

**EARLY RECOVERY IS 'TOO LATE': A REVIEW OF
PREVALENT CHALLENGES TO THE NEW DOCTRINE OF
AIDWORK**

by

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ABSTRACT

Early Recovery represents the suffusion of development principles into the humanitarian relief setting, purportedly improving the overall delivery of aid. But though it is described as a new adaptation of aidwork and solution to the challenge of contemporary emergencies, Early Recovery is 'too late': complex emergencies have evolved faster than the debates that produced their solution in Early Recovery. In addition, several challenges to aid are especially relevant in regard to Early Recovery - such as the lack of feedback loops and the erosion of human security. As well, the specific challenges of 'timing', 'funding' and 'understanding' plague Early Recovery, and given that these challenges will ultimately require their own individual adaptations, further debates will likely delay desperately needed solutions to complex emergencies. This paper reviews prevalent challenges to Early Recovery and proposes a means to potentially shorten the length of time it takes aid adaptations to emerge.

Keywords: Early Recovery; aid; humanitarian; relief; development; recovery; rehabilitation; reconstruction; complex emergency; disaster; new wars; conflict; peacebuilding; participation; social narrative; Darfur; Afghanistan; Somalia; Iraq.

Dedicated to my mother and sister, and to my colleagues and instructors at the
School of International Studies, as well as the women of eastern Congo,
south Darfur and the Beja of Hamish Khoreb.

“Remember how often you have postponed minding your interest, and let slip those opportunities the gods have given you. It is now high time to consider what sort of world you are a part of, and from what kind of governor of it you are descended; that you have a set period assigned you to act in, and unless you improve it to brighten and compose your thoughts, it will quickly run off with you, and be lost beyond recovery.”

Marcus Aurelius, The Meditations, 167 A.C.E.

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1: THE CONCEPTUAL LAG

1.1 Introduction

The history of aidwork is a succession of evolutionary adaptations, representing responses to challenging environments, such as natural disasters and man-made crises. These emergencies may not have fundamentally changed over time, yet the advent of globalization and of new ideas about human rights have changed our conception of them; they appear as 'new' environments and challenge us as such. These new environments stimulate research and debate, which lead to a better understanding of them. A better understanding produces improved theories and updated praxes in aidwork. By this process the aid industry adapts to contemporary emergencies. These adaptations take the form of new technologies, improved methods or updated concepts. But not all adaptations are successful. Some have been counterproductive, even to the point of exacerbating a crisis. Those that are successful usually are implemented in other emergencies: 'food-for-work' and 'mobile medical teams' are two examples of aid successfully adapting to meet the challenge of food and health emergencies respectively.

Natural disasters are often sudden-onset, as in the case of an earthquake. They test a country's capability promptly to aid vulnerable populations, as Hurricane Katrina so aptly reminded us. Adaptations to the challenge of severe storms on low-lying cities may appear to be straightforward, such as pre-

positioning supplies in key locations and storm proofing levies and dams. More likely, however, the challenges are political and social rather than technical. Such is always the case in 'man-made' disasters such as genocide. These emergencies occur gradually over longer timeframes, even though the actual violence may appear to break out overnight. Man-made disasters generally involve the suffering of civilians due to political machinations. When war occurs simultaneously with threats to a population's basic needs, such as food, health or shelter, the situation is termed a 'complex emergency'—that is, a humanitarian crisis fuelled by violent conflict. Complex emergencies test the will of the international community to protect affected populations. Adaptations to complex emergencies may take longer to develop due to the greater complexity of challenges involved. Like the conflict that stimulated their production, these adaptations may also seem to appear suddenly, despite the many years of evolution involved. Such is the history of 'early recovery', a recent adaptation in aid delivery stimulated by the environment of protracted complex emergencies.

In 2005 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was tasked with institutionalizing and promoting the relatively unknown doctrine of Early Recovery (ER). According to UNDP, Early Recovery purportedly improves aid by collapsing a 'gap' said to occur when relief agencies are transitioning out of an environment and development agencies are transitioning into it (UNDP 2008:5). ER is also novel in that it marks a departure from the adaptation of individual aid activities and instead represents an adaptation of nearly the entire modality of aid delivery. For that, ER requires a paradigm shift: the suffusion of a development

ethos into relief programming at the immediate onset of a humanitarian response, regardless of war or peace. In this way, ER overlaps the humanitarian relief and the development assistance phases to provide a continuity of aid delivery during the cessation of relief and the onset of development (see *Figure 1*). As well, because ER includes development principles such as sustainability and participation, it is expected to improve humanitarian relief activities that can sometimes erode the ability

of vulnerable populations caught in protracted crises to care for themselves.

Proponents argue that ER offers an improved solution to the dilemma of protracted crises, where endless relief operations are accused of creating dependency. In this regard, ER is held desperately to be needed.

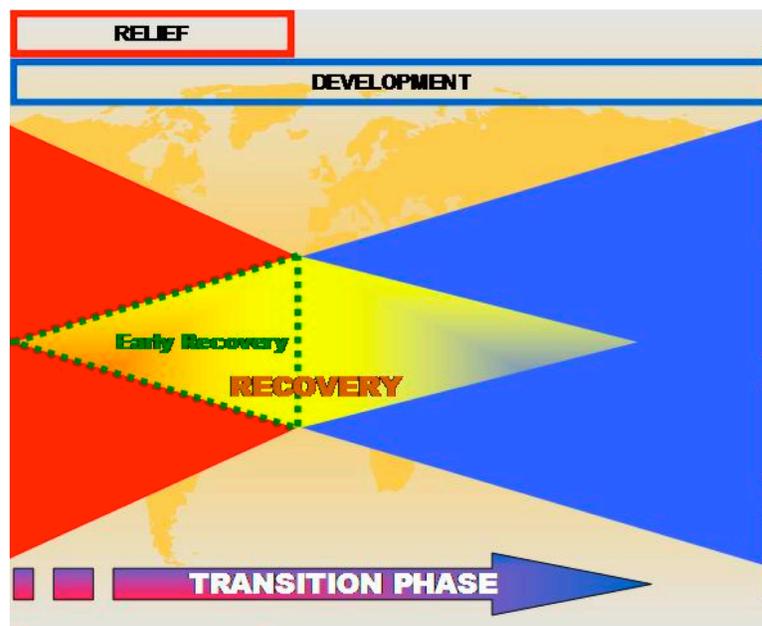


Figure 1: Early Recovery overlaps the relief and development phases

The trouble with Early Recovery lies in the evolutionary process by which it was created. The inherent problem with evolution is that adaptations remain a step behind the environment; by the time an adaptation materializes, the environment has probably changed. This lag, between contemporary adaptations of aid and modern-day emergencies, constrains aidworkers trying to conceive, or

envisage, the challenges of an environment as well as conceive, or generate, solutions. Though problematic, this 'conceptual lag' is natural to the evolutionary process and thereby unavoidable. But it also means that more complex challenges tend to create longer conceptual lags, and longer conceptual lags mean less capable aidworkers.

As aidworkers recognize that their solutions to an emergency are ineffective a second problem can occur. Desperate for answers to their present challenges, aidworkers borrow successful adaptations from earlier emergencies. First, they standardize and universalize these old solutions, relying on antiquated training scenarios and case studies. Secondly, they apply these outmoded adaptations to new and complex environments. This over-reliance on a once successful method can be dangerous. It can turn an appropriate, contextualized solution into an inappropriate, universalized 'technical fix'. Indeed, this fate has befallen food-for-work; it served as a remarkable solution to some instances of famine but has since been applied to varying instances of food insecurity regardless of the context. For example, during localized droughts in Eritrea food-for-work projects were said to have undermined the Eritrean government's policy of generating self-sustainability through trade. Lowland pastoralists purportedly had less incentive to trade for cereals with highland farmers when these foods were provided by aid agencies. When the government opposed food-for-work projects beneficiaries realized the futility of their labour and the strategy was undermined. In Kenya, the government recently suspended the World Food Programme's (WFP) food-for-work programs when it was revealed that intense

manual labour was being required of people stricken by hunger: “it [is] wrong to subject those facing famine to digging trenches and making dams on empty stomachs” (Capital News 2009). Right or wrong, in both instances the projects were halted. But sometimes old, formulaic strategies applied indiscriminately to complex and differing environments result in a lengthy process of denial (“Stay the course!”) and a redoubling of efforts (“Increase the budget!”)—a mentality which lies behind the adage, “Generals always prepare for the last war.” Yet short of predicting the nature of future emergencies, aid can forestall over-reliance on past strategies by coming to terms with the imperfection of the evolutionary process. Simply put, shrinking the conceptual lag demands our constant attention.

The evolutionary process of aidwork is not abstract or simple. It is composed of debate and discussion, testing and retesting, all presented in academic literature that sometimes describes this whole process as a ‘discourse’. One example is the ‘discourse on linking relief and development’, which has been on-going for many years, dating back to the early 1970s. Though it might appear as just a lot of chatter, for better or for worse it represents a significant part of the process by which aid adapts to new environments and major accusations levelled at it: for example, evidence has shown that development assistance has in some cases contributed to igniting conflict, while humanitarian relief has been viewed as complicit in perpetuating it (for examples see, Do No Harm by Mary Anderson (1999); Famine Crimes by Alex de Waal (1997); and The Road to Hell by Michael Maren (1997). The linking discourse

recognized these accusations and debated a solution of linking relief and development that is comparable with the doctrine of Early Recovery formulated around the start of the new millennium. In the last decade, though, our perception of contemporary emergencies has changed and the conceptual lag between problem and solution has grown substantially. A sizeable conceptual lag plagues Early Recovery. Identity-charged violence directed at civilians – for example, within the protracted emergencies of Darfur and Somalia and the state-building attempts in Iraq and Afghanistan - risks exposing the linking discourse as irrelevant, and ER with it. As an adaptation to the environment of protracted complex emergencies, Early Recovery may be ‘too late’.

Many of the particular challenges to ER also loom over the international aid industry itself. ‘Lack of accountability’, ‘erosion of human security’ and ‘erosion of humanitarianism’ are prevalent challenges regarding the delivery of aid in general. As a merging of both the development community on the one hand, and the relief community on the other, it is inherently necessary for ER to resolve criticisms levelled at each. In this respect, ER represents a unique opportunity to improve aid. If it is able to surmount these challenges, it must also address the new composition of war found within complex emergencies, where unarmed civilians bear the brunt of violence. To be successful, ER must catch-up to this reality of contemporary emergencies by engaging in an updated discourse linking human security and aid. As well, ER must resist the temptation to rely on inappropriate, uncontextualized, ‘technical’ solutions, while simultaneously resolving the criticisms levelled at aid. The militarization of humanitarianism in

Iraq and Afghanistan has severely weakened the morale of the international aid industry and provided donors, politicians and the electorate with an alternative choice in the military as service provider. The cluttered and dwindling humanitarian space that remains will only shrink even more as another community of specialized ER actors competes for resources. The future of the international aid industry may lie in the balance. UNDP and ER aidworkers have an immense responsibility because if ER fails it will simultaneously become both irrelevant to modern crises and yet remain as another layer of systems and controls in an already over-bureaucratized industry. Faced with the prospect of more failed interventions like those of the 1990s, one can only wonder at what point the industry will collapse from incompetence.

This paper serves to outline the challenges that befall Early Recovery before concluding with a suggestion as to how the evolutionary process of 'discourse' might be improved. It is divided into three parts. Part one begins with a summary of the linking discourse through the past three decades. Its purpose is to describe how the relief-development 'transition' presented a challenge for aidworkers and stimulated unsuccessful adaptations. A review of the current adaptation, the doctrine of Early Recovery, follows. Part two is review of terminology that serves as a vehicle to flesh out some criticisms of aid. These are criticisms that Early Recovery must navigate and resolve in order to enmesh the best practices of development into the best practices of relief. Part three of this paper returns to the challenges to Early Recovery. In the late 1990s 'timing', 'funding' and 'understanding' were identified as the most prevalent challenges to

linking relief and development. How do they challenge ER a decade later? Part three re-examines these three challenges in light of contemporary emergencies. While recognizing the dilemmas involved, part three concludes by arguing that human security must become a priority of Early Recovery. This paper's thesis is that Early Recovery must catch-up and becoming relevant to the nature of protracted complex emergencies occurring in Somalia, Darfur, Afghanistan and Iraq. Unless the identified challenges are surmounted by UNDP and ER aidworkers, Early Recovery will not only fail to improve the delivery of aid but will continue to support the *status quo* by discouraging future attempts at aidwork reform. The inability of relief and development more effectively to aid the suffering populations in the most challenging emergencies will continue.

1.2 The linking discourse

As mentioned in the introduction, both the development assistance and humanitarian relief communities suffer from accusations that the injudicious application of their respective activities contributes to conflict. Authors such as Mary Anderson, Alex de Waal and Michael Maren are just a few who have argued convincingly that development assistance can, in some cases, contribute to igniting conflict, while humanitarian relief can perpetuate it. Aid literature debating this problem dates back to the 1970s when the iconic crisis of the Cold War era—the protracted famine—stimulated a discourse attempting to link humanitarian relief and development assistance. The purpose of the 'linking discourse' was to find better ways to collapse the gap said to exist between relief and development. Though the discourse began as a policy-related literature

regarding humanitarian response to famine (see Thomas et al. 1989; Singer 1985; Hay 1986; WFP 1986), it re-emerged a decade later as a discussion regarding the iconic crisis of the post-cold war, protracted complex emergencies. A review of the discourse will help to demonstrate how the doctrine of Early Recovery emerged as an adaptation of aidwork.

1.2.1 The ‘linear conception’

A one-way, linear conception—relief-to-development—marked the first major step in the evolution of aidwork. The linear conception was posited during responses to famine in the 1970s, when aid organizations were mostly concerned about the dangers of never-ending distribution of food aid and its impact on sustainable, long-term food security objectives (Smillie, 1998:xiii; Brandt 1997:2). Of secondary concern was that the development community had failed to address the underlying causes of vulnerability to famine. Authors of the linking discourse tried to address some of these concerns by arguing for a shift from palliative measures towards preventative ones, which marked the first instances of mixing development principles with relief activities and vice versa. However, within the linear conception, relief and development phases remained separate and sequential, and the mixing of activities meant eroding the linear progression from relief to development, from chaos to order. Institutional donors did not readily support the idea and deemed the discourse too ‘experimental’ (Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell 1994:1). Relief and development remained distinct activities with little more in common than the geographical area of operation. During a humanitarian crisis, relief agencies carried out their activities

until the emergency had passed, when development actors returned and, ostensibly, picked up where they had left off. In this way, humanitarian crisis was considered as a temporary disruption of an otherwise linear development process.

The end of the Cold War heralded many significant changes. The new geopolitical landscape saw relief expenditure rise both in absolute terms and as a proportion of falling development aid. Total European Union aid and the percentage of British aid spent on humanitarian activities both rose by a factor of five between 1990 and 1993, and 1980 and 1992, respectively (Duffield 1994:39; Barrow & Jennings 2001:17-18). Worldwide relief accounted for less than three percent of all official assistance in the 1970s and 1980s, then rose to ten percent after the start of this millennium (Smillie & Minear, cited in Buchanan-Smith & Fabbri 2005:5). As well, the rise in the number of complex emergencies involving sensitive ethnic and political problems gave commentators reason to argue that humanitarian relief is, for western donor governments, becoming preferable to development assistance. One reason western donors prefer relief is because longer-term development assistance might be viewed as a tacit political endorsement of a regime (Duffield 1997:529; de Waal 1997:134). The increased expenditure on relief occurred amidst a dearth of leadership in aidwork. For example, a United Nations review in 1991 examined the coordination of assistance to populations affected by complex emergencies but notably did not analyze the problems regarding protection and assistance affecting displaced populations or even the root causes of complex emergencies (Sollis 1994:454).

The lack of leadership left aid agencies to their own devices, resulting in major aid debacles beginning with the failed intervention in Somalia in 1992 and typified by the catastrophically late response to the Rwandan genocide two years later.

While the same UN review urged its own agencies to implement emergency relief in ways that 'support recovery' and 'promote development', it did so by focusing narrowly on technical issues involved in mounting relief operations (*ibid*). The shirking of responsibility could not have come at a worse time, complex emergencies were only just beginning. The linking discourse reignited the search for aid solutions amidst conflict. Linking relief and development was seen as sensible and necessary in light of complex emergencies: "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 other shocks, 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 the transition between the two" (Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell 1994:2). Clearly, business as usual was untenable. Old observations made regarding protracted famines of the 1980s were resurrected in the wake of protracted conflict: "the old division,

whether conceptual, administrative or resource allocative, between emergency...or development...simply collapses in the light of the present African experience” (Singer 1985: 13, quoted in Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell 1994:2).

1.2.2 The ‘relief-development continuum’

The next conception of aid in the linking discourse became known as the ‘relief-development continuum’. Essentially, the continuum model positioned recovery as a transition in between relief and development and then tried to smudge the boundaries of each phase so as to blend the principles of each across each other. The problem, however, persisted as the continuum model was still based on a linear notion that aid began with relief and ended with development. The continuum model failed properly to conceive the challenge of protracted conflict in the same way that the linear model involved failure to understand the challenge of protracted famines—both types of shocks are not to be seen simply as aberrations of development but rather should be seen as possible parts of the processes of development. Both the linear and continuum models were based on the assumption that a shock is a temporary disruption of an otherwise straightforward progressive development process (Frerks, Hilhorst and Moreyra, 1999:30). Yet, as theorist David Keen explains (2008), war is not a temporary abnormality on the progressive development scale; war is internal to political and economic structures—that is to say, conflict is a part of development. This paradigm shift challenged the myth of modernity that conceives development as a universal pattern of peaceful, social progress (Duffield 1994:38). Therefore, crises should not be seen as one-off situations

requiring the technical application of aid to get 'back to normal' as soon as possible; instead, crises must be analyzed as a possible result of development.

Aidwork laboured through the late 1990s testing various other models of emergency response and post-conflict assistance that more or less followed along the same linear assumptions, incorporating pre and post-conflict activities, such as prevention, early warning, preparedness, mitigation, response, etc. The goal was to find activities that could help development assistance by preventing crises from re-occurring, while relief aid could be augmented to contribute more effectively to long-term development. In the end, these activities still aimed at a 'return to normalcy' (Frerks, 1999:2). Near the end of the millennium it was finally being recognized that the continuum model did not reflect the complex reality of modern wars. Still, the European Community Humanitarian Office tried to save the concept by inventing the word 'contiguum', a joining of the words 'continuum' and 'contiguous' in an effort to reflect the dynamic aspects of both relief and development. But contiguum still did not reflect an integration of aid and still relied on a linear conception (Smillie, 1998:xxv).

The shortcomings of the continuum model are simple. First, it was based upon a simplified approach to dealing with crises and thereby ignored social and political factors that contribute to them (Duffield, 1994:38-39). Secondly, it still assumed a linear, one-way progression from relief to recovery to development. Ian Smillie criticized this concept of sequential activities, calling it a "conveyer belt" that attempted to fill the transitional space with rehabilitation and reconstruction activities without addressing the challenge of protracted crises

(Smillie, 1998:xxiii). The aid industry's reluctance to abandon the continuum model underscored its bias to modernist assumptions, punctuated by the desire to treat recovery as a 'return to normalcy' and the 'path of development'. But the continuum model simply broke down when applied to modern complex emergencies; in the face of new wars occurring in Somalia, Darfur, Congo, Afghanistan and Iraq, the aid industry finally realized the need for integrated relief and development activities.

1.3 The doctrine of 'Early Recovery'

Recognizing the flaws in a linear model where relief organizations handle the early part of a crisis and then hand over responsibilities to long-term development agencies, former UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth acknowledged that the only way to avoid gaps between relief and development is not to stop development work during a crisis. By enmeshing development activities into humanitarian relief and humanitarian partnerships into recovery activities, he reasoned that the link could be made (Speth 1999:2). Speth's conception of aidwork eventually evolved into what is now called 'Early Recovery'. ER, however, became much more than the individual adaptation of development activities for use in relief; instead, it seeks to institutionalize the suffusion of a development ethos into all sectors of relief planning at the immediate onset of a humanitarian response. In this way, ER is said to treat relief and development as complementary—relief with development.

Early Recovery represents two new things: it is the label applied to a new conception of aidwork and it is also the name used to identify a new

'humanitarian cluster'. A humanitarian cluster is a group of aid agencies, interconnected by their respective mandates, voluntarily coming together around a set of aid activities focused on a common area of intervention for purposes of synergy, effectiveness and coordination. There are ten humanitarian clusters each chaired by an agency of the United Nations: Shelter (International Organization for Migration/IOM), Food and Nutrition (World Food Programme/WFP and UN Children's Fund/UNICEF), Health (World Health Organization/WHO), Camp Management (UN High Commissioner for Refugees/UNHCR), Water and Sanitation (UNICEF), Logistics (WFP), Protection (UNICEF), Education (UNICEF), Information and Telecommunications (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid/OCHA, WFP and UNICEF) and Early Recovery (UNDP). As the lead agency in the Early Recovery cluster, UNDP is responsible for the dissemination of the doctrine of Early Recovery across the other nine clusters, as well as for the coordination of agency activities within the ER cluster itself. Early Recovery is termed a 'cross-cutting' cluster, in that it exerts influence on the strategic and operational frameworks of projects in all other clusters, not just the ER cluster. It achieves this by positioning ER-trained aidworkers within other clusters to help design and implement ER principles and objectives. UNDP defines ER as the "interface at which humanitarian, development and, possibly, peacekeeping partners co-exist and interact. It is the arena in which recovery planning and development programming are initiated early, thus minimizing the gap between the end of relief and the start of longer-term recovery" (UNDP 2008:5).

1.3.1 Has anything changed?

As a novel adaptation of aidwork, Early Recovery must be substantiated by recognizable changes in aid delivery. The following section will highlight some changes that ER brings to the field, regional and international practice of aidwork. ‘Build back better’ and ‘livelihoods restoration’ are two tools of Early Recovery still in their infancy, both aiming, according to UNDP, to “stabilize local and national capacities from further deterioration so they can provide a foundation for full recovery and stimulate spontaneous recovery activities within the affected population” (UNDP 2008:7). Although they only represent two ways in which Early Recovery has merged development and relief methods, build back better and livelihoods restoration appear to be the two most reported and discussed aspects of Early Recovery to date (Early Recovery Cluster Meeting Reports: Myanmar, May 2008; Myanmar, June 2008; Kenya, June 2008; Pakistan, July 2009; Gaza, February 2009).

Build back better represents an initiative within Early Recovery to influence humanitarian relief strategies by advocating that disaster risk reduction principles be built into projects that involve either physical infrastructure such as houses, markets, roads and buildings, or public institutions such as urban planning offices, police departments, fire brigades and civil society groups such as volunteer search and rescue and local trade unions. By providing personnel support where technical knowledge and staffing gaps are found in government and NGOs, UNDP aims to support local actors searching for local designs and strategies within the humanitarian relief phase—that is, local actors performing

aidwork supported where necessary by experts. In this manner, build back better aims to respond “not only to the crisis of today, but to also help reduce the impact of future disasters.” (UNDP 2008:16).

UNDP reasons that given its extensive experience in community-based development, it is well placed to support humanitarian actors in designing projects that aim to foster community-based self-recovery. Such projects would include helping to build back better community infrastructure while providing employment opportunities that deliver a quick peace dividend to high-risk groups such as ex-combatants,

internally displaced persons and refugees, and single-headed female households.

These projects would also include activities that expand access to justice through public awareness campaigns and the training of legal

professionals and human rights observers with a special focus on violence against women and girls (BCPR 2009:3). While these activities would seem commonplace within the development phase of UNDP operations, their inclusion



Figure 2: Survivors seek to restore livelihoods immediately following a crisis (authors own photograph)

within the humanitarian phase—if successful—marks a significant change in aidwork.

Livelihoods restoration requires augmenting humanitarian relief strategy to provide short-term or temporary jobs that provide quick access to income. These types of projects are often termed ‘cash for work’ or Emergency Public Employment Services (EPES) (UNDP 2008:19). They involve small, rapidly implemented projects intended to foster participation, build a technical capacity in certain groups (such as displaced populations in a camp), and provide a source of income to beneficiaries. These skills and resources can help to stabilize and even enable coping mechanisms as well as help restore vital public services through projects as simple as debris removal or as complex as bridge building. EPES also attempts to match skilled job seekers with vacancies in public works programmes as well as identify beneficiaries for short-cycle skills training (*ibid*). Following the 2005 earthquake in northern Pakistan, Early Recovery projects such as these were credited with enabling tens of thousands of Kashmiris to remain in their mountain villages throughout the winter by providing them with employment opportunities and shelters. These people would otherwise have collected in IDP camps at major population centres, where a greater potential exists for coping mechanisms to be eroded (M. Marshall, personal communication).

1.3.2 Community example

Myanmar, after cyclone Nargis, offers an example of how build back better and livelihoods restoration efforts can also help to solve pre-existing community

level problems. Environmental resources directly underpin the livelihoods of poor people in Myanmar, though many pre-existing environmental problems constrain traditional livelihoods, particularly farming and fishing. Humanitarian relief efforts would typically have concentrated only on the damage directly caused by the cyclone, leaving pre-existing problems to development assistance schemes that would come later. However, this linear/continuum perspective of aid leaves open the possibility that humanitarian relief may actually exacerbate pre-existing environmental problems by seeking to circumvent them. Instead, the social disruption following the cyclone might be viewed as a unique opportunity to address the pre-existing environmental problems by trying to transform unsustainable livelihoods. To this end, Early Recovery actors in Myanmar completed an environmental assessment revealing that community-lead recovery efforts may have their own ecological impact on the region: “timber needed for reconstruction may come from the mangrove vegetation and/or from forestry inland, and may be harvested in an unsustainable manner. Immediate support is required to help communities and agencies minimize the environmental footprint” (Early Recovery Strategy – Myanmar 2008). This led the ER cluster in Myanmar to propose several interventions to address those concerns, such as assisting community leaders in designing houses that minimize the use of mangrove timber. As well, an ‘environmental help-desk’ was created in order to engage other local actors in researching other resources that could be used in the rebuilding process. The research pertaining to the mangrove eco-system generated by this initiative also provides an evidence base for future advocacy

efforts to save the forest, to be undertaken by development actors. Because this process involved livelihoods restoration (through short-cycle skills training in improved building practices), as well as the 'build back better' principle, Early Recovery was able to achieve some success in stabilizing local capacities, protecting them from further deterioration while addressing pre-existing environmental problems (*ibid*).

1.3.3 Regional example

Early Recovery had not fully been introduced by UNDP when the South Asian tsunami occurred. The humanitarian response that followed the disaster included some elements of Early Recovery, but the implementation was spotty. Evidence of this can be found in some of the problems faced by recovery actors in the months that followed. While field reports describe failures related to typical obstacles such as logistical hurdles, administrative constraints, lagging capacity and coordination challenges, they also indicate that the humanitarian phase did not adequately provide a foundation for recovery. Evaluations were found to have "too heavy of an emphasis on asset replacement, with relatively less attention paid to sustainable livelihoods" (Cunliffe 2006). An effect of this was that too many people went back to their old livelihoods without the restored markets and infrastructure to support them (M. Marshall, personal communication). It is conceivable that a proper Early Recovery assessment might have envisaged livelihood restoration from a more holistic perspective, inclusive of markets and infrastructure losses.

Another example of Early Recovery in action comes from a report on the International Workshop on Reconstruction (Workshop Report 2008). The Sichuan earthquake in 2007 reportedly caused a loss of livelihood to 372,000 urban residents because some 16,289 businesses had suffered catastrophic damage to their infrastructure. The resulting loss in direct economic income was estimated at US\$14.5 billion. After the initial humanitarian phase, some 600,000 migrant workers returned to Sichuan Province to search for employment, while another 1.1 million farmers found themselves without the productive assets such as tools and seeds needed to plant their crops (UNDP 2008). UNDP's Early Recovery work in response to the crisis included a strategic partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO), which helped provide information on employment opportunities through job fairs and cash for work programmes to aid reconstruction efforts. Aside from the typical projects such as housing reconstruction, debris clearance/removal and rehabilitation of irrigation systems as a means to provide temporary jobs, UNDP also provided skills development/vocational training opportunities, including training for masons in seismic safe construction techniques. This led the ILO to open two Emergency Employment Information Centres and establish a database of job seekers in different occupations that could be matched with the requirements of the labour market in the affected regions. By moving these sorts of projects from the later recovery phase to the humanitarian phase, the principle of build back better begins immediately, rather than after several months of construction has already taken place (Early Recovery Snapshot – Pakistan 2006).

1.3.4 International example

As a multi-sector humanitarian framework, ER cuts across all other clusters and therefore a new organizational approach may be warranted. In large disasters the international response mechanism is usually led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). This involves a roll-out of the humanitarian cluster approach with individual agencies coordinated by a designated head within OCHA. However, if the situation warrants it, a dedicated Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) is appointed and supported by OCHA, UNDP and the UN Development Operations Coordination Office. This brings three principle ER actors under one administrator, though responses to conflict-related situations would bring in additional actors, such as the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and potentially the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). In such instances the need for coherence in strategy becomes critical. Therefore, a Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) would become the lead administrator, with the HC appointed as his or her deputy. The SRSG would coordinate external affairs, while the Deputy SRSG would interface with the UN country team and directly lead aid activities (UNDP 2008:9).

The Deputy SRSG is not expected mechanically to reproduce the set-up and structure of the cluster system. He or she has a degree of flexibility in order to include mechanisms to support developmental initiatives that may already be running within the country, thereby 'tying-in' ER strategies to pre-existing initiatives—one way that gains in development might be better protected during a crisis. Within the UN system, the Deputy SRSG has the lead responsibility for

coordinating the ER efforts of international organizations in cooperation with national actors. Given the multi-dimensional nature of ER, an Early Recovery Network is established (ISAC 2006:3). The network is composed of ER actors

Early recovery coordination mechanism

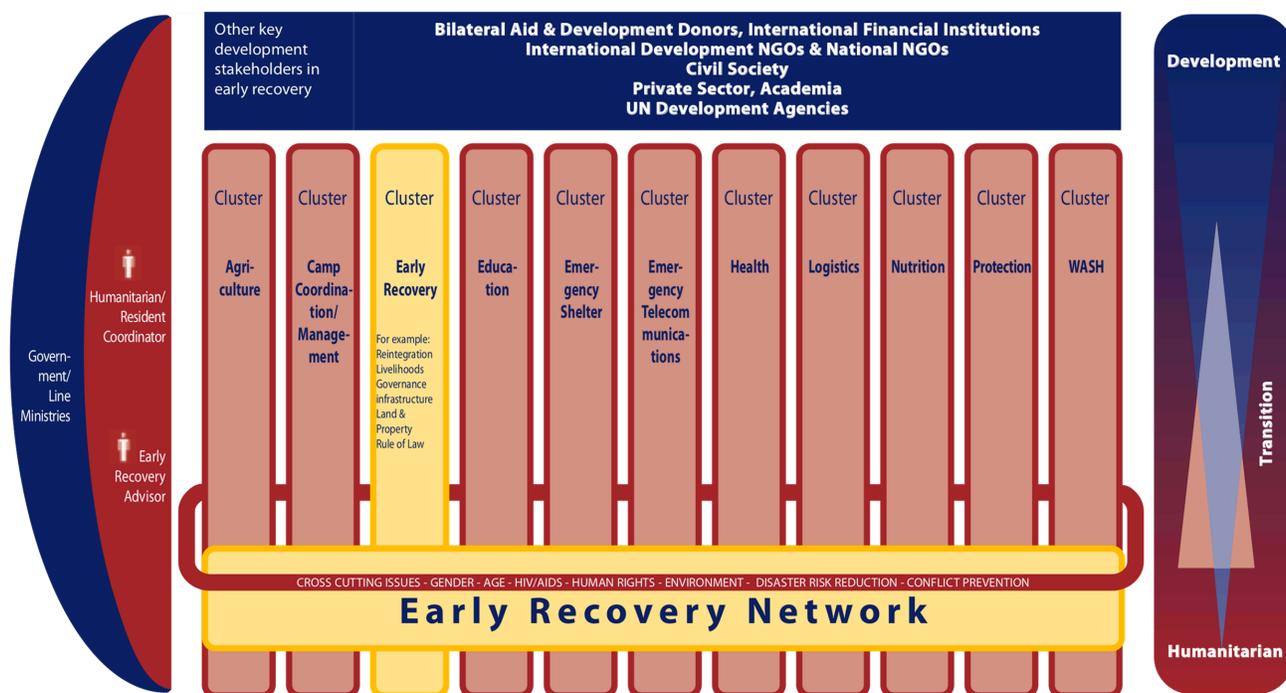


Figure 3: The L-shaped coordination mechanism (UNDP 2008:30)

from other clusters, who must work together on the integration, mainstreaming and coordination of Early Recovery projects. The purpose of the ER Network is to make ER a common concern of the humanitarian community, and avoid limiting it to the work of one cluster. UNDP, with its lead role within ER, is often required—though not obligated—to set up and run an Early Recovery Cluster to cover the areas of ER not covered by the other clusters. Together, the Early Recovery Cluster and Early Recovery Network form the ‘L-shaped’ model of

Early Recovery coordination (see *Figure 3*). The L-shape ensures that: (1) Early Recovery is effectively mainstreamed throughout everyone's work and becomes a collective responsibility (through the horizontal ER Network); and (2) no gaps are left uncovered that are considered essential for the success of the collective ER effort (through the vertical ER Cluster) (ER-FAQ 2008:2).

1.3.5 In search of an integrated strategy

A key feature of Early Recovery is that it must begin at the very onset of the humanitarian response, not weeks or months after humanitarian relief operations have begun. This is because ER activities are intended to help stabilize an emergency and reduce further setbacks for vulnerable populations by focusing on longer-term problems that typically are not addressed by humanitarian relief actors. To do this Early Recovery must foment and support opportunities for beneficiaries to speak to and participate in their own recovery. But including local participation within humanitarian relief projects requires that relief actors look beyond just saving lives, and direct some of their attention to longer-term coping mechanisms valued by beneficiaries, such as the regeneration of livelihoods, and the physical security of vulnerable populations, including women, children and the displaced. It would seem that accomplishing such a feat at the immediate onset of an emergency response should require an integrated strategy, contextualized for the crisis, to guide the activities of the various political, security, development and humanitarian actors involved. As of yet, however, no framework to guide the creation of an integrated strategy seems to exist. In addition to this, UNDP acknowledges that the changing security

environment inside complex emergencies may significantly alter ER needs and opportunities (UNDP 2008:7). One day the security situation may progress, creating space for ER activities, but then quickly regress, stifling them, which “creates a continuous need for sensitivity and flexibility in implementing and adjusting early recovery activities” (*ibid*). This reality suggests that ER activities within complex emergencies might look considerably different, not only from emergency to emergency, but perhaps also month to month within the same emergency. If ER activities are subject to such wide discrepancies then what, if any, guiding principles of Early Recovery remain universal? Furthermore, what sort of comprehensive framework could determine which ER principles should receive priority in such dynamic conditions as a complex emergency? Indeed, these questions mark the frontier of the current debate on Early Recovery. To address them, the following section will review six principles of Early Recovery, as proposed by UNDP, and two recent reports arguing for a universal prioritization of ER principles within the environment of complex emergencies.

1.3.6 Principles and priorities of Early Recovery

UNDP policy describes six development principles that lay at the heart of the Early Recovery (UNDP 2008:12). These are: (1) national ownership, which is not synonymous with government ownership. National ownership provides a foundation for sustainability: “International actors will come and go, but national actors remain”; (2) capacity building of the state and other duty-bearers to fulfil their main obligations and responsibilities towards the population. Otherwise, relief activities can sometimes replace or substitute existing national capacities

and limit local recovery processes: “affected populations should be seen as fundamental actors requiring capacities to drive the process of recovery”; (3) community-centred approaches mean that all levels of government must be engaged in meaningful Early Recovery activities: “community participation in decision-making, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of local programmes increases the appropriateness of the early recovery interventions”; (4) conflict prevention includes creating opportunities to address conditions that led to instability: “‘building back better’ aims to promote the restoration of services, systems and institutions to a more advanced state than before the crisis through the application of improved standards and policies”; (5) promoting gender equality should be integrated as a cross-cutting issue in all Early Recovery activities and should be addressed beginning with the initial assessment and planning stages of Early Recovery; (6) transparency and accountability includes a transparent recovery planning process, the sharing of good practices, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation, as well as “recognizing beneficiaries as active rights-holders at the centre of the recovery process, who are reached through information sharing, local grievance and redress mechanisms” (*ibid*). Notably absent from this list of principles is any indication of prioritization—aside from the numbering, which appears to be arbitrary. Two recent reports analyzing ER within the context of complex emergencies provide evidence that the lack of prioritization results in the lack of a framework needed to create an integrated strategy; without an integrated strategy political, security, development and humanitarian actors may end up working towards conflicting

objectives. Both reports posit that complex emergencies warrant peacebuilding/conflict prevention as the foremost principle of Early Recovery.

The first report, “Recovering from War: Gaps in Early Action”, was commissioned by the UK Department for International Development. The report reasons that without an integrated strategy political, security, development and humanitarian actors ultimately prioritize Early Recovery principles according to their own specialty, resulting not only in chaotic and uncoordinated aid delivery, but also an inefficient use of resources. The report cites the situation in Afghanistan as an example of what happens when there is no integrated strategy guiding actors: “...Italy and the United States competed openly for control over the justice system; the security tools armed warlords as the development tools tried to launch disarmament, and there is still open disagreement over how to pursue counter-narcotics policy” (NYU 2008:34). The solution suggested by the report calls for improving the capacity of the UN integrated mission model. As already mentioned, within this model the UN Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) acts as Deputy to the Special Representative to the Secretary General (DSRSG)—an office that combines the technical expertise of the HC with the administrative and political authority of the SRSG. The report reasons that the Office of the DSRSG contains sufficient power to execute an integrated strategy for political, security, development and humanitarian actors involved in Early Recovery. The drawback to this solution, admitted by the report, is that there is no evidence to indicate that the Office of the Deputy SRSG has sufficient capacity to develop an integrated strategy, train personnel in it, or fund its dissemination throughout the mission

model (NYU 2008:36). The report blames this lack of capacity on UN bureaucracy: “Absurdly, in integrated mission structures, the UN’s budget mechanisms have routinely been reluctant to provide funds for senior level staffing in the Office of the Deputy SRSG, where much of the planning process nominally would reside, arguing that because DSRSGs are also [Humanitarian] Coordinators, staffing them should be done through UNDP’s budget. UNDP’s budget process had—of course—reached precisely the opposite conclusion. A more damning example of the ‘penny wise, pound foolish’ outcomes of a system with divided and disbursed governance and accountability mechanisms is hard to imagine” (UNDP 2008:37).

A second drawback to this solution, admitted by the report, is that while prioritizing ER principles might be universal, prioritizing ER activities must be a context-driven exercise requiring a thorough and honest country assessment. “Where Lebanon required attention to rebuilding infrastructure to restore livelihoods, Afghanistan required more focus on the security sector, Sierra Leone on youth employment and disarmament, and the DRC on securing control of natural resources. All of these sectors interact, of course, and it is only through a deep understanding of context that prioritization is possible” (NYU 2008:36). However, official UN assessments of a country’s socio-economic needs can take many months to complete and in the end are heavily edited to reflect political sensitivities (NYU 2008:35). Conceivably, if the assessments were completed quicker and were candid in their evaluation, they could be very useful to the Office of the DSRSG in developing an integrated strategy. But without such

assessments the report admits that developing an successful, integrated strategy is unlikely, and that therefore the Early Recovery principles of conflict prevention should be given priority by default: “there is no greater retardant to the process of laying a foundation of socio-economic or political development than the restart of conflict” (NYU 2008:36).

A second report, published by International Alert, titled “Enabling Peace Economies through Early Recovery—Perspectives from Uganda” agrees: “gaining and maintaining the peace needs to be at the heart of all early recovery efforts” (International Alert 2009:7). International Alert argues that the political economy of modern conflict is the chief rationale for positing peacebuilding as a principle “first among equals” within Early Recovery. Their report reasons that a failure to focus on peacebuilding inevitably leads to an insensitivity to the political economy of modern conflict, resulting in aid strategies that exacerbate rather than heal political divisions and conflict dynamics: “Conflict-sensitivity is not a technical tick-box exercise; it needs to inform all levels of planning and implementation” (International Alert 2009:21). The report goes on to detail some of the subtle ways in which aid can be insensitive to conflict, evidenced in Uganda. These risks include the danger that patterns of exclusion are perpetuated as politically connected individuals (typically southerners) living in the north maintain a monopoly of economic opportunities, for example in agribusiness growth and rebuilding of infrastructure. The report provides evidence that suspicion and mistrust of the Ugandan government is greatly increased if northern populations do not perceive any peace dividend. Added to this, if

humanitarian relief agencies are insensitive to conflict, their beneficiary selection for various interventions may feed local tensions (International Alert 2009:6). The report concludes that the planning and implementation of Early Recovery needs to be grounded in an appreciation of macro- and micro-level conflict dynamics. If this occurs, the report optimistically reasons that ER represents an improved opportunity to enable the emergence of a peace economy within complex emergencies (*ibid*).

With the principle of peacebuilding as the chief priority of Early Recovery, it is worth considering how ER might lead to improved stability and prevent a relapse into conflict within a dynamic and complex environment such as Somalia. Despite being referred to as a failed state, Somalia actually exists as three *de facto* states of various capacities: Somaliland currently enjoys relative stability with functioning institutions and is in the early stages of development; Puntland is in the early stages of recovery as it struggles to organize a democratic administration and requisite institutions; the south/central region of Somalia remains as a complex emergency. The result of a fractured Somalia is persistent food insecurity and unacceptably high malnutrition levels in the south/central region, leadership feuds in Puntland sabotaging nationwide peace initiatives and a notoriously lucrative piracy hub in the heart of Somaliland. That countries move from least-developed to developing to developed; that communities move in a linear manner from dependency to sustainability; and that agencies make the transition from relief to recovery to development does not suffice in the balkanized context of Somalia. To greater or lesser degree, each of the three

regions stands at risk of destabilizing into open warfare, requiring yet another reapplication of relief. Perhaps if Early Recovery is able sufficiently to augment current humanitarian relief activities with peacebuilding principles the international community could avoid another occurrence of the failed 1991 intervention. In fact, a case might be made that had ER activities been implemented at the onset of the humanitarian response in 1991, the fomentation of civil society could have been jump-started through participatory opportunities in humanitarian activities. Civil society groups might then have provided the necessary counter-weight to the politically dominating clan warlords. Clan moderates would have received support from these civil society groups and exerted pressure on the warlords to maintain the peace. At very least, the UN department of peacekeeping operations would have had a broader platform of political support and some necessary momentum on which to enter the country. Therefore it would seem that with peacebuilding as a priority ER is, at very least, more sensitive to conflict economies, and at very best, building trust through local participation and thereby stimulating the conditions for peace. This paper echoes the call for prioritizing peacebuilding in ER and ranks it as one of several key challenges identified in the remainder of this paper.

2: PROBLEMS WITH AID

2.1 The scapegoat of terminology

Aid is evolving and along with it ‘aidspeak’—the *lingua franca* of humanitarian relief and development assistance notorious for its overuse of euphemism and acronym. Despite the complexity of the subject, just a few key terms, such as ‘relief’ and ‘development’, are often used to define the near entirety of aidwork. Different understandings of these terms can strongly influence the interpretation of policy and objectives within the activities represented by each. ‘Complex emergency’, ‘rehabilitation’, ‘reconstruction’, ‘recovery’ are the types of terminology that are also used to describe when, where and how aid is implemented and assessed. Aidworkers often presume consensus on definitions such as these, which can sometimes exacerbate confusion and frustration between the field and headquarters as staff on the ground attempt to implement policy amidst an incapacitating ‘fog of emergency’. When failure occurs, aidworkers have been known to use terminology as a scapegoat. In an industry where agency reputation drives donor funding, accepting responsibility for failed strategy is aggressively avoided. Aidworkers would much rather conclude their reports with excuses pointing towards terminology, such as ‘miscommunicated aims’ and ‘lack of coherence in objectives’ rather than their own failed strategy. The disappointment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is just one example of this: UN

Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon admitted on July 6, 2009 that, though more than halfway towards the international deadline, the overall progress has been far too slow to meet the majority of the goals. Aidworkers attached to the MDGs convened to assess the damage. Despite the plain, unambiguous language contained in the MDGs, such as its first target to “halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day” (Millennium Project), the participants laboriously debated the wording of the MDGs. Did they describe a paradigm, a set of indicators, an advocacy tool, an agenda or simply a set of targets? Indeed, a case was made for each (EADI). Unwilling to criticize the strategy of the MDGs, they criticized terminology precisely because no one person or agency can be held directly accountable for terminology. Such is a general history of how failure in aidwork has been confronted, or rather, how confrontation has been purposefully avoided. The following section, a review of some key definitions, will hopefully serve as an attempt to forestall this habit from occurring in Early Recovery. Yet the task of scrutinizing definitions actually serves a wider purpose here; examining the concepts that lay behind the terminology illuminates pertinent ideas that inform our understanding of an even wider assortment of ancillary aid terms, too numerous to define here. Finally, and most importantly, reviewing terminology also allows for diagnosis, albeit brisk, of a few key problems with aidwork that Early Recovery must resolve if it is to act as a merger between relief and development.

2.2 The definition of ‘development assistance’

‘Development assistance’ refers to attempts to aid the process known as ‘development’. The theory behind the term ‘development’ suffers under the immense weights of ideology and culture. Attempting to arrive at an unbiased definition can be a trying experience. Debates within development literature abound. With every argument that enthusiasts cite, their critics counter with an equally convincing argument, and so on. The facts and one’s time are the most immediate casualties. To save on both let us advance to the point: despite the contemporary argument for ‘less aid and more trade’, development assistance will nevertheless remain for many decades to come—yet it is badly in need of reform. If Early Recovery represents the infusion of a ‘development ethos’ into humanitarian relief, then what ethos are we talking about and how must it be reformed?

2.2.1 Long-term perspective

Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is the most straightforward, though shortsighted, means to measure a nation’s development. The Human Development Index complements the measurement of GDP by ranking societies based on scores achieved in three basic aspects of human development: health, knowledge and a decent standard of living. Health is measured by life expectancy at birth; knowledge is measured by a combination of the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary, and tertiary gross enrolment ratio; and standard of living is calculated by GDP per capita. According to the United Nations Development Programme, these are the essential elements of

development (UNDP 2000:19, 157). The problem is that these descriptions of development are objectives that could also be reached through other forms of aidwork such as rehabilitation, reconstruction or recovery work. An element of sustainability must be identified within aidwork in order to qualify it as 'developmental'—that is to say, sustainability over the long-term is a key component to development assistance (Eade and Williams, 1995:825). Development assistance requires first and foremost a long-term commitment. Thus, the main difference between development and every other aid activity is not the objective, but rather the time allocated to reach it.

2.2.2 Planners and Searchers

Development economists such as William Easterly, Jeffery Sachs and Paul Collier have recently dominated debates on aid. Easterly distinguishes aid practitioners between Planners and Searchers: "A Planner thinks he already knows the answers; he thinks of poverty as a technical engineering problem that his answer will solve. A Searcher admits he doesn't know the answer in advance; she believes that poverty is a complicated tangle of political, social, historical, institutional, and technological factors" (Easterly 2006:6). Easterly concedes that Planners like Jeffery Sachs have the rhetorical advantage. People are naturally drawn towards big plans to make the world a better place. So after a half-century of third-world poverty beaming through household televisions into the living rooms of the most advanced nations, the promise to 'make poverty history' becomes an emotional catharsis for first-world angst. This is the greater tragedy Easterly laments, that the poor die not because of our indifference, but rather our

ineffectiveness. Easterly lays much of the blame on the lap of men like Sachs, who conceive the big plans to end world poverty. Such grandiose plans span all the way back to the days of the Marshall plan and have always featured one constant demand: a lot more money. Sachs, Easterly argues, is the modern author of the second tragedy perpetrated against the poor because his plans are the biggest and his appeals for more money in the face of implausible strategies are by far the most widely heard.

It would be unfair to say Sachs understands poverty strictly in terms of economic development—but not terribly so. His metaphor is straightforward: development is a ladder with higher rungs representing steps up the path of economic growth. He purports to advocate for the one billion people around the world who live in extreme poverty, unable to reach that first rung of the ladder due to a ‘poverty trap’ that prevents them from escaping ‘extreme material deprivation’ (Sachs 2005:18). Sachs reasons that even though the solutions exist to develop these societies, “families and their governments simply lack the financial means to make these crucial investments” (Sachs 2005:19). Trapped below the ladder, they cannot even begin the climb without a ‘leg up’ in the form of aid. Easterly’s scrutiny of the data is more convincing: “It doesn’t help the poverty trap legend that eleven out of the twenty-eight poorest countries in 1985 were not in the poorest fifth back in 1950. They got into poverty by declining from above, rather than from being stuck in it from below, while others escaped. If the identity of who is in the poverty trap keeps changing, then it must not be much of a trap” (Easterly 2005:32).

Still, the 'poverty trap' theory has convinced many people using a fairly simple form of economic reasoning: developing world populations grow faster than their capital is being accumulated. In economies where savings actually exceed depreciation, the capital stock still declines because it cannot keep pace with the burgeoning population (Sachs 2005:245). Thus, the poverty trap precludes the 'end of poverty'. Sachs argues that it therefore becomes the responsibility of rich nations to ensure that poor nations become un-trapped, as it were. 'Official development assistance' (ODA) plays an integral role in Sachs' conception of breaking the poor free from the trap, especially in those countries with the least capacity to attract private direct investment. For many countries in Africa, ODA has become the major source of external financing and is vital to the achievement of the development aims Sachs has in mind, including the Millennium Development Goals mentioned earlier.

In fact, the MDGs are the grand strategy behind Sachs' 'big push' to increase aid to developing countries. They consist of eight development goals that all 191 UN member states unanimously agreed upon in 2002 when they signed the United Nations Millennium Declaration. Sachs views any failure to meet the MDGs as the fault both of rich countries and poor ones—that is to say, everyone is accountable for meeting the MDGs. Yet by the same token, no one is accountable for meeting the MDGs—a reality not lost on Easterly. Sachs intends universal and collective harmony by laying the responsibility for development equally upon us all, but in reality he leaves no one accountable. It should come as no surprise that the failure of the MDGs resulted in attacking terminology, as

noted above. With no person or agency directly accountable for missing the MDGs, the planners could only find the terminology to blame. Easterly rubs this point in by highlighting development schemes in the past half-century that have also failed without any real repercussion to their authors: a 1977 summit set a deadline for realizing the goal of universal access to water by 1990—it passed without success and the target was re-set for 2015 under the MDGs (Easterly 2005:10). Perhaps it is only a matter of time before planners announce a new set of targets to replace the MDGs, and request a larger sum of money, that the cycle starts anew.

This legacy of development as a series of attempts at unaccountable social engineering influences western aid institutions such as the World Bank, regional development banks, national aid agencies such as USAID, the agencies of the United Nations and countless NGOs in very negative ways. Easterly calls it hypocritical of these institutions to espouse democratic and capitalist principles, and yet design and implement projects based on an ideology totally to the contrary. Ironically, development-as-social engineering is a western, capitalist legacy of the Cold War rather than a socialist one. As the West strove to convince the poorer nations that material prosperity was more feasible under capitalism than under communism, their development assistance took on a very materialistic dimension. ‘Development economics’ was born, and along with it the theory of the ‘big push’. Easterly challenges development economists who reason that “because I have studied and lived in a society that somehow wound up with prosperity and peace, I know enough to plan for other societies to have

prosperity and peace” (Easterly 2006:26). Instead, he identifies accountability, informed through positive feedback loops, as absolutely necessary for aidworkers to discover workable solutions to problems on the ground. The feedback loop occurs when populations are able to communicate to and inform searchers attempting to solve social problems. Easterly uses the metaphor of the marketplace; if aidworkers would function more like salespeople with an ear to their customers, then a feedback loop would direct them. Rather, aidworkers function like marketers attempting to manufacture appeal for predetermined solutions. Easterly identifies this lack of accountability as the most critical flaw in the existing aid paradigm (Easterly 2006:15).

The result of setting such an intimidating goal as ‘make poverty history’ is that we arrive at a conception of development assistance that convinces us of the need for highly technical solutions implemented by extremely specialized actors requiring huge sums of financial resources to perform these very particular kinds of tasks. We tend to overlook that sixty years of schemes such as these and \$2.3 trillion in foreign aid has generally failed to engineer development. Easterly’s conclusion is unpopular but pragmatic: big plans tend to lack accountability, and therefore do not make for successful development assistance.

2.2.3 The two-sides of development

After the Second World War ‘development’ was the term that came to be used to describe a new era of post-colonial relations between rich and poor nations. In the three decades from 1945-1975, development was almost exclusively directed at the strengthening of a functioning state. As in the first

world, poor nations were expected to commit themselves to an expansion of public services, though funded by foreign aid. During this era it was believed that the state was the only institution capable of growing an economy systematically and effectively. Private foreign investment was limited but development assistance in the form of bilateral aid to the developmental state was universal.

Sometime in the 1970s this model began to unravel and was eventually replaced by market fundamentalism that has more or less held sway ever since. Development was based on the idea that sustained economic growth would in turn fuel social services for the poor. Development assistance became fixated on the question of 'how to create economic growth' and capitalism was the answer. Simultaneously, another conception of development assistance evolved based on the reality of capitalism as a creative yet highly destructive force. The consequences of capitalism created a conundrum: economic growth caused economic disparity. In this light, the second role of development assistance became cleaning-up the mess—often in the form of conflict—that capitalism makes. Consider the first half of the twentieth century: a period of economic growth, followed by destructive conflict, followed by humanitarian efforts to clean the mess. This cycle actually repeated itself—once with the League of Nations in the interwar period, the second time through the Marshall Plan. 'How can we achieve the growth?' and 'how can we manage the mess?' have become the two sides of development assistance. Indeed, the 'cleaning up the mess' side of development assistance is the source of contemporary 'humanitarian relief'. In this conception of development, growth creates mess. Thus, the mess, often in

the guise of conflict, becomes part of the development process rather than an aberration of it. The next section will explore the gap between an exclusive concentration on the economy (the growth) and its consequences on society (the mess).

2.2.4 Development as freedom

Quoting Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Nobel prize winning economist Amartya Sen summarizes the gap mentioned above from a different perspective: “wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking, for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else” (Sen 1999:14). Sen’s argument is that, “the usefulness of wealth lies in the things that it allows us to do—the substantive freedoms it helps us to achieve” (Sen 1999:14). He presents us with an image of development that contrasts starkly with measurements of gross national product, personal incomes, industrialization, etc. Increasing GDP is important as a means toward development, but Sen directs our attention to the ends of development (Sen 1999:3). If expanding freedoms make our lives richer by allowing us to be fuller social persons, then by interacting with and influencing the world in which we live we create and direct a collective process of development. This process of expanding our freedoms leaves us better suited to manage the mess caused by growth because we learn to exercise and govern our own agency.

Sen highlights freedom as key in this process for two reasons: (1) freedoms have to be effective, and whether they are or not is measurable in (2) the free agency of people, on which the achievement of development is thoroughly dependent. That is to say, effectiveness and agency form the crux of

freedom's role in development (Sen 1999:4). To be effective Sen reasons that mutually reinforcing connections between different kinds of freedoms are crucial because through them a sustainable free agency emerges as both an engine of development and a faculty of managing the mess of development. In this way, freedoms form both the primary ends of development and its principle means: "Political freedoms (in the form of free speech and elections) help to promote economic security. Social opportunities (in the form of education and health facilities) facilitate economic participation. Economic facilities (in the form of opportunities for participation in trade and production) can help to generate personal abundance as well as public resources for social facilities. Freedoms of different kinds can strengthen one another" (Sen 1999:10). In this conception, individuals are not "passive recipients of ... cunning development programs"; rather, they shape their destiny when given the social opportunities that afford them such (Sen 1999:11).

This concept of development as freedom dovetails with Easterly's emphasis on accountability. Having freedom of control over your destiny is hugely important because it allows you to hold those who purport to help you accountable. In 1986 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the 'Declaration on the Right to Development' which posited development as a "comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting there from" (United

Nations 1986). When properly heeded, the 'active, free and meaningful participation' of this statement should bring accountability into 'development assistance'. Therefore, 'aid through engineering' becomes 'aid through relationship'.

Sen further divides development into processes that allow freedom of action and decision (such as woman's suffrage, civil rights, freedom of the press, etc.) and the actual opportunities that people have, given their personal and social circumstances (such as wealth, nutrition, health care, education, etc.). This is because it is important to see freedom broadly enough or otherwise our attention tends to focus only on one set of development activities, such as strengthening the process of free and fair elections. With too narrow of a focus, development assistance becomes blinded to the fact that many people may be unable to vote due to a lack of opportunity caused by illiteracy, regardless whether the elections are free or fair. Conversely, it is also inadvisable for development assistance to concentrate only on providing equal opportunities without regard for the nature of the processes that bring them about (Sen 1999:17). Here we can see that Sen is concerned not only with the role capitalism plays in fostering the environment for freedom, but also with the substantive processes that can govern the freedom capitalism creates—and the messes that result.

'Development assistance' is best defined as the participative process of assessing the requirements of development, in terms of un-freedoms that persist in a society, and overcoming those un-freedoms through relationships based on

accountability. This conception of development assistance is not unrelated to the market mechanism of economic growth (recall the feedback loops), but its reach and coverage goes far beyond development through economic growth via capitalism. And while Sen shies away from suggesting a precise criterion to rank and compare freedoms, the debates about priorities should be seen as participation in the process itself. As ER aidworkers look to infuse a development ethos into humanitarian relief, this conception of development leading to increased freedoms presents a challenge. In what ways can humanitarian relief activities be augmented to overcome un-freedoms, allow for participation and foster accountability through feedback loops? This is an extremely pertinent question for UNDP and actors involved in ER. If this question can be answered, humanitarian relief could contain built-in peacebuilding mechanisms—beneficiaries would develop the means to manage conflict (the mess created by growth) while actively participating in their own recovery.

2.3 The definition of ‘humanitarian relief’

During the 1980s authors commonly associated humanitarian relief with ‘famine aid’—food security activities became first among equals within the various sectors of intervention. In the violent conflicts of the 1990s massive camps were created to house displaced populations and humanitarian relief was more closely associated with ‘refugee aid’. In this way, though the aid literature has emphasized certain relief activities at different times, it has been more or less agreed that humanitarian relief refers to ‘providing for the welfare of human beings’ following some sort of shock—famine, war or otherwise.

The humanitarian system is a growing enterprise. In 1991 overall assistance amounted to \$4.5 billion and although this figure dropped to \$3.8 billion in 1997, it climbed back up to \$5.8 billion by 2000, reaching some \$10 billion in 2004 (Randall & German 2002). This doubling of the resources flowing into the humanitarian system has created new actors with diverse agendas and interpretations of humanitarianism. The result is a dense field of humanitarian actors of all types and capacities. The first most readily observable effect of this is that the UN and ICRC no longer dominate relief efforts. Second, the international response to conflict has widened and competition has increased as aid agencies have jockeyed for access and resources. These two effects have made the humanitarian system unwieldy and have almost totally eroded whatever potential there was for coordination.

While the successes of the humanitarian system in saving lives have been numerous and notable, so have the failures in how agencies responded to complex emergencies in the 1990s. General Romeo Dallaire called it ‘a decade of adhocism’, his criticism levelled at the failure of the humanitarian system to adequately respond to many of the violent conflicts that occurred, particularly that of Rwanda (Hoffman and Weiss 2006:135). The de facto humanitarian relief policy of ‘improvisation’ lies at the heart of the problem. Attempts to address the overreliance on improvisation often translate into a call for better coordination—a recurring panacea from crisis to crisis. That call after call for meaningful coordination is dismissed only underlines the fact that there is an entrenched *status quo*—what Hoffman and Weiss call the “atomization” of the humanitarian

system. By this they mean that the net effect of so many agencies crowded into crisis areas has been to exacerbate a long-standing collective action problem: agencies routinely defect from a common stance, trading their effectiveness and respect as a whole, for short-term gains through independence. Hoffman and Weiss give the example of aid agencies paying bribes to militia road-checks for entrance to areas the UN is busily negotiating access to. Facing stiff competition for resources and beneficiaries these organizations attempt to gain exclusive space by sacrificing shared access—that is, they trade the prospect of humanitarian space for the assurance of agency space. More often than not, they defend this behaviour using a warped interpretation of the humanitarian imperative—and because the media is often not far behind, donors are willing to reward this behaviour in return for favourable press. This atomization of the humanitarian enterprise exposes a weak link in the chain of international responses to crisis (Hoffman & Weiss 2006:136). Hoffman and Weiss contend that the persistence of this problem indicates deep structural flaws: “The dysfunctional humanitarian family has been struggling for some time... Therapy sessions organized by the UN and NGO consortiums have helped agencies to cope, but their progress is little consolation for war victims who are victimized a second time by the confusion and waste of informal associations, the fracture in formal structures, and the role of humanitarian action within the larger projects” (*ibid*). The dwindling humanitarian space in Iraq and Afghanistan substantiate that the problems experienced in the 1990s were not aberrations and demonstrate that, indeed, the humanitarian system is imperilled.

Coordination may have always been a far-fetched idea, but at least it was conceivable when only the UN, the ICRC and a handful of NGOs responded to a crisis. The crowding of humanitarian spaces and the atomization of the humanitarian enterprise makes coordination now seem like a fool's errand. The late journalist Arther Helton rhetorically asked about the situation in Iraq: "How coordinated can the effort be when donors will give money through both multilateral and bilateral channels; international organizations and NGOs will jockey for roles and money; and relief work will run up against recovery and development plans?" (Hoffman & Weiss 2006:179) If humanitarian action in Afghanistan and Iraq represent the most challenging area of operations to date, then perhaps it is safe to say that humanitarian relief has viewed its future. The collective action problems in those contexts make an answer painfully evident: "uncoordinated inputs in the international humanitarian system result in uncoordinated and often counterproductive outputs" (Hoffman & Weiss 2006:180). Clearly new tactics and new strategic thinking is needed: "It is time to get...innovative about how we do things. It is time to be creative about humanitarian agency rather than to wallow in humanitarian agony" (Hugo Slim quoted in Hoffman & Weiss 2006:181).

Hugo Slim's above quote calls for drastic action—for innovation to triumph over the *status quo* of improvisation and atomization. His appeal hints at the root of these twin symptoms: 'to be creative about humanitarian agency' requires redressing the dearth of cohesion in the humanitarian system. This lack of cohesion has been translated into a need for coordination. But instead of seeking

better coordinating mechanisms to reassert order, what is required is a common vision—a new set of principles around which the humanitarian system can self-organize. Early Recovery represents an opportunity to rally the humanitarian system around a common vision because it exists as a cross-cutting cluster and a unifying doctrine. To do so, extensive training is required in order to disseminate the doctrine beyond the small group of specialists associated with UNDP and the ER cluster. While this suggestion may ring of yet another ‘big plan’, Early Recovery can overcome this temptation by concentrating on training local actors. In the end, participation of this kind will create conditions for the implementation of new ideas, contextualized for specific environments by local actors, which support self-generating recovery. If successful, Early Recovery can thereby restore ‘agency’ to both the actors and beneficiaries in the humanitarian system.

2.4 The definition of ‘complex emergency’

Despite reports that since the early 1990s there has been a decline in the number of wars in the world (Human Security Centre), annual global spending on homeland security measures has increased by about \$70 billion since 2001, the result of the so-called ‘war on terror’ (Lomborg and Sandler). For those living in developing nations, especially those in extremely impoverished nations, terrorism takes on a more insidious aspect in the form of inter-state war fuelled by ethnic violence or religious extremism. War accompanies an already long list of pertinent threats of which disease, hunger and thirst are just a pitiful few. When conflict occurs simultaneous with these threats, a ‘complex emergency’ results—

that is, a humanitarian crises fuelled by large-scale violent conflict—a man-made disaster.

Protracted war in the ‘failed states’ of Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia now share headlines with new outbreaks of localized violence in once relatively peaceful countries like Pakistan, Kenya and Mexico. These complex emergencies represent a nexus of suffering that includes hidden atrocities against civilians that go unreported due to media restrictions, as in northern Sri Lanka, and massive population displacement legitimized by the state, as has been the case in the Swat valley of Pakistan. In this way, conflict associated with complex emergencies appears to have become more dynamic, political and directed at civilians. The so-called ‘new wars’ theory associates this change with a blurring of the distinctions that once delineated legitimate warfare and lawless violence. The term ‘new wars,’ however, can be misleading. Thomas Weiss explains that, “it is not so much that totally new elements have appeared,” but rather that “elements thought extinct or tangential have come to the fore or been combined in ways that were heretofore unremarkable or largely unknown” (Weiss 2007:63). That is to say, contemporary conflict is a re-composition of traditional elements of warfare, such that new wars appear unfamiliar. Mary Kaldor, author of the ‘new wars’ theory, argues convincingly that understanding the new composition of modern conflict is a vital step towards disentangling the various actors caught up in complex emergencies, many of which are innocent bystanders in need of aid (Kaldor 1996:ix).

2.4.1 Time & Space

The first recomposed element of war has been the distortion of time and space. Two causes of this distortion are globalization and insurgencies. One result of globalization is that transnational organizations, such as the United Nations, have led to a decrease in state-versus-state conflict. However, this decrease has occurred relative to an upsurge in violence within states. Interstate violence occurs between state and nonstate actors, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan and FARC in Columbia. The rise of nonstate actors has led to a 'de-territorialization' of political, economic and social space. An example of this is the relatively easy flow of arms across borders and an enhanced transnational narcotics trade. In the regions of Afghanistan and Columbia where this is occurring, the opium and cocaine trades have been identified as major sources of equipping and funding for the nonstate actors pursuing conflict in those countries. Although it would appear that controlling the border would be a vital aim of nonstate actors, in actuality their aim is to control the populations near national borders. Control of border populations is, in effect, control of the border. In this way, the battlefields of 'new wars' have altered from conventional front lines vying for the control of territory, to resource trafficking through the control of key populations, such as those living near borders. The means by which these populations are kept under control is insurgency. As such, it is often the case in environments of complex emergencies, as it is in Afghanistan, that pockets of the country experience conflict differently. In the north and west of Afghanistan the situation is relatively stable, and both locations are on the path of economic development. Meanwhile, the central region surrounding the capital struggles to

maintain momentum towards recovery—security is crucial to the stability of the area. In the southern provinces near to Pakistan the situation is very much in the grip of open conflict in the form of an insurgency. In this way, ‘new wars’ have broken down the linear conception of war to ceasefire to peace treaty. The term ‘post-conflict’ therefore becomes unhelpful, even misleading, in describing the environment of complex emergencies.

The distortion of time and space requires a re-conception of the terms conflict and post-conflict. In environments of protracted crisis, particularly insurgencies, these terms no longer suffice as accurate descriptors of the security situation. As well, it requires a re-conception of ‘the battlefield’. The battlefield must be seen as a particular population, rather than physical geography. The rise of nonstate actors and the illicit cross-border trade they thrive upon, and the fact that many ethnic and linguistic population groups are spread across borders, means regional cooperation is vital to the recovery of a country destabilized by a complex emergency; solutions to conflict that fuel complex emergencies necessitate a regional security perspective.

2.4.2 Human sovereignty

The second recomposed element of war is the de-legitimization of state sovereignty. In the era of World War I Max Weber emphasized that the state’s legitimate monopoly on violence is the basis of its authority—that is, state sovereignty. However, ‘new wars’ must also be viewed from the perspective of the state’s role in generating conflict and perpetuating violence against civilians.

Where such instances occur, the state's monopoly on violence is no longer legitimate, and following the Weberian rationale, its sovereignty is questionable.

David Keen's observations on conflict challenge the conventional notion of conflict espoused by Carl von Clausewitz: 'a continuation of politics by other means,' that is, a contest by two sides vying to defeat their enemy and win. Keen posits that conflict is a system unto itself, and that by analyzing what war has in common with peace within a given society, we can better understand the incentive structures of that system. It is necessary to acknowledge, "that significant sectors of society may benefit from war and other disasters, and that we are unlikely to find out why wars happen (and are made to happen) unless we understand what these benefits are." Thus, war is not just a breakdown but the emergence of another, alternative system of profit, power and protection (Keen 2008:15). Keen identifies three examples of these alternative systems of conflict that depart from the normally emphasized aim of 'winning'. These systems benefit the state by fueling violence against its civilians, leading to a de-legitimized state sovereignty.

The first occurs when a government engages in war through proxy groups to limit violence directed towards the state (Keen 2008:27). This involves farming out the dirty work of fighting to ethnic militias, an accusation leveled at the Government of Sudan, which purportedly has employed the Janjaweed against Darfuri rebels for this very reason. In Darfur, Sudanese officials defend atrocities against civilians as an unfortunate consequence of counterinsurgency warfare. Regardless of whatever incentives the Government of Sudan has to end the

atrocities committed against its own civilians in Darfur, all attempts to do so have been largely unsuccessful. Whether the Sudanese government regrets a loss of control over the Janjaweed militias it armed and mandated, or whether the government still arms and mandates them becomes inconsequential; faced with accusations of genocide by the international community and a warrant for the arrest of the head of state on charges of war crimes, the Government of Sudan no longer holds a legitimate monopoly on violence.

A second aim that runs contrary to the concept of winning a war is the desire to weaken political opposition through conflict. For example, the military in Pakistan has been accused of using the conflict in Kashmir and the nuclear stand-off with India to justify its continued interference in politics and large military budget. Keen explains that in order to retain power, “government and government forces—from within and beyond a crisis-affected country—may do at least as much as rebels to propel and deepen civil conflict” (Keen 2008:31).

A third characteristic concerns the idiosyncratic economies in war zones. Keen updates von Clausewitz’s theory by positing new wars as a ‘continuation of economics by other means’. Symbiotic economic relationships between belligerent actors essentially provides a means for both to thrive, a scenario Keen labels as a ‘sell-game’. A good example is the efforts of the Ugandan army to defeat the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA is a poorly equipped militia that relies on abducted children to feed its ranks, yet twenty years of conflict has failed to neutralize the LRA. Instead, the overly aggressive Ugandan army’s counterinsurgency campaign against the LRA has been accused of deliberately

undermining peace initiatives and perpetuating war. The accusations reveal that rents derived from the cattle trade may be too lucrative for senior offices on both sides of the conflict to ever accept peace. Many army officers also stand accused of inflating the number of soldiers in their units and pocketing the pay (Keen 2008:30).

Observations such as these posit a contrast to war and peace as total opposites. The economies of war reveal that rather than a collapse into chaos, war becomes an alternative system (Keen 2008:211). This alternative system can benefit the state to such an extent that it perpetuates war, even when it includes abuses against its own citizenry. Thomas Weiss argues that a new paradigm is required: “a dramatic shift away from state-centric perspectives is crucial in the face of ‘new wars’ rise of a multitude of unconventional political units” (Weiss 2007:66). In complex emergencies that signal a de-legitimization of the monopoly on violence, state sovereignty must be replaced by human sovereignty.

The involvement of governments in abuses against its own citizens is nothing new. However, when abuse of a citizenry turns deadly and forms the basis for a system of profit benefiting the state, the international community has a moral responsibility to intervene. The faltering of human security in the context of complex emergencies requires a legal framework based on the sovereignty of human beings where and when the sovereignty of the state has been compromised (Weiss 2007:67). Some people, notably Michael Ignatief, have proposed just such a solution in the so-called ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P)

initiative. A key aspect of the conceptual lag that plagues ER regards its irrelevance in the face of violence against civilians. R2P may or may not be the solution; however, it should be clear that aid must become manifestly more cognizant of human security in complex emergencies. Indeed, without it, there is little reason to pursue Early Recovery at all; dead beneficiaries require no aid.

2.4.3 The conflict trap

Perhaps the most championed theorizing of new wars is the conflict trap (see *Figure 4*), which posits conflict in developing countries as a vicious cycle.

The model was authored by Paul Collier, who claims to have found a link between risk of war and initial level of income. Not surprisingly, conflict is more likely to perpetuate itself in low-income countries due to a lack of economic growth and employment opportunities, which

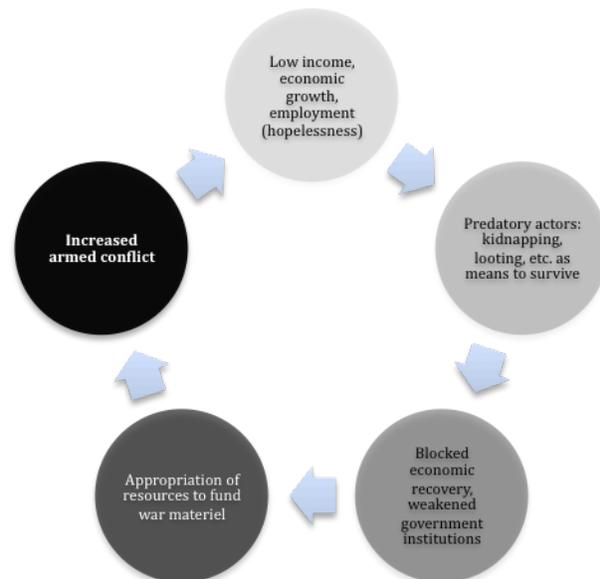


Figure 4: The conflict trap model

give rise to criminality and predation: “young men, who are the recruits for rebel armies,

come pretty cheap in an environment of hopeless poverty” (Collier 2007: 20).

This insecurity blocks efforts at economic recovery, which further weakens the government by denying it tax revenue needed both for investment into the

economy and to check predation by violent actors. The appropriation of primary

resources such as oil, diamonds, or cobalt finance the war aims of rebels sufficiently to perpetuate conflict (Collier 2007: 33).

Collier's model is thought to excel in revealing the incentive structure contained within contemporary conflicts, which are believed to be perpetuated by actors with interests in "maintaining an environment of 'durable disorder' from which they profiteer via pillaging, extortion monopolization of lootable resources, and other criminal activities" (Menkhaus 2004: 151). In such an instance, it becomes immaterial whether or not the population is war-weary because actors profiting from conflict are motivated to ensure its continuation. The attraction of the conflict trap model is clear: having a model that can successfully 'predict' conflict is seen as crucial to maintaining stability and restoring security in impoverished countries. With it, security analysts and policymakers may be able to identify the first instances of destabilization before a vicious circle can develop, while it also gives donor governments motivation to protect their investments in development by dramatically increasing foreign aid at the first instance of trouble. However, simply identifying the insecurity is not sufficient—Afghanistan and Iraq have proven that much. A thorough understanding of 'root causes' of destabilization is necessary, and a debate has erupted within the social sciences over greed or grievance as motivation.

2.4.4 'Rebel greed'

One component of the conflict trap model is the association of lootable resources as the incentive for conflict. Collier identifies 'greed', and not 'grievance', as the root cause of civil war. He reasons that the grievances do not

spur rebellion, as is commonly assumed, because of problems arising over collective action: rebels participating in a grievance-led rebellion, especially in the early stages, carry more personal risks with few immediate benefits than if violence brings immediate benefits (such as access to valuable resources). Raising an army is not easy, and while grievance helps, Collier argues that some sort of immediate material incentive is the main ingredient for success (Collier 2007: 44).

David Keen disagrees with Collier and regards the 'rebel greed' theory as a longstanding convention of projecting an 'otherness' on one's enemies so as to forestall any attempt to legitimize, and thereby relate to them. A classic example of this is the usage of the term 'evildoers' by President Bush following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Labelling the terrorists as evil relegated any attempt at understanding their motivations. This follows neatly into a naïve yet popular approach to security, which assumes that with the removal of 'evil' enemies, peace and the development of society will simply resume apace—that indeed, the belligerents were a societal aberration, like aliens from a foreign world. Keen is right that any language which labels rebels as 'greedy' does not bring us any closer towards understanding rebellion. To what extent are people merely struggling to survive, rather than being 'greedy,' and sometimes using violent means to do so? (Keen 2007:47)

2.4.5 Identity politics

Keen extends his criticism of 'rebel greed' to explanations of conflict centering on ethnicity. His argument is that ethnicity cannot be regarded as an

explanation, but rather something which itself needs to be explained. If not, then those who are ready to use easy labels and to accept the 'inevitability' of ethnic violence may actually play into the hands of those seeking power through ethnic division (Keen 2007:14). Ethnic allegiances can be a product of conflict as much as a cause of it. Therefore, new wars, like ethnicity, need to be explained as 'positive phenomena', that is, as phenomena that have functions as well as causes and effects.

One aspect of Kaldor's new wars theory provides some clarity here. Her definition of ethnic conflict is "political mobilization around exclusivist causes" that is often engineered via top-down nationalism or religious fundamentalism before being morphed into passionate sentiments (Kaldor 1998:ix). The morphing occurs through the manipulation of cultural or ethnic narratives, that is, by enmeshing real or perceived grievances with cultural, ethnic or religious memes. Kaldor argues that identity politics concerns the pursuit of power by means of an appropriated, idealized and nostalgic narrative.

Narratives are usually understood as stories with a basic structure involving a succession of incidents organized in a culturally coherent way for people to share (Elliot 2005:9). By describing incidents in a particular way, the story leads listeners to adopt a particular perspective of them. And, by linking the incidents/perspectives together, the narrative advances a particular conclusion regarding the context. Consider how someone narrates their workday over dinner: depending on their audience the narrator will prioritize particular incidents in order to lead listeners to certain perspective about them and conclusion about

their day. So, in simplest terms the narrative is “a story that performs a social function” (Fook 2002:133). One social function might be to generate empathy for a group or cause, such as a war. Use of a social narrative is a key tool in propagating conflict whether the motivation is greed, grievance, or ethnicity. Belligerents attempt to harness the power of a social narrative in order to recruit followers and support. For militia leaders, manipulation of a social narrative would require them to frame incidents within the context in a provocative way, and then link them to powerful motivators, such as religion or money, in order to lead people to conclude they should support the militia.

Identifying the manipulation of social narrative as part of conflict has major ramifications on Paul Collier’s conflict trap. His theory focuses on outside inputs (notably, lots of money) in order to break the cycle. But because his theory lacks an analysis of root causes of conflict beyond the ‘motivation debate’ of greed and grievance, it ignores the process by which conflict germinates within the social narratives of an environment. Social narratives can be directly affected by the method of aid intervention. If the shock of war on a population can cause severe economic, political and social trauma, then the manner by which these shocks are mitigated can also influence the degree of trauma incurred. This degree of trauma can then influence the social narrative through which populations perceive the shock—its originations and function. Social narratives are like ‘public opinion’, in that they are malleable. However, because deeper issues like cultural, ethnic and religious histories inform them they require more substantial inertia to change—such as a shock. The disaster response to Hurricane Katrina

exemplifies this framework. Though the shock of the storm was considered an 'act of God', affected populations perceived a greater degree of trauma resulting from an inadequate response from the state. Though the natural disaster was exacerbated by human fallibility, much of the vulnerable populations of Louisiana perceived the failure as conventional, perhaps even intended. This perception reinforced a social narrative that posited the existence of a population in discord with the state. This social trauma resulted in a social narrative that stymied recovery rather than supported it, particularly for vulnerable populations. In an impoverished country with abundant natural resources, this process may have lead to open rebellion by the citizenry.

In impoverished countries experiencing recurring shocks, layers of trauma upon populations can radically influence long-standing social narratives, stimulating or perpetuating warfare where it is occurring. Consider the Somali proverb, "My brother and I stand against my father, together with my father's household we stand against my uncle and his household. Our two households stand against the rest of the kin, and with the kin we stand against the rest of the clan. Our clan stands against all other clans, and together, we as a nation stand against the world." Clearly, breaking the conflict trap in Somalia requires much more resources than money. The social narrative of Somalia requires careful consideration.

Well-mitigated shocks not only prevent trauma, but also can heal past trauma. The extreme shock of the south Asian tsunami produced a social narrative that eventually fostered peace in the Indonesian province of Aceh. The

mitigation of emergency and response to crisis, on the part of beneficiaries and actors, directly influences the setting for recovery regardless of whether the emergency is natural or man-made. Any analysis of conflict or recovery from conflict must not overlook how social narratives have been transformed or manipulated, and how they might be arrested to promote peace and recovery.

2.5 The definition of ‘rehabilitation’, ‘reconstruction’ and ‘recovery’

Rehabilitation, reconstruction and recovery are terms that have long occupied the same conceptual space—that is, somewhere in between relief and development. Generally, they are used interchangeably to cover a wide range of activities, from the provision of short-term income transfers, to the rebuilding of key infrastructure, and the repatriation, reintegration and reconciliation of belligerents. There has never existed an agreed upon distinction between any of these terms. This may be due to the differing contexts of humanitarian emergencies, which call for differing activities. These differing activities, in spite of their similarities and overlaps, function uniquely within each emergency. As aidwork is faced with the challenge of protracted emergencies, greater attention must be placed on what ‘recovery’ means, and why the term has been chosen. This short review should help to identify the ethos behind the term ‘recovery’, and why it is the most applicable of the three, especially in the context of complex emergencies.

2.5.1 'Rehabilitation'

The US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) refers to rehabilitation as activities aimed to restore victims to self-sufficiency. For OFDA, 'rehabilitation' implies creating a context in which an affected population's vulnerability is reduced (Stein and Cuny 1994:183). However, the use of the word 'restore,' in their definition can be problematic because it connotes a return to a previous order. After all, what 'self-sufficiency' means to OFDA may be something entirely different to the traumatized survivors of conflict. Besides, if it were possible to successfully restore society to a semblance of the conditions prevailing at the outset of conflict, would war not simply break out all over again, for the same reasons as before? (Keen 2008:191)

By the mid 1990s the usage of 'rehabilitation' had expanded to describe activities such as de-mining and bilateral aid to the macro-economy. Kumar further broadened the concept beyond natural disaster by arguing that rehabilitation contains three essential, interrelated elements: 1) restoration of physical infrastructure, basic social services and essential government functions; 2) structural reform of political, economic, social and security sectors; and 3) institution building (Kumar 1997:3). Rehabilitation was viewed as a post-conflict technical exercise, and relied upon activities such as rebuilding institutions and economic recovery—in short, the work of highly-educated specialists. In this regard, the term betrays an authoritarian bias—a 'doctor/patient' ethos, as though rehabilitation were performed by aidworkers upon beneficiaries, and only once conflict had ceased. This lack of accountability and relevance in situations

of protracted conflict is unhelpful; with little emphasis on positive feedback through local participation and no framework for implementation amidst conflict, the concept of 'rehabilitation' falls short.

2.5.2 'Reconstruction'

The introduction of the term 'reconstruction' in the 1990s was largely in response to the post-conflict scenarios of complex emergencies (Macrae 1997:7). The term gained currency institutionally, particularly in the World Bank, as a 'whole-of-government' activity aimed at rebuilding society (World Bank 1996:4). Despite this broadened approach, reconstruction generally was the term adopted for more obvious purposes—the rebuilding of material infrastructure that has been damaged or destroyed through conflict (Macrae 1997:7). But this narrow usage of the term is too short-sighted, while the World Bank's definition is too far-sighted. 'State-building' rings of social engineering; its very usage implies the presence of 'big push' planners touting economic and social development by jumpstarting the economy, establishing conditions necessary to resume trade, savings, domestic and foreign investment, strengthening government institutions, removing landmines, rebuilding key infrastructure... the list could be endless. The concept of reconstruction fails in the same way that of rehabilitation does: it lacks an emphasis on local agency, and relevance in situations of protracted emergencies.

2.5.3 'Recovery'

Within the corresponding literature 'recovery' appears as the newest and most progressive of the three terms. Applied to aidwork, the term seems to have originated in development literature regarding complex emergencies in the late 1990s. For example, Forman and Salomons use it to describe aidwork geared to fostering social, economic and political stability in societies that are still embroiled in conflict (1999:1). The usage of the term to describe relief-development 'transitional' activities within a protracted crisis, rather than in a 'post-conflict' context, was unique at the time; it marked an evolution in aid thinking amidst protracted crises such as Darfur, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq, where relief activities *in aeternum* are unsustainable and development activities are unfeasible.

The usage of 'recovery' in development literature is likely borrowed from mental health literature, where the term carries strong connotations. An article published by the American Psychiatric Association offers a helpful conception of recovery as a "journey of healing and transformation enabling ... a meaningful life in a community ... while striving to achieve [your] full potential." A closer look at the mental health perspective on recovery offers some worthwhile themes. First, the aspect of hope comes to the fore. More than just optimism, hope embodies a sustainable esteem of oneself, crucial in order to persevere through uncertainty and personal setbacks. In the mental health practice hope is inextricably linked to personal narrative, which informs self-esteem and influences personal agency.

In the same way, hope is important within a nation emerging from war. Whether it begins with a dramatic turning point or emerges gradually over time, it is linked to the prevailing social narrative shared by a population. Hope stimulates recovery, particularly in situations where complex stresses can confuse and stagnate a population's efforts to reform. Paul Collier makes this point effectively when he asks his readers to consider the difference between a poor family in China and an equally poor family in Chad (Collier 2009). Although both families live in extreme poverty, the parents in China have a credible hope that their children will grow up to take part in a prosperous global economy—a reasonable bit of hope for their children's future that can make endurance through poverty mildly bearable. In contrast, Chad does not offer its population a credible basis for hope. It is a small, impoverished country structurally unable to provide the public goods—such as security—that are critical for a decent quality of life. With what hope do the parents in Chad raise their children? Hope instils empowerment, which fuels agency through self-determination. Without it, planning for the future becomes sorrowful and inane. Narrative can fuel hope through a sense of meaning and overall purpose, which is necessary to sustain the recovery process over a long period of time. In mental health recovery this often involves renewing, finding or developing a guiding philosophy, religion, politics or culture—or from a postmodern perspective, this is the work of developing a narrative. The principle actors of recovery—the affected populations—develop this confidence not *for* independent assertive decision-making, but *through* independent assertive decision-making.

Finally, a second aspect of recovery in the mental health realm that is useful to this analysis is the presence of support people in the actor's process of recovery. A common adage in this regard is that while mental health professionals can offer a particular though limited kind of relationship, and help to support a foundation for hope, it is everyday relationships with friends, family and the actor's community that are essential to long-term prospects for recovery. Mental health research highlights that one-way relationships based on being helped can actually be devaluing for an individual attempting recovery. Reciprocal relationships and mutual support networks can be of more value to self-esteem and recovery. Applied to aidwork, this perspective serves as a reminder that international participation often can provide a necessary support role, but that long-term recovery is dependent on regional participation and support, built on reciprocally beneficial relationships.

These themes provide a conception of recovery whereby a broad spectrum of aid activities can be reconfigured to take on new emphasis, and operate within complex emergencies fuelled by new wars. Aidwork involving a whole host of activities from repatriation, reintegration and reconciliation to agricultural rehabilitation, health needs and livelihoods restoration can help to define recovery, but such definitions are ultimately problematic—such activities cannot always be assumed to contribute to recovery. While 'reconstruction' generally concerns economic and material problems, and 'rehabilitation' human and social ones, 'recovery' deals with both elements within the context of peacebuilding and the achievement of human security amidst conflict. Whereas

'rehabilitation' connotes a pre-formulated set of activities that happen to actors, and 'reconstruction' connotes the unhelpful idea of a return to pre-conflict 'normalcy', 'recovery' activities are those enabling actors to aid themselves within their context.

Part two has of this paper reviewed terminology in order to flesh out criticisms to aid that serve as challenges to early recovery. These challenges compose the conceptual lag that prevents ER from being a relevant solution to protracted complex emergencies. ER must navigate and resolve these challenges in order to enmesh the best practices of development into the best practices of relief. Three key points from part two deserve repeating: (1) Early Recovery must foment feedback loops through participatory aid activities; (2) Early Recovery must find solutions to the erosion of human security in complex emergencies; and (3) Early Recovery must respond to emergencies in a way that fosters a 'positive' social narrative of hope. Unaddressed, these challenges will continue to constrain aidworkers in protracted complex emergencies.

3: THE FUTURE OF EARLY RECOVERY

3.1 Pre-existing Challenges to Early Recovery

As the pinnacle of the linking discourse, Early Recovery represents many years of analysis and debate on the attempts to link relief and development. Many authors in the discourse have suggested various gaps that thwart agencies' efforts to link the two sets of aid activities, but no analysis has been so thoroughly articulated and widely cited as that of Ian Smillie's 1998 paper "A Struggle for Synergy". Smillie divides his analysis of the linking gaps into three parts: timing, funding and understanding (1998:xiii). The challenge of timing regards the problem of knowing when and how to respond to crises, and when and how to move from relief to development. The challenge of funding examines the problem of short-term funding for long-term needs, the impact of declining overall aid resources and the competition this creates among aid agencies. The challenge of understanding examines how international relief and development organizations learn or fail to learn from past emergencies, and how a failure to learn could very well be exacerbated by Early Recovery. Smillie writes that these three fundamental challenges "impinge on the effectiveness of international agencies attempting to make real connections for real people between emergency and development assistance" (Smillie 1998:xvii). The connections Smillie speaks about are, more or less, the aims of Early Recovery. Therefore, ER must at the very least satisfy Smillie's analysis and collapse these gaps. Of

course, a 'theory of early recovery' would necessitate the satisfaction of many more gaps previously identified in the discourse. Gaps that persist could mark potential flaws in the current conception of Early Recovery; if not corrected, they could serve to undermine the long-term success of aid in protracted crises. This section is intended to mark a necessary first step in reviewing UNDP policy on Early Recovery in light of Smillie's three gaps. In what ways does Early Recovery meet the challenges of timing, funding and understanding, and in what ways does it not?

3.1.1 The Challenge of Timing

'Appropriate timing' in aidwork revolves around "when to engage, when to modify the intervention, and when to withdraw" (Smillie 1998:25). For the linking discourse, the issue of timing was a challenge of knowing if, when, and how to move from basic humanitarian relief to more developmental objectives. At the very onset of an emergency, Early Recovery requires the immediate application of basic humanitarian relief activities infused with developmental strategies deemed appropriate in light of the specific crisis and the needs of the affected population; indeed, the question of if, when, and how to transition from relief to development is lessened, if not altogether nullified by Early Recovery. Instead, the challenge of timing for Early Recovery becomes the correct weighting of priorities on the one hand, ER must not unduly distract humanitarian relief from its immediate life-saving responsibility yet on the other it must continually challenge relief actors to foster development opportunities. The timing and subtlety of this process must be impeccable and for that reason, the Early

Recovery actor must be the consummate searcher, not only intimately connected to the situation on the ground, but also well informed as to the root causes of the emergency. How exactly Early Recovery theory and policy will guide the mitigation of this challenge remains to be seen. It is worth reminding ourselves, though, that the 'humanitarian impulse' ensures that the most significant life-saving responses are most often locally provided during the first week of an emergency (IFRCRC 2006:169).

The challenge of timing for early recovery must be approached from another, more nuanced perspective as well. With the merging of relief and development through Early Recovery many actors within a crisis may fall sway to the (updated) assumption, "something (better) is being done." That is to say that the presence of Early Recovery activities may inadvertently—or otherwise—be used as a justification to label a crisis 'resolved' ("*after all, development activities have begun...*") despite the fact that regionalized conflict, injustice, and perhaps even basic humanitarian needs of vulnerable populations persist. Such is the present concern in Darfur, where aidworkers have expressed concern to UNDP that the developmental nature of Early Recovery will signal to the Sudanese Government and the international community watching the crisis (particularly the media) that the humanitarian emergency has been resolved. This could dangerously affect funding for critical humanitarian relief operations as donors call into question the objectives of agencies that are still there performing relief. All of this and to say nothing of the political actors that may seize upon the developmental perspective provided by Early Recovery as a cause for

prematurely declaring a crisis 'over'. Certainly the Government of Sudan has ample incentive to take such a position, where the persistence of emergency fuels funding to human rights groups and vilifies the government internationally.

3.1.2 The Challenge of Funding

The second major challenge is one of funding. The following section does not follow Smillie's analysis strictly speaking, but instead highlights two particular aspects contained within his analysis of donor funding, specifically: (1) the differing challenges to traditional relief versus traditional development donors and; (2) the differing challenges of privately versus publicly financed non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Humanitarian relief funding is notoriously sporadic, arriving in short-term bursts, often with strict conditions on the types of activities permitted as outlined in the project 'terms of reference'. Terms of reference include logistical frameworks, which detail the intended tangible and measurable outcomes of a project, such as the proposed number of temporary shelters to be constructed. This causes prevalence for measurable outcomes to be valued over real results, such as the number of families that actually end up being temporarily sheltered. One reason for this is that neither donors nor implementing agencies want to be held accountable (or in their words, 'liable') for the basic welfare of beneficiaries. Another reason is that donors have a bias for supporting agencies with pre-existing capacity, which helps to produce momentum on the ground, aids in the speed of implementation, and in the end makes donors look good. To demonstrate pre-existing capacity it helps to be able to point to a bunch of

shelters that your agency has constructed, regardless of whether their design or location was properly conceived. All of this means that activities that hint of experimentation are highly discouraged because they contain the potential for delays, cost overruns and errors in design. With the added constraint of the global financial crisis donors are less willing to contribute the fewer resources available to them to activities that have not been proven in the field. Despite the institutional backing of UNDP, Early Recovery is still viewed as experimental. The increased scrutiny levelled at ER activities may serve to put aidworkers on the defensive. Rather than embracing and implementing ER, they may opt for a safe, conservative, 'back-to-basics' mentality. None of this seems positive for the adoption of Early Recovery.

Funding siphoned from aid by governments searching for ways to fund their global 'war on terror' adds to the constraints imposed by the global financial crisis. Some institutional donors, particularly those of the U.S. government, now associate aid spending as synonymous with some military expenditures resulting from humanitarian intervention. The same sort of connection is made regarding support of peacekeeping and private security contractors. Faced with excessively large expenditures, governments choose to divert money from aid allocations in order to pay security bills based on the rationale that 'they were incurred in a developing country.' The expenditure is recorded as 'humanitarian' and included in reports on foreign aid spending.

It would be a poor stereotype—but not altogether untrue—to say that development donors are the polar opposite of relief donors. Governments

sometimes separate their offices for development and humanitarian relief, if not spatially, then at least culturally. Where this separation is greatest, aid bureaucracies that have institutionally placed a greater emphasis on development assistance may struggle to involve themselves in Early Recovery because they lack the structure to define a strategy and dispense funding within a short time horizon. For example, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is known to take a hard line in distinguishing between humanitarian response and development assistance: “Canada works with agencies like UNICEF on life saving issues, but on the development side, there does not appear to be same urgency” (Workshop Report 2008). CIDA distinguishes between life-saving relief activities and life-sustaining Early Recovery activities, which makes it difficult for humanitarian funds to be used to cover activities for Early Recovery. Even UNDP recognizes that the implementation of Early Recovery represents a significant challenge to their organizational culture: “UNDP’s support for early recovery in humanitarian situations cannot be business as usual. It requires substantial changes to the way UNDP operates in crisis situations.” (UNDP 2008:24)

Since Early Recovery will need to rely on financial support from development donors, this may present a particular challenge. In addition to this, Early Recovery represents a challenge to both relief and development donors that persist in their conception of aid as a linear continuum. Donors that continue to operate within this paradigm may come to incorrectly regard Early Recovery operations as a new, separate phase that falls somewhere between relief and

development. In this case, neither relief nor development donors would have clear incentives to fund ER activities.

The challenge of funding Early Recovery is chiefly a problem of institutional cultures. Any solution to this challenge not only requires training of donor staffs, but will also need to provide a clear incentive for both relief and development donors to dedicate a portion of their funding to activities that stretch the borders of their core mandate. 'Business as usual' will only ensure that yet more funding mobilization mechanisms will be added to the current international system, which is already crowded by the likes of Consolidated Appeal Processes (CAP), Consultative Groups (CG) and Round Tables (RT) that occur simultaneously and separately, despite their shared beneficiaries. Separate funding mechanisms, such as these, stimulate unhealthy competition between relief, recovery, and development actors rather than building linkages between them.

Notions of neutrality also drive the separation of relief and development donors, and in protracted complex emergencies force aidworkers to apply short-term financing to long-term goals. Consider the current situation in Zimbabwe, where western donors are unwilling to be seen funding development activities, fearing that such funds imply a tacit endorsement of President Mugabe and his policies. Yet, in the wake of an emergency such as the 2008 cholera outbreak, Western donors such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID) heartedly supported humanitarian relief activities. Faced with the pressing needs of longer-term problems in Zimbabwe, it should come as no

surprise that humanitarian relief actors regularly divert emergency funding to a variety of ancillary activities related to the emergency, though not directly caused by it. This frequently cited problem over the years (Smillie, 1998:38; Buchanan-Smith & Fabbri, 2005:33) is just one way that complex emergencies often suffer the effect of short-term financing applied to long-term goals. Regardless of other motives that may lay behind the trend, the preference for short-term relief commitments on the parts of donors amounts to a significant constraint on the prospects for Early Recovery financing.

For publicly funded agencies the challenges of funding also involve a blurring of beneficiary and donor. Agencies vying for funding become confused about who they serve, that is, who their 'customer' is. At first glance it may be seen as a problem of supply responding inappropriately to demand. Smillie argues otherwise: "Far from being a perversion of the law of supply and demand, these are examples of the law at work" (Smillie 1998: 45). He reasons that even if the 'actual demand' (the need on the ground), is clearly expressed by the victims of a crisis, it may bear little resemblance to the 'interpreted demand' (that communicated by the media and humanitarian agencies to the donor). The effect on donors is reflexive, which is to say that the donors' preferred response (demand) could have dramatic affects on the characteristic of aid provided (supply). Still, it is difficult to blame the donor, who upon hearing sensational reports of tragedy from journalists and humanitarian advocates, commits vast sums of money for immediate aid to an emergency's victims, and by doing so inadvertently pushes another less sensational protracted crisis out of both the

headlines and her pocketbook. Indeed this is what happened in 2005 when the south Asian tsunami eclipsed the on-going emergencies in Darfur and the Congo. Yet another assortment of adverts and appeals to donors from Early Recovery offices in a multitude of agencies will only exacerbate this situation unless an ethical, sustainable and effective funding mechanism can be identified that provides disincentives to competition in crisis funding and tactfully communicates emergency situations.

Agencies that are less dependent on public donor funding have greater flexibility for experimentation, though they face another set of issues due to their reliance on the media to generate awareness (Smillie 1998:39). The challenges to privately funded agencies have to do with the messages they communicate to the public. During times of crisis, appeals to the public for funding are undoubtedly emotive. However, Early Recovery operations are billed to last many months beyond the span of typical media coverage. Sustaining funding over such a time period may prove difficult. Furthermore, faced with a public possessing a short attention span, development agencies attempting to engage in recovery activities may be lured into including emotive messages in their advertising, which would counteract and confuse their efforts to educate their donors on development priorities such as self-reliance and dignity (Smillie 1998:44). Agencies dependent on private donor funding for emergencies rely heavily on the media as a fundraising tool, particularly when responding to a crisis. This feature of aidwork is hardly new. When the media 'discovered' the situation in Biafra donations to NGOs grew quickly and dramatically. As

mentioned, donations were so plentiful following the south Asian Tsunami that some commentators criticized donors for being stingy on less publicized, protracted emergencies.

Humanitarian relief staffs have been criticized for a lack of 'professionalism' in emergencies, but in order to build professionalism, an organization must be able to develop and retain good staff (Smillie 1998:46). Training and retention are key components to building the capacity of an agency. With the introduction of Early Recovery, the funding to ensure this capacity may be jeopardized as agencies struggle to train existing staff, while new staff is recruited. This cannot be done if the agency is on a financial merry-go-round, riding from crisis to 'no crisis' and back to crisis again in response to whichever emergencies the media covers. Most NGOs cannot maintain a stable of experts in anticipation of donor funds that may or may not come as they wait for the media to pick up on an emergency that will give their fundraising effort the requisite boost. Clearly, agencies will need to make hard choices and set new priorities as Early Recovery is adopted (Smillie 1998:41).

3.1.3 The Challenge of Understanding

Understanding is clearly the main ingredient in both proper timing and prudent funding. For this reason Smillie identifies it as the most significant challenge to linking relief and development, and therefore Early Recovery. He cautions that though knowledge and information are both key components, they should never be assumed to be synonymous with understanding. Information requires time for its analysis before it can be labelled knowledge. For knowledge

to translate into understanding it must be correctly applied. The correct application of knowledge is a process that requires discernment, which often requires experience. Experience requires retaining capable staff. However, in absence of experienced staff and the understanding they can provide, aidworkers have been known to compensate by simply amassing information in a misguided effort to fabricate knowledge and understanding. Yet, an even greater problem lays in the humanitarian enterprises' aversion to learning from past mistakes, particularly after the emergency is over. Smillie explains that this is due to a fear of evaluation (Smillie 1998:53). But even if evaluations were occurring more frequently with the results more widely shared, the process still might not help as much as he believes. Evaluations are very threatening in an industry where reputation drives funding. As previously discussed, evaluations normally focus on successful outputs rather than the intended results. For evaluations to be helpful in creating understanding they need to focus less on verification and control and more on the components that produce knowledge: an assessment of the actual result of aid as viewed by the beneficiary.

Added to the challenge of understanding is the constant rate of change. The requirements of relief and development agencies in situations of protracted conflict is that they must keep abreast of changes in geo-politics, religion, technology, law and social theory. New knowledge and new skills need to be continually resourced for use in negotiation, political management, conflict management, human rights, and increasingly, relations with international military forces and nonstate actors (Smillie 1998:54). A dedication to research is vital to

this endeavour. Early Recovery, particularly because it is a new and untested field, must find proactive and appropriate incentive mechanisms within academia and government to stimulate research. In order to be effective in supporting future development efforts it must also stimulate humanitarian agencies to seek a better understanding of local cultures, politics, social dynamics and history than they have had in the past.

Understanding local situations necessitates the inclusion and participation of local people in needs assessment and planning, execution and evaluation of any designs for assistance. Typically, local participation is greater in development projects than in the delivery of relief aid because of the time it requires. Therefore, Early Recovery needs to create a conceptual space whereby understanding can be developed through research in the midst of conflict, and applied to humanitarian relief in the midst of an emergency response. Certainly part of the solution lays in forming effective partnerships with appropriate local actors in government and/or civil society, such as traditional leaders and local academics, as well as local NGOs. These relationships must be committed and protected if they are to be helpful. Moreover, humanitarian actors must come to realize that local participation is necessary to the process of converting information into knowledge and absolutely essential to converting knowledge into understanding. When these relationships are absent, weak, or imbalanced—which typically results from power inequalities and lack of commitment—understanding will suffer, aid activities will suffer, and victims of crises will continue to suffer.

3.1.4 Summary of the three challenges

The challenge of timing for Early Recovery concerns the correct weighting of priorities in an emergency, such that it does not unduly distract humanitarian relief from its immediate life-saving responsibility. The Early Recovery actor, therefore, must be the consummate searcher, not only intimately connected to the situation on the ground, but also well informed as to the root causes of the emergency. The challenge of timing also regards protecting Early Recovery from unduly influencing the perception of an emergency. How ER counteracts politicians who may use the developmental nature of ER activities as justification for prematurely labelling an emergency as 'over' must be addressed. Funding also presents a diverse set of challenges. Early Recovery is still viewed as experimental and has not garnered the support of institutional donors, nor the understanding of private donors. Early Recovery also faces a problem of institutional cultures within the donor community that may not see a clear incentive to fund ER activities. This requires the training of donor staff, and the provision of clear incentive for both relief and development donors to dedicate a portion of their funding to activities that stretch the borders of their core mandate. Privately funded agencies face a particular set of challenges too. They may find it difficult to sustain funding for ER over a period longer than the average media cycle. These agencies may be lured into crafting overly emotive messages in their appeals, counteracting and confusing their efforts to educate their donors on development priorities such as self-reliance and dignity.

Solutions to the challenges of timing and funding can be found if the challenge of understanding is surmounted. Understanding requires information to be translated into knowledge and correctly applied within a given context. This correct application of knowledge is a process that requires discernment, which necessitates a core of experienced staff located in the field. A dedication to research is vital to this process, and therefore ER must be proactive in stimulating humanitarian agencies to seek a better understanding of local cultures, politics, social dynamics and history than they have had in the past. Part of the solution lays in forming effective partnerships with appropriate local actors in government and/or civil society. These relationships must be committed and protected if they are to be helpful. ER needs to convince aid of the value in local partnerships and stimulate their fomentation from the immediate onset of response.

3.2 Conclusion

This paper began by describing how aid is subject to the process of evolution, exemplified by the linking discourse. This process produces adaptations in the form of novel solutions to the challenges of new environments. Early Recovery was identified as a major adaptation of the aid industry to the challenge of contemporary emergencies. The inherent problem with the process—and therefore Early Recovery—was defined as the conceptual lag, which occurred when particularly challenging environments delayed the emergence of an adaptation. The conceptual lag, between the challenge of an environment and its solution, constrained an aidworker's capability to respond

adequately to protracted complex emergencies. In this way, Early Recovery was found to be 'too late' as an adaptation because it did not provide an effective response to the challenge of protracted complex emergencies; the conceptual lag between Early Recovery and Darfur, Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan was shown in key challenges identified by this paper.

In part one this paper analyzed the linking discourse in order to demonstrate that the occurrence of conceptual lag is innate and cannot be circumvented, but only lessened. Part two fleshed out a few key criticisms that serve as challenges to aid generally, and Early Recovery specifically. These challenges partly compose the conceptual lag that prevents ER from being a relevant adaptation of aid delivery in protracted complex emergencies. Fomentation of feedback loops, solutions to the erosion of human security, and fostering a social narrative of hope were identified as three major challenges that constrain aidworkers in contemporary emergencies. Part three reviewed the pre-existing challenges of 'timing', 'funding' and 'understanding' as also considerably prevalent to the Early Recovery conceptual lag. Solving the challenge of understanding was posited as a lynchpin to the other two. Part of the solution to understanding was outlined in forming effective partnerships with appropriate local actors in government and/or civil society in order to convert information into knowledge and knowledge into understanding.

Each challenge to Early Recovery identified in this paper will require its own individual adaptations. That is to say, the adaptation of Early Recovery will require further adapting. Each of these further adaptations will require a

discourse of its own, and therefore potentially each will contain its own conceptual lags, depending on how long the discourses take to materialize the new adaptations. The conclusion of this paper will therefore outline a framework by which aid may gain a better perspective on the nature of conceptual lag and offer a possible solution to lessen it. This framework involves a more proactive assertion of control over the evolutionary process of aid, thus shortening the duration of a discourse by identifying conceptual lags earlier on in the process.

3.2.1 'The Medium is the Message'

The evolutionary process of aid is laborious, not simple or sudden, which allows aidworkers to debate the properties of new adaptations as they materialize. Though aidworkers know what each adaptation's purpose is, they inherently lack a clear idea of the adaptation's effect on an environment due to the conceptual gap. After a period of implementation and experience with the adaptation, aidworkers look backward and realize that some consequences were entirely unanticipated. They may even realize that the adaptation, though helpful and needed, requires retooling. This is the case that has been made regarding Early Recovery in this paper. Many of the unanticipated consequences of an adaptation stem from the fact that there are conditions in societies and cultures that are changing rapidly while such adaptations are being conceived. These 'primary conditions' might include culture or religion, historical precedents, or the interplay between 'the environment' and 'the international'. None of these primary conditions are immediately obvious, and yet they comprise the context in which the adaptation is introduced. Primary conditions work silently to influence the way

in which actors interact with the adaptations, with one another, and with the rest of the population within the environment of contemporary emergency. Another set of conditions results from the interaction of aidworkers, and aidwork itself. These 'ancillary conditions' are easily noticed by aidworkers—they are producing and reporting on them daily. Primary conditions that occur in the environment comprise everything that typically goes unnoticed—and what goes unnoticed is far more complex and dynamic. Indeed, only when a major shock occurs do primary conditions become more visible, otherwise they mostly go unnoticed. Yet, recognizing minute changes in primary conditions is key to forecasting the future effects of an adaptation.

Eminent social theorist Marshal McLuhan famously proclaimed, “the medium is the message”. This adage holds an important lesson for Early Recovery as it attempts to adapt itself to protracted complex emergencies. McLuhan tells us that a 'message' is “the change of scale or pace or pattern” that a new adaptation or innovation “introduces into human affairs” (McLuhan 1964:8). McLuhan points out that it is not the content of the message, or use of the innovation, but rather the change in the primary conditions that the adaptation causes. For example, McLuhan would argue that the 'message' of a newscast is not the news story on terrorism, but the change in the public attitude that results from the story, such as the creation of a climate of fear and anxiety. McLuhan's point was that a message should signal us to look beyond the obvious and seek the non-obvious changes or effects that are enabled or enhanced by the innovation. He defines medium as “any extension of ourselves” (*ibid*). In other

words, a medium is the extension of our body, senses, or mind; indeed, anything from which a change emerges. And since some sort of change emerges from adaptations, they are termed the 'medium'. For Early Recovery, the lesson in "the medium is the message" is that is that aidworkers can know the nature, characteristics, drawbacks of new adaptations (the medium) by virtue of the often unnoticed and non-obvious changes that they effect (the message). Aidworkers involved in Early Recovery need all the help they can get, and for this reason must keep a keen eye on these non-obvious changes. Yet agencies and the actors they employ are presently too focused on the content of a medium—that is, in the expected outcomes of a project or adaptation. McLuhan warns us of this pitfall: "it is only too typical that the 'content' of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium" (McLuhan 1964:9). But it is precisely the character of the medium that gives it potency and effect; that is to say, it is the message that warrants the greater measure of attention. In terms of Early Recovery, the greater consequence on 'the environment' comes through the way an adaptation or project is implemented—not on the outcomes as is commonly assumed. This has particular relevance in regards to social narratives. They become a litmus test for aidworkers to measure the effect of a new adaptation or project.

"The medium is the message" tells us that noted changes, for better or for worse, in the social narrative that guides people's perception of their cultural and societal context indicates the presence of a message, that is, the effect of a medium. With this early warning, aidworkers can set out to identify and improve the medium or adaptation before its damaging effects take root. And if it is

discovered that the new medium brings along effects that might be detrimental to the environment, there is an opportunity to influence the evolution of the new adaptation before the effects become pervasive. McLuhan sums that, “Control over change would seem to consist in moving not with it but ahead of it. Anticipation gives the power to deflect and control force” (McLuhan 1964:199). McLuhan’s theory identifies a framework for aidworkers who take it upon themselves to address the challenges that confront Early Recovery described in this paper. Used as a tool this theory could significantly reduce the length of discourse required for adaptations to materialize by revealing conceptual lags sooner.

Early Recovery represents a bold opportunity to improve aid altogether. If it fails, however, it will only add to the clutter of dwindling humanitarian space in complex emergencies, creating more redundant systems and controls in an already over-bureaucratized industry. To be successful the advocates of Early Recovery must embrace McLuhan’s theory as a tool to address the conceptual gap that plagues ER, and update it to the environment of protracted complex emergencies. Criticisms of aid in the 1990s focused on the apparent ‘poverty of ideas’. With advent of Early Recovery this criticism must be reformulated. The aid industry suffers a ‘poverty of implementation’—humanitarianism desperately needs Early Recovery, and thus it needs a sufficient framework to speed up and guide the process by which new ideas result in successful adaptations in the thinking and doing of aid.

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