-defined responsibilities should be added the formal mandates of various international bodies, including for example the statute of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and that of the UN Relief and Works Association in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

While some of these provisions give rise to specific entitlements to welfare assistance, these may be difficult or impossible to enforce in the situations in question. Moreover, the normative provisions are limited. There is, for example, no universal legal entitlement to relief assistance. The Geneva Conventions make specific provision in the case of armed conflict, though even here the duty to allow provision of relief by third parties is limited and permission for particular relief actions is generally made conditional on the consent of the warring parties.⁶ The right to life provision in Article 6 of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (as interpreted by the UN Human Rights Committee), together with Articles 11 and 12 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, provide some legal underpinning for a right to welfare assistance, while not in themselves creating individual entitlements.⁷

While armed conflict may cause the cessation of public services, governments remain responsible for the welfare of the civilian population, and this may be recognised in various ways. The Government of Sri Lanka, for example, maintained its administrative presence and at least vestigial functions in the contested northern areas of the country. Perhaps more importantly, it recognised the obligation to allow relief supplies to be transported across battle lines, though it was often accused of 'rationing' the right to life by unreasonably refusing permission for essential supplies.

Other rules of international humanitarian law are relevant here. Starvation as a method of war is forbidden. So too is the destruction of 'objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population', including crops, livestock and drinking water sources, as well as essential medical supplies.⁸ In other words, the obligation to ensure the welfare of the civilian population relates not just to the provision of services, but to the methods used to prosecute war itself. The principle of distinction between civil and military targets is central to this.

⁶ See, for example, Additional Protocol II of 1977, article 18. The general rule is that consent is not to be withheld.

⁷ Darcy (1997). Under Article 11 of the ICESCR, States Parties 'recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living ... including adequate food, clothing and housing...'. Article 12 recognizes 'the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health...'. While the obligation on the state is to take steps 'to the maximum of its available resources', and through international cooperation, to achieve the progressive fulfillment of these rights, the rights themselves are not conditional.

⁸ See in particular 1977 Additional Protocol II, Art.14

2.3 Roles and approaches to social protection

Much of the effective role of social protection during conflict is played by non-formal actors. Civil society institutions – including, for example, the church, mosque or temple – often play a central role in providing for those who have lost the means to support themselves. In insecure environments, where government services may have ceased, such bodies may provide an essential welfare and information service. More generally, communities themselves, particularly through extended family networks, provide support for the most vulnerable – though their ability to do so may be limited when insecurity is a generalised phenomenon, and where protracted crisis has eroded income and assets across the board. Remittances and voluntary donations by communities in exile may be significant (though generally unquantified) factors in supporting those affected.⁹ The hosting of internally displaced populations by neighbouring communities is another common manifestation of non-formal support, and one that may impose a severe burden on the host community itself.

As Dean (2004) points out, an overemphasis on the role and responsibility of the state for welfare provision – and the stressing of *contractarian* over *solidarity* aspects of welfare responsibility – risks losing sight of the essential fact of social interdependence. This is all the more important in the kinds of situation under consideration here. This does not, of course, mean that notions of rights and welfare entitlements cease to be relevant – though their relevance is to some extent conditioned by circumstance in each case. Rather, it should alert us to the reality that non-formal mechanisms for social protection are likely to bear a particularly heavy burden, especially where conflict and political instability have caused a breakdown of formal (state/governmental) mechanisms, or even led to policies of deliberate exclusion. Support to non-formal mechanisms may indeed be one of the more effective forms of intervention for social protection – allowing that their capacity and scope will be limited, even where they have relatively greater scope for operating in conditions of prevailing insecurity.

How then is this burden shared? In some cases, it is not: people may simply not have access to assistance in the form of food distributions, income support, free health care or other essential services. This may be the result of a generalised loss of entitlement, perhaps due to displacement, compounded by the breakdown both of state-run services and of normal community support mechanisms. The breakdown of state-provided services may be taken as the trigger for international humanitarian service provision: in North Korea, for example, the dramatic decline in the late 1990s of food supplies going through the public distribution service (on which there was a high level of dependency) was a key determinant of the decision to provide massive international food aid. A similar catastrophic result was predicted by some before the invasion of Iraq by the US and its allies in 2003.

National or local non-governmental agencies may play a more or less significant role in filling the services gap. These may be community-based, a direct expression of social solidarity, or more centralised, as with the national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In either case, they are likely to be heavily dependent on voluntary contributions and voluntary labour, both of which may be hard to secure in the context of violent conflict. They may also be politicised and partial in their provision of assistance: who gets help may be a matter of political allegiance, ethnicity or religion. Equally, it may be a matter of which areas are safely accessible by member of a certain group in the fractured environment of armed conflict.

⁹ It cannot be assumed, in any given context, that remittances are received by or benefit poorer families (Nicholas Haan, FAO Somalia, personal communication, 30 July 2004). This is a generally under-researched area, and one on which ODI/HPG is considering a collaborative research initiative for 2005.

Such CBOs and NGOs may receive international support, but the partnership mode of international engagement is more a feature of natural disasters than complex political emergencies – in part because of the issues of neutrality and impartiality alluded to above. For the same reason, the ‘substitutory’ mode of service provision in conflict-affected areas – establishing health care, food distribution and other mechanisms that are independent of government structures – is characteristic of international humanitarian responses, particularly where the government in question is one of belligerents. In practice, the consent of the belligerents is essential to the establishment of such services, and the negotiation of secure access for service provision may be on a more or less formal basis (as for example with Operation Lifeline Sudan) or on an *ad hoc* basis.

The issue of the responsibility of belligerents for the welfare of those living in the territory they control is thrown into sharp relief when considering the role of third-party humanitarian actors. Formal (legal, political) responsibility does not change; yet one line of criticism of international humanitarian interventions are that they serves to undermine the social/political contract between people and government, or between people and the *de facto* controlling authority. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the ICRC withdrew from assistance provision in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 2003 on the grounds that it could not continue to fulfil what was properly the responsibility of the occupying power.

Local civil society actors, alone or with external resourcing, may play the critical role in social protection during conflict. One comparative study of social capital and social protection in war-affected states found that, in the cases of Somalia and Guatemala, ‘*Civil society in both countries substituted for state roles by becoming the main provider of safety nets and basic services, especially for vulnerable groups, in the context of a failed state (Somalia) and an oppressive exclusionary state (Guatemala).*’ (Colletta & Cullen, 2000:70). International interventions have been criticised for failing to acknowledge and work with local institutions (see for example Harris & Lewis p.120, in Harris, ed. 1999).

At the macro level, the World Bank’s LICUS initiative was a response to the weakening of the legitimacy of public institutions and the decay in the performance of social service ministries in the countries concerned (Harmer, 2004) The consequent decline in the reach of government services was felt to pose a fundamental challenge to improvements in human development. The Bank’s response – to work through civil society organisations in such situations – has been criticised for undermining the capacity of the state through an over-emphasis on non-public (NGO, social fund, private-for-profit) provision of services. In practice, these non-governmental organisations face many of the same operational constraints that hamper public service delivery.

This question of substitution of government functions becomes a particular issue in the aftermath of war. Most of the situations under consideration here are ones in which the capacity of the government to fulfil its sovereign responsibility – including the ability to ensure the safety and welfare of its population – has been seriously eroded. The consequent vacuum of governance may extend well beyond the cessation of hostilities, a fact which poses severe challenges for the design of appropriate and sustainable social protection mechanisms.

2.3.1 *The developing role of the World Bank in conflict situations*¹⁰

Traditionally, the International Financial Institutions have been concerned with the macro-economic underpinnings of growth. However, over the last decade the World Bank's policy has shifted from a concentration on macroeconomics to a focus on the political and social determinants of growth. In line with this, the Bank has developed a wide variety of instruments to respond to conflict-affected countries and countries in transition.

The Bank, from its very origins, has played a role in post-war reconstruction. But in the late 1990s, it began to espouse the potential role of development assistance in *preventing* conflict (World Bank, 2003). During this time the Bank sought to re-interpret its mandate, from an institution that sits on the outskirts of war, waiting for conflict to end and a focus on rebuilding infrastructure once the conflict had passed (the *Reconstruction* mandate) to an institution that aims to both prevent conflict, engage where possible during times of conflict, and assist vulnerable groups in the transition from conflict – the *Development* mandate.

In line with this shift in focus and in response to the findings from a critical evaluation (World Bank, 1998), in 2001 the Bank adopted an Operational Policy which legitimised the Bank's work in countries before conflicts ended.¹¹ This states that:

- (i) In “countries vulnerable to conflict”, the Bank will use its usual instruments to promote growth and poverty reduction;
- (ii) In “countries in conflict” the Bank will continue its efforts towards poverty reduction and maintain ‘socio-economic assets’ where possible; and
- (iii) In “countries in transition from conflict”, the Bank will support recovery and development through investment and development policy advice, with particular attention to the needs of vulnerable war-affected groups.

The Bank's involvement in war-affected economies pre-dates this policy. In Angola, for example, a social fund (the FAS) was established in 1994 by the Bank and bilateral donors to support projects initiated and implemented by communities (de Sousa *et al* in Addison, 2003, p.43). The aim of the FAS was to *‘improve access to basic services through the provision and rehabilitation of basic infrastructure (for example schools, health facilities, water supply and sanitation...) ...and to create additional income and employment especially in rural and peri-urban areas’* (ibid., p.44). In addition, it provided support to sub-projects identified and managed by communities, in a deliberate attempt to create a bottom-up approach that did not depend on the ‘cumbersome state apparatus and its lack of poverty focus’. Subsequent beneficiary surveys recorded that some 63% of respondents had benefited from the FAS, and that their stated top priorities were education (68%) and access to health services (23%).

Box 1 gives the recent example of a World Bank social protection initiative in the Palestinian Occupied Territory - a context of violent insecurity and of occupation, where the responsibility of the occupying power (Israel) is disputed, and where long-standing

¹⁰ For this and other material in this paper relating to the World Bank and IMF's role in social protection, the author is indebted to Adele Harmer, Research Fellow at ODI. See also Chapter 1 of the forthcoming HPG report ‘Beyond the Continuum: the changing role of aid policy in protracted crisis’ (Macrae & Harmer). See also Chapter 1 of the forthcoming HPG report ‘Beyond the Continuum: the changing role of aid policy in protracted crisis’ (Macrae & Harmer)

¹¹ *OP 2.30 Development Cooperation and Conflict. To signal the shift in emphasis the previously named Post Conflict Unit was renamed the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction (CPR) Unit.*

international assistance mechanisms (particularly UNRWA) have struggled to fulfil a social protection role.

Box 1 Social security in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

In June 2004, with the stated aim of supporting the Palestinian Authority (PA) in meeting an increased demand for social assistance, the World Bank launched a Social Safety Net Reform Project with an initial financing of US\$10 million.

This project is designed to assist the Ministry of Social Affairs to reform and expand its main social assistance instrument known as the Social Hardship Cases (SHC) Program. This Program provides regular cash assistance, food donations and health insurance provision to about 36,000 beneficiary families (about 120,000 individuals). According to a World Bank press release, 'Funding shortages have occurred during the last three years amidst a climate of increased social vulnerability, PA fiscal difficulties and the ongoing crisis with Israel.'

The Bank's project contains three components:

(i) financing of a SHC reform program consisting of conditional and unconditional cash transfer grants; (ii) capacity building in social safety net planning, administration and evaluation and (iii) project management. The project will be implemented over a four-year period and will offer partnership opportunities for interested donors.

According to the WB press release, 'This is a novel approach to social sector reform in the West Bank & Gaza... The Bank has successfully supported conditional cash transfer approaches introduced in the last ten years in many other parts of the world, like Latin America and Turkey, where their efficiency has been proven in mitigating the effects of vulnerability in particular as regards poor children.'

'Conditional cash transfers are targeted grants for qualifying poor families, enabling them to pay the out-of-pocket costs of keeping their children in school and to make regular preventive visits to health clinics. In the West Bank & Gaza, SHC parents will not only have to ensure their children go to school and receive proper healthcare, but will also be required to attend awareness-raising training courses as the conditions for continuing to receive the cash assistance.'

'The Bank has been active in the West Bank & Gaza for the past ten years, adapting its operations to the prevailing political climate from reconstruction to institution building, and since September 2000 to emergency assistance. As with all recent Bank emergency operations in the Palestinian territories, the Social Safety Net Reform Project aims at providing immediate relief and preventing further loss of human capital while supporting the PA's efforts to achieve sustainable social development in the long run.'

3 Social protection in 'post-conflict' and transitional states

3.1 Vulnerable groups and targeted assistance in the aftermath of war

Levels and types of vulnerability in the aftermath of such situations ('post-conflict', 'transition', 'recovery' phases) depend in large part on the nature and duration of the conflict, its effects on people and structures, and the way in which the conflict has ended. Destruction of physical infrastructure may be a major factor. Political instability associated with new, weakened or contested governance structures is common, and may be accompanied by continuing insecurity, lawlessness, even anarchy (Somalia). More generally, state systems and structures are typically disrupted, sometimes with major loss of trained staff and other resources. At the community level, conflict may leave in its wake social fragmentation and tension. The demobilisation of troops or return of displaced populations creates competition for available resources, jobs, land; and makes greater demands on weakened services.

Conflict creates new forms of poverty and social exclusion. Demobilised troops may come to constitute an underclass and a source of potential macro and micro-insecurity (Harris, Lewis and dos Santos in Harris ed., 1999). According to the ILO (1995), the major problems faced by demobilised combatants relate to alienation from civilian life; inadequate information and counselling; problems of land availability and allocation; and problems of finding stable livelihood and employment options.

Successful reintegration of ex-combatants is said to depend on the motivation of the individual, the acceptance and support of the community, and measures provided for employment and income generation. Progress on other areas of public policy, and particularly land reform issues, may be key to determining the success of reintegration programmes (see for example Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, 1994, on reintegration in El Salvador; and more generally Collier, 1994). Various specific social protection measures, including vocational skills training and demobilisation allowances, are likely to be essential to successful reintegration. In this regard, Srivastava (1994, p.10) notes that 'Evidence suggests that demobilisation allowances for one year would be the minimum required in most countries'.

Another key vulnerable group in the situations under consideration are refugees and internally displaced people, as they return to their country or places of origin. Here the issues of social exclusion are likely to relate to the original reasons for flight, the conditions on return, and whether people are able to return to their original home and land. Rogge (1994, p.34 – cited in Harris, ed.) argues that the effectiveness of economic readjustment and reintegration by refugees depends on a number of variables:

1. The length of time a returnee has spent in exile;
2. The level of self-sufficiency or dependency he/she experienced in exile;
3. The skills or knowledge he/she acquired while in exile;
4. Income-generating opportunities or means of production available in home areas;
5. The amount of individual or zonal reintegration assistance provided;
6. The degree of voluntariness in his/her repatriation; and
7. The individual's commitment and/or tenacity to re-establish themselves.

Rogge notes that returnees may find themselves reintegrating into a radically different political-economic system from that which existed before exile, or from that to which the returnee has adjusted during exile. Young adults in particular, unused to agricultural work after years in refugee settlements, may choose to return to urban areas – often with little prospect of employment. More generally, Forman and Salomons (undated) caution that

'care must be taken to avoid the perception of serving the needs of the returnee population to the exclusion of the local inhabitants' – a caveat that applies as much to situations involving return after internal displacement as return of refugees. For reintegration to succeed, recovery efforts must include the entire community, allowing that the returnees may have specific needs e.g. relating to disruption of livelihoods or loss of assets including land and other property.

Targeted assistance is likely to focus on the social protection needs of particular groups, notably widows, orphaned children, and people disabled by war or by landmines. Levels of disability in particular are frequently very high in the aftermath of conflict, and the consequences for the individuals concerned are likely to include limited employment and livelihood options, and various manifestations of social exclusion. In some cases, but by no means all, rehabilitation services may be available. Compensation schemes may be available to disabled ex-combatants in some cases, but this is not the norm (ILO, 1995).

The advantages and problems associated with targeting social assistance have been much debated (see Devereux, 2002 for an account of the main arguments). In the post-conflict context, new layers of complexity are added to the problem of identifying and targeting assistance to vulnerable groups. Shifting populations and the lack of reliable data are one aspect of this. Humanitarian relief assistance and emergency service provision tend to be based on geographically-defined criteria (generally the regions worst affected by conflict), further defined in some cases by demographic or social categories, including those described above. The rationale for such schemes may be multi-faceted: while the core rationale may relate to such aims as ensuring food security, nutrition and health across the target population, this is frequently complemented by social and political objectives, including a desire to ensure political stability and to 'knit' populations fractured by war (as for example in Bosnia-Herzegovina).

As Devereux observes (*ibid.* p.3), there are political risks to targeting deriving from the resentment of those who are excluded, and these risks are likely to be compounded in post-conflict environments. This would tend to indicate forms of welfare provision that are, in general, broad-based rather than narrowly targeted.

3.2 Post-conflict humanitarian action and welfare safety nets

The question of how to construct the social protection agenda in the aftermath of conflict, and what relative weighting to give it in the allocation of resources and setting of policy priorities, is a matter of some debate. Given the analysis above – that the need for protection may be as great or even greater in the aftermath of formal hostilities – the imperative to restore effective basic services and ensure basic food security as a matter of priority is not in doubt. How this should be managed, and what forms of vulnerability should be recognised through special safety-net arrangements, is less clear. So too is the relationship between the humanitarian relief – which typically continues beyond the cessation of formal hostilities – and social protection mechanisms. The often dilapidated state of government services in the aftermath of conflict complicates these issues, as does the urgent requirement for radical macro-economic and governance reform. While these transitions may be externally supported and heavily subsidised in the short-term, constraints on public expenditure and the problem of raising adequate revenue from taxes may give little scope for generous public welfare provision in the medium term. In many contexts, high levels of risk – to people themselves, to humanitarian workers, to state and commercial enterprise, etc. – are posed by continuing violent insecurity, making transition difficult to achieve.

In the short term, international humanitarian assistance may provide a more or less adequate safety net. Levels of funding, especially to countries undergoing protracted crisis or transition from crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa, are often grossly inadequate to the task. Even in those cases that receive greater international attention, the transition phase poses real dilemmas and exposes the conceptual and operational gulf between relief and development approaches. As Christoplos (2004) notes, 'The interface between social protection and humanitarian action is currently relatively uncharted territory... The lack of clarity in terminology related to rehabilitation, recovery, reconstruction, etc. stems partially from a failure to define how humanitarianism, social protection and growth relate to one another with respect to values and operational priorities.'

Social protection must be understood as an inextricable part of the social/political 'contract'. The formulation and implementation of social policy is politically determined in ways that are problematic, even anathema, to humanitarians. This, says Christoplos, 'suggests uncomfortable questions regarding the efficacy of maintaining a strict division between politics and saving lives...' While general principles of equity and non-discrimination may guide policy, the demands of impartial response to need may be impossible to meet through rudimentary or run down public services, even after a sustained period of investment and recovery.

In the particular case of Afghanistan, Christoplos notes that a number of different arguments were made to justify the expansion of social protection structures:

- Social protection represents an agenda for making a smooth transition from the chaotic and haphazard collection of humanitarian projects to a more reliable and regularised system that protects the population as a whole;
- The negative impacts of certain forms of humanitarian assistance (e.g., food aid) can be addressed if programming is placed in a more regularised structure under the leadership of the government;
- Social protection is an agenda that can strengthen the legitimacy of the state by allowing it to re-shoulder its responsibilities for ensuring the basic survival of its citizens;
- As a country prone to natural disasters and high levels of seasonal stress, Afghanistan needs a system with which to respond to the needs of disaster-affected people; and
- Rural people are perceived as shifting to opium production in response to acute livelihood stress, and a social protection system is therefore seen to be an important component of a counter-narcotics strategy.

He goes on 'Most importantly, it is clear that a significant proportion of the population faces a structural deficit of assets by which to meet basic livelihood needs. Even if the most optimistic projections of the international community hold, there will still be a significant number of people experiencing extreme hardship every year. If the Afghan state (rather than the international community) is to manage its responsibilities for the basic survival of its citizens, an institutionally sustainable safety net is needed. If it fails to do so, the government's social contract with its citizens will be profoundly flawed.' Concerns are being raised, says Christoplos, about the untenable nature of the present status quo of organisational roles in protection of livelihoods.

In a policy paper entitled "From Humanitarian Assistance to Social Protection" (2002), the Afghan Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development (MRRD) envisages a shift from humanitarian to 'more stable modalities' involving first a shift of responsibilities from the international community to the government. It will also demand a shift from providing support to loosely defined sets of beneficiaries, consisting of 'vulnerable groups' and

disaster victims to the use of much more refined targeting tools – a common preoccupation in the design of social protection mechanisms, but one which can lead to exclusion and inflexibility, and to schemes that are costly to administer (Devereux 2002).

The MRRD argues that currently “Accountability is blurred. In the eyes of most Afghans, the government is responsible for social protection, but is not seen to be playing a leadership role in respect to humanitarian resources. As a result, accountability is not clear if things go wrong” (MRRD 2002:3).’ Christoplos notes that ‘while overall data collection regarding vulnerability is certainly improving rapidly, the capacity of the government to manage transparent and non-politicised inter-community targeting at field level remains limited.’

3.3 Managing post-war transitions

The dimension of social capital that relates to state institutions and their ability to function (*organisational integrity*), which includes the legal environment and social norms, has a major bearing on the provision of social protection. According to Colletta & Cullen, ‘The degree of the state’s integrity influences whether civil society complements (enhances) or substitutes for state services and functions.’ In contexts like Afghanistan and Iraq, in which social protection must be considered against the backdrop of a process of wholesale reconstruction of the state and its institutions, a fundamental weakness of state integrity is likely to constitute the reality in the short and medium terms.

Any social protection strategy that ignores this reality is likely to fail in its objectives. This implies the need for transitions planned over several years, and a degree of commitment to protracted engagement from international agencies and donors that cannot be taken for granted. It also implies a high degree of flexibility and willingness to adapt approaches to changing circumstances. Uncertain donor commitment, and the pressure for new regimes to establish their political legitimacy, may lead to ill-conceived transitions that leave social protection issues largely unaddressed.

Continuing violent insecurity may be another reality. The recent withdrawal (July 2004) of the international medical agency MSF from Afghanistan after five of its staff were killed illustrates the difficulty of maintaining services in dangerously insecure environments, even when those services are provided by neutral humanitarian agencies operating in notionally ‘post-conflict’ situations. Agencies and individuals (nationals or internationals) perceived to be working for the national government or aligned to the policies of international donor governments are at particular risk from armed opposition groups. The UN and its agencies have been specifically targeted. The resulting contraction of ‘humanitarian space’ is a matter of great concern in Afghanistan, Iraq and other similar contexts (Donini, 2004), and one that has serious implications for the provision of basic social as well as physical protection.

3.3.1 Relief-development transitions

The much-debated relationship between relief and development approaches, while largely beyond the scope of this paper, has obvious relevance to the social protection agenda. To some extent, this relates to the question of sustainability. As Macrae *et al.* point out (1995) ‘The criteria applied to planning relief operations are primarily concerned with the physical survival of individuals; development activities are planned with respect to the sustainability and appropriateness of social and economic systems. These two categories of objective cannot be easily reconciled by the concept of ‘rehabilitation’.

The issues here relate in part to the objectives of relief and development strategies, and the timeframes within which they are conceived; and in part to the means by which they

are pursued. Some of these issues have been noted above. Colletta & Cullen (2000:76) argue that ‘...additive rather than substitutional strategies are the preferred course of action during the transition from emergency to development.’ While this seems to represent a majority view, many of the questions noted above about the absence of state capacity remain unanswered in specific contexts.

[For further discussion of the link between relief and development approaches, and the increasing linkage to security agendas, see the forthcoming HPG report ‘Beyond the Continuum: the changing role of aid policy in protracted crisis’ (ed. Macrae & Harmer)]

3.3.2 Multiple transitions

Research conducted on post-conflict environments in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Naqvi *et al.*, undated) considers the question of social protection in states that are recovering from recent conflict and which are, at the same time, undergoing radical political and economic transformation. Socialist systems that virtually guaranteed employment and which made generous welfare provision for those unable to work have been replaced with political economies in which public expenditure is much more tightly controlled, and where levels of unemployment are not matched by equivalent social security schemes. Low administrative capacity and high levels of bureaucratic corruption are common features of such transitional states.

Naqvi *et al.* conclude that fundamental policy reform is a priority in the window of opportunity that presents itself in the aftermath of war. At the top of the list of reforms, they argue, should be measures to promote the key social protection objective of maximising job creation, because ‘the fiscal and administrative capacity to sustain even a well-targeted social protection system is likely to be limited’. Central to this, the authors argue, is reform of labour policy and legislation to allow maximum flexibility within the formal labour market while complying with core labour standards – recognising the significance of the informal economy in such contexts. Coordination of donor policy and programming is essential to achieve these ends. So too are public awareness campaigns, informing people of their entitlements, managing expectations, and helping dispel myths of favouritism.

These arguments might be said to be applicable, with variations, to many other post-conflictual states, where political and economic transformation is a common theme.

3.3.3 The International Financial Institutions and countries in transition from conflict

As noted above, the World Bank has defined for itself a role in “countries in transition from conflict”, supporting recovery and development with particular attention to the needs of vulnerable war-affected groups.

Carlin (2003) notes that after an absence of 23 years, the Bank and the IMF re-engaged in Afghanistan in 2001. By 2003 (within 2 years of the Bonn agreement), the Bank was financing a US\$60 million health sector programme, 80% of which will be delivered by NGOs. Establishing a serious health effort in Cambodia took more than twice as long. This improved responsiveness was contingent upon a willingness to contract with non-state actors, and a rapid procurement strategy to support this. But critics questioned the sustainability of health care systems and the level of investment the Bank had made in strategic approaches to welfare provision.

There is recognition that there needs to be more scrutiny of the actual practice and dynamics of civil society organisations (CSOs) in specific contexts (World Bank 2002). One of the inherent problems of CSOs is that they are not able to provide an overall

framework for service delivery and monitoring at the national level. Therefore the advantage of individual CSOs in delivering services cannot be aggregated to a national advantage in terms of an entire health or education sector. More generally, differentiating between state circumstances – for example the development of Interim PRSPs in ‘post’ conflict situations – have a particular set of issues and challenges which the Bank is yet to systematically respond to (World Bank 2002).

Much of the Bank’s work on social service delivery in crises has been informed by lessons gained from the response to East Asia financial crises, especially in Indonesia, and from evaluations of social funds and safety nets that were linked to adjustment programs and/or economic crises. In other words, very little of their learning thus far is from conflict-affected or transitional environments. Lessons from Indonesia indicate that the Bank faced significant challenges targeting vulnerable populations – primarily hampered by lack of up-to-date, complete and accurate information. It also faced challenges in administration and its financing was exposed to political manipulation at both national and local levels. Experiences with different channels for the provision of social services including, governments, international NGOs, community based organisations, and the private sector, has had mixed results.

Studies conducted on the impacts of the Fund’s structural adjustment policies on the level social sector investments have thrown up some interesting results. The Independent Evaluations Office report on “Fiscal Adjustment in IMF-Supported Programs” (IEO, IMF, 2003) found that on average the presence of a Fund-supported program did not reduce social spending. Rather, the presence of a programme was associated with increased public spending in health and education – measured as either a share of GDP, total spending, or in real terms compared with a situation without a program. It did note however that the positive effects attributable to the program were short-lived.

3.3.4 Social protection and post-war recovery

The relationship between social protection and economic recovery (growth) presents a paradox. On the one hand, reform of public expenditure policies would appear to demand tight control of social expenditure. On the other hand, it is argued that investment in social capital is a necessary driver of growth. The findings of a recent study (World Bank, 2002) suggest that in terms of policy reform priorities for growth, social policy is relatively more important than macro-economic policy in post-conflict and transitional settings. The study notes that if opportunities exist for modest trade-offs that improve social policies at the expense of deterioration in macro-balances, growth is, on average, improved. Thus relative to the normal post-conflict strategies adopted, social policy needs to be assigned a higher priority. The findings raise the question: why should social policies have a higher impact in stimulating economic growth in post-conflict countries? (Especially since by their nature social interventions tend to produce results in terms of high growth only in the long term). A possible explanation is that an emphasis on social policies (and social inclusion) has a significant effect in signalling the government or transitional administration’s commitment to reconciliation and rehabilitation, which has knock on-effects in terms of encouraging private capital flows (remittances, as well as private sector investment) back into the country – both of which matter for growth (see World Bank, 2003 & 2004).

4 Conclusions

Applying the concept of social protection to conflict situations requires some adaptation of normal usage. In considering the issue of individual and household security in such contexts, a range of vulnerabilities and risks must be considered that goes beyond the economic. Social protection approaches have to reckon with the often extreme damage done to the social fabric in such contexts; and with the sometimes extreme manifestations of social exclusion that characterise them.

The more immediate consequences of violent conflict may include loss of household income and assets; disruption of markets; and exposure to danger from violence or forced displacement. Those exposed to protracted conflict may face the erosion of livelihoods requiring sometimes radical adaptations, resort to damaging survival strategies, and (for some) 'diversification' into areas that may be dangerous, degrading or illegal – including prostitution and drug production. For others, livelihoods may be more resilient but yield a progressively lower income.

In the absence of government services, a heavy burden is placed on non-formal service provision by civil society actors – and on international humanitarian mechanisms. Depending on a variety of factors, including access and political will, these provide a more or less adequate basic welfare service for those who need it. Such services are often grossly inadequate to the task. It is characteristic of such contexts that those who escape them – as refugees across national boundaries – are likely to receive more adequate and more sustained assistance. Asylum policy and social protection in conflict situations are related issues. Within the conflict-affected area itself, support to non-formal mechanisms may be one of the more effective forms of intervention for social protection – allowing that their capacity and scope will be limited, even where they have relatively greater scope for operating in conditions of prevailing insecurity.

The social protection agenda in conflict situations centres on attempts to sustain life and minimally adequate living conditions. In the aftermath of armed conflict, the damage caused and the level of continuing insecurity may determine both the need for social protection, and the scope for providing it. Transitions from 'parallel' or 'substitutory' relief approaches to more sustainable approaches to service provision have proved difficult to achieve in many cases; not least because of the problem of building the capacity of public service providers (and of the related governance structures) while ensuring the continued provision of essential services. The existence of strong and stable central government seems to be the key variable here, along with the willingness of international donors and financial institutions to pursue strategies that allow for such transitions in realistic (often medium-term) timeframes, and are sufficiently flexible to allow for fluctuating conditions.

Apart from its intrinsic social protection rationale, there is some evidence to suggest that in the short- and medium-term, investment in social policy is also essential to promoting growth in post-conflict and transitional states. Situations like that in Afghanistan would also seem to suggest that it is essential to the maintenance of political stability and the re-forging of the social contract.

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