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# Conflict and Resilience: A Synthesis of Feinstein International Center Work on Building Resilience and Protecting Livelihoods in Conflict-Related Crises

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Daniel Maxwell, Elizabeth Stites, Sabina C. Robillard and Michael Wagner

**Tufts**  
UNIVERSITY

FRIEDMAN SCHOOL OF  
NUTRITION SCIENCE AND POLICY

Feinstein  
International Center



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Corresponding author: Daniel Maxwell  
Corresponding author email: [daniel.maxwell@tufts.edu](mailto:daniel.maxwell@tufts.edu)

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**Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of  
Nutrition Science and Policy  
Tufts University**

114 Curtis Street  
Somerville, MA 02144 USA  
Tel: +1 617.627.3423  
Twitter: @FeinsteinIntCen  
[fic.tufts.edu](http://fic.tufts.edu)

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# Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Conceptual Overview</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Conflict directly undermines livelihoods—and resilience</b>	<b>10</b>
What are the direct and indirect effects of asset stripping on livelihoods?	10
<b>Displacement affects civilian livelihoods during and after conflicts</b>	<b>12</b>
Who is displaced during conflict?	12
How does displacement affect livelihoods in the short term and long term?	14
Why are rights in land and natural resources critical?	15
<b>Conflict is not the only factor undermining the resilience of crisis-affected households</b>	<b>16</b>
How does competition for natural resources serve to deepen vulnerability in marginal regions?	16
How does economic marginalization compound the effects of conflict on livelihoods?	17
How do weak institutions and weak governance undermine resilience?	18
How do international politics and perspectives affect vulnerability in conflict?	19
How do idiosyncratic shocks undermine household resilience in conflict?	20
<b>Social networks affect people’s resilience in the face of conflict</b>	<b>21</b>
What role do social networks play in people’s ability to deal with conflict?	21
How do social networks enhance access to other livelihood assets during conflict or recovery after conflict?	23
How do conflict and crisis change the nature of social networks?	24
<b>Post-conflict dynamics can severely limit livelihood recovery</b>	<b>26</b>
When does conflict actually end?	26
Does a “peace dividend” follow conflict, enabling recovery?	27
In post-conflict recovery, does the focus shift from the “vulnerable” to the “viable”?	28
<b>Livelihoods programs alone cannot necessarily stabilize conflict-affected societies</b>	<b>30</b>
What is the current evidence relating to the ability of livelihoods programs to build peace?	30
<b>Major gaps in the research</b>	<b>32</b>
How is “conflict” measured and analyzed?	32
How do the strategies for supporting livelihoods resilience change based on the nature of conflict?	32
How does livelihood resilience in conflicts differ in urban settings?	32
What does a successful livelihoods resilience program in conflict look like?	33
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>35</b>





# Executive Summary

Resilience is defined as the ability of people to mitigate, weather, and “bounce back” from shocks or adversity. This definition is framed in terms of understanding capacities and risk—often particularly climactic, environmental, and economic risk.

However, understanding the resilience of people and their livelihoods to the kinds of shocks and stresses associated with violent conflict requires a different set of analyses. This paper reviews over fifteen years of research by the Feinstein International Center, Freidman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University in order to examine the nexus of conflict, livelihoods, and resilience. Its key findings are as follows:

**Conflict directly undermines livelihoods and resilience** through its effects on people’s assets and the systems upon which their livelihoods depend. In contemporary conflict, the destruction of livelihoods through looting and asset stripping is often deliberate. During conflict, households with assets can become targets, which turns their assets into liabilities. Assets are key to resilience, and any disruption in people’s access to assets can impact their ability to recover after conflict.

**Conflict also affects civilian livelihoods through displacement.** Displacement is one of the primary effects of violent conflict, and disconnects people from their previous livelihoods and forces them to adapt to new circumstances. These new circumstances may lead some to adapt dangerous, unsustainable, or illegal livelihoods to survive; others may actually find new opportunities that were denied to them under previous socioeconomic power structures. Often, these changing dynamics affect gender roles. The effects of displacement may be felt long after resettlement in the place of origin.

However, **conflict is not the only factor undermining the resilience of crisis-affected households.**

There are macro-level factors such as natural and economic hazards, competition over natural resources, chronic poverty, and poor governance, as well as idiosyncratic factors such as illness, non-

conflict-related deaths, and identity issues such as ethnicity, gender, and class. Conflict may compound these factors, but they must still be understood on their own to address underlying vulnerabilities.

Another important factor is **the role that social networks play in affecting resilience in the face of conflict.** Membership in a social network often helps people preserve their lives and livelihoods by giving them access to resources, migration opportunities, and labor markets. Despite these advantages, inclusion in a social network often comes with social obligations that can strain household resources. Social networks also have power dynamics that can disadvantage certain members, such as women, and exclude less powerful groups, leaving them even more vulnerable to shocks.

Despite the strong effects of conflict on resilience, **post-conflict dynamics can also limit livelihoods recovery.** There is often no clear end to a conflict, and even when the violence ends, the structural violence that preceded the conflict may persist. In addition, the effects of conflict are long-lasting: conflict may have permanently affected livelihoods assets, strategies, and governance systems. Often, important providers may be disabled, displaced, or dead, which impacts household resilience.

While many conflicts are driven by socioeconomic grievances, **investing in livelihoods cannot alone stabilize conflict-affected societies.** This is largely attributable to operational constraints (such as limited project and funding cycles), political constraints (such as linking these programs to counter-terrorism measures), failures to understand conflict dynamics, and unintended consequences of the programs themselves. There is still great merit to programs that seek to provide opportunities to conflict-affected communities; however, more evidence is needed to show how they build sustainable peace.



# Introduction

Since the crises in Somalia and the Sahel in 2011–2012, there has been significant investment in resilience. USAID defines resilience as “the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth” (USAID, 2012). Over this period, much of the focus of programmatic investment in resilience—as well as the policy imperatives—has focused on natural and environmental hazards, with the reduction of expenditure on humanitarian assistance in crisis being one of the expected outcomes of resilience investments. Yet between 2002 and 2013, over 80% of the humanitarian budget was devoted to conflict-related crises (UN General Assembly, 2016). While some investments in resilience have been made in conflict-affected areas, coming to grips with conflict is clearly a major priority for resilience policy and programming, and probably presents the biggest challenges as well. Resilience analysis and programming can be applied to a number of different kinds of shocks and stressors: climatic, environmental, economic, epidemic—as well as to rapid political change and conflict. But there has been significantly less research and application in the case of conflict.

For the past fifteen years, Feinstein has been examining the livelihoods of people in complex emergencies. It has built up strong scholarship oriented towards helping policy makers and practitioners understand the complexities of protracted crises—critically examining the intersection between humanitarian response, conflict, and historical marginalization. This paper will use this extensive set of research to answer the question, “What do practitioners and policy makers need to know about livelihoods in conflict in order to best support the resilience of conflict-affected people?”

The paper reviews Feinstein research across a number of different research projects and different countries in crisis to examine the resilience of people

and their livelihoods to mitigate, withstand, and recover from the shocks and stresses associated with conflict. Specifically, it examines the vulnerability of livelihoods during conflict, and whether and how households are able to recover their livelihoods after a conflict’s nominal end.

Some of these studies were specifically about conflict—or immediate post-conflict—dynamics. These include the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) studies (a comparative study across eight African and Asian fragile and conflict-affected countries—the Feinstein team led the research in South Sudan and Northern Uganda); the 2011 Horn of Africa Crisis study; and over a decade’s work on the crisis in Darfur. Other studies included work on livelihood systems under stress, with one of those stressors being localized or general conflict in Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Northern Uganda and Karamoja, Northern Kenya, and Somalia—as well as other studies not in Eastern Africa or the Greater Horn.

Summarizing the complete results of these studies—nearly 100 in all—is far beyond the scope of one paper. The intent here is to draw out some common themes about livelihoods and resilience in the context of conflict, and to identify some gaps in the knowledge of this nexus. Given that most of Feinstein’s research has not been in the area of program evaluation, this paper tends to be analytical rather than prescriptive—that is, it identifies problem areas and gaps in knowledge, rather than prescribing a set of policy imperatives for the future. The intent is that by identifying problem areas and gaps—across a wide range of different contexts, livelihood systems, and complex sets of constraints—this synthesis will contribute towards better policy making and practice. As such, it is not intended as guidance. In addition, this paper is a synthesis of Feinstein research as opposed to a general review of the literature on resilience and conflict. Work from fellow scholars is cited as needed, but the focus here is on research conducted by the Feinstein team.

The following section lays out some of the conceptual framework for looking at livelihoods and resilience in the context of conflict, and outlines some of the key linkages. The remainder of the paper is organized according to key categories of findings—and within these findings, the key questions that arise out of Feinstein research, accompanied by the best evidence from these studies. These key areas of findings include the direct impact of conflict on

livelihoods and particular livelihood assets; the multiple risks that conflict-affected populations face; the specific role that social connectedness and social networks play in conflict; “post-conflict” dynamics and how they affect livelihoods recovery; and the track record of trying to protect livelihoods in conflict. The final section outlines some of the key gaps in the research.

## Conceptual Overview

Livelihoods comprise “the capabilities, assets (including both natural and social) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base” (Chambers and Conway, 1992). Livelihoods are typically understood in terms of the assets that a social group holds (frequently, but not always, a household), the activities or strategies that social group employs, and the multiple outcomes its members seek to achieve—be that adequate food, adequate shelter, good health and nutrition, education for the future, and, critically (especially in conflict situations), safety and security. Livelihoods must also be analyzed in terms of the policies or institutions that shape or impinge on access to natural resources, labor markets, education, social relations, and myriad other factors that shape livelihood opportunities.

Resilience is defined in terms of the ability of the same kinds of social groups—an individual, a household, a community—to mitigate, weather, and “bounce back” from shocks or adversity—through coping, adapting, learning, and innovating. Just as livelihoods analysis requires an in-depth understanding of institutional and policy factors, multiple lenses are required for a complete understanding of resilience (Maxwell, Vaitla et al., 2013). First and foremost, the nature of livelihoods and the livelihood system must be understood. Second, the nature of risk and hazards

must be understood. And third, it is critical to understand how and why livelihoods change over time. Resilience is not a static concept—it implies behaviors that take place over time.

The Department for International Development (DFID) separated the analysis of resilience into three categories: exposure to a hazard, sensitivity to its effects, and various “capacities” to deal with shocks (DFID, 2011). These capacities are often described in terms of “absorptive” capacity (the ability to withstand a shock and recover); “adaptive” capacity (the ability to adapt to a changing environment); and “transformative” capacity (the ability to proactively shape the environment). An analysis of resilience thus involves an analysis of hazards in a given context, an assessment of which groups are the most exposed, and an understanding of the nature of their vulnerabilities.

Much of the research on resilience has focused on covariate risk—and especially climatic, environmental, and economic risk (Maxwell, Mazurana et al., 2017). While livelihoods analysis has long recognized conflict risk, questions remain about its application in conflict or fragile contexts—characterized by ineffective or illegitimate governance, weak institutions, and conflict or violent extremism. Conflict and “political” shocks and stressors are different from natural or environmental hazards. They are by definition human-made. People—and their livelihoods—need to be resilient to the effects of violence and conflict; however, this should not be interpreted as an acceptance

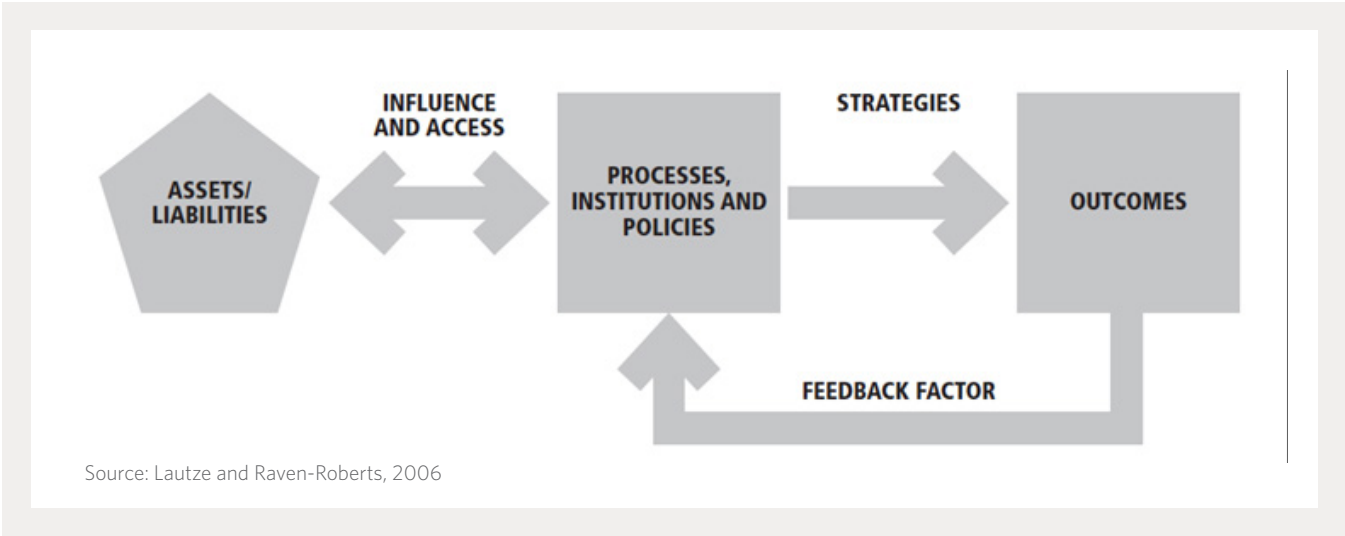


of the inevitability or “normality” of these shocks. Humanitarians frequently voice objections to the notion of “resilience” to violations of International Humanitarian Law, even while supporting people’s capacity to remain resilient in the face of the effects of such violations (ICRC, 2016).

Livelihoods are affected differently by conflict than by other kinds of shocks or stressors. The role of livelihood assets—critical to resilience in the face of climatic, environmental, and economic shocks—may be reversed in conflict. In particular, physical and financial assets can become liabilities very quickly,

making people more likely to be raided, looted, or targeted for attack (Lautze and Raven-Roberts, 2006). Sometimes membership in a social group—which in some kinds of shock can be a source of support—also may be used to target people for attack in conflict. And given the human-made nature of conflict, the range of factors that shape or constrain livelihoods and resilience are different as well. Much of the recent work on livelihoods and resilience in conflict has been shaped by the livelihoods analysis framework developed by Lautze and Raven-Roberts (2006), which reflects many of these differences (Figure 1).

Figure 1. A revised livelihoods analytical framework for conflict emergencies.



The assets (liabilities) pentagon includes natural assets (land, water, forest use rights); financial assets (money, savings, sometimes livestock); physical assets (productive tools); social assets (social networks, membership in groups) and human assets (health, ability to work, education). Outcomes include all the usual livelihood outcomes that people seek to achieve (adequate food, health, shelter, education, etc., and crucially—in the case

of conflict—safety and security). This framework builds on the initial analytical frames (for example, DFID, 1999) as modified for conflict (or complex humanitarian emergencies, in the language of Lautze and Raven-Roberts) and informs much of the research conducted by Feinstein that this paper synthesizes.

# Conflict directly undermines livelihoods—and resilience

While some types of conflict may not involve violence, the type of conflict with which we are concerned here involves violence and destruction. In the past, the destruction of livelihoods and civil institutions may have been a by-product of conflict, but in contemporary conflict, the destruction of livelihoods and livelihood assets is often deliberate. Sometimes communities are targeted in order to weaken them or even force them out; other times armed groups may simply be looting people's assets in order to sustain themselves. Looting or "asset stripping" is a common means of violence against a civilian population that turns assets into liabilities as a conflict evolves. Assets (of all kinds, not just physical or financial ones) are the key to resilience. Any disruption in people's access to their assets has a profound impact on their ability to sustain their livelihoods in times of stress or recover afterwards.

## What are the direct and indirect effects of asset stripping on livelihoods?

Building on the work of David Keen (1994), Feinstein research illustrates how asset stripping can be both direct and indirect, which helps to explain the breadth and depth of the impact of conflict on civilian lives and livelihoods. Direct asset stripping occurs as "systematic attacks...intended to destroy the livelihoods of people," while indirect asset stripping is "the systematic destruction of livelihoods as a result of processes, institutions and policies, many of which develop as a result of conflict" (Young et al., 2007, 11)—and which may contribute to the self-perpetuation of conflict as war economies develop, and certain forms of economic activity can be more easily conducted. These new processes

and institutions arise out of the conflict dynamics and, in turn, determine the overarching governance environment (Lautze and Raven-Roberts, 2006). Feinstein research shows a broad range of these conflict-related processes that result in indirect stripping of assets. These include:

- Erosion of market systems through border closures, collapse of supply chains, and insecurity at marketplaces;
- Insecurity that limits mobility and access to markets, resources, and services;
- Destruction and loss of public infrastructure;
- Collapse of public institutions such as healthcare, education, and pension systems;
- Land occupation and predatory grazing or other forms of usage;
- Environmental degradation arising out of maladaptive livelihood strategies;
- Collapse or politicization of systems of local governance;
- Marginalization of specific groups, leading to inequitable access to natural resources or social services, including relief or development assistance; and
- Erosion of social and political networks due to displacement, impoverishment, polarization, closure of borders, and limited mobility.

Interventions—for instance, shoring up collapsing markets, rebuilding schools, or providing relief—will also be affected by the emergence of these conflict-related systems. An example of this is the purchase of relief grain sold on the commercial market in Darfur to feed pastoralist livestock (Buchanan-Smith and Fadul, 2008).

The results of indirect asset stripping often go deeper than targeted direct attacks. During conflict,

new political and economic pathways develop with their own sets of codes and norms, and new or adapted livelihood strategies emerge from or are shaped by these pathways. The new governance systems and their supporting livelihoods become deeply enmeshed, a phenomenon that Young (2009) dubs the “conflict-livelihoods cycle.” Pulling apart this cycle can be extremely difficult due to its symbiotic and mutually reinforcing components. This dynamic was apparent in the raiding violence, retaliation, and asset accumulation practiced by young men at the height of the insecurity in the Karamoja Region of northeastern Uganda (Stites et al., 2007; Stites, 2013b). In parts of the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), many people turned to informal artisanal mining after conflict undermined agrarian livelihoods. Militia control of the mines (and miners) meant that this survival strategy fueled the war economy. National efforts to reverse this trend (through restrictions on artisanal mineral extraction, among other means) increased illicit extraction and smuggling, and undermined the survival economy in these areas (Kelly, 2014).

These processes, in turn, describe the ways in which livelihood assets become liabilities. During the conflict in Darfur, such assets included livestock, grazing areas, and land holdings. Lautze and Raven-Roberts (2006) illustrate how assets normally considered to be positive—any form of wealth or savings—made people extremely vulnerable to attack and asset stripping in the context of conflict. This is evident in the intensification of livestock raiding in conflict periods (Gordon, 2014; Maxwell et al., 2014; Young 2009; Young et al., 2005), theft of crops from fields by armed actors (Stites et al., 2006), and even attacks on those receiving food aid (Stites, 2006; Maxwell and Burns, 2008).

It is critical for external actors to consider the fluidity between assets and liabilities in planning interventions in fragile settings. For instance, plans by development partners to reintroduce livestock in northern Uganda were met with reluctance by some beneficiaries who did not want to increase exposure to cattle raids (Stites et al., 2006). Other beneficiaries in the same area, in contrast, felt that the benefits of restocking herds or being able to again plow with oxen outweighed the risk of being

raided. These discrepancies point to the need for a thorough understanding of the at times fine line between assets and liabilities in a given local context. Participatory approaches to design and targeting may also allow programs to better take into account the degree of a local population’s tolerance for risk and perceptions of factors contributing to vulnerability.

### Summary

Building on the observations of Lautze and Raven-Roberts, Feinstein research has demonstrated that the role of assets in resilience building is distinctly different in conflict—and may at times put people at greater risk rather than helping to reduce it.



# Displacement affects civilian livelihoods during and after conflicts

One of the primary effects of violent conflict is displacement, and it is often intertwined with the destruction of livelihoods discussed above. Displacement may be intentional on the part of armed actors to the conflict or may be a by-product of violence or livelihood destruction. Displacement is one component of the often-overlapping factors fueling broader migration trends. These may include economic migration, migration to access humanitarian assistance, climate-induced migration, and forced displacement. Regardless of the specific mechanisms and motivations behind these movements, displacement almost by definition disconnects people from their previous livelihoods and forces them to adapt to new circumstances. It is therefore essential to understand the dynamics of displacement and its effects on livelihoods during and after conflict.

## Who is displaced during conflict?

Displacement may be due to either sudden threats or gradual pressures that make staying in place impossible or undesirable. Actual or imminent attacks occur at the frontlines of conflicts, in areas prone to attacks by militias or other armed groups, or in zones of counterinsurgency efforts. These attacks—or the threat thereof—result in both internal displacement and cross-border flight, with the various options determined by location, access to borders, and the characteristics of affected households and individuals. In Somalia, for example, some displaced communities were able to cross into Ethiopia or Kenya, while others moved to Mogadishu or other urban destinations (Maxwell and Majid, 2016). Household dynamics may determine who flees and who stays behind. Families with many young or elderly members may have a difficult time staying together once on the move. Individuals within households may flee to avoid forced

conscription, sexual violence, or the kidnapping of children (Mazurana et al., 2012; 2014a). Some demographic groups make choices that change the profile of who flees and who remains. For instance, men of fighting age may fear moving in public or attempting to cross international borders if doing so leaves them exposed to forced conscription or targeting by combatants, leading to disproportionate numbers of women and children among the displaced. Elderly people may stay behind because they are too frail to travel or may believe they are unlikely to be targeted by armed groups.

Displacement often occurs when conflict disrupts livelihood systems. In Darfur, for instance, the conflict that began in 2003 curtailed grazing routes, undermined markets, slowed trade, and led to the border closure with Libya, thereby stopping the cross-border flow of goods, workers, and remittances (Young et al., 2005). In the war between northern and southern Sudan, farmers limited areas under cultivation (especially those far from home), many people lost large portions of their livestock, and the government of Sudan's "scorched earth" campaigns in oil-rich areas drove people out as their lands became uninhabitable (Maxwell et al., 2012). Many people were forced to move as the processes undermined their existing livelihoods.

The economic impacts of conflict and insecurity can have a snowball effect that is particularly acute for the most vulnerable. In the Karamoja sub-region of Uganda, uneven disarmament by the government in 2000–2001 led the Bokora territorial group to be repeatedly attacked by their still-armed neighbors, resulting in loss of life and cattle. Without livestock or protection, many Bokora out-migrated in search of work (Stites et al., 2007). More broadly, animal health deteriorated in the sub-region as insecurity prevented access to prime seasonal grazing areas,

and herders sold weakened animals at low prices. Many young people left rural areas to find work in local towns, neighboring districts, or urban centers elsewhere in the country (Stites and Akabwai, 2010; Stites et al., 2014). The example of migration within and out of Karamoja illustrates the often-blurred distinction between migration and displacement. Conflict and insecurity gradually undermine social and economic systems, and individuals or entire households eventually move in search of new means of survival (Stites and Akabwai, 2012; Maxwell, Mazurana et al., 2017; Maxwell et al., 2016b; d’Errico et al., 2014).

Widespread forced displacement is often the marker of a shift from what might be considered “background” levels of conflict (such as the low-level but continuous conflict experienced in pastoral areas in Karamoja, Uganda, in parts of Sudan, in South Sudan, and in southern Ethiopia) to a form of conflict that is instead transformative or highly disruptive. In South Sudan, for instance, violence associated with cattle raiding and inter-communal conflicts had been a part of life for decades (Gordon, 2014). However, the descent into civil war in December 2013 was characterized by the first widespread forced displacement that had occurred since the formation of the young state. Widespread displacement serves as a marker of the shift in conflict because of its pronounced and longstanding local impacts—including violence and human rights abuses, separation of families, conscription and abduction of children by armed forces, and loss of productive assets (Mazurana et al, 2014b; Maxwell et al., 2016b). In addition, widespread displacement can wreak havoc on host communities, thereby having an impact beyond the displaced population. Note that much of the investment in resilience in conflict-affected settings is mostly in the low-level, often resource-based, conflict areas. Widespread and politicized violence is a much more difficult context in which to work.

In considering displacement, Feinstein research indicates the importance of thinking about not only who is displaced but also who is not, and why. Conflict actors may allow certain groups to remain in place based on ethnicity, religion, or other characteristics (Young and Jacobsen, 2013). Forced displacement is often strategic and

designed to clear or seize territory, block or control access to resources, or use civilians for strategic ends. Indirect impacts of the displacement may simultaneously, however, have ripple effects that undermine the goals of the conflict actors. In Darfur, for instance, the displacement of farmers gave the Northern Rizeigat an advantage in rural areas but simultaneously led to the collapse of markets and access to supplies that the pastoralists depended on (Young, Osman et al., 2009).

People may be able to avoid displacement through self-protection strategies. For example, a Feinstein team visited a series of small villages in Kitgum District in northern Uganda in 2006. These households had abandoned (or refused to enter) the squalid internally displaced person (IDP) camps that were home to 90% of the Acholi population at the time, choosing instead to risk the persistent threats from Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebels and raiders from Karamoja. The villagers survived through a system of vigilance (whereby a rotating platoon of armed men would watch for intruders at night) and flight (whereby women and children moved higher up the hills when rebels or raiders approached). These strategies allowed households to access farmlands and avoid the crowded camps but brought regular exposure to extreme risks. Women explained that they hid their young children in crevices in the rocks when they could no longer carry them up the hills, instructing them to be quiet if the enemy approached. Women and older children covered themselves with animal hides to disguise themselves as rocks in the dark of night (Stites et al., 2006). International actors may wish to support local self-protection strategies, but many of the most effective strategies—such as marrying off young girls to militia members in exchange for protection—are unpalatable to humanitarian actors and create other problems in the longer term.

Faced with conflict and violence, many people do not move to safer areas because they are geographically, physically, socially, or economically unable to do so. In Darfur, ethnic affiliation determined where displaced households could and could not go. When the Northern Rizeigat experienced violent attacks, for instance, they had limited options and little access to humanitarian assistance. Many joined the ranks of the government of Sudan’s counterinsurgency

efforts in an effort to avoid further impoverishment and marginalization (Young, Osman et al., 2009). Likewise, ethnic and clan dynamics determined access to camps for Somalis seeking safety and food assistance in the face of famine (Maxwell and Majid, 2016).

Within households, it is often the elderly, disabled, or women with young, elderly, or disabled dependents who have difficulty fleeing (Mazurana et al., 2011). Households without economic or political assets—including cash, savings, or identity papers—may be unable to pay for the journey or navigate the complexities of crossing borders (Maxwell and Majid, 2016; Santschi et al., 2014).

## How does displacement affect livelihoods in the short term and long term?

Displacement often leads to the emergence of alternative coping strategies and new responsibilities by household members (Maxwell and Majid, 2016; Santschi et al., 2014; Young et al., 2005; Young, Jacobsen et al., 2009). Migration to towns in Karamoja due to insecurity and livestock loss has contributed to a gradual shift of economic responsibility from men to women, who support their families largely through natural resource exploitation (sale of firewood), brewing, and petty trade (Stites et al., 2014). Rural-to-urban migration flows have also led to a rise in the number of female-headed households in regions with endemic violence, which has shifted the traditional gendered responsibilities associated with livelihoods (Maxwell et al., 2012; d’Errico et al., 2014). Given these relatively rapid changes in livelihoods strategies and systems, struggles over new resources, including urban services, natural resources, and access to influence in new sites, are likely to emerge (Young, Jacobsen et al., 2009).

Although it undermines many livelihoods, displacement can also create opportunities for some households, particularly those that are better off or have a more diversified asset base. Displacement leads to new settlement patterns, economies, social dynamics, and power systems. Urban and peri-urban areas grow as people move to areas of greater

safety, and informal economies often expand greatly in these areas (Maxwell et al., 2012). Maxwell and Majid (2016) found that mobility and splitting of families (including into urban or camp settings) were critical household-level coping strategies that permitted more diversified access to resources and therefore greater economic security in the face of the 2011-12 Somali famine. In Karamoja and South Sudan, rural settlements became more concentrated as a means of self-defense against violent cattle raids (Stites et al., 2010). Power dynamics shift when communities are displaced into new environments; for instance, movements into urban areas often upend traditional rural systems of gerontocracy (whereby elders maintain a monopoly on power) and give more influence to young able-bodied men who can adapt to the urban environment (Sommers, 2010; Turner, 2004; Carlson et al., 2012; Gordon, 2014).

Although large short-term displacements garner international attention, displacement is often long term or even permanent. Displacement can create permanent shifts in livelihoods strategies and associated pressures. Research with internally displaced persons (IDPs) in urban settings in Darfur in 2013 found that household income from agriculture and livestock—which had been the predominant forms of income prior to displacement—had almost entirely disappeared (Young and Jacobsen, 2013). This change represented both the loss of access to assets and the collapse of the grain and livestock markets as a result of the conflict. In South Sudan, many IDPs who settled in urban centers during the recent civil conflict have decided not to return to their communities of origin, despite difficulties in establishing urban livelihoods. Meanwhile, other individuals are returning and asserting property rights. The demand for land is especially high in Juba, leading to reports of land grabbing (Maxwell et al., 2012; d’Errico et al., 2014).

Over the long term, many displaced may opt to stay in urban areas due a variety of push and pull factors. Urban locations afford better access to healthcare, education, financial services, employment, and opportunities for building new skills (Maxwell et al., 2012). Pantuliano et al. (2008) found that some returnees to rural areas in southern Sudan after



2005 had lost skills needed for rural livelihoods after extended time in urban areas; these returnees were particularly vulnerable to shocks. Stites et al. (2014) found that those households in Karamoja that moved to towns but were able to retain a link to the rural areas (in the form of land or livestock) were normally the best off. In addition, respondents in Young and Jacobsen's study of IDP livelihoods in Darfur (2013) reported that their main goals included maintaining links to their land in their home areas while also diversifying into the urban economy. However, the same study found that many of the post-displacement livelihood strategies were maladaptive and intertwined with the war economy. These maladaptive, conflict-related livelihoods fell into three types: those that were dangerous for individuals, those that were destructive to the environment, and those that were illegal and involved human rights abuses (Young and Jacobsen, 2013).

## Why are rights in land and natural resources critical?

International actors can face a quandary when attempting to program in these environments. Should engagement with displaced communities be through traditional or newly emerged authority structures? Agencies often attempt to split the difference by working with multiple points of contact (i.e., a youth liaison, a women's liaison, etc.). While knowledge of the local context is critical in making such liaisons, the power dynamics on the ground may change as the conflict evolves over time. This is true even after returning to their place of origin, as returnees may face immense challenges in resuming livelihoods due to loss of skills, new power dynamics, and struggles over access to assets. This is particularly the case when considering land rights.

Land is often a point of contention, as was the case for returnees in southern Sudan after 2005 and in northern Uganda after 2006. Problems accessing land decreases livelihood and food security for households while potentially fueling local conflicts (Maxwell et al., 2012; d'Errico et al., 2014; Mazurana et al., 2012; 2014b; Levine, 2016). Women may face particular difficulties in securing land rights following displacement; this was the case for many widows in northern Uganda who found that in-laws or male

relatives had taken over land that was rightfully theirs (Levine, 2016; Mazurana et al., 2014b, 2012; Stites et al., 2006). However, Feinstein research shows that the complexities of land rights are easily misinterpreted by outsiders, who may be quick to presume land grabbing. The situation is particularly complex when land rights are informal, communal, or poorly defined, as was the case in parts of West Darfur where pastoralists and farmers had coexisted in mixed settlements. As explained by Young et al:

The patterns of displacement and sedentarization do not fit neatly with the sweeping generalizations about 'land occupation' by the Arab *abbala* and reports of entrenched patterns of coercion and exploitation...This gives a misleading impression that all recent settlement of Arab *abbala* is for the purpose of land grabbing and is generally associated with the intimidation and coercion of the former inhabitants. (Young, Osman et al., 2009, 77)

In the absence of a clear understanding of land issues following displacement, Young et al. found that outside actors misinterpreted the power dynamics behind the positions of the various groups (Young, Osman, et al., 2009; 2005). The link of land rights and resilience is a study in itself and beyond the scope of this synthesis—but the consequences of misanalyzing the role of land rights in conflict is critical.

### Summary

As a very frequent direct outcome of conflict, displacement has a range of short-term and long-term effects on people's livelihoods—and hence their ability to cope and recover. These effects may be felt long after the displaced population has returned to their places of origin. In addition, as both livelihoods systems and displacement processes are highly influenced by dynamics such as gender, age, ethnic identity, political affiliation, and ability, it follows that the effects of displacement on livelihoods vary immensely even within a conflict-affected population. Livelihoods may likewise influence who is displaced, how, and to where. It is therefore critical to have a nuanced understanding of pre-conflict, conflict, and transitional livelihoods patterns and systems in order to effectively promote resilience among displaced populations.

# Conflict is not the only factor undermining the resilience of crisis-affected households

Conflict itself is only one of the many factors undermining resilience in crisis settings. By focusing exclusively on violent conflict, other factors that impede livelihoods and reduce resilience may be missed. This is evident in Feinstein work in multiple locations, including South Sudan, Sudan, northern Uganda, Ethiopia, Somalia, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Nevertheless, donors and external actors often assume that violent conflict is the main factor driving poor livelihood outcomes. This section points to the multiple drivers of vulnerability in fragile contexts, which often existed before the outbreak of violent conflict but which conflict may exacerbate or alter in some way. This section highlights that poor outcomes are often attributable to a range of causal factors such as competition over and access to natural resources, economic shocks and chronic poverty, politicized violence, the inability of the state to manage conflict, and even “normal” idiosyncratic shocks such as illness and non-conflict-related deaths. Context-specific analyses may uncover the ways in which location (i.e., urban vs. rural), ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and other idiosyncratic factors may also determine whether livelihoods succeed or fail in crisis (Maxwell, Mazurana et al., 2017).

## How does competition for natural resources serve to deepen vulnerability in marginal regions?

Feinstein research shows how competition for natural resources can exacerbate household vulnerability by aggravating food insecurity, putting

pressure on livelihoods, and fraying social structures; this vulnerability can in turn fuel conflict around scarce natural resources. In analyzing the link between conflict and resilience, natural resource access often serves as an underlying factor driving both livelihood vulnerability and violent conflict.

Adequate productive and grazing land is becoming increasingly scarce in the Greater Horn of Africa. The absence of regulatory frameworks for natural resource management in most countries in the region further complicates existing resource scarcity (Young, Osman et al., 2009; d’Errico et al., 2014; Gordon, 2014). The erosion of customary administrative structures in Sudan, South Sudan, and northern Uganda means that more ad hoc practices have replaced the previous mechanisms for negotiating access to resources and resolving conflicts. At the same time, pressures such as increasing population density, the rapid transformation of market economies, and increasing climatic aridity and land degradation have shifted land-use patterns while driving tensions between sedentary and pastoral groups (Young, Osman et al., 2009; Stites et al., 2010).

In Darfur, conflicts between farmers and pastoralists over access to natural resources have decreased integration and cooperation and increased social tensions. Restrictions on livestock mobility, overgrazing, the expansion of mechanized agriculture, and deforestation have fueled competition for limited productive resources. Many pastoral communities have been forced into more marginal areas. The increase in tensions

has the potential to jeopardize durable peace and increase the vulnerability of marginalized households (Young et al., 2013). Such local-level disputes may be removed from the wider inter-tribal, civil, and transnational conflicts affecting Darfur, but they have a profound effect on the resilience and sustainability of the two main livelihood systems in Darfur (Young, Osman et al., 2009).

Increased tensions over resources, particularly in the context of conflict, can lead to the emergence of maladaptive livelihood strategies. These are usually short-term, unsustainable strategies that depend on a distorted economy, and/or entail violence, coercion, and the abuse of rights of various groups (Young, 2009). For women, such strategies often involve significant harvesting of firewood or charcoal production for sale in urban areas or displacement camps. In Darfur, economic control of natural resources was an effective form of control and intimidation of the IDP population by the *Janjaweed*, and women collecting firewood faced extreme risks of attack and sexual violence (Young et al., 2005). Responses to insecurity can also limit access to natural resources. In northern Uganda, the risk of physical violence was also a factor that prevented displaced households from accessing agricultural land (Stites et al., 2006). In Karamoja, Uganda, for instance, insecurity led people to cluster their settlements closer together. While improving physical security, this clustering increased the distance to water and pasture and led to over-grazing and soil depletion around the larger and denser settlements (Stites et al., 2010).

It is clear that natural resources often play a complex role in the interaction between livelihoods and conflict. Access to natural resources may be a factor behind a household's vulnerability to livelihoods shocks and the effects of violent conflict. A nuanced understanding of the role that natural resources play in deepening vulnerabilities, particularly among already marginalized populations, is essential for contextualizing any discussion of resilience. Other agencies have been investigating this nexus (Kurtz and Scarborough, 2014).

## How does economic marginalization compound the effects of conflict on livelihoods?

Conflict can have a devastating effect on people of any socioeconomic status; if an affluent and politically important region is attacked, there will be an impact on local livelihoods. However, conflict has different and deeper effects on livelihoods in areas that are affected by chronic economic marginalization precisely because of their existing vulnerability. In many states in the Greater Horn of Africa, groups that are economically, politically, and socially marginalized reside in peripheral and borderland regions. For many of these groups, their governments have historically contributed (and often presently contribute) to their exclusion from power and access to resources. Recurrent conflict in many such areas further compounds livelihood vulnerability, and this in turn can exacerbate conflict. Feinstein research on Somalia, Uganda, South Sudan, and Sudan illustrates these points.

In Somalia, al-Shabaab worsened the dire food security situation in areas under its control in the run-up to the 2011 famine. However, many households in south-central Somalia faced profound economic hazards prior to the intensification of conflict. Al-Shabaab's practice of claiming *zakat* (the Islamic obligation of sharing of wealth with the poor) from households further strained Somali clan-based social linkages. Wealthier households left their communities to avoid the coerced taxation, thereby weakening local social safety nets. At the same time, food prices spiked, and the drought intensified. People who were able to move did so in search of wage labor. The eventual distribution of humanitarian aid prompted further migration, and also created a predatory dynamic between members of the better-connected clans and those who lacked social connections (Maxwell and Majid, 2016; Maxwell, Kim et al., 2015).

In South Sudan, pervasive poverty combined with insecurity, lack of infrastructure, and limited market opportunities have created extreme vulnerability to shocks. Households that rely heavily on their social networks are particularly vulnerable, as widespread



impoverishment has weakened even this informal support mechanism. Repeated economic shocks and associated livelihood pressures have stoked inter-community tensions, leading to violent disputes. Cycles of violence result, in turn negatively affecting livelihood development and increasing vulnerability (Gordon, 2014).

Cattle raiding in pastoral areas of South Sudan exist at the nexus of economic shock and violent conflict. Traditionally a means of social interaction and asset redistribution (Hendrickson et al., 1996), cattle raiding became increasingly predatory, violent, and linked to wider conflicts in the late twentieth century (Markakis, 2004). For instance, in Pibor County, one of the most disadvantaged areas of South Sudan, cattle raiding had historically been a form of competition among young Murle men (Santschi et al., 2014). More recently, cattle raiding in the region has become embedded in inter-ethnic conflicts and the civil conflict taking place in the region, with approximately 50% of Pibor County forcibly displaced (Santschi et al., 2014).

Darfur is officially in a post-conflict period, but limitations on access to land and the high risk of investing in animals create continued economic vulnerability. Many households have sought to diversify their asset base to the extent possible in hopes of having protection from expected shocks and crises (Young and Fitzpatrick, 2013). Rising costs of production have forced many less financially secure households to step out of pastoral livelihoods. Households that attempt to re-enter livestock production often find significant economic barriers to rebuilding herds and are left with limited ability to cope with shocks (Buchanan-Smith et al., 2012)

As demonstrated by these examples, chronic poverty compounds the effects of violent conflict on livelihoods. It is impossible to fully understand resilience in conflict situations without first understanding any preexisting economic marginalization.

## How do weak institutions and weak governance undermine resilience?

In a crisis-affected state, often the government cannot or does not provide basic services, social protection, or livelihood assistance. Instead, international and national non-governmental organizations, religious institutions, community-based organizations, and local self-help groups play a much more substantial role in responding to needs during conflict and post-conflict periods. The lack of involvement of the state in these processes can be an additional barrier to protecting livelihoods during conflict and rebuilding them after.

In South Sudan, for instance, the state is largely absent in the provision of social protection and livelihoods support. Humanitarian trends were worrying even before the 2013 renewal of fighting, a sign that the government was unable to provide services even in a time of relative stability. Today, the failure of the South Sudan government to resolve the conflict and manage the economy, coupled with the minimal ability of South Sudanese to access credit and capital, has led to a burgeoning of the informal economy in densely populated areas at the peripheries of urban centers such as Juba. People have also moved to these locations in search of relative safety. Meanwhile, rural households that lost livelihoods during the conflict continue to face impediments to restarting these livelihoods due to insecurity and the almost complete lack of support for livelihood recovery. Government institutions (such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of Animal Resources and Fisheries) meant to support livelihoods and economic recovery have limited capacity and very limited reach (Maxwell, Santschi et al., 2017).

The weakness of state institutions also hindered recovery in northern Uganda following the end of hostilities between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in 2006. In a region with a largely rural population, land rights are the foundation for both economic and food security, as well as for the development of resilient households and communities. However, a void in land administration and a dysfunctional justice system have created an environment ripe for land disputes

and land grabbing. While post-conflict assistance could serve to improve relations between northern Ugandans and the government, this institutional vacuum has instead contributed to distrust. The end of the war neither enhanced rule of law nor built government institutions capable of helping to reestablish livelihoods (Levine, 2016).

Limited reach of and support by the state may at times be due to a specific political agenda. As detailed by de Waal, the neglect of the peripheral regions of Sudan, including Darfur, by the government in Khartoum was no mistake (de Waal, 2015). Political and economic marginalization in Darfur was a major factor underlying the conflict. When politics is the reason behind a state's abdication of its responsibility to support livelihoods recovery, the effects may be particularly severe.

Whether the state is unwilling (due to political reasons) or unable (due to systemic weakness and lack of resources), it often does not play the role that it should in post-conflict recovery. This creates a void during sensitive transition periods that should ideally be used to support household resilience and break cycles of violence.

## How do international politics and perspectives affect vulnerability in conflict?

Conflict, livelihoods, and humanitarian assistance do not happen in a vacuum. In our increasingly globalized world, even highly localized stresses and shocks may be exacerbated or altered by international markets, politics, perceptions, and priorities. These effects can be seen in the domains of political negotiations, humanitarian assistance, and even the private sector.

International politics and policies may have unintended consequences in conflict settings. For instance, U.S. anti-terror legislation had a direct and negative impact on the ability of Somali communities to mobilize international resources in the run-up to the 2011 famine. Restrictions on money transfers meant that social safety nets that should have been bolstered through remittances from the

Somali diaspora were stretched thin in areas of the greatest need. Unfortunately, many of these political challenges remain unaddressed as the greater Horn of Africa is again facing drought, food insecurity, and high rates of malnutrition (Maxwell and Majid, 2016; Maxwell, Kim et al., 2015). Policies limiting remittance flows globally may profoundly undermine local strategies for resilience—and may have counterproductive outcomes for counterinsurgency strategies.

External views on various actors in a conflict can influence the politics of international response. For instance, as the conflict in Darfur intensified in the early 2000s, little was known at the international level about the Northern Rizeigat, the community from which many members of the *Janjaweed* were recruited. This lack of understanding not only meant that the Northern Rizeigat were excluded from humanitarian assistance and political dialogue but also that little analysis existed as to their motivations for participating in the conflict. Feinstein research sought to challenge these stereotypes through analysis of the historical processes that resulted in the marginalization and grievances of the Northern Rizeigat. More broadly, this research has highlighted the way in which unequal power relations among groups in Darfur create dynamics that are easily exploited by regional and national authorities. Importantly, this work highlights that while pastoral groups may be more difficult to reach for the purposes of assessments or assistance, international actors need to consider the unique vulnerability and historical exclusion of pastoral groups, and to be careful not to legitimize and reinforce the processes that led to this marginalization (Young, Osman et al., 2009).

International priorities and development models may at times clash with national legislative or political processes. In South Sudan, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement ended 23 years of war and was informed by a liberal model of peacebuilding. International backers prioritized the promotion of democracy and market-based economic reforms, and the development of formal government institutions as means to legitimize the new government. Development aid was meant to provide basic services and social protection equitably and

to alleviate the need for rural residents to migrate to urban centers to access basic services. John Garang, the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, promoted a vision in which services would be made available in the countryside—"taking the town to the people" (Moro et al., 2017). But the lack of roads and basic infrastructure hindered even a minimal provision of service delivery (including basic health, education, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)) to rural areas. Delivery of services, linked to the donor-supported state-building agenda that emphasized technical solutions, was intended as the answer to South Sudan's political challenges. International programs shifted from state building to the delivery of humanitarian assistance after the renewal of fighting in 2013, but this engagement still remained detached from local contexts and perspectives (Moro et al., 2017).

## How do idiosyncratic shocks undermine household resilience in conflict?

Shocks are not uniform in their nature or impact. Likewise, households within a community and members of a given household do not experience or respond to shocks in the same way. Some shocks are idiosyncratic (affecting specific individuals or households) while others are covariate (affecting a wider population). While covariate shocks are much more visible and have wider impacts, Feinstein research indicates that the experience of idiosyncratic shocks, even in the context of conflict, is often key in determining household vulnerability. As the examples below from Darfur and northern Uganda illustrate, there can be surprising differences in the influence of shocks on households.

In Darfur, when assessed in a study by Young and Fitzpatrick in 2013, three of the five greatest shocks were idiosyncratic ones: death, illness, and house fires. Death and illness sharply curtailed a household's ability to engage in productive labor or secure wages, and led to decreased economic and food security. House fires, while less common than illness and death, often resulted in the loss of accumulated wealth and assets such as seed stocks, food stores, and petty trade inputs. Recovery from

the sudden destruction of these productive assets is extremely difficult for the poor, and households reported being compelled to sell their remaining assets in an attempt to replace destroyed goods (Young and Fitzpatrick, 2013).

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) surveys in 2012 and 2015 found that 5% of the population of Acholi and Lango sub-regions in northern Uganda were significantly impaired or incapacitated by war-related physical, psychological, and emotional injuries. Households with war-wounded members are more likely to have a limited asset base and less food security, are engaged in fewer livelihood activities, and have to use more coping strategies to meet basic needs. As the war primarily affected the rural poor, many of these households were already vulnerable to shock. This highlights how the after-effects of war—even after nearly ten years—have idiosyncratic effects on individual households long after the conflict has ended and compound vulnerabilities that existed prior to the conflict (Mazurana et al., 2014a, 2014b, and 2014c). War-wounded households are the most likely to remain poor and the least resilient.

### Summary

Violent conflict is rarely the sole factor undermining resilience at the household or community level. Instead, multiple factors influence resilience during conflict. Nonetheless, international actors often presume that conflict is the principal factor in adverse livelihood outcomes. In reality, poor outcomes may be due to a range and combination of factors ranging from endemic poverty to climate shocks, loss or restricted access to natural resources, and even idiosyncratic factors such as the death of a family member. Conflict may compound these other factors, but they still must be understood on their own in order to properly address underlying factors of vulnerability. Donors must take these aspects into account while also remembering that shock is experienced differently by different households or individuals based on gender, age, disability, caste, clan, religion, ethnicity, wealth, and degrees of social connectedness.

# Social networks affect people's resilience in the face of conflict

Although “social capital” has long been included in the assets framework for livelihood security, there has been relatively little research on the ways in which people rely on social networks and social connections to cope with conflict. Feinstein research provides a number of findings and working hypotheses about the ways in which people use their social connections to mobilize resources to keep themselves as safe as possible, to survive in conflict and crisis, and to recover in their aftermath. But this research also shows that social networks, and the very nature of social connectedness, are flexible and subject to rapid change in times of conflict or other complex emergencies. While social networks have served positive roles in terms of providing protection and support, they can also be exclusionary and even predatory.

## What role do social networks play in people's ability to deal with conflict?

An overall observation from the SLRC research is that conflict-affected and displaced households are heavily reliant on kinship networks for support. Such support, however, may be extremely limited. Households relying heavily on such forms of social support were among the most vulnerable, often surviving solely on natural resource extraction or wild food collection (Maxwell, Mazurana et al., 2017).

A review of the Somalia famine of 2011 highlighted the ways in which people caught in that crisis, who were largely cut off from state or international assistance, coped:

While themes of diversification, mobility and flexibility are important...the factor that

seemed to determine whether and how well people survived the famine [was the] social connectedness and the extent of the social networks of affected populations and the ability of these networks to mobilize resources...The nature of reciprocity, the resources available within people's networks, and the collective risks and hazards faced within networks, all determined people's individual and household outcomes in the famine and are related to the social structures and social hierarchies within Somali society. (Maxwell et al., 2015, 4)

The famine was driven by a number of factors, including drought and an extreme spike in food prices, but the isolation of the hardest-hit populations was due to the conflict that Al-Shabaab was fighting against African Union peacekeeping forces (AMISOM) and the Ethiopian army, who were supported by Western governments. The conflict shaped people's ability to move out of the affected areas and their ability to cope with the crisis in areas of origin. Social networks in Somalia largely follow kinship, lineage, and clan lines, although they are highly malleable depending on context.

While remittances from the Somali diaspora played a critical role, connections with other communities within Somalia were equally important to the notion of “social connectedness.” Maxwell et al. (2015) note three circles of social connectedness that stressed households can appeal to for assistance. The first circle revolves around immediate kin or very close relatives. The second circle expands to the sub-clan and sometimes to community linkages beyond sub-clan. The third circle is much more diffuse and might consist of people who did not have a common clan identity but rather some kind of connection on which to base a claim. The second circle is only invoked



in the event of a shock and is best at addressing the impact of idiosyncratic shocks. In the case of a major shock, such as the combination of drought and conflict that hit Somalia in 2011, the resource flows in weaker networks were not able to carry people through the crisis. It is critical to understand the nature of these networks and the kind of resources circulating in them in order to understand the “absorptive capacity” of households. In 2011, the collapse of this “second circle” essentially defined the onset of famine conditions for the most vulnerable groups. This happened suddenly, and much more quickly for some of the less well-connected sub-clans.

While social networks that function in extreme crises define social inclusivity, they also define exclusion. The more limited the social connections were, the greater people’s political vulnerability. It was hence no surprise that various sub-clans of the Rahanweyn and the Somali Bantu were the hardest hit in 2011. Both groups have been largely marginalized from power, resources, and services (including education), resulting in relatively limited numbers living in urban centers or the diaspora, and relatively few connections to business groups. Maxwell and Majid (2016) note multiple authors who refer to the Rahanweyn as second-class citizens and the Somali Bantu as third-class citizens. In 2011, some of the sub-clans of the Rahanweyn and some groups within the Bantu were simply not able to mitigate the impact of the crisis by leveraging assistance from their networks—the second and third circles described previously—and these groups suffered the highest mortality during the famine (Checchi and Robinson, 2013).

In Sudan, linkages to clan members in various diaspora groups were important sources of sociopolitical support in times of stress, and the politics of migration determined which groups had access to this lifeline (Young, Jacobsen et al., 2009). Arab tribes such as the Northern Rizeigat of Darfur had long been marginalized due to militarization and constriction of their pastoral livelihoods. Many depended on labor migration to Libya because the route was familiar, accessible, and relatively inexpensive to cross. In addition, relatives who had migrated earlier could provide support to new

arrivals, which served as a strong pull factor. When the outbreak of the Darfur conflict led to the closure of the Libyan border, this led to increased economic hardship among Northern Rizeigat communities. The impact was particularly strong because, compared with other ethnic groups in the region, the Northern Rizeigat had minimal connections to the Sudanese diaspora in Europe and North America (Young, Osman et al., 2009) and were therefore much more dependent on their connection to Libya. This marginal position made the Northern Rizeigat much more susceptible to recruitment into the government’s counterinsurgency strategy (Young, Osman et al., 2009).

Social networks and connections also serve as a critical factor in determining how people protect themselves in conflict—both the nature and effectiveness of self-protection strategies. Prior to the start of the conflict that engulfed much of northern Uganda, traditional customary structures and elders wielded significant influence over natural resources and managed shifting alliances and relations with neighboring groups. With the onset of conflict and the collapse of post-colonial state structures, households with stronger social connections and familial ties to these customary sources of power were better able to secure land, access food from community and family members, work in collective groups, access credit through savings associations, and obtain paid labor opportunities. In contrast, households with a limited social network faced greater difficulty accessing land and employment, and resorted to activities that entailed greater security risks, such as collecting natural resources alone (as opposed to in a group). Beyond the ability to access resources, households and individuals with stronger social connections were able to utilize more effective protective strategies, with the most common mechanisms being group movement and maintaining close proximity to other community members when moving outside of settled villages (Stites et al., 2006).

## How do social networks enhance access to other livelihood assets during conflict or recovery after conflict?

Social networks are an important determinant in enabling households and individuals to access livelihood assets and to employ more effective livelihood strategies. In northern Uganda, survey data demonstrated that social networks and the ability to draw on the resources and support of extended family enabled households to pull themselves out of the bottom economic quartile of the population (Levine, 2016; Mazurana et al., 2014b). This extended family support included access to land and other natural resources, financial resources such as credit, labor opportunities, and migration opportunities. While social connectedness was relevant to all of these prior to conflict, the conflict caused a shift in these dynamics. Women are legally able to inherit land under Ugandan law, but customary practices often make this difficult. Women who were widowed by the conflict often had particular difficulties tapping into the social networks required to access land when they returned alone to their place of origins (Mazurana et al., 2012).

Strong social networks and obligations can also serve as a hindrance to post-conflict livelihood recovery. In the aftermath of conflict, one of the first priorities for many households in northern Uganda was the payment of bridewealth to secure a marriage. Few households were able to afford marriage payments during the conflict, and, with the onset of peace, individuals moved rapidly to regularize relationships that had been established during the war. The social obligation for bridewealth payments far outweighed the incentive to invest the same resources for economic advancement. This prioritization illustrates that social obligations have economic implications, particularly in cultures where interdependence is emphasized and where the risks of social isolation are high. Failing to meet social obligations (such as official marriage) could limit the future ability of individuals and households to call on kinship- or lineage-based support to mitigate economic shocks (Levine, 2016).

Social networks, gender, disability, and socioeconomic class all determine people's ability to secure employment across a range of conflict-affected and post-conflict contexts (Maxwell, Mazurana et al., 2017). For instance, in Afghanistan, barriers to entry to the labor market exist for both men and women, but women's access to the market is frequently controlled through male relatives (Maxwell, Mazurana et al., 2017; Pain and Mallett, 2014). More generally, Jackson (2016) notes that ordinary Afghans can only gain access to state-controlled resources through personal connections, particularly to the warlords or former commanders who now serve as gatekeepers.

Social connections are also a crucial factor in determining an individual's ability to successfully migrate in search of employment. For individuals and households that have migrated from rural areas to urban centers in Karamoja, social networks from regions of origin remain critical for securing employment or learning skills required for urban livelihoods (Stites et al., 2014). Households that have better social connectedness and a greater asset base are able to keep one foot in the town and the other in a rural area, thereby mitigating risk and insecurity. Such strategies increase resilience but are often costly and require strong social networks in both places, and proximity to rural locales.

Connections to social networks are important determinants of labor market opportunity and mobility, but social networks also frequently carry additional obligations. While inclusion within these networks can facilitate labor market entry, they can also become a hindrance to asset accumulation in the longer term. The migrant is often perceived to be better off, and hence is called upon to support kin and others in the network (Mallet and Atim, 2014).

Social networks may be relatively static for some and fluid for others, and this distinction itself influences livelihoods systems and coping mechanisms. In Darfur, certain tribes have a continuum of merging and splintering populations rather than entirely distinct ethnic groups. "Farming communities settled in areas where they had some knowledge or kin. The Zaghawa and the Masalit of el Geneina have established this tradition, thus new migrants

are easily accommodated and accepted while the nomads of north Darfur have not managed to develop such a tradition” (Young, Osman et al., 2009, 45). The limited social connections of the Northern Rizeigat, which stem in part from their nomadic livelihood pursuits, have not only reduced their ability to mitigate tensions between mobile and sedentary groups but also limited their connections with regional administrations. These dynamics set the stage for the participation of many youth from Northern Rizeigat communities in the government’s counterinsurgency strategy in Darfur, leading to the further marginalization and ostracism discussed previously (Young, Osman et al., 2009).

## How do conflict and crisis change the nature of social networks?

Social networks change in response to conflict and crisis. In Darfur, the disruption to livelihood systems wrought by the war has been one of the driving forces behind the collapse of social support mechanisms. For example, in the town of Mellit, where the Zayadia were previously under siege, better-off families would support their poorer relatives (Young et al., 2005). However, the conflict disrupted livelihoods and depleted financial reserves, largely through distress sales of productive assets. While there had once been a distinction between rich and poor, fewer such distinctions existed after the conflict. As a result, there were also fewer mechanisms for social support. Whereas previously communal restocking mechanisms existed, the incurrence of debt combined with livestock deaths from disease seriously constrained the ability of households within the Zayadia community to recover. This changed relationships based on social support, and made the community as a whole more prone to future shocks and less resilient (Young, Osman et al., 2009).

Conflict may directly undermine or destroy social networks. Prolonged armed conflict in Pibor County in South Sudan led not only to the loss of assets but also to the unraveling of social ties due to displacement (Santschi et al., 2014). Intergroup and intergenerational competition for livestock is the overarching social dynamic of cattle raiding violence in Jonglei State in South Sudan. Because cattle are

both a significant source of wealth and a major determinant of social status (especially for males), the loss of cattle through raiding means significant loss of financial assets and the loss of social stature and standing within one’s network. On the other hand, the necessity of obtaining cattle for marriage or social status is one of the drivers of raiding. The cost of bridewealth (in cattle) has risen rapidly in South Sudan in recent years (Gordon, 2014; Maxwell et al., 2014).

In some crises, social obligations and connections simultaneously shape conflict and are shaped by conflict. In South Sudan, the changing conflict dynamics and the resulting loss of cattle from raiding led to losses of both financial and social assets, given the role of cattle in social structures. Success in raiding, on one hand, is a source of pride and assets. On the other hand, the loss of animals to theft deprives men of wealth and status and hinders their ability to marry, secure more social stature, and solidify their livelihood prospects to secure future income (Maxwell et al., 2014; Stites, 2013a; 2013b).

In conflicts, the nature of social networks and how they change as a result of crisis and conflict is as important to understanding resilience dynamics as understanding a household’s assets or activities is. This section highlighted how any analysis of the interplay of social networks and obligations with livelihoods and resilience needs to reflect differences between groups and changes over the course of the conflict. Practitioners must always examine their existing assumptions about these dynamics and strive to stay abreast of how they evolve. This will be further explained in a following section.

### Summary

Feinstein studies underline the importance of understanding people’s social networks and connections, and how these networks link to vulnerability and resilience. Clearly, the social connections of some groups in crisis are stronger than others, enabling them to cope more effectively and to recover more quickly. Understanding social dynamics on the ground is extremely important in terms of knowing which groups to prioritize for assistance or protection. At a minimum, the “do no harm” imperative should prevent external programs

from undermining people's own coping mechanisms and networks, though there is still ample evidence that this does occur. More appropriate knowledge of the strength of social networks also has implications for the targeting of assistance—both humanitarian and development.

At the same time, however, it is important not to presume that social connections and survival strategies are always positive. The very factors that promote cohesion for a stronger group may result in exclusion for less powerful groups. In addition, dynamics within households may be very different from those of the household as a whole.



# Post-conflict dynamics can severely limit livelihood recovery

As demonstrated by previous sections, conflict is clearly a major constraint to livelihood security. Post-conflict recovery strategies often assume that these constraints end with the fighting. For some people, however, the end of conflict may signal the beginning of a different kind of struggle, one with fewer resources and services. Across a broad variety of cases, certain assumptions repeat themselves regarding the nature of what happens to livelihoods, to access to social services, and to forms of “recovery” when conflict ends. This section reviews three major questions related to these assumptions and their consequences. These questions are about the unclear nature of when conflicts end; the impact (or the presumed impact) on livelihoods of the ending of conflict; and targeting in a post-conflict period.

## When does conflict actually end?

The ending of conflict can be highly variable. Among the countries studied for the six-year SLRC review (2011–2017), some countries were clearly in a post-conflict situation during the study (Uganda, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Sierra Leone, for example), while others (most notably, South Sudan) had again become mired in large-scale violent conflict (Maxwell, Santschi et al., 2017). Several other countries (the Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan, and South Sudan before December 2013) were formally “post-conflict,” but continued to see periodic spikes in violence against civilians or the continuation of major combat operations (specifically Afghanistan for the latter). Even when conflict officially ends, its influence can extend far into the future. The two-decade civil war in northern Uganda ended in 2006, but its effects continue to

be felt, particularly by households that experienced major war crimes (Mazurana et al., 2014a).

In other countries, there are few clear answers to the question of when conflict ends. Although the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) ended the civil war in Sudan in 2005, and South Sudan gained its independence in 2011, it was difficult to portray South Sudan on the whole as being “post-conflict” even before December 2013 (Gordon, 2014; Maxwell et al., 2016b). In Darfur, local-level conflict has persisted long after the signing of the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement, and there has even been an escalation in population displacement in recent years (Fitzpatrick and Young, 2016). Continued insecurity restricts access to pasture and migration routes, in turn forcing nomadic groups to become increasingly sedentary. As a result, traditionally mobile groups have used violence to control access to natural resources, in turn displacing agrarian communities and leading to the collapse of market infrastructure (Young, Osman et al., 2009). Structural shifts in land tenure—from communally-shared land to individual ownership—have led to further conflict and greater polarization between livelihood groups. As long as the assets of either sedentary or pastoral groups remains skewed in one way or the other, tensions and conflict will persist (Young and Goldman, 2015).

The Somali Region of Ethiopia is characterized by many of the same challenges that affect other pastoralist regions throughout the Greater Horn of Africa. Conflict remains a recurrent problem, linked to the scarcity of natural resources and competition among livelihood groups. These conflicts continue to evolve due to the changing national political structures and cross-border dynamics. For instance, livestock raiding is, in some cases, being driven by

political actors and the military who seek to benefit from the high value of livestock and easy access to export markets. Thus, an economy is emerging in which improvements in local and regional security are undermined by higher-level actors engaging in local conflict dynamics (Catley and Iyasu, 2010).

In other cases, the reliance on maladaptive livelihood strategies may continue long after the conflict has ended. This often links to the conflict-livelihood cycle discussed earlier. Stites and Marshak (2016) noted that the theft and violence continued in Karamoja long after the justifications for intense conflict and cattle raiding had been removed. The increase in crime and violence committed by young men occurred in parallel to overall security improvements. While the military's disarmament campaign ultimately improved security and livelihoods, this initiative also limited the ability of male youth to serve as the providers for and protectors of their families and communities. This occurred against a backdrop in which masculinity was largely defined in terms of successful cattle raiding and created a situation in which idle young men are at risk of relapsing into criminal behavior (Stites and Marshak, 2016).

As this section demonstrates, few conflicts have clear endpoints, and even those that do still have lasting impacts on the affected population. This highlights the absolute necessity of good contextual analysis and the abandonment of convenient categories, such as "post-conflict." It also suggests that conflict should be conceptualized in a programmatic context as a "stressor" that can range from low-level tensions to acute flare-ups to chronic power struggles, as opposed to a "shock" with a distinct beginning and end.

## Does a "peace dividend" follow conflict, enabling recovery?

A widespread assumption is that the end of conflict will be followed by some kind of "natural" economic rebound as people resume their previous livelihoods and engage in economic activities instead of fighting. Markets will re-open, and a variety of activities will return to their pre-war normality. Money will be invested in economic enterprises rather than in

fighting. This presumed rebound is often referred to as a "peace dividend." But Feinstein research indicates that in many cases, little—if any—real peace dividend accrues.

SLRC research came to no firm conclusions with regard to whether actual peace dividends result from the ending of conflict but noted that they are more frequently not observed (Maxwell, Mazurana et al., 2017). Infrastructure may be rebuilt, and new economic opportunities may open up, but people who have lost most of their assets are rarely in a position to take advantage of these opportunities. This is particularly true if people have been physically or mentally harmed by the conflict (Mazurana et al., 2014c).

Reliance on maladaptive strategies has also continued in Darfur, even after the resolution of conflict at the local level (Young, 2009). Urban IDPs face considerable challenges, with their livelihood strategies evolving in a context of chronic insecurity, distorted markets, and rent-seeking (Young and Jacobsen, 2013). Many of the urban IDPs depend on overexploitation of natural resources in a context characterized by poor natural resource governance and limited government and policy regulation (Young, Osman et al., 2009). While these strategies may have been short-term coping strategies during the conflict, in the "post-conflict" period these efforts represent longer-term adaptations and household-level efforts to cope with a depleted asset base (Fitzpatrick and Young, 2016).

In cases of programmatic interventions, program managers sometimes assume that conflict was the driver of vulnerability and close down programs when conflict ends, only to subsequently observe that the symptoms thought to have been driven by the conflict continue. Years of high prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) in Northern Bahr al-Ghazal was presumed to have been driven by the effects of the civil war. Bahr al-Ghazal was stable and peaceful for some years after the 2005 Peace Agreement, but the prevalence of GAM did not decline noticeably despite the cessation of hostilities and the return of displaced people. By 2008, nutrition agencies were coming back to Bahr al-Ghazal and reopening many of the same kinds of

programs closed in 2004–05 (Maxwell and Burns, 2008).

In some countries, an emphasis on quickly rebuilding followed violent upheavals. These are normally instances in which the turmoil was quickly brought under control. Kenya saw widespread violence in Nairobi, Rift Valley, and Coast Provinces after elections in December 2007. But a Government of National Unity led a concerted effort to rebuild destroyed housing that put an end to the conflict, and shifting political alliances have meant that the previously belligerent parties are now allies. There was a high level of preparedness for elections in 2013 to prevent the recurrence of violence, but some of the underlying grievances—particularly over land rights in the Rift Valley—remain unaddressed (Maxwell, Marshak et al., 2013).

The SLRC final synthesis noted that there is rarely a “natural” peace dividend. If the goal of post-conflict programs is to create a peace dividend, more investment in livelihood recovery would be required to be sustained over longer periods and to be supported by improved access to services (Maxwell, Mazurana et al., 2017; Levine, 2016). The ability of livelihoods programs to actually translate into peace will be discussed in a future section. In addition, these programs have to target the right people—the topic towards which this analysis now turns.

## In post-conflict recovery, does the focus shift from the “vulnerable” to the “viable”?

During conflict, the primary form of outside programmatic intervention is humanitarian, which unambiguously aims to focus on the most vulnerable groups. This is firmly enshrined in the principle of impartiality and supported by humanitarian analysis practices such as the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. This is not to imply that humanitarian aid always is well targeted, or that the capture of humanitarian aid by wealthy people who do not need it is not a problem; the point is that the *intent* of humanitarian assistance is clear. Post-conflict assistance has a less clear intent. In many cases, post-conflict interventions do not target the most

vulnerable but rather those who are the most able to take advantage of new market opportunities, new technologies, or have access to credit and land. In short, following conflict there is a distinct shift in the targeting of programs from the “vulnerable” to the “viable” (Maxwell, Mazurana et al., 2017). This may be exacerbated by the inclusion of stabilization goals, with aid investments going towards interventions (or populations) deemed to have the highest likelihood of preventing a return to conflict.

Market-driven approaches to pastoral livelihoods inadvertently may be captured by individuals and groups that are able to take advantage of market opportunities. Catley and Aklilu (2013) observed that in pastoral areas, the poor are often forced to sell their limited livestock assets at the worst times, such as during lean seasons or droughts. In contrast, individuals who are better off economically and with better market access are able to time livestock sales to periods of higher demand, thus maximizing gains from market engagement. The poor more often sell to meet short-term cash needs during hard times—and thus end up *more impoverished* as a result of market engagement. This illustrates the challenges of getting markets to benefit the poor: while some interventions have been successful, market systems also present the poorest pastoralist households with high risks (Aklilu and Catley, 2010).

In both northern Uganda and Darfur, research indicates that the effects of conflict continued for many years, particularly for those injured during the war (Mazurana et al., 2014c; Fitzpatrick and Young, 2016). Post-conflict support, however, often does not focus on these groups, as manifested in numerous ways. First, SLRC research showed that post-conflict livelihood support programs were minimal in contexts like northern Uganda or South Sudan. Second, even where programs did exist, they were mostly not targeted at those most in need. Part of this was inevitably due to elite capture, but some programs made no attempt to target vulnerability (Mazurana et al., 2014b; Maxwell et al., 2014). Even where aid was well targeted and transparently allocated, one-off asset transfers did not lead to recovery (Mazurana et al., 2014b). Third, development agencies tend to favor market-based approaches, such as enabling access to credit to

finance new enterprises; humanitarian agencies tend to target the vulnerable members of a community and provide free inputs. In the most extreme cases, this dichotomy creates the perverse result whereby the most vulnerable people have better access to services during conflict than afterwards (Maxwell et al., 2014).

Sometimes targeting a vulnerable group in a post-conflict environment can bring its own challenges. The Survey of War Affected Youth (SWAY) study from northern Uganda found that heavy emphasis on rehabilitating child soldiers led to the relative neglect of young adults and non-combatants. The evidence suggested that the targeting of formerly abducted youth was likely to be unsuccessful in reducing vulnerability and in improving long-term reintegration—primarily because abduction status was a poor indicator of actual need. This recommendation failed to take into account the considerable challenges faced by non-abducted (but still war-affected) youth in accessing health and education services and economic opportunities. Also problematic was that targeting based on abduction experiences carried the risk of stigmatization, which could lead to the weakening of important social connections (Mazurana et al., 2007).

Post-conflict assistance was often not only insufficient and poorly targeted but sometimes also not relevant to the most pressing needs. The SLRC study found that, in general, the assistance tended to be based on what the donor wanted to provide rather than on context-specific needs geared towards recovery. Thus, in northern Uganda, for example, interventions like seeds and tools are common, but the major losses to people's livelihoods during the conflict were livestock and land.<sup>1</sup> The delivery of assistance in northern Uganda was further characterized by a general lack of transparency. If recovery is to be understood as a social, economic, and political process, then aid must be delivered and targeted in a more transparent way in order to facilitate recovery (Levine, 2016).

Support to recovery should recognize that livelihoods and economic recovery encompass more than merely "adding up" assets. Livelihoods analysis must

ultimately seek to understand the multiple ways in which people cope with difficult times. Thus, the issue of targeting is not only about determining social categories that should be targeted with assistance but also about understanding the full range of problems and challenges to be addressed. For example, targeting distributions towards female-headed households will do little to help people whose real problem is defending their land rights (Levine, 2016). Likewise, targeting can be subject to serious exclusion errors in refugee and IDP return programs in the aftermath of conflict if programs neglect "spontaneous" returnees (who, for instance, made up the largest group of returnees after the end of the Sudanese civil war) or if they target only returnees and neglect vulnerable households within the communities that were not displaced. In South Sudan, returnees receiving reintegration assistance were often no worse off (and in some instances, are significantly better off) than community members who had not been displaced and for whom no assistance was provided (Maxwell and Burns, 2008).

Finally, given the dynamics of conflict and the way in which it is understood by outside agencies, targeting in post-conflict settings is sometimes determined on the basis of political or other identities. As mentioned earlier, the Northern Rizeigat in Darfur were sidelined from nearly all international assistance because of their pariah status. But the fact that some of the Rizeigat youth had been recruited into militias did not mean that the Rizeigat people in general did not also have needs (Young, Osman et al., 2009). In northern Uganda, much of the international attention and aid focused on the Acholi people, with much less going to the Lango and Teso, who were also badly impacted by the conflict (Mazurana et al., 2014b; 2012; Levine, 2016).

In conclusion, if programs fail to understand the longer-term impacts of conflict or if the analysis underpinning these interventions fails to examine common assumptions about post-conflict realities, then it is highly unlikely that the resulting programs will deal effectively with the direct impact of the conflict or new problems that emerge in a "post-conflict" setting.

<sup>1</sup> As mentioned earlier, in the immediate post-conflict period, not all households wanted to receive animals even if available given the threat of raids from Karamoja. Raiding has since decreased.



# Livelihoods programs alone cannot necessarily stabilize conflict-affected societies

Previous sections have established the challenges to recovering or building resilient livelihoods during times of conflict. But can investing in livelihoods help to create peace and stability in a society? As economic grievances and vulnerabilities are often key drivers of many conflicts, it would be logical that livelihoods programming would contribute to a reduction in conflict and the building of a more stable society. However, given the complex dynamics between livelihoods and conflict illustrated throughout this paper, this may not necessarily be the case. Often, livelihoods interventions fail to translate meaningfully to increased stability for societies affected by chronic conflict.

## What is the current evidence relating to the ability of livelihoods programs to build peace?

Mallett and Slater noted that “in conflict-affected situations, aid-funded livelihood interventions are often tasked with a dual imperative: to generate material welfare benefits and to contribute to peace-building outcomes. There may be some logic to such a transformative agenda, but does the reality square with the rhetoric?” (2016, 229). They noted six specific post-conflict livelihood interventions intended to *create* peace dividends, including microfinance, transportation and infrastructure, value chain development, “making markets work for the poor,” job creation, and skills training—and determined that these have decidedly mixed outcomes in terms of promoting livelihood recovery.

A 2014 Mercy Corps study examined thirteen sub-Saharan countries and found a correlation between increased employment and reduced participation in political violence in only one of the thirteen: Liberia. A different Mercy Corps study in Somalia found no significant relationship between employment and participation in political violence. These studies do, however, highlight the importance of non-financial benefits of employment for youth, including the status and dignity that comes with having a decent job (Mercy Corps 2015a, 2015b, and 2015c).

While there is merit in implementing programs that seek to provide economic opportunities, greater evidence is needed to support the claim that such activities counter radicalization or the propensity for extreme violence (Maxwell, Mazurana et al., 2017; Stites and Bushby, 2017; Mallett and Slater, 2016). For policy makers, donors, and humanitarian practitioners, this implies that such programs should not be incorporated blindly into efforts to prevent radicalization and further conflict but should instead be based on evidence and appropriate to the local context. To date, however, there is little empirical evidence in this regard (Cramer, 2010; 2015).

This does not mean that livelihoods interventions cannot translate into increased stability, and some organizations, such as the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), are increasingly seeking to ensure that food and livelihood interventions in fragile states support or build sustainable peace (FAO, 2016). In addition, some livelihood interventions may intentionally and directly aim

to address the root cause of the conflict, such as conflicts over water, land, or other resources. Overall, however, there continues to be a gap in the evidence as to the ultimate effectiveness of such efforts. The evidence does indicate that the way livelihoods programming is currently carried out in fragile and conflict-affected states often fails to build sustainable peace. This is because of operational constraints (such as limited funding cycles), political constraints (such as the tying of livelihoods programming to counter-terrorism measures to “win hearts and minds”), failures to adequately understand the underlying conflict dynamics, and the unintended consequences of the programs themselves. Several of these factors will be discussed in the following section.

Examples from Feinstein research in South Sudan and Afghanistan illustrate the disconnect between the expected impact of aid in improving stability and the outcomes on the ground. Despite having the highest GDP per capita of any country in the region, few state resources went to service delivery to South Sudanese citizens. International actors engaged in institution building in an effort to boost the legitimacy of the state and improve perceptions of governance. While many factors contributed to the descent into armed conflict in 2013, the intense focus and high degree of spending by international actors apparently did not succeed in preventing this result (Maxwell et al., 2016a, 2016c, 2016c).

Feinstein research in Afghanistan found that aid was frequently destabilizing and undermined its own objectives. This was particularly true in insecure areas where there was pressure from donors to spend significant funds over short periods of time. The competition over resources created perverse incentives among local leaders to maintain an insecure environment; in addition, opportunistic security contractors allegedly capitalized on this dynamic by playing on communal tensions regarding the location of roads and hiring practices (Fishstein and Wilder, 2012). Overall, international programs tended to prioritize socioeconomic issues rather than political ones and thus failed to address underlying causes of instability in Afghanistan (Fishstein and Wilder, 2012).

In addition, Feinstein research found that these market-based programs in Afghanistan may have contributed to social tensions by creating gains that were often captured by an already despised and corrupt elite. Illustrative of the lack of development in more stable areas, some Afghans in the north of the country reported that they were compelled to move to the more conservative south in search of work and, once there, enrolled their children in *madrassas*, or Islamic religious schools. Depending on the school, this potentially furthers radicalization and destabilization, as some *madrassas* follow an extremist agenda and are used as recruiting grounds by radical groups (Fishstein and Wilder, 2012).

Finally, one of the biggest complaints about programs in Afghanistan was that the assistance bred further corruption. International donors were faced with the dilemma of needing to build the capacity of deeply corrupt Afghan institutions. In the eyes of intended beneficiaries, however, the channeling of assistance through these bodies delegitimized the aid, increased suspicion of international actors, and failed to improve security (Fishstein and Wilder, 2012).

### Summary

As previous sections of this synthesis have demonstrated, the links between conflict and livelihoods are not so simple and linear that isolated investments in economic opportunity will translate directly into tangible and sustainable gains in building peace. Rather, conflict and fragile livelihoods are intertwined branches that share common roots of marginalization, poor governance, and systemic inequality. Therefore, while some forms of assistance may help to reduce competition and tensions among or between groups, policy makers and programmers should not expect economic development interventions alone to address deep and systematic issues that drive violence and instability.

# Major gaps in the research

The last section of this research synthesis considers several major gaps in the broader literature and evidence on resilience and conflict.

## How is “conflict” measured and analyzed?

A critical element that is not adequately addressed in our research or elsewhere is how—or if—to measure conflict as a shock. Without standard metrics for understanding the impacts of conflict, violence, and insecurity, it is extremely difficult to analyze how conflict affects resilience. Many measurement systems for other covariate shocks exist, such as food price fluctuations, earthquake magnitudes, and precipitation levels. In addition, a range of measures seek to understand *responses* to shocks at the household or individual level; these measurements may reflect resilience.

There are some standardized means for effectively assessing the ways in which individuals, households, or communities experience conflict, violence, and insecurity. The counting of events is often used as a proxy for measuring the entirety of conflict: attacks or other incidents, the number of towns under siege, prevalence of cases of communicable disease, numbers of suicide attacks carried out or barrel bombs dropped. Such indicators are important but do not adequately capture the full impact of violence, conflict, and insecurity on civilian populations. Other estimates come through proxies such as numbers of people displaced, the amount of aid needed, and levels of humanitarian need—but these are all the outcomes of conflict (and many other hazards!), not conflict itself. Psychosocial assessments can measure reactions to trauma, but such assessments are difficult to implement, may bring stigma, must be adapted to be context specific, and are likely to be carried out with only a very few of the total number of people affected.

Conflict is frequently conceptualized as a “shock” or an “event.” To the extent that these can be operationalized, questions are constructed for household questionnaires and data are gathered on whether members of a household experience such an event. But this almost by definition underestimates the impact of conflict as a background factor or as a “stressor:” people unable to move freely, markets not functioning, livelihoods constrained—most of which is not captured by asking about specific shocks such as attacks, killings, and active displacement. Without standardized and accepted measures in place to analyze the impacts of conflict, it remains extremely challenging to assess the resilience of a given population. Finally, while conflict analysis has made great strides as a field on its own, much of it has yet to be taken on board by livelihoods/resilience programs.

## How do the strategies for supporting livelihoods resilience change based on the nature of conflict?

Related to the point above, this paper does not distinguish greatly between different types of conflict; for instance, between natural resource-based conflict, ideologically driven conflict, politically driven conflict, and criminally driven conflict. This is mainly because many conflicts (particularly those around protracted complex emergencies) have a mix of political, ideological, and criminal elements. However, resilience might look very different in urban Honduras in the context of criminal gang conflict than in communities in rural Somalia dealing with the effects of al-Shabaab. Similarly, conflicts that revolve around natural resource competition or scarcity may be better suited for livelihood-based interventions than those with a political basis. Therefore, the kinds

of policies and practices required to support resilient livelihoods in these contexts may in fact be different.

In addition, while this paper establishes that even the most highly-localized conflicts often have national, regional, and even global influences, the strategies and approaches needed in conflicts may depend on the how geopolitically relevant the conflict is. For instance, the options available for both affected communities and practitioners and policy makers may be significantly different in a conflict of global interest, such as Syria, when compared with a less visible conflict, such as conflict between indigenous communities and agribusiness in Ecuador.

There are many other different kinds of conflict typologies that could be used for analysis. Because all programming and policy in conflict situations must be context specific, these analyses should be happening regardless of the broader categories any given conflict may fall into. However, there may be important trends and differences that would be useful to understand more deeply.

## How does livelihood resilience in conflicts differ in urban settings?

Feinstein's research largely focuses on rural populations (both sedentary and mobile) and camp populations. While many of the same principles and theories established in this paper apply to urban populations (both displaced and non-displaced), it may be more helpful to have further analysis of the unique challenges and resources present in urban settings. Programming constraints and opportunities may also differ systematically between rural, camp, and urban settings. These considerations may be important factors for how to conceptualize a framework of understanding resilience during and after conflict, particularly as the world grows more urbanized and conflict is increasingly affecting urban populations.

## What does a successful livelihoods resilience program in conflict look like?

This paper has made clear that there are significant obstacles to effectively offering crisis-affected populations livelihoods support that effectively reduces their vulnerability over time. There are relatively few examples of studies illustrating successful programming. While successful programs themselves may not be able to be replicated across different conflict-affected areas (given the importance of context-specific analysis), the processes of analysis and decision-making that these programs demonstrate could be helpful for policy makers and practitioners in a variety of settings. An attempt inspired by "positive deviance" to identify successful programs and learn from them could be an interesting area of future research. The real question for programmatic application is to identify the factors that support resilience in conflict and resilience capacities that help to prevent or mitigate conflict in the first place.

However, the very definition of a "successful" livelihoods resilience program is also something that may need to be further defined. Is a "successful" program measured by the food security of those it targets, by the sustainability of new livelihoods approaches, by the propensity of the beneficiary community to mitigate future conflict, or by the ability of these communities to survive or recover from future shocks? How does one measure these factors in places of chronic conflict, where households may never quite get an opportunity to fully recover and rebuild their assets? If one group becomes more resilient while another becomes more vulnerable, does this qualify as success? All of these are important questions for furthering the discourse on what livelihoods programs are aiming to achieve in the context of resilience and conflict.



# Conclusion

Conflict by definition disrupts. It disrupts societies, communities, and families; it disrupts both lives and livelihoods. Unlike natural disasters, which communities can plan for, ride out, and recover from, the disruption from conflict is varied, unpredictable, and, in many cases, chronic. Therefore, the concept of resilience in the context of conflict is a much more challenging and complex phenomenon to understand and to program for. In order to understand how vulnerability changes during conflict, we need to understand how conflict affects household and community assets, and how conflict-associated displacement can fundamentally alter livelihoods. Conflict has both short- and long-term effects.

Factors such as asset stripping and displacement are not the only elements that undermine people's resilience in conflict. Forms of structural violence that preceded the outbreak of physical violence, such as economic marginalization and competition over natural resources, also affect people's experiences and livelihoods during conflict. External factors, such as weak state institutions and engagement of international actors, can also influence the ability of households to survive and recover from conflict-related shocks. Finally, highly local factors, including a household's social networks and idiosyncratic shocks such as illness, can determine whether a family survives a conflict and how it is able to rebuild its livelihood afterwards.

Unlike natural disasters, there is rarely a clear end to conflict. After a political agreement to end conflict, violence itself can persist, shift into criminal violence, or transform into structural violence. Even if violence ends, the physical, mental, and social effects of that violence may persist for a long time. There is frequently no clear "peace dividend" following the end of a conflict, which means families may struggle to rebuild their livelihoods even during a period of relative calm. This may be exacerbated when assistance that was given during a conflict is withdrawn once "peace" is declared.

Livelihoods programs are being implemented in conflict and post-conflict zones with the express purpose of supporting resilience, recovery, and stability in conflict and post-conflict situations—and to prevent the slide into violent conflict in contexts of fragility that are rarely adequate to support a full recovery. Precisely because of the structural challenges of fragile and failed states, limited livelihoods programs on their own will not be enough to address the fundamental inequities and exclusions that gave rise to both the conflict and livelihoods vulnerability to begin with.

Most conflict-affected populations are resilient; with or without external assistance, many will find ways to survive conflict and rebuild some sort of normalcy in their lives. Sometimes, however, that may come at great cost, and the very act of survival can leave people at risk of future crises. Feinstein research has tended to focus more on conflict itself and on the factors that put people at risk. More research is needed on the factors that can be demonstrated to support resilience in violent conflict. Some of these factors are beginning to be understood—for example the nature and strength of social networks. Some factors are well understood but may have an inverse relationship with resilience as commonly understood—such as the role of financial and physical assets that may turn into liabilities in violent conflict. Other factors may be as broad as geopolitical considerations, security, and even counter-terrorism. But also important are the capacities to manage or even transform conflict—turning it away from its destructive nature into a positive force for social change. But the element of "what works?" under these circumstances is still an open question that the resilience community of practice is seeking to understand better.

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