

Food security responses to the protracted crisis context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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I. INTRODUCTION

I.1. Background

1. Recent works in the field of food security research have pointed to a critical paradox or policy gap between situations of food insecurity and famine, and policy response (Flores, Hhwaja and White, 2005). While there is increasing recognition that situations of food insecurity and famine are brought about by a complex and dynamic set of causes (Devereux, 2000), responses to food crises tend to be driven by a one-dimensional understanding of these crises and to be based on rigid and restrictive frameworks of intervention. Food security policies are also generally of a humanitarian or emergency nature (FAO, 2000) and tend to be oriented to the short term. This paradox helps to explain why most food security interventions fail to address the needs of the people affected by food insecurity.

2. The lack of appropriate responses becomes even more apparent in protracted emergency contexts caused by civil war. In protracted crises, food security interventions tend to be based on a standardized set of responses that do not take into account the dynamic nature of protracted crises. Such interventions tend to focus narrowly on food production and neglect other dimensions of food security. Furthermore, it is seldom recognized that in conflict environments humanitarian and food security interventions might have unintended political consequences. Responses to such emergency situations are generally of a “humanitarian” (i.e. emergency) nature. While they contribute to saving lives and (sometimes) to protecting livelihoods, they are generally inadequate for addressing in a sustainable manner the complex root causes of these crises. This may be partly attributable to a dearth of long-term policies and strategies for addressing food security problems in a sustainable manner in protracted emergency contexts. In fact while there are relatively well-developed policy frameworks for humanitarian interventions (e.g. neutrality, impartiality) and development actions (e.g. sustainability, participation, cost recovery), these are generally inadequate in contexts where people’s livelihoods need to be supported and protected over years in extremely volatile situations.

3. This policy gap was highlighted during the *International workshop on food security in complex emergencies: Building policy frameworks to address longer-term programming in complex emergencies*, organized by the Agricultural and Development Economics Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO/ESA)¹. The workshop examined the likely effectiveness of a wide range of policy options under conflict situations and pointed to the importance of strong links between

¹ Held in Tivoli, Italy, 23–25 September 2003.

knowledge and action, involving research and information systems, to gain a better understanding of the complexity of the issues at stake and to facilitate knowledge-based responses.

4. This report intends to contribute to the research base and to test the validity of the critical paradox between the dynamic features of food insecurity and static policy responses in a protracted emergency context. It will do so by presenting a preliminary review of the food security situation and related stakeholders' responses in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The war in eastern DRC has generated one of the most severe humanitarian crises since the Second World War. In a conflict that has involved over six African nations and more than a dozen rebel groups, more than 3 million Congolese have died either as a direct or an indirect consequence of armed confrontations, according to the International Rescue Committee (Coghlan *et al.*, 2006). Many have lost their physical and financial belongings, as well as access to arable land and health services. Traditional livelihood resources have been destroyed, livestock killed or pillaged and hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced due to continuous insecurity in many rural areas. Interventions by international aid agencies and local development associations have tried to alleviate the most acute consequences of the war by addressing the most critical food security constraints. Recent analysis has revealed that most of these interventions have had limited success in addressing the needs of the local population because they deal with only the symptoms of food insecurity (Levine and Chastre, 2004). The interventions were generally based on a very narrow range of actions implemented in nearly all circumstances and were not built on necessary assessments, even though much information on existing food insecurity constraints was already available. They also focused too much on food production and relied too much on food aid (Levine and Chastre, 2004).

5. Given the critical food economy context in eastern DRC, the main objectives of this paper are:

- to define and test a framework for analysis of food security in protracted crises contexts;
- to provide a brief description of the main events, specific features and causes that have characterized the DRC conflict;
- to provide a preliminary analysis of the food security situation in the eastern DRC and of its link with the protracted crisis situation (e.g. recurring conflicts);
- to provide an overview of the major food security-related responses to the crisis undertaken by local and international stakeholders and of the policy and strategic frameworks under which these responses have taken place;
- to identify the major strengths and weaknesses of these responses in addressing food security and agricultural rehabilitation with a medium- to longer-term perspective;
- to identify research areas and research questions that may deserve further attention; and
- to define the framework for analysis for two field-based case studies.

1.2. Framework for analysis: conceptualizing food security, conflict and policy

1.2.1. Perspectives on food security

6. Food security has been defined in multiple ways that can best be summarized in three dominant paradigms. The first paradigm understands food insecurity and famine as a direct consequence of

food shortages caused by climatic variables (environmental view) or demographic pressures (neo-Malthusian or demographic theory). Climatic variables attracted widespread attention during the droughts of the 1970s in the Horn of Africa, which caused large-scale famines. These famines were explained as the consequence of a lack of capacity of social systems to deal with external (climatic) shocks. The dominant policy response was massive food aid. Neo-Malthusian theory comes to a similar policy recommendation in its call for increased agricultural production. According to this theory, food insecurity and famine are caused by food availability decline due to rising demand (demographic pressure) and stagnating production. Even if this view has lost much of its attraction, it is still pursued by leading think tanks such as the Worldwatch Institute, which has warned of a “new era of food scarcity” (Devereux, 2000).

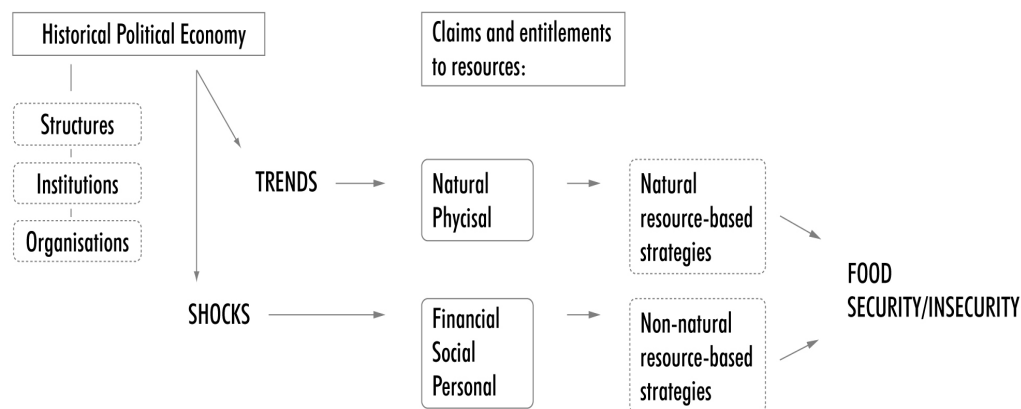
7. In the early 1980s, the theses of declining carrying capacities and supply failures were rejected by Amartya Sen, whose “entitlement theory” of famine made a distinction between the availability of food and people’s ability to acquire it. This ability is reflected by people’s “exchange entitlements” or livelihood sources, which include production-based entitlements, own-labour entitlements, trade-based entitlements and inheritance and transfer entitlements. In this view, famines and other food-related emergencies are economic disasters caused by failures of demand, or by a sharp decline in people’s entitlements, which leads to inability to command enough food for subsistence even when markets are well stocked. In order to prevent famine, therefore, interventions should strengthen people’s access to food either by the production of food or by the exchange of other commodities or services for food (Sen, 1981). This economic view of food security, which is also repeated in the World Bank’s definition of food security (“access by all people at all times to sufficient food for an active, healthy life” (World Bank, 1986)), disregards the notion of sustainability, or sufficient access to food over the long term, and the notion of vulnerability, or the risk of exposure to shocks and the ability to cope with these shocks and recover from risks to livelihoods (Maxwell and Wiebe, 1999).

8. Sen’s stress on the relationship between people and markets as the root of famine also neglects the political context or the larger “structures of inequality” (Seddon and Adhikari, 2003) that explain why some people have easier access to food than others. It also fails to explain why famine may create opportunities and benefits for some while reducing them for others. Since the 1990s, an increasing number of authors view famine as a political phenomenon that is not caused by lack of food production or market deregulations, but by political powerlessness. Keen has stressed that “a lack of lobbying power within national (and international) institutions” is the main reason for food insecurity (Keen, 1994). It is the wider political and institutional context that explains why those hit hardest by famine are those that are the most politically vulnerable. De Waal goes even further and claims that “famine is caused by failures of political accountability” (de Waal, 1997). Rather than strengthening the availability of food and people’s access to food, the political famine theory urges that interventions focus on state reconstruction, good governance and accountability.

9. The advantage of the last paradigm is that it offers a valuable framework to relate people’s livelihood strategies to structures, institutions and organizations, or to the wider political economy. If food security in its most extreme appearance is “a socio-economic process which causes the accelerated destitution of the most vulnerable, marginal and least powerful groups in the community, to a point where they can no longer, as a group, maintain a sustainable livelihood” (Walker, 1989), it is also the outcome of political structures and processes. A better understanding of the complex and

open-ended phenomenon of food insecurity (Devereux, 2000) thus includes a comprehension of the key mechanisms that cause unequal food availability and unequal entitlements to food, as well as of people's coping strategies and the range of constraints and opportunities affecting the livelihood strategies of households and individuals. Figure 1, developed by Seddon and Adhiraki, presents a framework that integrates these issues. The central element of the model is the link between political economy and people's claims and entitlements to assets needed for an effective pursuit of sustainable and secure livelihood strategies and to attain food security (Seddon and Adhiraki, 2003).

Figure 1: Framework of food production, distribution and consumption



Source: Seddon and Adhikari, 2003.

1.2.2. Food security and conflict

10. Recent literature has also pointed to the complex interaction of food insecurity and conflict, and the close association between both. On the one hand, conflict and institutional variability put existing food systems under stress and turn them from predictable mechanisms of production, processing, distribution and consumption into very volatile, unpredictable and uncontrollable mechanisms (Pingali, Alinovi and Sutton, 2005). The consequent food insecurity can be an unintended by-product of war but can also be a deliberate strategy of armed actors (Devereux, 2000). On the other hand, famine can cause intensified competition for food and instigate armed struggle. In both forms of interaction of famine and conflict, a key parameter to a better understanding of local food systems is the social and institutional environment.

11. This perspective leads to two observations. First, recent studies in conflict areas such as Somalia, the DRC and West Africa suggest that the collapse of (state) institutions does not necessarily mean the collapse of society. In some of these areas the interaction of institutional breakdown and conflict has provoked the development of new, non-state centres of authority that consolidate themselves around alternative patterns of social control, protection and profit (Le Billon, 2001; Menkhaus, 2004; Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers, 2004). In some instances, these new local polities even seem to be more economically beneficial than the preceding (predatory and repressive) state structures (Pingali, Alinovi and Sutton, 2005), and can offer new opportunities for food security. Second, this recent

material suggests that conflict does not necessarily lead to a complete withering of social cohesion or to a “conflict-trap” (Collier, 2003), but in fact involves a great deal of individual and collective adaptation. An increasing amount of research points to the fact that societies in crisis situations develop a wide range of coping strategies that might induce important processes of social transformation (Collinson, 2003).

12. A better understanding of these institutional shifts as adaptation strategies is thus essential for better understanding the dynamic nature of food-related emergencies. A very valuable strategy for gaining insight is Sarah Collinson’s political economy approach to conflict, which looks at the interrelatedness between livelihood opportunities and the broader political economy. Collinson’s model seeks to understand “both the political and the economic aspects of conflict, and how these combine to affect patterns of power and vulnerability” (Collinson, 2003). The analysis is concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes in a society, which include the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time. In this context, the term “vulnerability”, which is a central element of livelihoods approaches, is understood not just in terms of material need, but also includes an essential reference to (political and economic) powerlessness.

13. Understanding the effects of conflict on food security mechanisms, therefore, requires an analysis of vulnerability and risk, both of which related to social and political status. Vulnerability can be defined as “the dynamic social production of resilience, or the capacity to manage, adapt to, cope with or recover from risks to livelihoods. These variables reflect social relations and are themselves social relations, linked to group hierarchies and resistances of the society in which they circulate.” (Pingali, Alinovi and Sutton., 2005) Most research – like most interventions – has limited itself to analysis of one internal aspect of vulnerability, which can be defined as people’s capacities to deal with “shocks”. These coping strategies, or “short-term, temporary responses to declining food entitlements, which are characteristic of structurally secure livelihood systems” (Davies, 1993), offer valuable insights into the different responses of people and households to food insecurity caused by protracted crises. The coping strategies index (CPI), for example, which incorporates elements of vulnerability and the deliberate decisions of households faced with food insecurity, measures four categories of coping: dietary change, increasing short-term food access, migration or decreasing numbers of people to feed, and rationing strategies (Maxwell *et al.*, 2003). In many cases, the CPI has revealed that what people do in crisis situations is not unrelated to their strategies in ordinary difficult situations; in other words, there is a continuum from daily coping strategies to strategies developed in protracted crises (Seddon and Adhikari, 2003).

14. One of the weaknesses of the CPI is its focus on short-term strategies. When food insecurity is prolonged, damage to livelihoods becomes inevitable and people and households are forced to adopt alternative strategies if they want to survive. The question arises to what extent the new strategies are parameters to measure changes in local food systems in general. In the long run, dietary change might also lead to changes in consumption patterns. Immature crop consumption forces people to consume alternative crops, which might provoke a shift in production systems. Migration in search of alternative economic opportunities might induce changes in mobility patterns. Forcing children to fend for themselves might push them into new forms of integration such as militia groups. In other words, the short-term *coping* strategies investigated by the CPI might in turn indicate the first phase of

a larger process that includes the development of longer-term *adaptation* strategies of livelihoods to crisis contexts. Following the definition of Pingali, Alinovi and Sutton of livelihood vulnerability, the adaptation of these livelihoods will to a great extent be influenced by the institutional framework in which they are developed. One of the major tasks of contemporary research in protracted crises, therefore, is to explore this apparent link between short-term coping strategies, long-term adaptation strategies and the “policies, institutions and processes” (Collinson, 2003).

15. One element that needs particular attention in the analysis of food systems in protracted crises is land tenure systems. The links between land tenure and food security have recently generated a substantial body of research and policy initiatives. In many regions, pressures on land have generated land disputes and land tenure insecurity. While environmentalists have pointed at the importance of land scarcity and demographic pressure as causes of land disputes, recent research into protracted crises has illustrated that these disputes are triggered by shifts in the rights and institutions that govern access to and use of land. These shifts often result in insecure and limited access to land for large sections of society and become structural causes of poverty, food insecurity and conflict. In return, in some cases war transforms the role of unequal land access from a structural cause of poverty and conflict to a “resource of conflict”. This is the case where local politico-military elites try to consolidate their own power base and reward their supporters by extending control over land (Vlassenroot and Huggins, 2005; Huggins and Pottier, 2005). Unequal land access and shifts in tenure systems have a direct impact on local food systems. In cases where land access becomes insecure, crop diversification is no longer in accordance with agro-climatic zones but with security of tenure. Households with insecure land access tend to opt for low-risk, seasonal but less efficient crops instead of perennial crops. These shifts in cropping patterns risk negatively affecting their food security, because in addition to the shifts in crops there is also a shift in the qualitative use of land. When land access becomes insecure, investments to increase productivity tend to decrease. Research into the links between food security and conflict must therefore integrate the issue of land tenure. While it is obvious that shifts in land tenure systems are often a structural cause for poverty and conflict, it is one of the hypotheses of this study that the alternative strategies developed by households to guarantee their food security eventually induce transformations of local food systems.

1.2.3. Interventions and policies

16. Concerns about the impact of policy interventions for maintaining food entitlements of crisis-affected people and households in recent years have provoked an intense debate among researchers and agencies on how to build more effective policy responses. This debate has revealed a number of common deficiencies in policy responses to food insecurity. First, the international community has moved from long-term development-oriented assistance to short-term emergency support. Second, while protracted crises are to be understood as complex processes that are deeply rooted in local society, interventions in most cases tend to start from a top-down and blueprint approach and are limited to a standardized set of responses. Moreover, most donor agencies regard conflicts as an aberration from the normal path of development and neglect the complexity and changing environment of protracted crises (Korf and Bauer, 2002). The main reason for this seems to be the lack of assessments of livelihoods as well as a weak link between available information about the crisis environment and policy formulation. Third, these short-term interventionist frameworks are commodity-focussed and are dominated by food aid or the provision of seeds and tools, thus

neglecting the other dimensions of food security (Flores, Khwaja and White, 2005). Fourth, agencies start from a very neutral perspective on food assistance strategies, which is in sharp contrast with the possible negative effects of food distribution. Food aid might create long-lasting food deficit situations (Doornbos, 2003) and destabilize local food systems, or might become an element of local war economies. In all protracted crises, aid interventions certainly have political as well as economic and technical consequences. Fifth, most policy interventions address only the direct needs of households and individuals and do not deal with the structural or institutional causes of inequality and food insecurity. Finally, in some cases it was demonstrated that food security interventions fail to address the needs of the crisis-affected populations (Levine and Chastre, 2004).

17. Recently, a number of suggestions have been formulated to improve policy responses to food insecurity. Flores, Khwaja and White suggest that policy frameworks should have the following essential attributes in order to make them more effective: i) the formulation of clear overall objectives; ii) the promotion and support of improved contextual knowledge in order to comprehend the full nature of needs and suitable responses; iii) the generation of a broader range of policy options as a basis for the designing of responses to food insecurity; iv) the establishment of clear implementation principles and standards that govern the manner in which agencies put policy options into effect; and v) the provision of a clear rationale for donors to fund policy development and implementation. Food security policy frameworks should also relate short- and longer-term food security perspectives, integrate local and national authorities in the implementation processes and field expertise, and delegate decision-making (Flores, Khwaja and White, 2005). Korf and Bauer suggest that food security assistance should be development-oriented right from the beginning in order to avoid the erosion of the foundations of development activities. In addition responses should involve local people in all stages of the project cycle in order to strengthen the confidence and responsibility of the local population (Korf and Bauer, 2002).

18. The “twin-track approach” of the FAO, which starts from the core dimensions of food security and suggests possible actions and policies to be implemented in relation to these dimensions, integrates most of these concerns and suggestions. Because it can be used both for the analysis of food security and the development and evaluation of policy responses, the FAO framework serves as the methodological and analytical framework of this study. This conceptual and operational framework is flexible and adaptable to each context, integrates immediate and longer-term needs and defines the most appropriate responses and strategies based on the particularities and specificities of the intervention environment. The first track addresses recovery measures for rural livelihoods, while the second track provides immediate support to vulnerable groups. Figure 2 shows possible actions and policies that could be implemented under each track of the twin-track approach:

Figure 2: The twin-track approach and the dimensions of food security

Twin-track approach	Availability	Access	Stability
Rural development/ Productivity enhancement	Enhancing food supply to the most vulnerable Improving rural food production, especially by small-scale farmers Investing in rural infrastructure Investing in rural markets Revitalizing livestock sector Rehabilitating and conserving resources Enhancing income and other entitlements to food	Re-establishing rural institutions Enhancing access to assets Ensuring access to land Reviving rural financial systems Strengthening the labour market Establishing mechanisms to ensure safe food Supporting social rehabilitation programmes	Diversifying agriculture and employment Monitoring food security and vulnerability Dealing with the structural causes of food insecurity Reintegrating refugees and displaced people Developing risk analysis and management Reviving access to credit system and saving mechanisms
Direct and immediate access to food	Providing food aid Providing seed/input relief Restocking livestock capital Enabling market revival	Transfers: Food/cash-based Asset redistribution Social relief/rehabilitation programmes Nutrition intervention programmes	Re-establishing social safety nets Monitoring immediate vulnerability and intervention impact Peacebuilding efforts

Source: Pingali, Alinovi and Sutton, 2005.

II. FOOD SECURITY AND PROTRACTED CRISIS IN EASTERN DRC

II.1. The Congolese “war complex”

19. Violent conflict has engulfed the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), principally the eastern part, for much of the last decade. It has caused, directly and indirectly, more than 3 million deaths, massive internal displacement, refugee movements, and generalized insecurity in rural areas. In addition to the humanitarian impact, the conflict has also seriously affected local social and economic structures. Several years of violence have disrupted economic survival mechanisms, have distressed relations between different communities and have eroded the social fabric. Despite the hopes for peace offered by the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement (1999), the Sun City Accords (2003), and the subsequent establishment of a Transitional Government in June 2003, the security situation in the

rural areas has hardly improved. Rural populations of eastern Congo continue to endure the harsh conditions produced by a decade of violent conflict. Citizens are still confronted with extortion of their economic activity, the imposition of forced taxes, summary killings, detentions and executions, as well as systematic sexual violence against women and girls. Even as the DRC moves towards greater political and economic stability, the smouldering conflict that has ruled people's lives for years continues to determine both local livelihoods and governance structures.

20. At the origins of this protracted crisis is the merger of local, national and regional dynamics of conflict. From the early 1990s onwards, the process of state collapse (itself a direct consequence of Mobutu's neo-patrimonial rule) provoked intensified competition for political participation and access to economic assets. The violent struggle that resulted gradually pitched entire ethnic communities against each other. In 1993, growing competition between Banyarwanda communities and autochthonous populations for political representation and access to land led to a first outburst of violence, killing several thousand people. After the arrival of more than one million Rwandan Hutu refugees in 1994, the local dynamics of conflict became increasingly intermingled with a regional struggle for power in Africa's Great Lakes region. Rwandan Hutu militias started attacking local Tutsi in Zaire, as well as the new regime in Rwanda. The regional coalition set up in 1996 to deal with the security problem had little difficulty in cutting right through the weakened Mobitist defence. Seven months after its creation, the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) arrived in Kinshasa and installed Laurent-Désiré Kabila as the new president of the country. What was hoped would be the end of a national and regional crisis, however, soon set in motion a process of political fragmentation. Growing disagreement between the new Congolese regime and its foreign supporters instigated the formation of a rebel movement against the Kabila regime. The Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) rebellion in turn set in motion the formation of a regional war complex, including the involvement of several African nations and a total fragmentation of the politico-military landscape, the dissolving of political agenda into more local and individual interests, and growing militarization of local society.

21. The peace process initiated in 2003 provides ground for cautious optimism about the resolution of the DRC crisis. Both the former adversaries and the international community seem determined to put an end to the conflict and set the transition process on track. Most of the armed actors are showing their adherence to the military power-sharing agreements and support the transitional structures inaugurated in June 2003. Since then, the Mission of the United Nations in Congo (MONUC) has been given a stronger mandate (under Chapter Seven of the United Nations Charter) and its military force has been expanded. Along with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, several Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries decided to significantly increase their development aid as well as to support financially the government's transitional reform. This international commitment includes the training of a new and unified army, the establishment of national and local administrations, the initiation of a large-scale disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, assistance for the organization of national elections and support of security reforms and economic recovery. This commitment has helped to establish some political stability and economic recovery and has ensured the functioning of several transitional institutions. In addition, it has facilitated the preparation of national elections and has redefined regional relations based on cooperation.

22. Some caution remains, however, as this fragile political stability is regularly challenged by politico-military groups that refuse to support the peace process. Another cause of concern is the presence of foreign militias that are a major source of insecurity in the Kivu provinces (eastern DRC). Slow progress in preparing elections has caused serious delays and popular discontent. At the same time, security reform is stumbling due to lack of confidence between the warring parties. In general, the transition process continues to be overshadowed by large-scale corruption, while the transitional parties appear to be driven by opportunistic behaviour rather than by firm commitment to the peace process. Finally, the local conflict dynamics that instigated the DRC war have not been dealt with adequately. There are therefore no reliable projections on the future of the Congolese peace process.

II.2. Effects of conflict on poverty, food systems and food security

II.2.1. Dramatic levels of poverty

23. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is often represented as a typical example of the natural resource curse: while its abundant natural wealth makes it potentially one of the richest nations on earth, its gross domestic per head is among the lowest in the world. Decades of economic mismanagement and patrimonial rule, the conversion of economic resources into political resources and profit-seeking activities by the ruling class have caused a total collapse of the Congolese economy. Already before the war, the Congolese population was faced with very low national income, limited access to health and education, and the total disintegration of economic and transport infrastructure. The war has further reduced the economic opportunities of the Congolese population and has had a devastating impact on remaining productive capacities. In 2002, about 80 percent of the population lived below the poverty line of US\$0.2 per day (AfDB/OECD, 2005). At the same time, the war has resulted in considerable regional disparities in poverty figures. The average national annual income per capita in real terms in 1998 was estimated at US\$110 (FAO, 2000), but in the eastern areas of the country is only US\$32 (AfDB/OECD, 2005). There more than 50 percent of households (with an average of six to seven members) survive on less than US\$1 per day. These figures reveal only part of reality, as it is much easier to secure access to food in the more rural areas of eastern Congo than in Kinshasa. Another disparity is evident in unemployment, which nears 90 percent in Kinshasa and close to 100 percent in eastern DRC. Other social indicators show similar realities. The infant mortality rate rose from 125 per 1000 in 1990 to 170 in 2000, and maternal mortality from 800 to 2 000 per 100 000. While life expectancy in Africa in 2002 was 51 years, in the DRC it was only 42 years (AfDB/OECD, 2005). In the eastern DRC, more than 90 percent of the rural population has no easy access to safe drinking water.

II.2.2. Food insecurity, loss of assets and reduction of livelihood options

24. In most parts of the DRC, the food security situation has worsened considerably since the outbreak of the first Congolese war in 1996. In the capital Kinshasa, important supply changes, innovations and coping strategies (such as the development of peri-urban and urban agriculture) have emerged as a result of the war. Such strategies have facilitated a continuing food supply and have allowed most Kinshasians to deal with the most severe effects of chronic food insecurity (Tollens, 2005). Children are among the most affected by malnutrition. In Kinshasa, between 18 and 30 percent of children are malnourished (FAO, 2000). Even if reliable and updated national statistics are scarce,

remain anecdotal or do not go beyond informed estimates, available data reveal that in the eastern parts of the DRC the nutritional position of large parts of the population has reached dramatic levels. Chronic infant malnutrition is over 45 percent for children under five years old (the national average is 38.2 percent (MICS2, 2001)). In the rural areas of eastern Congo, daily diets are deficient in micronutrients, proteins and lipids.

25. There are many causes of food security in eastern DRC. Generalized insecurity (especially in rural areas) has led to a decrease in production, limitation of access to markets and the reduction of financial means. Only about 12 percent of the population eats three meals a day, 60 percent eats two meals and 27 percent eats only one meal a day. In South Kivu, according to statistics of the *Inspection Provinciale de l'Agriculture, Pêche et Elevage* (Ipapel), the amount of cropland cultivated dropped by 29 percent overall between 1996 and 2004 and by more than 50 percent in the most remote areas. General food production dropped by 12 percent, vegetable production by 42 percent and the production of cereals by 33 percent. In North Kivu, livestock activity shifted from cattle raising (the number of cattle has been reduced by more than 50 percent during the war) to small livestock activities. The main constraints to production are limited access to land and tools, pillaging of harvests and animal stocks by armed groups and lack of treatment of diseases of small stocks and plants. Lack of access to markets and growing isolation of remote areas have also discouraged production of food. Another critical constraint to food security is a growing lack of financial assets. Lack of demand due to loss of financial assets has reduced food prices, which in turn have caused loss of income for the rural populations. A survey in Kamituga (South Kivu) revealed that sales of agricultural products by individual farmers dropped by roughly a quarter in comparison with the pre-war period (1995–1996) (Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers, 2004). The reduction in farmers' income is also caused by a shortfall of economic exchange between urban centres and insecure rural areas, and by the importation of basic necessities that were formerly produced locally. Before the war Kinshasa's main provider of beans, maize and meat was the Kivus, but today it imports cheaper agricultural products from Zambia, Tanzania, South Africa and others. The coping mechanisms adopted by the most vulnerable households to deal with the effects of declining income have further affected food security. These strategies include the reduction of quality and quantity of meals, a preference for crops that have a minimal risk but low alimentary value, exchange of labour for food and displacement (Save the Children, 2003b). Migration to mining sites, which has become a very popular coping strategy in resource-rich areas, has caused neglect of local food production and a considerable increase in food imports and prices. The most striking example of this development is the situation in Walikale (North Kivu), where 60 percent of food products are currently imported from Goma; before the war, Walikale was one of Goma's main food suppliers.

26. In addition to the effects of the Congolese conflict, other factors have contributed to growing food insecurity. Pre-war governmental land tenure policies aimed at introducing an entrepreneurial agriculture and redirecting profits derived from land ownership to the advantage of a new class of largeholders have reduced local farmers' access to land, turning many farmers who were small landowners into simple labourers and eroding traditional coping mechanisms. The effects of the capitalization of land have been felt most in the densely-populated areas of eastern DRC such as Lubero and Masisi, where crop patterns shifted from nutritious crops to low-risk but protein-deficient crops such as manioc. The reduction in size of cultivated plots already resulted in famine in 1989 (Pottier and Fairhead, 1991).

27. Another compounding factor is the destruction of local infrastructure, the result of total negligence and lack of investment during the pre-war period. The collapse of the road network (in North Kivu 25 percent of all roads are no longer accessible and more than 50 percent only by 4x4 vehicles) and the presence of armed elements have further reduced access to markets and the possibilities for transporting food from production areas to centres of consumption. The shift from road to air transport has led to an increase in consumer prices in the interior.

28. A final factor in reduced food security is the disappearance of local agronomists to assist and guide local farmers. The lack of government assistance has resulted in decreased production and capacities to deal with diseases such as cassava disease and tracheomycosis (coffee wilt disease). Recent surveys revealed that less than 15 percent of rural households have access to knowledge and advice from agronomists, while assistance has become crucial due to a sharp increase in disease. In the Kivus, more than 75 percent of cassava fields are infected by disease, which has reduced the production by 30 to 60 percent, and in the most highly-affected areas by as much as 80 percent (for example in Walungu, which continues to suffer severely from the presence of Hutu militias). Production of bananas, which are an important staple food but also an important source of income, has also been affected recently by disease and insects and in some regions has declined by 50 percent. These shortfalls in production have made many farmers dependent on local markets to guarantee their access to food. The availability of financial assets, however, are not sufficient to obtain high-quality food, which in turn leads to shifts in food patterns to the advantage of cheap but less-nutritious products.

II.2.3. Land alienation and conflict

29. In many parts of eastern DRC, the land issue continues to lie at the heart of local conflict dynamics. At the root of local land disputes are shifts in local land tenure structures that were introduced during the colonial period. These structures were further consolidated after independence with the introduction of new land legislation. Before the colonial conquest, large parts of eastern Congo were characterized by markedly stratified social structures, which organized the use of available space through distribution of access rights to customary-held land in return for the payment of rents. These contracts could be described as institutions that not only distributed access to land but also legitimized the social organization as a whole by integrating all persons living within a given region into a local network of dependent relations (Van Acker, 2005). The socially integrative aspect of these customary land systems came under pressure for the first time during colonialism. One of the characteristics of the land tenure system introduced by the Belgian colonial powers was the creation of a double system of property rights. Next to “customary” existed a “modern” system for the white settlers, enabling them to establish their plantations through an application to the central state. All non-customary (or vacant) land was declared to be property of the colonial state and was expropriated for settler-owned concessions. The dual nature of the system allowed for “forum shopping” in order to gain access to land, which eventually undermined the legitimacy of both the customary and statutory systems. Another consequence of the integration of customary land systems within the structures of the state under colonial rule was the institutionalization of the links between ethnic identity and land access. These links became very problematic when increased migration of

labour forces from neighbouring Rwanda intensified local competition for land access and control (Vlassenroot, 2004).

30. The confusion brought about by the co-existence of “customary” and “modern” land access systems increased after the introduction of the so-called Bakajika Land Law in 1966. This legislation discarded customary law, so that land occupied under customary rules no longer had any legal status. This forced most peasants into a position of general uncertainty about their legal access to land. What was intended as a measure of national integration (it was giving every Zairian citizen equal access to land) instead in its application proved to be a perfect instrument for those already holding a position of political or economic power to appropriate any land not yet titled. In the Kivus, the majority of the land became the property of a small number of landowners, each of whom acquired extremely large landholdings through their access to the inner circles of Mobutu’s patronage system (Vlassenroot and Higgins, 2005). In a survey in the zone of Luhoto (North Kivu) in the beginning of the 1990s, it was found that 31 percent of the concessions covered 71.2 percent of the cultivable area (Tsongo, 1994). This land legislation and the politics of patronage pushed most small farmers into a position of insecure land titles or land alienation. In regions such as Bushi, Rutshuru and Masisi, which faced unrelenting population growth, the effects were disastrous. By the end of the 1980s, 49 percent of the population in Kivus lived in areas with a density higher than 100 inhabitants per square km, whereas this number was only 13.4 percent in Zaire as a whole (de Saint Moulin, 1995).

31. This dynamic has put the resources of poor peasant households under growing pressure, leading to: a) a shift in the economic use of the available space, which resulted in land dispossession and alienation, producing a large agricultural labour surplus; b) growing food insecurity in the most densely populated areas; c) young men opting for a strategy of temporal migration, causing shifts in local mobility patterns; and d) intensified competition for wealth accumulation through land, which led to a hardening of social boundaries on an ethnic basis. In areas with a large presence of immigrants, such as Masisi and Rutshuru, competition for land was easily manipulated into ethnically-motivated conflicts. But in other regions also, such as Ituri, land claims were rejected on an ethnic basis and land disputes caused regular violent clashes.

32. The direct relationship between problematic access to land and conflict was further consolidated during the Congolese war of 1996. On the one hand, local disputes for land came to be linked to the larger, multi-level conflict for political power and control over local resources. On the other hand, land became an integral part of strategies by new coalitions – comprising local and regional actors – to acquire control over local economic assets and social mobility. The result of this new dynamic was that land gradually shifted from a *source* to a *resource* of conflict. The most visible illustration of this trend is the confiscation by local commanders of land that they cannot legally claim. Access to land provides new local leaderships with the necessary economic basis, yet at the same time offers them a perfect resource to be distributed among their supporters. These practices have further pushed farmers into a very insecure economic position, as land is turned into an asset under control of a new class of politico-military leaders. Reduced access to land and considerable levels of insecurity have strongly limited agricultural activities and have seriously affected existing food systems. Insecure land access has forced poorer households to rent land instead of buying or owning it, and to develop

alternative strategies that in the long run might negatively affect their own food security – particularly if the environment of smouldering conflict continues to diminish economic alternatives.

II.2.4. Food economy zones

33. Based on the economic situation, main activities of rural production and food security situation, several food economy zones can be distinguished in eastern DRC. These zones do not correspond to the territorial organization of the country and in some cases cover parts of different provinces. The regions that are part of this preliminary review and field-based case studies include the food economy zones of North and South Kivu. These zones share a common focus on subsistence farming but differ in terms of markets and rural production, with livestock and agriculture as the main activities.

34. In North Kivu, the food economy zones include:

- a) The **Rwenzori food economic zone**, which comprises most of Beni territory and has as its principal activity subsistence and commercial farming, the produce of which is sold on local and border markets (principally Beni and Kasindi). The vicinity of the Rwenzori Mountains, which reach a height of 5 000 metres, makes this zone particularly suitable for the cultivation of fruit (mangos, oranges, avocados) and cash crops such as vanilla, cacao and *papaine*. Timber exploitation poses a severe threat to the environment, and is taking place at an alarming rate near the Ituri forest.
- b) The **Butembo food economic zone**, which is situated around the commercial town of Butembo and produces food crops for the surrounding areas. There is also some minor mining activity towards Manguredjipa and Musienene, which is exploited foremost by local militias. In addition, some fishing activity takes place on Lake Edward, along with pastoral activity in the Virunga Park and in the highland areas. The main commercial product in this area is quinquina, which is exported through local agents.
- c) The **Lubero food economic zone**, which traditionally focuses on livestock and vegetables (such as cauliflower and onions), but has been forced to shift strategies due to pillaging and insecurity. This is the zone most affected by the war, which is forcing people either to flee or to move closer and closer to the forest area. While small livestock is currently being reintroduced in the northern area (towards Butembo), there has been a notable shift towards subsistence crops, mainly manioc (which makes up as much as 80 percent of local produce in some areas).
- d) The **Masisi food economy zone**, which has been one of the main centres of livestock and agricultural activities, but since the 1960s has been faced with local struggles for land: large parts of the rural population have lost their parcels to the advantage of pastures owned by local elites. Starting in 1993, Masisi suffered from ethnically-underpinned violence and militia activities that caused massive displacement and a stand-still of agricultural activities. Since 2002, the security situation has improved considerably and livestock and agricultural activities have resumed in the region.

e) The **Walikale food economy zone**, which was a producer of palm oil, manioc and rice before the war; palm oil and rice were mainly cash-crops. Hunting in the nearby forests also added proteins to the diet of the local population. Since the war, insecurity and mining activities have seriously disrupted local food systems. Mining activities have offered an economic alternative but have led to the migration of local men and youngsters and have affected agricultural production, which explains why Walikale has shifted from a food-producing to a food-importing zone.

f) The **Rutshuru food economy zone**, which has characteristics similar to the Masisi food economy zone. The population is composed almost entirely of agricultural households that use their land mainly for subsistence and income-generating farming. Before the war, livestock was an important determinant of wealth, but during the conflict most of the livestock were pillaged by local and Rwandan militias. Since 2003, there is a tentative return of livestock and agricultural activities.

35. In South Kivu, the main food economy zones are:

a) The **Savanne food economy zone**, which produces manioc, bananas, vegetables, potatoes, etc. for subsistence as well as for the population of Bukavu, and which has a number of quinquina plantations. Along the shores of Kivu Lake, fishery activities are another important source of income. As in other regions, livestock used to be the main determinant of wealth but since the war they have almost totally disappeared. Demographic pressure and local mechanisms of land access have marginalized large parts of the population.

b) The **Ruzizi Plain food economy zone**, which used to have semi-industrial agricultural production of coffee, cotton and rice, mainly organized by local cooperatives. Since the war, most of these activities have been drastically reduced. Today, the main activities are manioc production, mainly for subsistence and for the provision of the population of Uvira, and livestock activities. This zone is also characterized by contested land rights, which has regularly caused tension between the autochthonous populations and the Barundi, who originate from neighbouring Burundi.

c) The **Tanganyika lakeshore food economy zone**, which is located south of Uvira, and is characterized by two zones of economic activity. Along the shores of Tanganyika Lake, fishing activities are the main source of income. In the forest areas, hunting and palm oil production are the main activities. Since the start of the war, both zones are controlled by a local militia that originated in the 1960s.

d) The **Shabunda-Mwenga food economy zone**, which comprises large parts of South Kivu province and is a forested area. Its main agricultural activities used to be the production of rice (which was exported to Kinshasa) and manioc. Since the start of the Congolese conflict, agricultural production has been limited to subsistence activities due to insecurity and a lack of markets. Today, food is increasingly being imported from Bukavu.

e) The **Middle and Hauts Plateaux food economy zone**, which are located west of the Ruzizi Plains and Uvira. Cattle raising is the main activity of this zone, although the conflict has seriously reduced the number of cattle. Prior to the war, this zone was the main provider of meat to the Burundian capital.

III. INTERVENTIONS: POLICY AND PROGRAMMING RESPONSES

III.1. Major players, mandates and approaches

III.1.1. National, regional and local institutions and structures

36. The Democratic Republic of the Congo can best be described as a weak or fragile state, with limited governance capacity and presence outside of the capital of Kinshasa. In the north-eastern and southern parts, rebel leaderships have replaced the state but largely rely on former government structures for the establishment of their own civil administration and the expansion and consolidation of their territorial rule. Lack of governance by government and rebel administrations is also echoed in food security policies. Pre-war government structures at provincial and local levels have almost totally disappeared or lost most of their financial and logistical means. In addition, rebel movements have not been able to revive agricultural structures and facilitate the delivery of basic food needs through effective institutions. At provincial levels, activities of agriculture administrations are limited to the collection of statistics on price evolutions at local markets or the facilitation of access of international agencies to vulnerable populations. During the war, rebel movements have used access to vulnerable people as a political tool and have impeded relief operations from reaching communities in territories under government or militia control. The RCD-Goma rebel movement, for instance, denied or complicated aid agencies' access to territories under Mayi-Mayi control. Although food insecurity and malnutrition are still not considered priorities, the transition process has partly strengthened government capacities to deal with food insecurity. A few years ago, at the provincial level, participative consultancies and seminars were organized and governmental committees were installed that are meant to coordinate policies to fight poverty, but these structures are inefficient. (In Kinshasa such coordination mechanisms had already existed for a long time; they are supported by the Ministry of Planning.) The activities of these committees are directed mainly at facilitating and accompanying aid agencies rather than at defining food security policies.

37. The role played by national and local research institutes in dealing with the causes and effects of malnutrition and food insecurity is also important. One of these institutes is the National Institute of Agronomist Research, which has tried to improve agricultural production by offering seeds and plants that are resistant to the most common and serious diseases. Local businessmen, however, have tried to profit by offering cheaper seeds of lesser quality, which has undermined efforts by research institutes. In addition, these institutes are regularly looted and lack institutional support, which has further hampered their capacity to improve seeds and assist local farmers.

38. Several community-based social network structures are playing an essential role in addressing the origins and dynamics of conflict and the causes and effects of food insecurity. Traditional social mechanisms based on kinship structures can be mobilized to cope with acute situations of food insecurity. These mechanisms include collectively owned land (mainly marshland and gallery forests)

that can be cultivated only for short periods and only in case of food shortages or to accommodate newcomers. Corrupt behaviour by traditional chiefs under Mobutu led to private sales of these common lands and eroded the capacities of local communities to deal with temporary food shortages.

39. During the war, local associations dealing with the effects of the conflict have been mushrooming. Most of these associations, however, lack financial means and capacity to have any serious impact. Those organizations that could attract funding from international agencies are mostly platforms that unite a number of grassroots associations and initiatives. In many cases, funding by international donors has reduced their activities to execution of donors' programmes. Most of these programmes were aimed mainly at responding to urgent humanitarian needs, which influenced the scope and orientation of local organizations. Successful initiatives in the field of food security intervention are the *Groupe d'Etude et d'Actions pour un Développement bien Défini*, which unites 99 grassroots associations, the *Programme d'Actions Locales*, the *Union des Groupements des Femmes Paysannes du Nord-Kivu*, *Groupe Technique d'Encadrement Régional* (GTER), *Groupe d'Appui aux Initiatives du Développement Rural* (Gaider) and *Initiatives Femmes-Enfants et Développement* (IFED). At the provincial level, local development organizations are united into *Conseils Régionaux des Organisations Non-Gouvernementales de Développement* (CRONGD), which at a national level are united into a *Conseil National des Organisations Non-Gouvernementales de Développement* (CNONGD). Since the start of the war, most of these councils have lost much of their capacity to coordinate the development activities of its members, which is one of the organization's key objectives.

III.1.2. The role of international donors

40. The large presence of international aid agencies is a direct consequence of the refugee crisis caused by the Rwandan genocide. The flow of more than one million refugees into eastern DRC was followed by the arrival of a multitude of international humanitarian organizations. As this refugee crisis was soon followed by a new humanitarian disaster, most humanitarian agencies increased their efforts and dealt with the effects of the crisis. The importance of humanitarian assistance reached such levels that the international community took over several key functions of the weakened civil administration. Most of this assistance, however, is going to relief and emergency operations. During the war, only a limited share of donor resources was aimed at financing development programmes. This focus on humanitarian objectives has shifted since the start of the transition process, with more and more agencies now defining longer-term programmes and enlarging their focus to post-conflict rehabilitation and direct support to the peace process.

41. The largest international operation is the **United Nations Mission to the DRC (MONUC)**. The mission was established on 30 November 1999 following the Lusaka Peace Agreement and as of 30 June 2005 was staffed with more than 16 000 troops, 700 military observers and about 2 500 civilian staff. While MONUC's mandate is to support the DRC peace process, a humanitarian affairs section was created to assist in efforts to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations. Activities of this section include providing temporary shelter and protection to civilians threatened by armed conflicts; negotiating access to vulnerable people by putting pressure on the belligerents and facilitating the transportation of non-governmental organization (NGO) and United Nations agency staff undertaking critical humanitarian missions. About 7 500 people were transported by MONUC in 2003–2004 on humanitarian grounds. Other duties of the humanitarian

section include the facilitation of delivery of humanitarian cargo and the sharing of security information with NGO and United Nations partners, which allows them to safely assist local populations. Through its humanitarian affairs section, MONUC engages with personnel from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) whose task it is to coordinate humanitarian action, mobilize resources, advocate for victims, undertake humanitarian negotiations and lead joint assessment missions.

42. The **Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission (ECHO)** is the DRC's largest donor of humanitarian assistance, with an allocation of more than 180 million Euros between 2000 and 2005. While the European Commission, through EuropeAid, gradually takes on more long-term development projects in the fields of health, food security and rehabilitation, ECHO has focused exclusively on emergency needs and is progressively withdrawing from more stable areas. This approach is in line with the Commission policy of linking emergency aid, rehabilitation and development. ECHO support is mainly provided through NGOs and is concentrated in the "red zones", which are defined as unstable regions still suffering from conflict or emerging from recent conflict, and in the "blue areas", or regions where intense fighting took place between 1998 and 2001, and which since then have gained a certain degree of minimal contextual stability. ECHO's activities include the support of public health services in areas directly affected by the conflict; the support of integration of nutrition and food security programmes, focusing on the most vulnerable groups; the provision of emergency assistance to internally displaced people; and the funding of the protection and coordination activities of international organizations with a specific mandate in these fields. Since the start of the transition process, the **European Union (EU)** has become a critical player in the DRC. Its support of the International Committee in Support of the Transition (CIAT), preparation of elections and assistance for security sector reform are generally seen as important benchmarks for future aid relations. A regional approach has gradually been accepted by the EU as a necessary principle for effective policy in Central Africa in general and the DRC in particular. This approach lead to the designation of a special EU representative to the region, Mr Aldo Ajello, and the establishment of an Initiative for Central Africa (INICA) under an OECD umbrella. Under the Dutch presidency of 1 July – 31 December 2004, the EU adopted a regional policy memorandum for the Great Lakes region.

43. The **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)** is another important donor in the DRC. Its activities underwent a serious shift from strong engagement under Mobutu, disengagement after pillaging Kinshasa and other cities in the early 1990s, cautious re-engagement during the war and increased efforts since the start of the transition. Its response now includes short-term emergency responses and long-term development support. In 2004, a new five-year Integrated Strategic Plan was adopted with the objective "to assist the DRC in its transition to democracy with a healthier, better-educated population benefiting from improved livelihoods". The Plan's strategic objectives include: the use of key health services and practices; the promotion of a successful transition towards peace and democratic governance; the improvement of livelihoods in targeted areas; improvement of basic education; and fostering of re-integration of ex-combatants into civilian life. Emergency assistance to conflict-affected populations is distributed by USAID/Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) through international NGOs and United Nations organizations such as FAO, OCHA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). USAID/Food For Peace provides emergency food assistance through WFP.

III.2. Overview of responses

III.2.1. Introduction

44. During the years following the 2002 peace agreements, the international community responded to the crisis in the DRC with a combination of humanitarian assistance, strong third-party military presence and diplomatic pressure that aimed at ensuring that the former warring parties adhered to the peace agreements and withheld from further exploitation of Congo's natural resources. Humanitarian interventions concentrated foremost on physical assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the most vulnerable and food-insecure people. This included the provision of food, shelter and material equipment to ensure minimal agricultural activity. Several attempts were made to shift from emergency relief to post-conflict rehabilitation interventions. Also, there was a growing tendency of humanitarian actors to connect humanitarian aims to development aims and to shift towards "humanitarianism as peace-building". Even if development activities remain very small in scale, in several regions the international donors' willingness to assist medium-to-long-term programmes resulted in at least a modest economic recovery and the re-establishment of security in inaccessible areas.

45. By 2006, many international agencies complained about a lack of information flows and weak coordination. Basic data about the food security situation of populations living in more remote or conflict-prone areas were not available, and most interventions were not based on assessments of available livelihoods. Another complaint was the lack of coordination between humanitarian actors. With over a million displaced people in the eastern parts of the country, humanitarian intervention required a firm coordination on the part of national and international development agencies. This weakness was partly connected to the vulnerability of MONUC in ensuring humanitarian access, as well as a general feeling of insecurity, which prevented most international agencies from operating in the most severely affected areas. In several regions, it was observed that developmental activities were better coordinated than the emergency intervention – which was probably attributable to the more modest presence of development organizations.

46. This chapter presents a selection of interventions in the field of food security. The objective of this overview is not to offer an exhaustive or representative presentation of food security policies undertaken in eastern DRC but to illustrate the main areas of intervention. These areas can be broadly divided into emergency responses that aim at responding to direct humanitarian needs; post-emergency responses that aim at reducing vulnerability of households; and post-conflict rehabilitation activities that can be linked to the larger post-conflict reconstruction and pacification process. The very volatile character of the context makes it almost impossible to make clear distinctions between these areas, as most agencies have shifted their approach from relief to interventions that comprise both humanitarian and rehabilitation aspects. In this chapter, particular attention will be given to interventions in the territories of Beni, Butembo and Lubero (North Kivu).

III.2.2. Emergency responses

47. **Food aid distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP).** The bulk of humanitarian interventions in eastern DRC consist of direct food distribution. Key stakeholder in the provision and distribution of food aid is WFP. During the first years of the DRC crisis, WFP activities were undertaken as an emergency operation (EMOP). Between 2000 and 2003, WFP mobilized about 260 000 mt of food commodities, which mainly targeted IDPs in the eastern parts of the country. An independent evaluation mission conducted in April 2003 by WFP headquarters revealed that food aid had enabled the IDPs' nutritional situation to stabilize. Through nutritional rehabilitation programmes targeting malnourished children, rates of recovery of 93 percent, with less than 2 percent relapse, were recorded. According to the same evaluation, food aid had also facilitated the resettlement of returnees in relatively stable areas through joint activities. In January 2004, the EMOP was replaced by a two-year Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO). The PRRO aimed at providing food assistance to war-affected people and comprised the three basic components of relief, refugees and recovery. The implementation of the relief component took priority in eastern Congo and comprised limited-duration general food distributions primarily for new IDPs and vulnerable groups using family ration cards issued in the name of women; relief activities for malnourished children, pregnant and lactating women; and the emergency provision of school meals. In 2004, 57 percent of the total resources (or 60 000 mt of foodstuffs) was allocated to this component. The recovery component had to facilitate the resettlement of IDPs and returnees and support reintegration and empowerment through food-for-asset-creation activities (mainly food for work and food for training) and the distribution of seed protection rations. These activities also specifically targeted child combatants and HIV/AIDS-affected people. In 2004, 40 percent of total resources (42 000 mt of foodstuffs) were allocated to that component and in 2005, 49 percent (40 000 mt of foodstuffs). In 2005 the PRRO was extended for six months and also introduced a new programme component (food assistance to the demobilization and reinsertion programme), which became effective in September 2005.

48. **ECHO-funded nutrition interventions.** As part of its emergency assistance, ECHO created and supported a number of nutrition centres in eastern DRC. In addition, therapeutic centres based at local hospitals or health centres and supplementary feeding centres were established, the first to treat the most severe forms of malnutrition and the second to correct moderate wasting or to prevent moderately undernourished children from becoming severely undernourished. A 2004 assessment of the impact of ECHO-funded nutrition interventions revealed that while the capacities of the staff of most centres was very good, the impact of the interventions was seriously affected by food stock ruptures, limited access to the centres, seasonality and security constraints. These obstacles explained why, despite large efforts, the nutritional status of children in most conflict-affected regions remained a serious public health concern. Another constraint was the cost of nutrition centres. Establishing and managing the centres proved to be very expensive because they required considerable resources, skilled staff and imported therapeutic products. Even if the impact of the centres was obvious and malnutrition rates were often lowered, the consolidation of results remained very difficult due to the very volatile context of the DRC crisis. In addition, the performance of nutrition centres depended heavily on WFP food deliveries; the quantity of distributed food depended on its being available. Finally, the assessment of ECHO-supported nutrition centres argued that the classical approach of management of acute malnutrition had been very successful in clinical terms but had clear limitations

related to coverage, caretakers' absence from the family and ignorance of the socio-economic structures responsible for the existence of acute forms of malnutrition.

49. Emergency food aid to IDPs in Beni-Butembo. As of 2006, the Beni-Butembo region received IDPs originating from Ituri and South Lubero and several organizations assisted them in ways varying from food, latrines and shelters to water drainage in the IDP sites. Assistance to IDPs from Ituri was severely curtailed in 2005 because of growing concern on the part of international donors about the deteriorating security situation in Ituri. This forced most agencies to close or scale down assistance to IDPs in the Beni region. The decisions by donor agencies to redirect their assistance produced a direct impact on their local partners; WFP and ECHO closed their supply programmes in July 2005 and local partners (such as *Cooperazione e Sviluppo* (CESVI) and *Solidarités*) were forced to reorganize their programmes accordingly. This practice points to a number of critical weaknesses in food aid programmes. Given the very volatile character of the security context, agencies are often forced to respond to new and "more acute" emergencies. This has a serious impact on the continuity of existing programmes and reveals a lack of programming and follow-up. A good example is the Ituri crisis of May 2003, which forced many humanitarian organizations that were dealing with the effects of the volcano eruption in Goma to shift their attention to Ituri. The case of assistance to IDPs in Beni-Lubero reveals a lack of coordination between aid organizations. While a commission was set up through OCHA in 2005 to exchange information about returning IDPs, the coordination was hindered above all by a shifting of strategies on the part of international donors. Another weakness was the very fragile position of local organizations, whose role in many cases was limited to executing programmes designed by donor agencies. In addition, none of the organizations in Beni-Lubero was able to provide information about ongoing or past assessments. Under these circumstances, it was extremely difficult to develop a more prolonged food security approach, for example by providing assistance to receiving households. Steps were undertaken to this end by *Solidarités* and Oxfam's post-emergency programmes in Beni and Lubero, respectively. Another remarkable observation came out of the emergency context in southern Lubero. When international aid organizations descended into the field in December 2004, the population in Kirumba refused to accept food supplies. Their motivation was that they did not need food aid as such – it was likely to be plundered by surrounding troops – but instead required improvements in security and facilitated access to their fields. Some humanitarian/development aid did slowly reach the region, which nonetheless continued to be affected by the presence of both Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR-Interahamwe) elements.

III.2.3. Post-emergency interventions

50. The distribution of seeds and tools. After food distribution, the distribution of free seeds of food crops and tools is one of the main strategies of food security intervention in eastern DRC. The main objective of these interventions is to support the agricultural production of the most vulnerable groups. During the first years of conflict, seed distribution was limited to the main staple foods maize and beans, and was mainly directed at returning displaced people and families that were hosting displaced people. Seeds and tools were also distributed to support nutrition centres and community-based associations. Instability and continuous insecurity have limited the positive impact of this distribution on household economies, as these factors have caused new displacements and the regular

pillaging of seed centres and households. Other constraints to this intervention are lack of accessibility to land, the price of seeds and tools and the degradation of local infrastructure. Between 1998 and 2002, seeds and tools distributions were mainly limited to areas close to the main cities and did not benefit most isolated areas. After 2002, when the security situation improved, international and local aid agencies started distributing other seeds in addition to the main staple foods and introduced seed multiplication programmes in collaboration with local institutes. Examples are *Institut National pour l'Etude et la Recherche Agronomiques* (INERA)/Mulungu and *Service National de Semences* (SENASEM), institutes that developed improved seed varieties for distribution to NGOs, with the objective of increasing use of these seeds in rural areas and strengthening the production capacities of local farmers. In the short term, these programmes helped households to reduce food gap constraints. Because no post-distribution assessments have been made, the long-term impact of seeds and tools distribution remains unknown. Observers have commented that the basic assumption that seeds distribution helps to increase household assets is not necessarily adequate. The sharp decrease in agricultural production is caused not only by lack of seeds but also by lack of access to land and the disappearance of agronomists to assist local farmers.

51. Food-for-work (FFW) and cash-for-work (CFW) programmes. FFW programmes have been implemented by a variety of organizations throughout the DRC. In most cases, the aim of these programmes is to assist chronically undernourished people, while at the same time contributing to maintenance of the road system. In turn, employment as road menders is meant to enable farmers to diversify their diets and pay for health care and education. Most of these rehabilitation programmes have been conducted by international aid agencies, directly or indirectly through their local partners. The roads to be rehabilitated were selected after consultation with local authorities but in most cases direct accessibility and conditions allowing the necessary logistical support were the prime reasons for selection. The rehabilitated and accessible roads tend to improve general security conditions and have also had a positive impact on food security. Surveys in Masisi have revealed that economic exchanges and access to income increased, displaced populations returned and survival mechanisms were reinforced after the rehabilitation of the Sake–Masisi road. In Masisi, agricultural production also increased by 50 percent and the number of livestock by 400–500 percent. These effects were generated by the rehabilitation of roads rather than by the distribution of food to labourers.

52. Food-for-work programmes as part of rehabilitation interventions have, however, also created a number of important negative impacts, including the disruption of local markets. For example in central Masisi, imported maize distributed by a humanitarian agency to local farmers negatively affected the producers of local maize in nearby Rutshuru, who could not compete with that distribution on local markets. In addition, most FFW initiatives were not preceded by assessments about the availability of labour and the need for food. **Cash-for-work** programmes are believed to be a better alternative to FFW because in addition to having many of the same advantages as FFW, they are excellent tools to inject cash into rural economies. An assessment of ECHO-funded CFW projects has revealed, however, that most participants are men and that little is known to which degree cash reaches the household. Also, the rationale for FFW versus CFW is driven by agencies' available resources rather than by the search for the most appropriate form of payment. Both FFW and CFW initiatives also have been part of DDR programmes. While the participation of former combatants in road works is meant to facilitate their demobilization and reintegration, little is known about the impact of these initiatives. Road works can offer an economic alternative to former

combatants, but most of the initiatives as part of DDR tend to focus only on former combatants and to exclude people that have never been involved in militia activities – although in most cases they live in the same difficult conditions as ex-rebels. The approach poses the danger that by favouring young people who in the past opted for violence, their choice is rewarded and a culture of impunity reinforced. Furthermore, this “carrot” for former belligerents is not utilized to negotiate safety for the rural population at large.

53. Post-emergency programmes in Beni-Lubero. In Beni-Lubero, a large post-emergency intervention was initiated by the German NGO *Agro-Action Allemande* (AAA). While formerly AAA had been active mostly in emergency aid financed by USAID/OFDA, in 2005 it received US\$3 million in funding from the European Union to be implemented in a longer-term project along the western Lubero axis. Apart from the rehabilitation of secondary roads or RDAs (*routes de déserte agricole*), the EU funding permits AAA to develop a wide food security programme that covers almost the entire area. The primary focus of the programme is on access to consumable products such as potatoes, rice and vegetables, and on the formation of agricultural specialists (*encadreur agricoles*). This EU funding led to a remarkable shift in AAA’s strategies. While during the emergency intervention in Lubero (November 2004–February 2005), the organization worked principally through local NGO’s – notably for seed reproduction – the main stakeholders of the EU-funded programme are instead village committees. The committees serve as mediators for introducing *les cultures maraîchères* (vegetable gardens) in the lower highland areas, as well as for facilitating access to arable fields. The collective farming methods introduced for this purpose are based on local conventions and involve the training of agricultural specialists.

54. FAO plays a crucial role in the implementation and coordination of food security interventions. Its focus in the DRC is on identifying and helping communities most affected by severe malnutrition. Its activities can be summarized as: providing tools and seeds to grow vegetables and food crops and setting up of quality seed production in communities in stable areas; distributing nets and fishing gear and rehabilitating fishery activities; rehabilitating selected feeder roads and improving access to these roads in order to enable transportation of agricultural products from farming areas to cities and to revitalize market activities; and offering nutrition training to families with malnourished children in feeding centres. In the Beni-Lubero region, the FAO food security programme concentrates on two aspects. The first is to assist displaced households in Lubero and Beni through so-called rapid intervention projects. These projects concentrate on the reproduction of seeds and tools for primary cultures such as manioc, potatoes and beans. A larger, EU-funded project concentrates on assistance to malnourished households through nutritional centres, or NAC (*nourissement à assise communautaire*). Through these centres, FAO introduces vegetable farming methods and small animal reproduction units to alleviate primary food needs. Its partners in this programme are CEAPRONUT, a local NGO, and World Vision International (WVI). Finally, with assistance from the Belgian government, FAO is trying to introduce fishing activities in and around Beni, as well as on Lake Edward. The problem with this assistance, however, is that fishing activity on Lake Edward has practically vanished as a result of environmental and political threats.

II.2.4. Information flows and coordination structures

55. The lack of reliable and comparable information on, and clear comprehension of, food security issues have seriously hampered humanitarian interventions. With the exception of data on the evolution of food prices, a number of small-scale surveys on the nutritional status of populations and vulnerability assessments conducted by WFP, basic statistical data on food security issues remain absent. In contrast with the case of Sudan, little effort has been made to create valuable information flows, while few interventions have been preceded by in-depth assessments. This lack of assessments is often justified by the emergency character of the intervention areas. When information is gathered by humanitarian agencies, in most cases this information is not shared with other stakeholders. The most prominent exceptions to this are the household economy analyses and a livelihood study focusing on land (carried out by Save the Children (2003a) in the Kivu-provinces and Bunia), assessments by Asrames (*Approvisionnement en médicaments essentiels*, a local NGO) and a number of nutrition surveys carried out by WVI and *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF). As a consequence, there is little knowledge about the food security situation and nutritional status of populations in regions that are most affected by the war or to which there is limited accessibility.

56. Since the start of the war, a number of mechanisms have been established that aim at coordinating humanitarian activities. The main objective of these initiatives is to increase the efficiency of humanitarian interventions and the level of understanding of the local humanitarian situation and needs. At provincial level, OCHA centralizes information on humanitarian issues and interventions and invites agencies to weekly meetings to exchange information and discuss the security situation. OCHA's coordination mechanism also aims at facilitating the communication between local politico-administrative authorities and aid agencies, strengthening the coordination of interventions and defining priorities and zones of intervention through the organization of regular seminars. Since the start of the war, international agencies, their local partners and local authorities have set up a series of commissions that aim at facilitating the response to urgent humanitarian needs. These commissions have become more effective due to increased support from United Nations agencies, which now coordinate them. One of these commissions is the food security commission, headed by the provincial inspectorate of agriculture and facilitated by FAO/TCEO (emergency operations service). However, its activities are mainly limited to the exchange of information and do not include the definition and preparation of (joint) strategies of intervention.

IV. PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

IV.1. Lessons learned

IV.1.1. Shifts in local food systems

57. The case of eastern DRC reveals that protracted crises can cause considerable shifts in local food systems. One particular factor that has affected local food systems is the emergence of new patterns of politico-military control, which have in turn generated new patterns of inequality between grassroots populations and powerful (politico-military and economic) elites. The gradual implosion of the Congolese state has fostered new, parallel governance structures that function next to the formal state apparatus. Armed actors have used their military and economic strength to build themselves a

profitable niche in the regional political economy, to replace traditional trading mechanisms by “military commercialism” and to monopolize trade and access to local assets. While businessmen and political elites have sometimes benefited from the opportunities of this new institutional context, most households were forced to re-negotiate their access and entitlement to vital economic assets. These new conditions have forced most households to invest in alternative strategies of survival. This explains why in several regions agricultural production has lost its importance to the advantage of mining or fishing activities; it also explains why some food-producing regions have become food importing areas during the war. These shifts in local food systems have attracted little attention from humanitarian agencies. This can be explained by the fact that most responses to food insecurity are based on humanitarian considerations and short-term perspectives, and do not address root causes of conflict, such as the structural roots of inequality, poverty and food insecurity.

IV.1.2. Limited impact of information flows

58. In the Congolese context, food security interventions fail to take sufficient account of local priorities and needs. Aid agencies often complain that the information needed to analyse and respond adequately to local needs is absent because local information systems have deteriorated. In addition, local organizations often fail to justify their priorities and proposed interventions with valid data. The missing link between information and intervention, indeed, is partly explained by the absence of well-designed locally based information systems. Nevertheless, few efforts have been made by aid agencies to fill this information gap. Most assessments and analyses conducted by aid agencies focus only on specific issues (such as humanitarian conditions, IDP movements, food needs, etc.) about which information is needed for short-term, supply-based interventions. Some agencies even argue that impact assessments are not needed because of the short-term character of interventions. This explains in part why so little attention is given to the wider and structural causes of food insecurity, the structural shifts in food systems, local mechanisms and responses to food shortages, social transformations and the longer-term impacts of food security interventions. Even if some relevant information on these issues is generated by local organizations and international research institutes, it is not integrated into the planning process of longer-term, more development-oriented interventions.

IV.1.3. Emergency versus development response

59. Since the start of the DRC conflict, most agencies have shifted from emergency relief to post-emergency and more development-oriented responses. The provision of food aid and the support to nutrition centres have been accompanied increasingly by rehabilitation efforts, initiatives such as FFW and CFW, and support of farming and fishing activities. In addition, some agencies have adopted longer-term programmes, such as the USAID-funded Integrated Strategic Plan and WFP’s protracted relief and recovery operation. Despite these efforts, most interventions still tend to be planned with a short-term perspective, officially because of the need for quick results. Within this short-term framework, the distribution of food aid and support of nutrition centres can be said to have achieved their goals, even if demands and needs were often greater than the available quantities and quality. As the assessment of ECHO-interventions has demonstrated, large-scale food aid imports risk slowing down agricultural recovery. Most agencies, however, failed to adequately consider the purchase of local food, even if it can stabilize markets and stimulate production. No coordinated local food purchase programmes were developed to bridge the gaps in the food pipeline.

Finally, there remains an important policy gap between emergency and post-emergency interventions in terms of the follow-up of local livelihoods: even if some emergency activities gradually include development perspectives, most interventions are still guided too strongly by short-term perspectives and are not directed at reinforcing livelihoods.

IV.1.4. Limited role of local institutions

60. As was observed in Sudan as well, in the eastern DRC local institutions and actors have played a limited role in humanitarian responses. Most interventions were organized by external aid agencies and the role of local actors was limited mostly to the execution of agencies' programmes. Most interventions were planned according to a top-down decision-making process, and were not based on local responses to food insecurity. Contrary to the Sudan case, however, in the DRC there was no lack of qualified personnel or of local institutions with sufficient capacities. Local community-based structures and humanitarian organizations developed their own mechanisms and strategies to mitigate the effects of food crises but these interventions were often ignored by external actors. Once local actors did receive support from outside, local coordination structures such as the CRONGD tended to lose their coordinating role to the advantage of international agencies.

IV.1.5. What was not done?

61. This overview of food security interventions in eastern Congo has pointed to a number of constraints to food security that have barely been addressed. One of these constraints is **reduced access to land**. In several regions, the devastating effects of pre-war land policies on the position of rural populations have intensified since the war. Land has become one of the main dynamics of conflict in regions such as Ituri and Masisi, and has become an important asset to warring factions: through their control over land, they have reinforced their political position to the disadvantage of small farmers. Addressing these land-related structural factors of poverty is a prerequisite for re-establishing food security but also for achieving sustainable peace. Despite the massive literature and available information on this subject, agencies have paid little or no attention to shifts in local production systems. Nevertheless, there are a number of opportunities for tackling food insecurity through interventions that focus on land access, such as strengthening the legal position of rural populations, strengthening the role of community representatives in land issues, etc.

62. Another issue that has not been addressed sufficiently by food security interventions is **access to markets** – even when most assessments indicate that limited access to markets is one of the key explanations of food insecurity. Farmers are affected both as producers and as consumers. In several regions, the main problem is not food availability but rather lack of market opportunities, caused by insecurity, lack of roads, shifts in food prices, lack of cash, etc. Against this reality stands the fact that most food security interventions still tend to focus on food availability rather than access to food and markets. The only exceptions are the road rehabilitation efforts executed through FFW and FFC. Cash-based interventions such as microcredit initiatives have become part of aid agencies' strategies only recently. Examples from Ituri and North Kivu have illustrated that access to markets is not only crucial to the survival of local food systems, but can also be a practical focus for local peacemaking efforts.

IV.2. Challenges

IV.2.1. How to deal with structural changes

63. The protracted crisis of the DRC has created a context that offers both constraints and opportunities to actors at all levels of society. These conditions have forced the same actors to develop alternative strategies to increase their access to assets, which has in turn affected local food systems. The new conditions created by the transition process are expected to provoke changes to the mechanisms that organize people's and elites' access to entitlements. On the one hand, it is expected that the transition process will lead to a more sustainable institutional framework that will be capable of regulating access to and distribution of wealth. On the other hand, there is reason to believe that the patterns of protection and economic control will resist a new institutional framework and the powerful try to safeguard their interests. Reducing the influence of parallel structures to the advantage of an institutional framework (that includes both the civil administration and traditional institutions) – one that guarantees good governance and equal access to assets – is one of the main challenges for external actors involved in the process of conflict resolution.

IV.2.2. The peace process: a context that is creating new opportunities and challenges

64. The transition process that was introduced in June 2003 was supposed to introduce stability, good governance and democracy before the end of June 2006. Crucial to this process were the organization of elections, security sector reform, reunification of the country and demobilization of militias. A successful transition to peace and democracy was far from guaranteed. While a consolidation of peace might create an environment for the achievement of sustainable food security, a number of factors could have a negative effect on local food systems and food security in general. These factors include:

- unresolved local conflicts and new ethnic tension as part of the electoral process;
- the return of large numbers of IDPs and refugees;
- the emergence of new vulnerable groups such as demobilized combatants, former child soldiers, etc.;
- new conflicts over access to land (as a source *and* resource of conflict);
- unresolved security threats caused by the presence of foreign militias;
- shifts in local trading patterns from eastern Africa to Kinshasa and the loss of economic control by local politico-military networks; and
- a decrease in emergency responses and limited compensation by more development-oriented and long-term interventions.

IV.2.3. How to move from relief to development

65. Since the start of the transition process, a number of international agencies have shifted their programmes from relief to development. The post-emergency contest is pushing an increasing number of agencies into quasi-development goals and responses. Unresolved security issues and the situation of “neither-peace-nor-war” in most of eastern DRC, however, hinders agencies from adopting longer-term strategies because the conditions force them to continue to focus on emergency

relief. This post-conflict reality requires flexible alternatives to the traditional view on the relief–development continuum, while aid agencies have to deal with the dilemma of whether to invest in emergency relief or support durable livelihoods. As in the case of South Sudan, these alternatives should start from a flexible mix of approaches and interventions that include elements from relief, rehabilitation and development. Some agencies have already developed such responses but most actors still start from either relief *or* development mandates.

IV.2.4. How to improve information flows

66. The preparatory study has pointed at a number of information gaps. In order to strengthen the capacities of agencies to develop flexible responses that are in accordance with the situation of “neither-peace-nor-war” and which include elements of relief, rehabilitation and development, additional investment in existing and new information flows is needed. These new information flows should include issues that allow for addressing the root causes of – and the structural changes produced by – the conflict. The challenge will also include shifting from traditional, external information flows to easily accessible local systems of information-gathering and analysis. Finally, mechanisms must be created that reduce the existing gaps between knowledge/research and response.

IV.2.5. How to integrate local actors

67. The involvement of local actors in the responses to food insecurity has been limited, on the whole, to executing programmes designed at donor levels. This has negatively affected existing coordination mechanisms between local humanitarian and development-oriented associations. However, these associations have developed their own programmes and approaches (often without external support) and have gathered significant knowledge and expertise about local food security mechanisms. The challenge is to integrate these experiences and efforts into the process. One aspect involves the prioritization of key sectors of intervention and the design of external responses aimed at reducing food insecurity. Other elements could include the support of recovery processes and strengthening of sustainable livelihoods, starting from locally articulated priorities.

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