

# INTRODUCTION

---

Towards the end of 2003 the African Security Analysis Programme (ASAP) of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) hosted an expert workshop in Pretoria on *Supporting sustainable livelihoods: A critical review of assistance in post-conflict situations*. The aim of the workshop was to bring together a range of experts in the field of post-conflict recovery and development and to stimulate informal discussion and brainstorming.

The Sustainable Livelihoods (SL) approach to conflict, which puts the livelihoods of poor people at the forefront of analysis and action, was the basis for the discussions about development initiatives in post-conflict regions. Country specific examples were used to reflect both on the negative and positive aspects of the approach and how they can aid the development process in post-conflict situations.

## **Background, motivation and objectives**

ASAP's role within ISS is to track and analyse threats to human security in selected countries, focusing broadly on the politico-military and the developmental and humanitarian aspects of conflict situations, with the intention of strengthening African capacity for conflict prevention, management and resolution. More specifically, ASAP aims to deepen the human security debate and enrich it with a more profound understanding of the interaction between complex humanitarian and security crises. Several countries in Africa are currently facing situations of chronic conflict and political instability, reflected in situations of an urgent need for food and non-food aid arising from a combination of conflict, drought and economic decline. In addition there is the terrible legacy of health problems arising from war, which creates an environment conducive to the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases. Health problems are further aggravated by the collapse of water and sanitation infrastructure.

Increasingly, we are seeing a ‘deadly triad’ of interrelated burdens – chronic food insecurity, HIV/AIDS, and conflict – added to which are disease, a reduced capacity to govern and provide basic services, and massive displacement, all of which constitute endemic threats to the livelihoods of Africans. Indeed, many more people are currently exposed to non-traditional threats to their security than to death either directly or indirectly as a consequence of armed conflict. These are not only causing sickness and starvation, but are a severe long-term challenge to economies and societies.

## **Moving from conflict to recovery**

Countries attempting to move from conflict to recovery face a daunting range of tasks if peace is to be sustained, renunciation of violence being just the first step: conflict resolution, peace-enforcement, demobilisation, and meeting chronic and acute humanitarian needs. Key policy objectives are, first, to reduce the risk of further conflict as rapidly as possible and, second, to restore favourable economic and social conditions. Because the domestic costs of civil war continue long after the fighting ends, addressing immediate needs for humanitarian assistance simultaneously while improving the longer-term prospects of communities is critical. More particularly, if peace is to last it is critical that economic policies do not favour a narrow elite (which may also harm the poor). There must be broad-based recovery that improves the incomes and human development indicators of the majority of people, especially the poor. The alternative is a fragile, ‘negative’ peace, an underdevelopment-conflict cycle. Without peace there is no development, and there can be no peace without development.

## **Difficulties facing humanitarian organisations**

Using aid effectively during early post-conflict years is extremely difficult, but can be most effective in raising growth if the institutional capacity to use it is in place. The SL approach requires new ways of thinking about institutional and organisational arrangements for development.

Agencies face three main operational challenges in establishing ways in which development aid can address the root causes of conflict and promote peace during post-conflict transition. First, it is important to link development and peace initiatives with each other so that they simultaneously address the material conditions of violence and empower people to resolve their conflicts

peacefully. Second, to promote long-term development and minimise the chance of renewed violence, aid agencies must incorporate local beneficiaries in the planning and implementation process of projects. Finally, agencies need to develop flexible and long-term frameworks to sustain the peace process.

The first task facing the humanitarian community is to try to navigate through the politics of a region. It is a myth that humanitarian aid is non-political, and it cannot be assumed that the giving of assistance to alleviate pain does not include challenging the status quo. Examples of mismanaged development aid as a source of food insecurity and conflict also abound in Africa. Addressing both immediate and longer-term needs requires that there should be no fixed boundaries between humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development cooperation. This, however, raises difficulties of coordination between government, donors and NGOs, more particularly because war weakens and destroys institutions. The response of humanitarian organisations and governments requires focused attention, a long-term perspective, and also new and integrated responses. Humanitarians are working with very limited tools when responding to immense, multi-dimensional needs. At the same time, conventional modes of humanitarian action, though essential, are trying to find their place within a visionary, comprehensive and long-term redefinition and reorientation of aid.