

# CHAPTER 1

## CONFLICT AND HUMAN SECURITY

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### **Africa's pervasive conflicts**

For many people the word 'Africa' has become synonymous with conflict and its various stages, all of which affect human security. The continent experiences continuing civil conflicts, countries in danger of descent into conflict, countries facing renewed conflict, countries economically, socially or militarily affected by, or directly involved in, neighbouring conflicts, and countries in transition from war to peace.

There are now a growing number of new conflicts in Africa that are increasingly violent and protracted. This new generation of violence, apparently internal but with international elements, is particularly threatening, not only for the countries involved, but also more broadly for regional and international security. More importantly, peace is often fragile, making it difficult to apply the term 'post-conflict' to many countries – in most cases there is a precarious balance between renewed conflict and sustained peace. Increasingly we are seeing countries that are caught in the 'conflict trap'. Of the countries that are in the first decade of post-conflict peace, perhaps half will fall back into conflict within the decade.

### ***Africa's 'New Wars'***

The term 'New Wars' is increasingly being used to capture the changing nature of war, the gradual shift in its causes, the duration and growing incidence of regional conflicts. Conventional approaches to conflict analysis that looked for obvious causes and motives are of limited use in understanding the New Wars, which are ostensibly about identity politics or statehood, and are largely devoid of the geo-political or ideological goals that characterised earlier wars. We see, for example, that the number of conflicts apparently caused by a quest for national and indigenous self-determination has risen sharply. Nevertheless, ethnic tensions and political feuds driven by socio-economic and political grievances, although important, are rarely the principal cause

of civil wars; rather the primary locale of current wars is to be found where there is a combination of entrenched poverty, an excessive dependence on natural resource exports, and poor economic governance and state weakness. These are the critical mediating factors. It is only through a more comprehensive approach to conflict analysis that we see that the outbreak of conflict is usually “triggered by the interaction of economic motives and opportunities with long-standing grievances over poor economic governance (particularly the inequitable distribution of resource wealth), exclusionary and repressive political systems, inter-ethnic disputes, and security dilemmas further exacerbated by unaccountable, weak states.”<sup>1</sup>

### ***Vulnerability to armed conflict***

The most striking common factor among war-prone countries is their poverty – the poorest one-sixth of humanity endures four-fifths of the world’s civil wars. The strong correlation between conflict and poverty includes issues such as deep inequality (one of the foremost causes of violent conflict), expressed in terms both of growth and the distribution of resources. Structurally, this is often related directly to the allocation and distribution of resources, including the scarcity of land and compromising of land tenure rights, because access to, or distribution of, properly managed, protected and controlled natural resources are crucial to livelihood strategies. Although it is difficult to demonstrate empirically that either poverty or environmental factors, in and by themselves, are strong determinants of conflicts, the ‘loss of livelihoods’ constitutes a missing link in explanations of current conflict patterns. Increasingly, this is being recognised as a common denominator in several recent civil wars. Growing evidence links environmental degradation and competition for natural resources with many of the internal and trans-boundary conflict situations that constitute a large proportion of complex emergencies.

### ***Resource wars***

Nevertheless, though prolonged economic decline can be a source of conflict, economic growth does not necessarily prevent or resolve violent conflict and may even intensify tensions. Economics impacts upon conflict dynamics, but what is not always clear is how it does so, and how much relative to other political and socio-cultural factors.<sup>2</sup>

Resource scarcity creates a vulnerability to war, but there is also a strong correlation between natural resource abundance (oil, diamonds) and the risk of armed conflict, such as we have seen in Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>3</sup> In such circumstances governments have generally failed to sustain the policies, governance and institutions that would enable them to both achieve reasonable growth and diversify out of dependence on primary commodities. Groups compete for control of these natural resources, a predatory government viewing control over resources as its 'prize'. The transparency of the management of these resources is often a critical issue, and where there is ethnic and regional competition about scarce resources, it usually results in the opportunistic politicisation of identity.

Such wars are both caused and sustained by a complex and shifting interplay between politics and economics: belligerents rely on their capacity to exploit and commercialise resources, so conflict becomes self-financing, self-sustaining and therefore not readily amenable to mediation. Where there are lootable resources, these frequently become critical sources of survival for the civilian population which, if denied, will exacerbate civilian hardship and maybe even multiply the points of conflict in these combatant controlled war economies. In the vast majority of cases the fighting is not between traditionally organised hierarchical military units but between multifarious factions. Many of Africa's wars are fought by loosely knit groups – the majority of them young males, some teenagers and even children – led by local warlords under little or no overarching structure. In consequence, the distinction between war and organised crime becomes blurred and there is large-scale violation of human rights.

The high degree of complexity that characterises these wars is also reflected in the number of interests external to Africa that continue to play a large and sometimes decisive role in sustaining conflicts.<sup>4</sup> The way these develop within a 'globalised' war economy may involve a multitude of external parties that support and sustain conflict directly, through financing, or indirectly, through the sale of natural resources to outsiders.<sup>5</sup> In fact, intrastate conflicts with strong international dimensions (sometimes referred to as internationalised civil wars) are now the norm, as the cases of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi and Côte d'Ivoire make clear. In addition the role that African governments play in supporting, or even instigating, conflicts in neighbouring countries is well recognised.<sup>6</sup> This brings into question the applicability of the concepts civil war and intrastate conflict, because the key actors and dynamics driving such conflicts are seldom confined by national boundaries.

Intrastate wars differ from international wars: they are informal, often having no clear beginning or end, they weaken rather than strengthen the authority of the state relative to other actors, and they leave opposing armies to be demobilised within one territory. Even more important, they erode the institutions of civil society, not least of which is respect for the rule of law.

## **The socio-economic costs of conflict**

Traditional definitions of conflict, such as the one provided by SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), describe it “as a situation in which armed force is used to resolve issues of government or territory, at least one of the parties is the government of a country and there are at least 25 battle-related deaths.” However, this reading is too narrow to encompass key dimensions of conflict, particularly in the African context. It also ignores the multiplicity of actors and the diversity of cause and motive. Local and international political elites, armed groups, refugees and IDPs, local populations, humanitarian, development and conservation organisations and donors are all actors in the conflict environment.

In many cases **state** actors are involved only peripherally, while in others they are the principal perpetrators of violence against the very citizens that humanitarian law requires them to protect. As Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, has pointed out:

[C]ivilians are no longer just victims of war today. They are regarded as instruments of war. Starving, terrorising, murdering, raping civilians – all that is seen as legitimate. Sex is no defence, nor is age; indeed women, children and the elderly are often at greatest risk.<sup>7</sup>

## ***Human rights violations, disruption and displacement***

During conflict situations it is most often **how** wars are fought that puts civilian populations at risk, far more so than the fighting itself. Attacks on civilians are often part of a deliberate strategy rather than a side effect. The increasing use of ‘scorched-earth’ tactics in several African countries by governments bent on defeating guerrilla insurgencies has had a disproportionate effect on the livelihoods of civilian populations. In 1996 alone, the 14 countries in sub-Saharan Africa afflicted by armed conflict accounted for more than half of all war-related deaths worldwide.<sup>8</sup>

As any rules of war are cast aside, violations of human rights increase. The number of child soldiers, often forcibly recruited as groups conduct attacks on IDP and refugee camps, exemplifies this. Arbitrary killings and other grave human rights violations such as torture, mutilation and rape have been documented in recent years in many African countries. In Uganda, hundreds of thousands of IDPs live in congested camps subject to frequent attacks by rebels. Massive violations of international human rights and humanitarian law have affected the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo – summary executions, some ethnically targeted, rape and looting, have been committed by all the fighting groups.<sup>9</sup> In one of the world's poorest and most inaccessible regions, Darfur in Sudan's western border with Chad, the Sudanese government and the Arab 'Janjaweed' militias have carried out attacks on civilians, massacres, summary executions and enslavement and the burning of towns and villages.<sup>10</sup>

Not only is it increasingly difficult to distinguish between violent crime and acts of warfare, but we are also seeing massive population displacement that is, moreover, a crucial part of the overall intent of the warring parties. At the end of 2003 more than half of the world's 25 million displaced people were to be found in Africa. Attacks on civilians, rather than being a side effect of conflict, are often part of a deliberate strategy by government forces and rebel groups to assert control over areas by intimidation and avoid conventional fighting. Markets are emptied and hospitals, homes, stores and crops routinely looted. Livelihoods are threatened by limited access to food, the collapse of small industry and social services, the increased risk of disease, the collapse or fragmentation of communities, and an increase in the number of female-headed households. Poverty deepens as coping mechanisms falter. Displacement on a grand scale is one of the principal consequences of this strategy. Large numbers of refugees are often inaccessible, as security concerns prevent the humanitarian communities from reaching them. IDPs are particularly vulnerable as, unlike refugees, they lack legal status and have no agency mandated to manage their protection.

## ***Health***

An interesting fact that is emerging is that health conditions are at their worst after rather than during the conflict, as the knock-on and cumulative effects resulting from the flight of health care staff, and absence of infrastructure and services become apparent. The ability of health services to function is impaired by the chaotic security situation and people's inability to access

them, the lack of funds and qualified staff. Social welfare services are disrupted and clinics are closed, ransacked or destroyed, making it difficult, if not impossible, to ensure access to quality curative and preventive health services. The incidence of diseases and epidemics (malaria, cholera and meningitis) increases and social indicators deteriorate because of poor or non-existent and uncoordinated health services and a limited response to epidemics as immunisation programmes are discontinued. Infectious diseases are, in fact, the most important cause of the indirect deaths of civil war. Access to potable water and to decent sanitation systems affect all populations displaced by crisis. This is particularly so in refugee and displacement sites. People die as a result of a combination of a lack of food and an inappropriate diet – leading to a decline in nutritional status – an increase in and spread of diseases, and unsafe drinking water.

There is growing concern about the implications of conflict for the spread, management and mitigation of HIV/AIDS in Africa, a continent suffering from a 'deadly triad' of the interrelated burdens of food insecurity, HIV/AIDS and a reduced capacity to govern and provide basic services. The relationship is complex and mutually reinforcing: hunger and poverty fuel conflict; war and conflict quickly lead to hunger; and people who are hungry and without food will tend to engage in risky, more aggressive behaviour. Conflict magnifies the complex series of ways in which HIV/AIDS interacts with livelihoods and contributes to vulnerability and food insecurity.

Although not much is known about the extent of HIV/AIDS in African conflicts and the interactions between conflict and HIV/AIDS, we do know that the chaotic and brutal nature of wars in Africa aggravates all the factors that fuel the HIV/AIDS crisis. Poverty and the gender dimensions of conflict and the pandemic compound both. Conflict situations act as a vector of HIV/AIDS: military personnel, typically young men, tend to have high rates of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV – estimates indicate that rates are two to five times higher than among the general population, even during peacetime. Risks are substantially increased because of population movements, risky sexual behaviour by combatants, the collapse of the health system and sexual abuse of women and girls – often a deliberate tool of warfare; HIV/AIDS just renders it even more lethal. Violations of human rights increase, as the rules of war break down, resulting in a continuum of crime and conflict. The number of child soldiers, often forcibly recruited as groups conduct attacks on IDP and refugee camps, exemplifies this. Itinerant bands of displaced youth and youth militias are a growing phenomenon.

Many refugees and internally displaced people do not return to their original homes after the war ends, but remain in makeshift camps for years. The general population continues to be exposed to conditions that increase the risk of infections. Screening and detection of diseases associated with HIV/AIDS are less likely to take place because of the weakened health system, while the destruction of the education system makes prevention through education and information sharing very much more difficult.

### ***Economic and political***

There are a number of features of chronic conflict and political instability particularly relevant to livelihood analysis that do not necessarily occur in politically stable contexts because the structure of the economy is deeply affected.

At a meso and macro level these include the breakdown of social and physical infrastructure and services, collapse of local markets, changes in the wider economy, and in governance structures. Conflict wrecks the physical infrastructure, from hydroelectric schemes at one end of the scale to village wells at the other, and roads, railways and bridges are destroyed. The lack of maintenance during the years of war compounds the breakdown in infrastructure.

Wartime economic management has a long-term impact. Public expenditure is reoriented towards the military effort. Arms purchases not only increase foreign debt, they require the growing of more export/cash crops, often at the expense of food, to earn the necessary foreign exchange. Sometimes weapons shipments have even been paid for by the direct transfer of internationally provided emergency food shipments.

The economic legacy of civil war is to reduce the level of tax revenue for a considerable period, which puts all forms of government expenditure under pressure. Because civil wars often either fail to end decisively or involve the integration of former combatants in an expanded army, it is difficult to reduce military expenditure, which may even increase to levels exceeding those of the pre-war period.

Foreign and local investment, already meagre, dries up in times of conflict. National savings are depleted. Economic assets fall prey to criminalised groups. Government spending in wartime deepens inequality further as what social spending there is flows to safer, urban areas.

War further weakens responsible governance. Scarce resources and energy are diverted towards the war effort, and trained and skilled manpower is redirected from the economy and administration. The result is a lack or weakening of coordination and planning, impairment of regional cooperation, and erosion of local government skills. Poor, or politically motivated, targeting of food aid is a frequent complaint.

Institutions often collapse. In many cases the civil service ceases to function and social services can no longer be delivered effectively, a failure that has short and long-term consequences. Education suffers, jeopardising a generation's prospects and laying the ground for further instability as young males see conflict economies offering better or more realistic opportunities than uncertain peaceful livelihoods.

Because institutions are distorted by protracted conflict it is difficult to reshape them into fully operational and soundly managed bodies during post-war recovery. Re-establishing governance mechanisms, which are accepted by, and accountable to, the population, takes time and insight.

Social and economic impacts also have consequences for the environment: political conflict and environmental degradation are closely interrelated, though the causal link is by no means clear cut or uniform, and cause and effect are difficult to separate. The loss of livelihoods offers some explanation of current conflict patterns. Explanations for the reason that the rank and file of most notorious militias are filled by large cohorts of young men points not so much to the issue of endemic poverty as to the rapid devaluation of their expectations as a result of a sudden fall into poverty resulting from loss of livelihoods, which is in turn often caused or aggravated by environmental degradation.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Loss of social capital***

At the household level the more direct effects of conflict such as displacement, forced migration, changing household composition and the impact on income generation, labour and productivity, and the loss, depletion and maintenance of assets, considerably limit livelihood options. Conflict also impacts profoundly upon social networks. Social capital – the individual's access to support, trust and cooperation among families, kin and communities – is a crucial element in livelihood strategies.<sup>12</sup> War reconfigures resources, relationships and ideologies, and people are not passive, but also act as active agents in responding to and shaping conflict.

A protracted conflict can undermine and even destroy social capital: conflict entrepreneurs – new political actors legitimised by the rule of force and violence – often play a fundamental role in determining access to resources. They patronise their own clientele (their own ethnic group) and thus reinforce intra-ethnic identities and inter-ethnic grievances.<sup>13</sup>

War accentuates inequality, not only in terms of income but also in respect of human development indicators. Households with access to the wartime shadow economy and connections to local-level elites may accumulate assets; the situation of poorer households deteriorates further, as do human development indicators, particularly for women. Civilian incomes from illicit activities may compensate for the state's failure or incapacity to provide basic services, but not only make vulnerability assessments virtually impossible, but also exacerbate the vulnerability of communities, impelling them to deepen their involvement in conflicts. Segments of the elite, themselves frustrated by violent competition, exploit situations of political instability for their own economic purposes, and are able to mobilise large numbers of foot soldiers relatively easily in a situation of pervasive poverty and insecurity. The impact of conflict on social institutions and processes can be seen in the unravelling of 'traditional' kinship relationships and methods of cooperation, mistrust between groups, breakdown in the moral and social order and of 'traditional' methods of cooperation, and the weakening of local governance structures.

Displacement can rupture social relationships but in certain circumstances it can also diversify and strengthen them. Communities cannot be assumed to be uniform in their response to conflict – different social relationships give rise to different coping and adaptation mechanisms, and while conflict results in losses, it also brings changes that transform societies. The implications for those providing support in post-conflict environments are that they must be mindful of vested interests and how (new) political actors play a role in determining access to resources. They must be careful to avoid rebuilding institutions that had roles in creating conflict in the first place; be aware that regulatory reform may reflect only commercial interests; be conscious of alliances between customary authorities and conflict groups, and of the challenges of creating a more inclusive system of local governance for the post-conflict period.

### ***Agriculture and food security***

Agriculture and trade, crucial for most people's survival, decline rapidly as conflict devastates agriculture and compromises food security. Widespread

food insecurity and chronic malnutrition become the norm, as they did in Angola, in Mozambique, and now in Burundi. Efforts to develop basic production capacities are continuously hampered by continuing insecurity, and looting of seeds and planting material delay recovery and the stabilisation of food production. The food security situation therefore remains very precarious.

Access to land and markets are hampered. The scarcity of food and resources experienced by armed groups – rebels and government troops – increases the vulnerability of civilians living in refugee camps, as combatants target these sites. Crime levels may rise because of banditry where populations are unable to establish food security.

Lands are often not tended, and protection and storage of stocks are compromised because of massive displacement, insecurity, the presence of landmines, and the conscription of manpower. Social and gender relations, so important to the survival of communities with small margins, are disturbed.

Communities are often displaced on to marginal lands, which in turn results in soil erosion, and depletion or destruction of natural resources that are not managed. Refugee camps and settlements highlight the relationship between conflict and environmental stress and degradation, though they are by no means the only links in this chain. Natural resources are frequently ravaged to finance conflicts. Deprived of funds from international sources and unrestrained by internal and external means of regulating violence, wars are increasingly reliant upon the steady extraction of natural resources and predation of civil assets.

New technological aspects of warfare have also increased the insecurity of civilians. Landmine accidents increase during the agricultural season when returning populations begin cultivating abandoned or unused lands.

Markets collapse as the delicate network of trade between peasant communities is disrupted and even destroyed, as is that between the towns and the countryside. Small traders, the essential links between peasant producers and the urban market, who provide farmers with access to vital agricultural inputs, are driven out of business, either because their stores are destroyed or because hostilities prevent them from selling in needy areas. They therefore refrain from purchasing surplus crops, even when these are available.

Veterinary services and control measures prove impossible to maintain, resulting in the rapid spread of animal disease and massive losses of stock. Resilience

to natural and other shocks is undermined at both the household and national levels and disaster mitigation is extremely limited. Conflicts thus act to drive disaster risk upwards, so that all that is required to trigger widespread suffering is a modest environmental hazard such as an unexceptional drought or heavy rainfall. The relief orientation and prolonged nature of donor support in the case of conflicts act to build a culture of dependence, mitigating against long-term structural, and developmental solutions to food insecurity. Under these conditions, sustainable efforts to reduce disaster vulnerability receive little attention and acts to discourage local initiative for the ownership of, and responsibility for, disaster risk. Furthermore, the apparent lack of strategic capability at local and national level strengthens the case for outside assistance. Communities are often left with little ability to provide for themselves, let alone place demands on their government. Added to this, years of NGO hand-outs weaken the will to work, leaving a legacy of an 'emergency mentality'.

Livelihoods are threatened because access to food is limited, the collapse of small industry and social services, the increased risk of disease, the collapse or fragmentation of communities, and an increase in the number of female-headed households. The rural economy becomes geared towards obtaining food security through subsistence activity, and poverty increases as coping mechanisms falter.

## **International assistance in post conflict situations**

Donors and aid agencies have an important role to play in maintaining a nascent and fragile peace process in the immediate post-war period. Most notably they have the comparative advantage of being in a position to offer analytical advice and strategic support. But this means they have to maintain a sharper poverty focus and a strong awareness of the most obvious economic legacy of the war, such as its huge negative effect on the capital stock, especially in rural areas where the parties to the conflict generally consider any sign of wealth or government institutions a legitimate target. Extreme, long-term under-development of the rural economy is one of the more lasting effects of political instability and chronic conflict.

Apart from observing the reintegration of refugees and the nutritional and health status of the population, assisting with the one-off donations to physically shelter and feed former refugees, aid agencies can assist in reviving local trading and the local economy. The single biggest poverty alleviation success in Mozambique, for example, has been the increase in smallholders' agricul-

tural output and the improved competition in agricultural markets. Rural agricultural development, however, cannot be addressed in isolation from other income-generating activities that allow households to diversify their income and asset base. Road rehabilitation, maintenance and de-mining promise high and immediate returns, providing employment opportunities, lowering the costs of humanitarian deliveries, and allowing the development of local administrative capacities. Support for government legislative and administrative capacity at all levels aimed at assisting smallholders to increase post-war production is essential. This cannot be done in the absence of an awareness of the way in which the allocation of aid may have a political impact that reinforces the vested interests of elites, thus contributing to political destabilisation and increasing economic inequality across the country.

In the final analysis, human security depends on the interweaving of various dimensions: during periods of reconstruction, the focus has to be on addressing poverty while engaging in economic policy reform. Recovery cannot be compartmentalised – if it is not broad-based, inequality will be sustained.

The prevention of conflict begins and ends with the promotion of human security and human development. However, 'human security' has become a buzz-phrase in the public arena, with all the danger this implies for it to become virtually meaningless. Only by locating threats to human security in particular contexts and events can we really bring our critical faculties to bear upon the dilemmas to which it draws attention.

## **Africa's conflicts: A future perspective**

The post Cold-War optimism of a new era of peace and stability has faded. With the ending of the Cold War the veil obscuring the complexities of international interests has been lifted, and we are starting to discern the internal dynamics of conflicts. Sadly, the world, and in particular Sub-Saharan Africa, is neither a fairer nor a more peaceful place than at the beginning of the human rights revolution and the reality, as David Reiff points out, is that

[F]or most of recorded history, war and not peace has been the norm, and in many parts of the world it is likely to continue to be, perhaps forever.<sup>14</sup>

The globalisation agenda is serving to ensure that the West garners a disproportionate share of the benefits at the expense of the developing world. It

has not succeeded in reducing poverty, or in ensuring stability, even though the need to address conflict and its consequences has become a central concern. The international community seems easily seduced by the glory of a global approach, but overlooks root causes such as those relating to resource exploitation, poor governance and human rights abuses. At the same time development issues have become important, primarily in relation to security concerns. The question remains, for whom and for what ends, is the status quo perpetuated.

At a national level there appears, at first sight, to be a paradox: even in functionally weak states there may be a strengthening of the centre and its security apparatus vis-à-vis the population at large. But this strengthening of regimes is often at the cost of the increasing marginalisation, economic and political, of civil society. In consequence, human-centred development is overlooked, reinforcing and aggravating poverty and inequality, the reduction of which are so vital to mitigating conflict and strengthening post-conflict recovery. For peace to hold, growth must not favour only a narrow elite but must improve the incomes and human development indicators of the majority of people. Rather, what we are seeing is that “the only beneficiaries of war economies are the local political elites, business mafias and their henchmen and such merchant adventurers and their global partners as indulge themselves in rough and extractive trade.”<sup>15</sup>

We are likely to see more low intensity, localised conflicts, but fewer, if any, large scale chronic conflicts such as those experienced in Angola for 27 years before 2002. We are also likely to see the subsidence of functioning states where there are zones of economic exploitation. There are some positive developments. At a global level we have the formation of the G3, which creates a powerful front for the defence of the developing world’s agenda. At a continental level, African leaders are making efforts to chart a new course, to tackle the root causes of poverty and conflict. They are working together with the G8 to agree on a new plan for Africa that includes intense action to resolve conflicts (such as the formation of the Peace & Security Council, SADC’s Mutual Defence Pact and developments towards establishing an African Peace-Keeping Force) and address poor governance, as well as extra support in aid, trade and debt relief to those countries committed to good governance. Although this new African security architecture is in its infancy, the momentum has been created for greater involvement of Africa in the resolution and management of its own armed conflicts. Of crucial importance will be the role of regional organisations such as ECOWAS, SADC and ECCAS in the strengthening of the AU’s intervention capacity in the resolution of conflicts.

The UN has a critical role. At the time that the UN was established, concepts such as human security, human development, governance and peace building, if they existed at all, were little used or understood, and it was the rights of, and relationships between, states (rather than individuals or groups) that were the focus of attention. Increasingly since the end of the Cold War, the international community has begun to focus on the linkages between peace and development. This has required an enormous and continuing institutional adaptation within the UN, as a result of which the development and conflict management communities have started to work closely together. Questions about the effectiveness of aid, in particular in those countries affected by violent conflict, have become topical and there is a growing consciousness that underdevelopment frequently coincides with a susceptibility to violent conflicts. This, in turn, makes the very countries most in need of development assistance among the hardest to help. Likewise, the role that development practitioners can play in post-conflict and conflict-prone environments – in mitigating, assisting or aggravating the situation – has come to the fore. The UN Security Council has begun to move away from a narrow political/military conception of peace and security to a much broader understanding that acknowledges the place of human rights, economic and social factors, and even health. This shift has been recognised in the increasing willingness of the Security Council to authorise peacekeeping operations with multidimensional mandates. This trend has contributed to an environment in which the conflict management and the development communities find themselves cooperating more and more often. UNDP teams enter the field even before conflict has ended, to ensure that there is a smooth relief-to-development continuum, and peacekeeping operations are involved increasingly in conflict resolution-peace building mechanisms. The convergence of development/humanitarian and peacekeeping/political missions is an important trend in the way the UN does business, calling for UN agencies, aid organisations and governments to cooperate and coordinate activities in an integrated fashion. This approach is not uncontroversial.

The role of humanitarianism has been questioned increasingly in the last decade. The Rwandan genocide was one of the events of the 1990s that haunted mainstream humanitarianism, confronted by its failure to do more than alleviate. Coupled with this was the recognition that development aid given to corrupt or repressive regimes does little good. This has brought about an integration of the two domains of humanitarianism and human rights – a ‘new humanitarianism’ – which makes the protection of basic human rights part of the core activities of humanitarian field operations. But this has been accompanied by declining support from donors, which has forced recovery

programmes to scale back their activities. The justification for this reversal is that it is morally unacceptable to cooperate with tyranny, and the principle that has been adopted appears to be one of doing no harm and not escalating violence. This rests on an assumption that withholding aid may ultimately benefit the masses of people the aid was ostensibly meant to assist.

The broad consensus about what needs to be done points to issues such as cancelling Africa's unsustainable and largely illegitimate debt; supporting African diplomats and civil society in resolving conflicts, managing peace negotiations and building peace; investing development resources in health, education, and other sectors that build human resources, and providing adequate resources to support the fight against AIDS. Africa's issues are global issues – the international community cannot ignore this, and must build support for efforts to manage the challenges of poverty, HIV/AIDS and conflicts by way of concrete actions that will support lasting peace and development.

Continuing instability and chronic conflict do not have to dominate Africa's future.

## Notes

- 1 K Ballentine & H Nitzschke, *Beyond greed and grievance: Policy lessons from studies in the political economy of armed conflict*, in International Peace Academy Policy Report, October 2003, p.12
- 2 Ibid, p.2
- 3 'Lootable' resources, such as alluvial diamonds and illegal narcotics are more likely to be implicated in non-separatist insurgencies, acting to prolong conflicts through the benefits they bring to rebels and conflict-dependent civilians. 'Unlootable' resources, such as oil and gas, tend to be associated with separatist conflicts. Ibid, p. 1
- 4 Oil, potentially Sudan's greatest resource, is today its curse. In the first two years of oil production, military spending doubled and the war became more violent, with a fierce increase in aerial bombardment and attacks by helicopter gunships. (Britain plays a significant role, with British-made pumps and pumping stations driving the oil pipeline.)
- 5 In Liberia, the control and exploitation of diamonds, timber and other raw materials was one of the principal objectives of the warring factions. Control over these resources financed the various factions and gave them the means to sustain the conflict.

- 6 The DRC has an abundance of natural resources, including diamonds, oil and a range of other minerals. It is this abundance that has been the primary cause of conflict, with different factions seeking to claim ownership of these riches.
- 7 M Robinson, cited in J Gomes Porto, *The role of conflict analysis in conflict resolution: Reflections on international mediation, the case of Angola*. Unpublished Ph.D., University of Kent, 2002, p. 13.
- 8 K Annan, *The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa*, Report to the UNSC, 16 April 1998.
- 9 DR Congo: *War crimes in Bukavu*, Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper, June 2004.
- 10 Sudan, *Darfur destroyed*, Human Rights Watch, [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)
- 11 L Ohlsson, *Livelihood conflicts: Linking poverty and environment as causes of conflict*, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, December 2000, p. 3.
- 12 B Korf, *Contract or war? An essay on institutional logic in violent conflicts*. Berghof Occasional Paper 23, April 2003, p. 20.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 D Reiff, *A bed for the night: Humanitarianism in crisis*, Vintage, 2002, p 332.
- 15 Discussion with Richard Cornwell.