Helpdesk Research Report

Relationship between humanitarian and development aid

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Question

What is the recent mainstream and influential literature on the relationship between humanitarian and development aid, particularly on transition and bridging gaps? Provide an overview of the main conclusion and issues, suggested approaches, and knowledge gaps.

Contents

1. Overview

This rapid research report identifies literature on the relationship between humanitarian and development aid. The concept of linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) emerged in the 1990s when practitioners identified a funding gap between humanitarian assistance, relief, and development activities. Since then, agencies, academics and practitioners have attempted to find ways of reconciling the humanitarian-development nexus to provide both effective humanitarian relief, and sustainable medium- and long-term development action. The basic premise of LRRD is the need to link and create synergies between short-term relief measures, with longer term development programmes. It reflects the belief that humanitarian need, poverty and state fragility are inter-related and often occur concurrently (Otto and Weingärtner 2013).

State of the evidence

There is a broad body of literature on the intersections and relationships between humanitarian and development aid. Much of the literature is in the form of secondary desk reviews, however there are some evaluations of donor and NGO attempts to better link humanitarian and development programmes. Some experts have raised concerns that the humanitarian-development relationship falls between different topics and is therefore often dealt with 'obliquely and unsatisfactorily'[1]. Others caution that while much has been written from a humanitarian perspective, there is a lot less from a development perspective[2].

Relationship between humanitarian and development aid

There are various approaches to understanding the relationship between humanitarian and development aid. Some literature points to a specific *time period*; envisaging the humanitarian-development gap as a temporal period when a humanitarian operation is about to be completed, and development and reconstruction projects are about to begin (Suhrke and Ofstad 2005). Others refer to an *institutional gap* which is not only about the practical problems of coordinating humanitarian and development institutions, but fundamental differences in priorities, cultures and mandates (Suhrke and Ofstad 2005). Recent debates have included an emphasis on linking humanitarian aid and development with security, in the context of post-2011 western foreign policy (OCHA 2011).

Challenges and approaches

Despite a broad body of literature on the relationship between humanitarian and development aid, there is limited specific guidance on how to address perceived gaps, and few practical examples of how donors' and others have implemented change. Some of the commonly cited challenges, and approaches to address them, include:

- **Conceptual, institutional and strategic gaps:** Differences in working principles, mandates and assumptions can present challenges for operationalising LRRD. Internally, the institutional arrangements of some donors present a clear division in the delivery of humanitarian and development aid. While externally, disunity among donor agencies and a lack of dynamism to respond to events have created strategic gaps in the delivery of different forms of aid (Van der Haar and Hilhorst 2009). **Approaches** to tackling such gaps include: decentralising planning, analysis, and funding allocation (Steets 2011); establishing joint humanitarian and development offices (Otto and Weingärtner 2013); and creating operational frameworks that incorporate both a long-term perspective into humanitarian work, and issues of vulnerability and risk in development work (Buchanan-Smith and Fabbri 2005).

- **Funding gaps:** There is inconsistent evidence about the existence of a temporal funding gap between the humanitarian and development phases of a response. However, there is more comprehensive evidence of a systematic funding gap for recovery activities, evidence that fragile state do not receive the necessary support (Steets 2011), and concern that financing is too fragmented and compartmentalised (OECD-DAC 2010b). Lack of flexibility in funding arrangements is a particular concern (Grünewald et al. 2011). **Approaches** to making humanitarian funding more flexible and longer-term include multi-year funding options, strategic

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[1] Expert comments
[2] Expert comments

partnerships instead of project grants, and pooling resources (Steets 2011; World Development Report 2014).

- ▪ **Partnerships and coordination:** Some donors' implementing partners may lack the expertise or capacity to work across different forms of aid or to coordinate their activities. Others may specialise in either humanitarian or development aid and find it difficult to draw linkages between the two. In terms of **approaches**, evaluations have found that programmes with strong local engagement and local partnerships on the ground are often more successful at marrying short- and long-term perspectives (Christoplos 2006; Brusset et al. 2006). Examples of approaches to improving donor coordination include compacts, multilateral joint assessments, and mutual accountability frameworks (Herbert 2014; OECD-DAC 2010b).

- ▪ **Refugees and displaced persons:** The perception that displaced persons can only be addressed through humanitarian means can impede or delay the achievement of sustainable solutions, and lead to protracted displacements and a cycle of dependence on humanitarian assistance (UNHRC 2010).   In terms of **approaches**, the transitional solutions initiative and the Solutions Alliance aim to position displacement at the core of recovery and development strategies through advocacy, coordination, capacity building and resource mobilisation[3]. These approaches focus on building relationships between bilateral and multilateral actors to support local processes and local ownership, and finding sustainable solutions for displaced persons and local communities (UNDP and UNHCR 2013).

2. Trends in the literature and evidence gaps

Relief-development continuum

Debates about the relationship between humanitarian assistance and development aid emerged in the 1990s under the umbrella of what became known as the '**relief-development continuum**' (Haider 2014). Literature in the main sought to identify the complementary objectives and strategies in humanitarian and development aid, and to promote the concept that humanitarian aid can provide a foundation for recovery, development and the creation of sustainable livelihoods (Otto, R. and Weingärtner 2013). The continuum concept also sought to focus attention on the need to bridge funding and operational gaps that may arise between emergency aid and development programming.

Development relief approach

The idea of a linear or chronological continuum was subsequently rejected by international aid actors as over simplistic. Instead of a linear or temporal view that reflects a 'transition' from one to another, some experts came to view the interactions between humanitarian and development aid as a **complex on-going relationship** or a 'contiguum' model[4] (Mosel and Levine 2014). Critics believed that though elements of humanitarianism and development are time sensitive, focusing on a linear or chronological approach lead to the structural or chronic factors that predate or outlast the crisis being overlooked[5]. The concept of a continuum from relief to rehabilitation was replaced by the development relief approach,

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[3] See: http://www.prsproject.org/initiatives/other-projects/
[4] A 'contiguum model' implies that all instruments can be used simultaneously. For further details see Mosel and Levine (2014, p. 3).
[5] Expert comments

which looks at long term solutions as well as immediate needs. Shifts in thinking about relief and development also moved towards areas of shared responsibility (Harmer and Macrae 2004).

Humanitarian aid, development and security in fragile states

More recent debates have placed a growing emphasis on linking humanitarian and development aid to the political and security objectives in fragile states (Harmer and Macrae 2004). Though there are notable differences between humanitarian and peacebuilding action, there is some common ground between the two approaches - humanitarian aid often seeks to build resilience at the community level, while peacebuilding aims to build resilience at societal and political levels (OCHA 2011). The New Deal for engagement in fragile states identifies five priority areas for peacebuilding and state building goals, and calls for donors to support 'country-led and country-owned transitions out of fragility' (International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding 2011).

Further trends

Some further trends with potential relevance to the LRRD debate include:

- **A rights-based approach** to LRRD has been advocated by some NGOs as a way to overcome the perceived dichotomy between humanitarianism and development, and to integrate thinking and practice under a common set of principles (Buchanan-Smith and Fabbri 2005).

- **Climate change adaptation** has been extensively discussed in development and indirectly in the humanitarian sector, particularly in disaster risk reduction, displacement and resilience (Otto and Weingärtner 2013).

- The use of **cash transfers** instead of asset replacement has been debated in the humanitarian sector. This includes distributing cash transfers instead of food or household assets to enhance resilience (Otto and Weingärtner 2013).

Evidence gaps

A central challenge in conceptualising the humanitarian-development nexus is a lack of clarity in concepts and definitions (Otto and Weingärtner 2013). Terms such as LRRD, relief and development are not clearly defined or are commonly misunderstood. There is often a lack of clarity in what the humanitarian-development problem is, which can have practical implications for connecting the two approaches. There is also still some ambiguity about objectives and funding streams for rehabilitation work (Buchanan-Smith and Fabbri 2005).

Some experts note that there is a lack of attention to what LRRD means for people working 'on the ground' and how they can be supported (Otto and Weingärtner 2013). There are very few specific tools or guidelines for how to implement LRRD, and few examples of what a successful LRRD programme looks like. Some authors additionally caution that LRRD is often thought of as a humanitarian concept and as such has limited resonance in development assistance (Mosel and Levine 2014).

3. Challenges to linking humanitarian and development aid

Conceptual, institutional and strategic gaps

Differences in the **working principles, mandates, values and assumptions** of humanitarian and development actors can present a fundamental challenge to operationalising LRRD (Otto and Weingärtner 2013). The bifurcation in aid architecture has contributed to two fundamentally different paradigms (Macrae 2012). While humanitarian aid has generally aimed to save individual lives, often by working *around* governments, development aid supports structures and systems and is delivered primarily delivered *through* governments (Macrae 2012). Some bilateral donors' institutional arrangements can mirror this division – for example, in Germany, BMZ is responsible for delivering aid, while the Foreign Office has a mandate for emergency relief. This can create obstacles to changing the way development and humanitarian aid are conceptualised and delivered.

Strategic gaps in the delivery of humanitarian and development aid have also been manifested in disunity among bilateral and multilateral actors, and a **lack of dynamism** in responding to changes in events and conditions. In a report for the UNDP, Stoddard and Harmer (2005) find that there is a **lack of clarity** in how humanitarian, development and security actors work alongside each other in conflict-affected environments. Challenges relate to the large number of actors and mandates involved in situations of conflict and protracted crisis.

One report on partnerships in crisis-related interventions, notes that some NGOs shift the administration and handling of partners internally to emergency departments during periods of conflict or instability (Van der Haar and Hilhorst 2009). This can lead to a loss of **losing institutional memory** of partnerships (Ibid.).

Working with and coordinating implementing partners

Donors may be challenged by implementing partners who lack necessary expertise or capacity to operate across different forms of aid and coordinate their activities with different actors (Steets 2011). Some operational agencies may specialise in either humanitarian or development assistance, making it difficult for donors to support projects across different forms of assistance. Smaller implementing organisations may have a narrow expertise base and lack the knowledge and knowhow to adopt an early recovery approach, or to incorporate development thinking from the beginning in line with humanitarian principles (Steets 2011). Some specialist development organisations may lack the capacity to think about humanitarian factors in their work (Steets 2011).

Funding gaps

Some experts find a lack of evidence for a temporal funding gap between the humanitarian and development phases of a response (Steets 2011). Rather, there is more comprehensive evidence of **systematic funding gap for recovery activities**, and evidence that **fragile state do not receive enough support** (Steets 2011). Compartmentalisation and a lack of flexibility in funding arrangements is also a persistent challenge (OECD-DAC 2010b). Experts have identified a need for a quick release of funds to provide resources in response to early windows of opportunity for development interventions, and for better coordination in the delivery of funding. In Haiti, for instance, the EU's humanitarian funding did not link up well with the development instrument, and the development instrument was not able to

adapt well the earthquake crisis (Grünewald et al. 2011). This meant that important opportunities for reconstruction were lost (Ibid).

Independence of humanitarian aid

Some authors caution that the implementation of LRRD can raise issues concerning the independence and neutrality of humanitarian aid (Stoddard and Harmer 2005; Mosel and Levine 2014). Humanitarian actors who are weary of the politicisation of aid may be hesitant to engage with state actors or with development actors, whose role is to support and build state institutions (Harmer and Macrae 2004). However, other analysts contend that working with state actors in a pragmatic and context-specific way can support the interests of the most vulnerable (Macrae 2012; Collinson and Elhawary 2012).

Range of programmes and needs

The extent of need, range of programmes, and geographical spread of targeted sites, presents challenges to linking humanitarian and development aid. An evaluation of humanitarian support in Haiti found that the need to carry out different types of programmes at the same time made it difficult to establish linkages between relief, rehabilitation and development (Grünewald et al. 2011). Challenges not only related to the need to move from one programme to another, but to working in different geographical areas, and using different methods and tools (Ibid). An internal evaluation of Save the Children's work in Ethiopia following the drought found that the immense number of areas affected by the crisis made it difficult to mobilise resources for LRRD (Brandolini and Abagodu 2012). Well-documented **gaps in deployable technical expertise** can also hamper the transition from humanitarian to development interventions (Chandran et al. 2008).

4. Approaches

Addressing conceptual, institutional and strategic gaps

There are various strategies recommended by experts to address conceptual, institutional and strategic gaps between the different forms of aid:

- **Decentralising planning, analysis and funding allocation** to the country level can provide opportunities to link humanitarian and development assistance, tailor support to local need, and create links between funding lines and implementing partners (Mosel and Levine 2013, Steets 2011). Though decentralisation is generally seen as conducive to 'good LRRD', it demands effective capacity on the ground. It is not always guaranteed that staff closer to the ground will conduct a more impartial analysis or be aware of national and regional issues (Mosel and Levine 2014).

- **Changing the starting point and approach to transition** can help facilitate more effective engagement in transition situations (OECD-DAC 2010b). This includes adopting a long-term, non-linear approach to transition that focuses more on actual objectives than on the instruments and approaches available.

- **Compacts** have become a common tool used by donors to bring together state building and peacebuilding actors to agree on: priorities that require a collective effort; implementation methods (who and how); mutual accountability; and funding commitments (Herbert 2014; See

also Bennett 2012; OECD-DAC 2010b). Other approaches include Multilateral Joint Assessment: Post-conflict Needs Assessment, and Mutual Accountability Frameworks (Herbert 2014). Several donors have sought to strengthen coordination between different actors by establishing joint humanitarian and development offices (e.g. SIDA and the FAO (Otto and Weingärtner 2013).

▪ **Mainstreaming LRRD in vulnerability, risk reduction and livelihoods frameworks** can be a practical ways of ensuring that long-term perspectives are adopted in humanitarian work, and that development work addresses issues of vulnerability and risk (Buchanan-Smith and Fabbri 2005).

Strengthening linkage capacities of implementing partners

Some evaluation studies on LRRD have found that programmes which have strong local engagement and local partnerships on the ground are more successful at marrying short and long term perspectives (Christoplos 2006; Brusset et al. 2006; Steets et al. 2011). Supporting and working with implementing partners – for instance through providing feedback on funding applications – can encourage a greater development-orientation of humanitarian relief programmes, and foster a greater focus on disaster risk reduction in development programmes (Steets 2011).

Donors can also **strategically work** with partner organisations that are able to operate across different forms of assistance, or provide partners with incentives to work across different aid forms (Otto and Weingärtner 2013). German aid institutions, for example, require applicants for humanitarian funding to identify links with development aid and potential follow-up projects. In situations where implementing partners focus solely on humanitarian activities, donors can offer support with an early recovery approach and help organisations develop the necessary skills through targeted training (Otto and Weingärtner 2013).

New coordination mechanisms such as the **cluster approach** have led to some improvements in coordination among humanitarian organisations (Steets et al. 2010). However, they have had limited success and, in some cases, may have undermined coordination between humanitarian and development actors (Steets et al 2010).

Programming mechanisms of funding and financing

Some donors have introduced new funding instruments to make humanitarian funding more **flexible and longer-term**. This includes multi-year funding options (EU and DFID), multi-year commitments with yearly grant renewal (Danida), and strategic partnerships agreements instead of project grants (Danida and DFID) (Mosel and Levine 2014). Pooling resources, adapting the eligibility of funds, or setting aside a specific share of humanitarian and development aid for recovery can also add flexibility to existing funding pools (Steets 2011). In a conflict context, funding gaps can be addressed by the expansion of a Peace Building Fund, the establishment of an Early Recovery Financing Task Force, in-country piloting of an Early Recovery Fund, and the continued expansion of peacebuilding budgets (Chandran, Jones and Smith 2008).

In a review of **transition financing**, the OECD-DAC find that there is a need for donors to reform their policies and procedures to ensure long-term targeted support (OECD-DAC 2010). Various approaches are recommended to facilitate more effective international engagement in transition situations, including: improving donor policies and procedures; identifying the right priorities and objectives; and improving

efforts to measure transition financing across instruments and modalities (OECD-DAC 2010; OCED-DAC 2010b. See also World Development Report 2014).

Analysis of context-specific risks

Designing and operationalising programmes that link relief, rehabilitation and development successfully requires a comprehensive analysis of context-related risks, vulnerabilities and capacities of the affected population. Some authors caution that there is a **lack of information** about how people perceive their situation, and how they relate to concepts of relief, rehabilitation and development (Buchanan-Smith and Fabbri 2005). When implementing a post-earthquake rehabilitation project in Gujarat, India, the Swiss Red Cross made use of a Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) to inform programme design (Labh and Pfander 2011). The VCA tool allowed them to systemically collect and analyse information on the community's vulnerability. This information was used to diagnose risks and capacities, and to feed into the design of programmes to reduce vulnerability and increase capacity (Labh and Pfander 2011).

Transitional solutions initiative / Solutions Alliance

The transitional solutions initiative (TSI) is an approach to thinking about refugee communities in terms of development assistance, rather than solely emergency aid. It aims to place displacement and the needs of displaced people on the development agenda[6]. A concept note for the UNDP and UNHCR argues that the perception that displacement can only be addressed through humanitarian means is 'ill-conceived' (UNHCR 2010, p. 1). Such thinking can impede or delay the achievement of sustainable solutions, and lead to protracted displacements and a cycle of dependence on humanitarian assistance (UNHRC 2010).

TSI attempts to position displacement at the core of recovery and development strategies through advocacy, coordination, capacity building and resource mobilisation[7]. The approach tends to focus on building relationships between bilateral and multilateral actors to support local processes and local ownership, and find sustainable solutions for displaced persons and local communities. There are two illustrative examples of TSI in practice:

- **Eastern Sudan** was selected as a pilot for TSI due to high poverty rates and challenging environments for displaced persons to build sustainable livelihoods. The TSI involved a consolidation of the partnership between bilateral and multilateral donors (including UNHCR, the World Bank and UNDP) and the Sudanese government. A phased, area-based approach was adopted that aimed to strengthen the self-reliance of displaced persons and host communities. Some of the positive outcomes of the scheme were the inclusion of East Sudan displacement issues in Sudan's Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the supporting of over 500 refugees and host community members to complete vocational training courses (UNDP and UNHCR 2013). Some of the key challenges include weak implementation capacity of national NGOs, limited access to land for refugees, and 'refugee dependency syndrome' (UNDP and UNHCR 2013, p. 5).

- In **Colombia,** the initiative focused on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and had three key goals: improving the quality of life through, for example, access to land and services; strengthening the capacities of institutions and communities; and supporting and protecting the rights of those who had suffered from the conflict[8]. There have been various challenges to

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[6] Expert comments. See also: http://www.prsproject.org/initiatives/other-projects/
[7] See: http://www.prsproject.org/initiatives/other-projects/
[8] See: http://www.prsproject.org/initiatives/other-projects/

operationalising the TSI in Colombia. The non-legalisation of land on which IDPs live is main barrier to progress, and affects investment by authorities in basic services and housing. There is an urgent need for effective local urban integration, particularly to reduce IDPs marginalisation and support social cohesion (JIPS 2013).

Solutions Alliance is a recent inclusive global partnership approach that seeks to build on lessons from the TSI[9]. It aims to promote and enable the transition for displaced persons to increased resilience and sustainable self-reliance. A two-track approach was established during a recent roundtable: thematic groups, which offer tools and practical approaches; and national groups, which seek to apply the principles of the Alliance to specific countries or regions[10].

Examples of NGO work on LRRD

There are a number of illustrative examples in the literature of how NGOs have managed to link humanitarian and development principles in their work:

- In Ethiopia, Save the Children has implemented a flexible livelihoods programme that can adapt to crisis. A four-phase 'drought cycle management' is applied which includes: normal development and preparedness, alert, emergency response, and recovery. Throughout all these phases, existing development projects in health, education and social protection continue (Voice-Accord 2012).

- In Kenya, Oxfam has combined humanitarian and development programmes through combing cash transfers to reduce food insecurity, with advocating for government to provide better social protection for pastoralists (Voice-Accord 2012).

Other pragmatic steps

Examples of additional pragmatic steps to link humanitarian and development aid include (Steets 2011):

- Consciously hiring staff with backgrounds in both humanitarian and development contexts;

- Having joint inter-department activities, such as joint training or field visits;

- Including linkage aspects or activities in job descriptions and evaluation forms;

- Targeting training on recovery for humanitarian staff, and disaster risk reduction and conflict prevention for development staff;

- Having clear political will and a statement of intent to link development and humanitarian aid.

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