



Occasional Paper #33

Relief and Development:  
The Struggle for Synergy

Ian Smillie

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Occasional Papers is a series published by

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## CONTENTS

Foreword by Larry Minear .....	v
Acknowledgments .....	ix
Acronyms .....	x
Executive Summary .....	xiii
Introduction .....	xvii
Definitions .....	xviii
Why the Link between Relief and Development is Important .....	xx
A Review of Continuum Thinking .....	xxii
Institutional Attempts at Synergy .....	xxvi
1. The Struggle for Innovation in the Field .....	1
Quick Impact Projects .....	1
Haiti in Transition .....	7
Transition in Bosnia and Herzegovina .....	11
Conclusions .....	22
2. The Challenge of Timing .....	25
Timing in “Loud” Emergencies: Warning Does Not Mean Response .....	25
Timing in Chronic Emergencies .....	30
Conclusions .....	33
3. The Challenge of Funding .....	35
Overall Aid Trends .....	35
Short-Term Funding, Long-Term Needs .....	38
Competition Versus Coordination .....	41
The Private, For-Profit Sector: Helping or Hindering? .....	46
Conclusions .....	50
4. The Challenge of Understanding .....	53
Knowledge, Information and Learning .....	53
Evaluation and Knowledge .....	56
Institutional Cultures .....	58
Understanding Local Cultures .....	61
Safeguards .....	64
Attempts To Improve the Knowledge Base .....	66
Conclusions .....	69

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5. Conclusions .....	71
Institutional Mandates .....	71
Timing .....	75
Funding .....	75
Understanding .....	77
Recommendations and their Limitations .....	78
Notes .....	83
Appendix I: About the Author and the Humanitarianism & War Project .....	95
Appendix II: Suggestions for Further Reading .....	99

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## FOREWORD

The much-maligned relief-to-development “continuum” is second perhaps only to “coordination” as perennial nominee for ho-hum topic of the year among humanitarian agencies. The continuum, it seems, also rivals coordination for the most frequently recurring subject in conferences, aid agency discussions, and journal articles. Like coordination, mere mention of the continuum produces yawns, stifling productive discussion of serious policy issues.

As with coordination, however, understanding the connections between relief and development and the realization of synergy between them is central to effective humanitarian action. However threadbare most discussions of the concept, there is general agreement that unless relief efforts capitalize on inherent development potential, the vulnerability of societies in crisis to emergencies is likely to continue and perhaps deepen. Conversely, there is little doubt that development work, properly understood and managed, represents a solid investment in avoiding future emergencies. The intermediate stages on the would-be continuum between relief and development—whether labeled reconstruction, rehabilitation, or transition—have their own dynamics and connections to activities that are either more short-term or long-term.

In keeping with the purposes of the Humanitarianism & War Project, this monograph approaches the relationships between relief and development less as a matter of theory than as a challenge to effective programming. It examines the origins and evolution of the idea of a continuum, including the now widely acknowledged limitations of the construct. Taking as an objective the need for aid practitioners to capitalize on the development potential in emergency relief situations, it examines recurring obstacles in the struggle to unleash synergy. Rather than proposing an alternative paradigm, it identifies what, in the experience of practitioners, has and has not proved effective in maximizing mutually reinforcing interactions.

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The continuum concept, innovative in its own time, has been rejected largely without a concomitant identification of lessons to be learned or institutional changes to be made. At a time of major cutbacks in international assistance and lagging international political will, capturing the potential synergy in aid commitments becomes ever more imperative. Moreover, to the extent that the continuum has become engulfed in overlapping and conflicting mandates among various aid organizations, clearer understanding of synergy may also provide guidance in unsnarling institutional relationships.

This study is one of a set of research activities being conducted during Phase 3 of the Humanitarianism & War Project (1997-1999), the overall theme of which is the dynamics of learning by humanitarian organizations after the Cold War. Since its inception in 1991, the Project has conducted some 15 case studies of individual crises, conducted thousands of interviews with those involved, and examined a number of crosscutting issues, including the humanitarian roles of the military and the media. In the current phase, we are identifying and analyzing innovations in humanitarian practice that seek to respond to the changed international geopolitical situation. The research program of which this monograph is a part is detailed in Appendix 1, which also describes the Project itself and identifies its contributors. A list of publications, many of which can be downloaded in their entirety, can be found at our website ([www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson\\_Institute/H\\_W/](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson_Institute/H_W/))

This monograph has been more than three years in the making. It has benefited from wide-ranging conversations with many policymakers, aid managers, and frontline practitioners. It has drawn on a companion study undertaken by Project consultants Joanna Macrae and Mark Bradbury on UNICEF's experience with transition planning in Africa. Joanna Macrae provided useful comments on earlier drafts of this manuscript, as did Colin Scott, Peter Uvin, Patricia Weiss-Fagen, Sharon Capeling-Alakija, and Brian Rowe. We thank them for their input.

Some of the findings of the study, which addresses challenges

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faced by governmental as well as private agencies, were tested in a meeting at the end of 1998 with major North American nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The organizations present included some agencies with either relief or development portfolios and others with multiple mandates covering a full spectrum of activities. There was broad consensus that synergy is more likely to be realized by the latter group, although it was also recognized that better synergy between relief and development is not assured by having more agencies attempting to do everything. Even agencies with a full range of activities experience internal difficulties in overcoming the compartmentalization of relief and development tasks. Participants agreed that in an age of specialization, some specialization of function is desirable, whether within or between aid agencies. That said, building synergy between relief and development does not come easy, either for relief-only or for broader spectrum institutions.

In publishing this study, we take the occasion to express our appreciation to the many persons who have been associated with the research in one form or another. This includes those who have shared their ideas in interviews at headquarters and the field with Ian Smillie as well as those who have read and commented on earlier drafts of the manuscript. We also acknowledge with thanks the assistance in editing and production from Fred Fullerton and George Potter of the Watson Institute. Finally, we express appreciation to Ian Smillie himself, who brings to this review a lifetime of work on development issues and of interactions with private and governmental agencies. A biographical note on the author is included in Appendix I. Appendix II contains some suggestions for further reading.

As we will continue to examine the issues raised in this monograph, we welcome and solicit reactions to it. The topic has numerous implications for how aid agencies understand their tasks, how they relate to other institutions, how they train their staffs, and how they evaluate and learn from their work. A number of these themes are also in the process of being explored in other Project initiatives, particularly studies on coordination and insti-

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tution-building that will be completed this year and next.

Larry Minear  
Providence  
January 1999



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many individuals shaped the contours and the details of this monograph. I am particularly grateful, however, to several people who commented on an early draft or who helped point me in the right direction. These include Sharon Capeling-Alakija, Joanna Macrae, Brian Rowe, Colin Scott, Patricia Weiss-Fagen, and Peter Uvin. Thomas G. Weiss and Larry Minear provided guidance and support; they also poked and prodded and made me think twice about everything I wrote. Brenda Cupper, CARE's Balkans Director, not only provided helpful comments and pointed me in the right direction, she put me in a jeep and sent me there, to Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Tuzla and other places where I might get a good view of the struggle for synergy between relief and development.

Ian Smillie  
Ottawa  
November 1998

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## ACRONYMS

ACORD	Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development
ANC	African National Congress
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee [OECD]
DFID	Department for International Development [UK]
DHA	Department of Humanitarian Affairs [UN]
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
EU	European Union
Fad'H	<i>Forces Armées d'Haiti</i>
FINNIDA	Finnish International Development Agency
FRETILIN	Front for an Independent East Timor
GDP	gross domestic product
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
IDB	Inter American Development Bank
IDRC	International Development Research Centre [Canada]
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LRD	Linking Relief and Development
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
MSF	<i>Médecins sans Frontières</i>
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [UN]

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OFDA	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance [U.S.]
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHR	Office of the High Representative [Bosnia]
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives [USAID]
QIP	quick impact project
RS	Republika Srpska
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SFOR	Stabilization Force
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and North- ern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNAVEM	United Nations Angola Verification Mission
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDDMS	United Nations Development Support and Management Services
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNOSOM	United Nations Operations in Somalia
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNTAG	United Nations Transition Group [Namibia]
U.S.	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme [UN]



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This occasional paper explores the relationships between emergency and development assistance. These relationships are important because the development community has seen much of its investment eroded or negated in recent years by war and governmental collapse and because relief agencies have recognized the need for sustainable peace if their work is to have long-term significance. Understanding the connections is also important because of evidence that emergency assistance can be inappropriate or even dangerous and that development aid, like emergency assistance itself, has in some cases contributed to fueling and igniting conflict.

From the 1960s into the 1980s, the standard approach to relief and development was a linear one, with both seen as distinct and essentially sequential types of effort. The concept of a “continuum” in which the external response to an emergency moves from relief through reconstruction to development represented a useful conceptual innovation. However, the approach was still based on the notion that at each distinct stage there would be specialized institutions to take and then pass on responsibility for discrete and phased programming. In the early 1990s, the continuum concept gave way to more holistic thinking. As a result, relief and development are no longer viewed as self-contained and mutually exclusive. Linkages can and must be made if reconstruction and development are to be sustainable and recurring relief avoided.

This study highlights three challenges encountered by organizations committed to making effective links between relief and development: *timing*, *funding* and *understanding*. These are examined through the lens of UNHCR’s innovative quick impact projects (QIPs), reconstruction efforts in Haiti, and the return of minority refugees to Bosnia after the 1995 Dayton Peace Accord.

Each case sheds light, with varying emphases, on each of the three challenges. These are the warp of the paper. The weft is a reconsideration of now disparaged historical organizing meta-

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phors—the continuum, the merry-go-round, and the conveyer belt. These are resuscitated for their value in describing not so much what should be but what still remains, for better or worse, the basic approach to relief and development.

The first challenge concerns appropriate *timing*—when to engage, when to modify the intervention, and when to withdraw. An essential ingredient of prevention, conflict reduction, and conflict resolution, appropriate timing is also important in terms of knowing if, when, and how to move from basic humanitarian relief to more developmental objectives. Examples of the problem include action too late in Rwanda and perhaps Kenya; departure too soon in Haiti; and transition too fast in Cambodia, Sierra Leone, and Bosnia. Key determinants of timing include political will and financial resources. They can be implicated in hurrying or delaying humanitarian response as well as in rushing the move from relief to development programming. They can be the cause of precipitous agency withdrawal and of the recent obsession with “exit strategies,” which may or may not be appropriate to the pace of social and economic change on the ground. Although there are a few cases in which appropriate timing has allowed for improving synergy between relief and development, the study finds that timing remains a fundamental problem on the ground, preventing better cohesion, let alone synergy.

*Funding* is the second challenge. Emergency funding remains sporadic, arriving in short-term bursts and often after lengthy delays. It can be patchy, and much of it is overtly political. Development assistance too can be patchy, cumbersome, and rigid, often arriving late and without reference to the emergency that it follows. Throughout the 1990s, official development assistance (ODA) declined dramatically, which exacerbated competition and created other obstacles to operationalizing links between emergency and development assistance. Declines in levels of international assistance have made it more difficult to realize potential synergy; experimentation is most difficult when resources are dwindling, donors are taking a closer look at supposedly successful initiatives; and practitioners are on the

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defensive. Short on unrestricted private donor funds, many NGOs have in recent years become significant contractors for governments and multilateral agencies, a trend that can mean less independence in where, when, and how an organization runs its programs. The obverse, however, is that governments have become increasingly dependent upon NGOs for the delivery of emergency assistance. Aid agencies are not the only economic actors. Commercial interests can be as potent a determinant of outcomes, although the role of the private sector in emergencies and their aftermath is oddly understudied.

Knowledge and information are related but different; together they characterize the third and most important challenge, *understanding*. Understanding represents the most difficult challenge, a sine qua non for proper timing and a prerequisite for the wise use of whatever funding is available. While both knowledge and information may be in short supply, much greater emphasis has been placed by practitioners on information, especially at either end of the relief-development spectrum, than on knowledge. Inappropriate blueprint-type reconstruction and rehabilitation programs continue to abound, in part because of serious impediments to institutional learning. These impediments include a fear of, and a consequent aversion to, evaluation and an environment in which relief workers suffer from danger, stress, overwork, and burnout. These realities leave institutional memories shallow and provide experienced workers with inadequate time to educate others. Different but equally serious learning impediments pervade the development enterprise. Even where understanding is not in short supply, its application remains heavily influenced by the clearly demarcated institutional borders that exist between relief and development. As a result, the process of lesson-learning, which might enhance the possibility for realizing synergy, too often fails.

The study offers several examples of laudable synergy between relief and development. A word is in order, however, about the subtitle, "The Struggle for Synergy." Over time, thinking about the discrete components of relief and development changed

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to a more dynamic notion of a continuum, which has been rejected subsequently as itself too mechanistic and linear. We are still searching for the next image, but there is clear evidence that interactions between emergency aid and development can be improved so that the total effect (that is, the impact on civilian beneficiaries and on the target country) can be greater than the sum of the individual effects.

The study concludes by asking whether the stubbornly resilient chasm between the two can be bridged solely with rather isolated examples of synergy and further exhortations for better understanding and more coordination. It suggests that there may be a fundamental institutional problem that cannot be overcome without much stronger leadership and the demolition of institutional barriers. Virtually all of the various new initiatives to link relief and development are located within an aid superstructure that remains unchanged after a decade and a half of state collapse, horrific warfare, and millions of violent deaths. In practical terms, funding for transitional peace-building efforts was probably less than three percent of all emergency assistance in 1998, and an infinitesimal fraction of overall aid expenditure.

There is an appearance of activity, but the structures of the past—with all of their problems and dysfunctionality—remain firmly in place. For the moment, at least, we are at the beginning and not the end of our struggle for synergy. Oratory thus far outstrips examples of success.



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## INTRODUCTION

This occasional paper examines the relationship between emergency and development assistance, and the gray area in between. It examines the widespread intellectual and institutional agreement on the potential and the need for synergy, and the real-life dissonance between rhetoric and reality that exists in the field.

The study also examines how and why the concepts and approaches of the so-called continuum and merry-go-round to relief and development programming evolved and then became discredited. It looks at how and why they continue to shape institutional arrangements and response. The study examines the current efforts of some agencies to change the way that they operate as a result of their dominant concepts and approaches.

The paper begins with three case studies in Chapter 1. The first is an innovative attempt, the “quick impact projects” (QIPs) of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to make the transition between relief and development. The second is an examination of two specific types of transitional programming in Haiti during the mid-1990s. The third is a more comprehensive review of the complex issues preventing the return of minority refugees to their homes in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords. Additional illustrations are drawn from Sierra Leone, Sudan, Mozambique, Bangladesh, and Kenya.

The presentation of the research is organized around three basic themes or “challenges” that face any organization concerned with the transition from emergency relief to longer-term development. These challenges are discussed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, respectively:

- *the challenge of timing*: The paper reviews the utility of the “early warning” debate; the problem of knowing when and how to intervene; when and how to move from relief to reconstruction and development; and the constraints associated with restricted time horizons and “exit strategies;”

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- *the challenge of funding.* The study examines the problem of short-term funding for long-term needs, resource imbalances between countries and sectors, the impact of declining overall aid resources and the concomitant relief-development competition among and within agencies. It also reviews the impact of growing contractual relationships between official development agencies and NGOs; and
  - *the challenge of understanding.* The paper examines how international relief and development organizations learn or fail to learn, looking at the role of evaluation, academic inquiry, institutional culture, concepts of “professionalism,” and the usefulness of proliferating codes of conduct. It also notes evolving institutional innovations within bilateral and multilateral agencies as a tool for improved understanding and response.

The three challenges represent the warp of the paper. The weft is a reconsideration of now disparaged historical organizing metaphors for linking relief and development: the continuum, the merry-go-round, and the conveyer belt. These are useful in describing not so much what should be, but what often prevails on the ground.

### Definitions

The concepts of humanitarian action, transition, reconstruction, development, and the continuum itself have been the subject of countless studies, and their meanings are hotly contested. This is not the place for anything more than a flavor of the debate, and so third-party observations are offered here for three crucial ones—humanitarian action, transition, and reconstruction—to provide a sense of their use in the text.

The term “humanitarian action,” as used by the Humanitarianism & War Project, has both narrow and expansive meanings. In a focused sense, it retains its classical reference to “emergency assistance and protection activities, carried out devoid of extrane-

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ous agendas—political, religious, or otherwise.” However, “humanitarian action encompasses a broader range of longer-term activities that affirm the essential humanity and dignity of humankind,” write Larry Minear and Thomas G. Weiss. “In this larger context, such action includes not only the provision of food and medicine but also the reconstruction of war-torn infrastructure and psychological counseling for rape victims. It includes elements indispensable to keeping life human: for the population of Sarajevo, newspaper and ink for the daily newspaper; for the uprooted people of Afghanistan, assistance in contacting relatives...Connecting and animating all such actions is the essence of humanitarianism.”<sup>1</sup>

The concept of “transition” is more self-evident. United States Agency for International Development (USAID) defines it as “a rapid change from relief operations to reconstruction and sustainable development operations.”<sup>2</sup> However, Joanna Macrae and Mark Bradbury note that the term blurs the issue of when a given transition starts and stops. They ask, “what criteria determine when a country is defined as being ‘transitional’? There is evidence from an increasing number of agencies and countries that the shift in aid programming from relief to development is occurring earlier and earlier. That is, situations that effectively still constitute emergencies are being relabeled ‘transitional’ in order to justify the move into ‘development.’”

According to the World Bank, the concept of “reconstruction” has multiple dimensions. It “does not refer only to the reconstruction of ‘physical infrastructure,’ nor does it necessarily signify a rebuilding of the socioeconomic framework which existed before the onset of conflict,” states a framework document from the Bank. “Conflict, if it goes on for a long time, transforms a society, and a return to the past may not be possible or desirable. What is needed is the reconstruction of the *enabling conditions* for a functioning peacetime society.”<sup>3</sup>

“Development” is at the center of a varied and much debated constellation of concepts and terminology. Hegel, Darwin, and Marx were early speakers at a podium later occupied by Brandt,

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Ward, and Wolfensohn. Economic growth, economic development, social development, human development, integrated development, sustainable development, sustainable human development are terms vying for contention and meaning. For the purposes of this study, “development” connotes more a process than a state of being. It connotes peace, justice, social equity, and an absence of, or at least a declining trend in, ignorance, disease, and poverty.

### **Why the Link between Relief and Development Is Important**

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe burst global floodgates of disaffection, nationalism, and ethnic division. At the same moment in history, and not coincidentally, Western aid donors’ interest in development assistance began to wane. Unpopular regimes, cut loose from their patrons’ influence, military support, and economic patronage, alternately lost or clung to their moorings in a surge of civil wars and uprisings that gave new meaning to the term “conflict” and new urgency to the search for prevention and solution.

Between 1980 and 1995, more than half of the world’s poorest countries experienced conflict. Of these, 30 saw 10 percent of their people dislocated, with 10 of them having more than 40 percent of the population uprooted.<sup>4</sup> In the eight years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, four million people were killed in violent conflicts.<sup>5</sup> In 1998, there were more than two dozen major armed conflicts around the world and perhaps two dozen smaller flash points. Many of these conflicts had persisted for years, with devastating consequences. In 1996, there were 20 million displaced people—half of them in Africa—and there were almost 15 million refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>6</sup> In some countries, an entire generation has grown up in the shadow of war.

Insecurity breeds insecurity. Even in countries where peace has returned, long-term private investment remains insignificant, institutions fragile, trust in government low, and social reintegra-

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tion weak. Joblessness among young men socialized in war, especially in countries awash with light weapons, feeds continuing violence, social dislocation, family breakdown, and insecurity.

Understanding the relationship between relief and development is important for several reasons:

- There is growing evidence that development assistance has contributed to fueling and igniting conflict.<sup>7</sup> Aid sustained and nurtured bad governments throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America during the Cold War. In some cases, if not many, inappropriate aid conditionality may have forced an unsustainable pace of change or weakened states to the point where basic social services and the rule of law could no longer be maintained.
- Agencies with primary mandates related to emergency assistance have recognized the need for sustainable peace if their work is to have long-term meaning. The sporadic and protracted nature of many conflicts means that refugees and displaced people are increasingly returning to situations of ongoing uncertainty and insecurity. Effective reintegration then becomes synonymous with “sustainable” return which, according to UNHCR, “implies a situation where—ideally—returnees’ physical and material security are assured, and where a constructive relationship between returnees, civil society and the state is consolidated.”<sup>8</sup>
- The development assistance community has seen much of its investment eroded or negated by recurring emergencies. At a time of declining ODA, a significant proportion of the funds available has been diverted to relief. It is little consolation that by 1998 there were fewer wars and fewer refugees than four years earlier. The numbers still exceeded those two decades before by several orders of magnitude, and the projected cost of reconstruction—that is, of getting back to the original starting line—was enormous.
- Declining budgets no longer permit development agencies that once avoided emergency situations to ignore the lost

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opportunity, the damage to their past investments, or the implications for their future role, should peace return. The World Bank was inactive in 1985 in countries such as Cambodia, Lebanon, Uganda, Angola, and Mozambique; a decade later, it had significant programs in each of these countries. Those programs had to take into account the need for reconstruction and conflict prevention if they were to be sustainable. China and India excluded, 24 percent of 1994 IDA commitments were to countries that had undergone or were emerging from significant periods of intra-state conflict.<sup>9</sup> In these countries and others, “business as usual” was no longer an option.

In cases where a “post-conflict” situation actually prevails, there are still a host of practical problems in making connections between relief and development. Macrae and Bradbury suggest that the term “post-conflict” itself can be misleading because it implies an absolute cessation of violence; because it does not differentiate between regions within a country, some stable and some not; and because it can underestimate structural problems—extreme poverty or authoritarian rule, for example—that must be addressed for peace to become sustainable. The term “post-conflict” is also not very helpful as a planning tool in situations of protracted violence such as Afghanistan, Sudan, Angola, and Sri Lanka.<sup>10</sup>

The relationship between relief and development seems to be so poorly understood on the ground. Making effective links within and among aid agencies carrying out one or another set of activities seems difficult.

### **A Review of Continuum Thinking**

From the 1960s into the 1980s, the standard approach to relief and development was a linear one, with both seen as distinct and essentially sequential types of effort. The concept of a “continuum” in which the external response to an emergency

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moves from relief through reconstruction to development represented a useful innovation. However, the approach was still based on the notion that at each distinct stage there would be specialized agencies to take and then pass on responsibility for discrete and phased programming. It is worth noting that initially the continuum idea—often ascribed to, and now rejected by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)<sup>11</sup>—seemed to be a major conceptual breakthrough in post-Cold War thinking.

Following its initial elaboration, the concept was discredited for positing a linear progression from one stage to another. At each of the stages, there were supposedly specialist agencies that would take and then pass on responsibility for those in need of assistance, as though they were on a conveyer belt that would move them from one operation to the next. This approach, in fact, had long been standard practice in the response to natural disasters: emergency, reconstruction, then “back to normal.” It was also very much the way that development assistance had been structured because institutions, mandates, and departments were clearly distinguished one from another. Such distinctions are found in most UN agencies; and emergency departments in bilateral agencies and in NGOs like Oxfam, CARE, and Save the Children are similarly compartmentalized.

The continuum, linear in concept, was joined by a cyclical metaphor, the merry-go-round. The first overhead in every disaster management training workshop, recalls Hugo Slim, shows the cycle of natural disasters: “Its merry go round phases, from disaster at the top, through rescue and relief to rehabilitation, development and preparedness look increasingly meaningless as a means of analyzing complex emergencies.”<sup>12</sup> But not always. There *can* be a cycle in the transition from degenerative change to localized conflict through to outright war and governmental collapse. The return to peace, often uncertain, can prove elusive and result in a further downward spiral of confusion and war. Like the now unloved continuum image, the merry-go-round offered a simple organizing metaphor for chronic emergencies. It failed, however, to provide any understanding of how relief and development

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agencies should act or interact as the merry-go-round turned.

Today, the processes of economic and social change, particularly in situations of intermittent or endemic conflict, have come to be viewed as far more dynamic and interactive, circuitous and multidirectional. This conceptual change notwithstanding, much of the language of development still treats the process as a linear sequence in the case of countries, from *least-developed* to *developing* to *developed*; in the case of communities, from *dependency* to *sustainability*; and in the case of agencies, from *relief* to *reconstruction* to *development*. When the linear sequence breaks down, the merry-go-round analogy comes into play.

There can be a continuum from emergency to reconstruction to development. This is more or less what occurred after 1967 in the part of Nigeria known as Biafra, and in Bangladesh after its war of independence from Pakistan. It happened in Vietnam and a number of other wars and complex emergencies. There is, in fact, a logic to continuum thinking, borne out of the experience of conventional wars between states, internal conflicts such as Biafra, and the experience of natural disasters. There is also an understandable human element in the continuum, a natural desire to see the end of a war, to work towards peace, reconstruction and development, to minimize relief and dependency, and to emphasize self-sufficiency and independence. There can also be a political continuum, described in Ball and Halevy's 1996 *Making Peace Work*.<sup>13</sup> They divide the peace process into four linear stages: negotiation, cessation of hostilities, transition, and consolidation.

The fact that most victims of conflict are unlikely to make tidy intellectual and organizational distinctions between emergency and development increases the importance of making effective practical links between the two. For many victims of war, "normal" life was already fraught with risk. Their coping strategies for dealing with the possibility of environmental danger, for example, and its impact on crops and livelihood may not be significantly different from their methods of coping with physical insecurity and violence. Hunger, whether induced by war or by a development failure, is still hunger, and the institutional and technical



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differentiations in the donor approach may well be lost upon the population.

This raises the issue of chronic instability, in many countries the norm rather than the exception. In some—Afghanistan, for example—fighting may be a commonplace experience, but for much of the population, the battle is remote, and life’s struggles remain as they have been for generations. In such cases, the interactions between relief and development may be even more intimate. Relief workers may require a full arsenal of “development” techniques in order to remain relevant, while development workers may require familiarity with emergency response techniques.

In the search for alternatives to continuum thinking, other expressions have come into vogue. “Linking relief with development” (LRD)<sup>14</sup> is one that enjoys common currency. USAID, for example, has developed principles and operating guidelines on LRD, stressing the need to identify and address the “root causes of disaster vulnerabilities,” to build on local capacities, and to support rather than displace indigenous attempts to recover.<sup>15</sup> Another expression gaining currency is “relief-to-development-to-democracy” approach (RDD), which extends the connections.<sup>16</sup>

In the grand tradition of development neologism, a 1995 European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) study suggested that the idea of a “continuum” should perhaps be replaced by “contiguum” to reflect the dynamic aspects of both relief and development.<sup>17</sup> Based on the word “contiguous,” this still suggests adjacent rather than integrated approaches. “Transition” has become a common expression, although this term also suggests a linear move from one situation to another. The World Bank’s 1997 framework document on reconstruction, for example, refers repeatedly to “post-conflict” situations and “transitions from war to peace,” even if the peace it envisages is not a simple return to the status quo ante bellum.

The Bank does not normally work in areas of violent conflict. Hence, the distinction between one “phase” and another is important, as is the identification of “trigger points for moving in and out

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of a particular phase,”<sup>18</sup> because the Bank’s personnel and resources are present or absent depending upon the characterization. “Moving in and out” misses the reality that development or development-related work can take place *simultaneously* with emergency assistance, in the midst of war, and among refugees. Examples include training in primary health care, education, literacy, or veterinary work; the protection and promotion of human rights; mediation and negotiation; the strengthening of civil society organizations and the promotion of political options. This idea of simultaneity has played a prominent role in thinking about food aid for a decade or more. Discussion of “developmental relief,” although often restricted to small-scale examples of what can be done, is not new.<sup>19</sup>

### **Institutional Attempts at Synergy**

During the 1990s, most of the major relief and development agencies rethought their mandates, budgets, and activities. At the outset of the decade, the continuum concept gave way to more holistic thinking. As a result, relief and development are no longer viewed as self-contained and mutually exclusive. Linkages can and must be made if reconstruction and development are to be sustainable, and recurring relief avoided. In 1994, USAID created an Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) as a mechanism for the rapid assessment of, and response to, short-term political and economic needs in the important recovery stage of an emergency. Initiatives have included the demobilization and reintegration of soldiers, work on elections, landmine awareness, reduction of ethnic conflict, and building civil society. In 1995, ECHO published a discussion paper, “Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development,” aimed at better integration of EU development and emergency efforts. In the same year, UNDP created an Emergency Response Division; starting in 1997, five percent of UNDP’s core resources were set aside to build bridges between relief and development activities.

In 1996, the United Kingdom’s Department for International

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Development (DFID, at the time the Overseas Development Administration, ODA) established a Conflict Policy Unit “to help create the conditions necessary for conflict handling issues to be fully and effectively integrated into ODA policy and practice.”<sup>20</sup> Similar units and funds have been created in Canada, Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands. In 1997, the World Bank proposed “a new reconstruction framework,” which included rethinking the timing and scale of Bank involvement in post-conflict countries and formulating a set of operational recommendations with new guidelines for post-conflict reconstruction activities.

Although their mandates may seem limited and clear, many UN agencies have a range of emergency and post-conflict reconstruction responsibilities. Fourteen claim to have capacities in emergency relief; the same number—though not always the same agencies—work in the areas of protection and assistance to refugees and displaced people; ten have responsibilities for human rights; fourteen in peacebuilding and community development; five in the analysis of post-conflict recovery; twelve in disarmament and demobilization; nine in demining and mine awareness; and four in peacemaking.<sup>21</sup> Bilateral and multilateral agencies are not the only ones affected. Like other multifunctional NGOs, Oxfam believes that a good conflict prevention strategy, like a good development strategy, must target both short- and long-term needs. It must respond at both the micro- and macro-levels and address practical as well as strategic needs if it is to deal with causes as well as effects.<sup>22</sup>

The mantra of linking relief and development, and of the need for coordination between the many actors, perhaps reached its highest visibility in two 1997 documents: the *DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation* (reprinted in 1998 as *Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation on the Threshold of the 21st*

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*Century*) and the Carnegie Commission's report on *Preventing Deadly Conflict*. These documents and others are examined in the following pages. The first chapter examines how the three fundamental challenges—timing, funding, and understanding—impinge on the effectiveness of international agencies attempting to make real connections for real people between emergency and development assistance.