

ALNAP Lessons Paper



HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN
DROUGHT-RELATED EMERGENCIES

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LESSON .1

Drought is a recurrent and natural event in many areas. Humanitarian organisations can be more effective when they take this into account in their programming.

In many areas of the world, severe drought is a recurrent phenomenon. It is possible that in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and elsewhere, droughts are becoming more frequent and intense.¹ There has been drought somewhere in the Horn of Africa in eight of the past ten years, affecting 67 million people (ECB/ACAPS, 2011).² These droughts often occur in contexts where conflict, high food prices, and restrictions on traditional livelihood strategies have already impoverished large sections of the population. Where this is the case, drought can trigger – or greatly intensify – large-scale human disasters.

In some countries, governments are addressing the longer-term, structural issues that turn droughts into emergencies.

In the Horn of Africa, governments are working with donors and implementing agencies to eliminate the divide between emergency response and development, for example by instituting safety nets and social protection programmes (Mousseau and Morton, 2010). After the Horn of Africa drought in 2005/06, donors stayed on to support efforts to mainstream disaster prevention and response, and funded multi-year relief and recovery responses in the Horn of Africa, including channelling more funds through government institutions in the 2008/09 drought (EU, 2010; ECHO, 2010a, ECHO, 2009). However, some national policies still limit the effectiveness of cross-border and pastoralist interventions (Levine et al, 2011). Good regional policies such as the African Union's Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa, need national support to counter decades of policies that have undermined pastoralists' livelihoods (Letai, 2011).

Effective and appropriate humanitarian response can be based on the flexible funding of developmental programmes.

Combined with organisational readiness and skills, flexible funding allows development programmes to change course temporarily and concentrate on the effects of drought. In Ethiopia, the Humanitarian Assistance Programme of Belgium allowed FAO to divert funds from the Pastoralist Livelihoods Initiative (PLI) to fund early animal-health interventions in the 2005/06 Horn of Africa drought (Grunewald et al, 2006a; Nicholson et al, 2007). Oxfam in Wajir repeatedly changed objectives from supporting livestock marketing associations (LMAs) to increase trade prior to drought, to supporting them in emergency destocking at the peak of drought, to emergency vaccination after drought during a disease outbreak, before finally refocusing on support to livestock trade. Save the Children UK has successfully used capacity-building programmes in Ethiopia as a springboard for emergency-response interventions. In the long term, decreasing the negative impact of drought on livelihoods requires effective developmental interventions which address the causes of poverty and vulnerability.

Humanitarian support can also be provided through the scaling up of existing activities.

Increasingly, national disaster-response strategies are linked to 'productive' safety nets which can be expanded in times of food stress (Slater et al, 2011). In Ethiopia, the Productive Safety Nets Programme (PSNP) has a contingency provision of 20% built in for emergencies when the situation demands (Grunewald et al, 2006b).³ This allows it to work as an emergency intervention: evaluations found that, after the drought of 2008, beneficiaries of the PSNP were more likely than non-beneficiaries to have increased consumption and livestock assets (Hoddinott et al, 2009). The use of existing programmes in this way can further significantly decrease lead times in an emergency (ECHO, 2010b; SCUK, 2011a; Longley and Wekesa, 2007) and increase the resilience and capacity of local structures to respond to future droughts (ACCORD/Cordaid, 2010; Oxfam, 2009).

Agencies that operate in drought-prone areas should ensure that they are prepared for drought response.

In addition to flexibility in funding and the readiness, skills and ability to 'change course', agencies with a longer-term presence in drought-prone areas should base programming on drought cycle management (DCM), conduct joint analysis to identify windows of opportunity for intervention, and preparedness auditing, including preparing off-the-shelf interventions to remove in advance some of the obstacles that delay emergency responses (Levine et al, 2011; PACAPS, 2009).

¹ See CRED, 2011; Oxfam, 2011, but also Catley, 2011.

² This figure is a total of those affected in each drought event. The same individuals, if affected in two separate events, will be counted twice.

³ In fact, safety net programmes – particularly when operated in isolation – are arguably more effective as emergency responses than as longer-term developmental interventions. Evaluations of the PSNP note that risk is "high" that beneficiaries of the PSNP will not "graduate" to more sustainable livelihoods unless the programme is linked to others designed to decrease long-term vulnerability (World Bank, 2010; DFID, 2006c).

Agencies working in drought-affected areas can successfully integrate emergency programming with longer-term initiatives by collaborating with local actors.

Successful emergency programming is more likely when conducted in partnership with local actors, who can use their networks, knowledge and experience (Ali et al, 2005; Aklilu and Wekesa, 2001). One example of this is Oxfam's work in Mauritania with a local partner that had an ongoing livelihoods development programme. Because the partner understood local livelihoods patterns, Oxfam was able to intervene by scaling up loans to shop-owners, with the effect of keeping food prices down. In the neighbouring community, efforts were less successful because interventions focused on food production without understanding the dynamics of ownership of land and harvests by local elites (Oxfam, 2004).

Many populations who live in drought-prone areas have developed strategies for responding to drought. The best way to support these populations is to support and enhance these strategies.

There is evidence that, if done right, interventions that support normal 'coping strategies' not only save lives and livelihoods but can lead to more resilient, cohesive communities (Bekele and Akumu, 2009; Steglich and Bekele, 2009). The Enhanced Livelihoods in the Mendera Triangle (ELMT) and Enhanced Livelihoods in Southern Ethiopia (ELSE) interventions take this approach, reinvigorating customary leadership, and building on indigenous knowledge, and making greater use of participatory impact assessments (Nicholson and Desta, 2010; Boku, 2010). CARE found that interventions implemented under the auspice of these structures were more successful and likely to be spontaneously replicated. At the same time, humanitarians should recognise that many communities, and particularly pastoralist communities, are changing rapidly. Consequently, there is a great deal of livelihood diversification and urbanisation in many drought-affected areas. International organisations must work to stay relevant to changes in pastoralists' communities, and not focus exclusively on livestock interventions (IFRC, 2011).

LESSON .2

Early warning is critical in responding to situations caused by drought. Effective early warning is sensitive to changes in the livelihoods of vulnerable populations, and is linked to early response mechanisms.

Given the long timelines often required to establish emergency responses, early warning is critical.

Without flexible funding and off-the-shelf projects, it often takes at least four months from early warning to implementation (PACAPS, 2009; SCUS, 2009; ODI/CARE, 2010; Grunewald et al, 2006a). It took four to six months for the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) to become operational in drought-affected regions in Ethiopia in the 2008/09 drought (Majid, 2011). In Afar, it was five months for proposal development and donor approval, and another two months for hiring and training staff (Bekele, 2010). If warnings are not given early enough, livelihoods – and particularly livestock-based livelihoods – have already been in some cases irreversibly lost. On the other hand, acting early can preserve livelihoods, and at very limited cost; SCUS found that it cost US\$1 to link a pastoralist to a trader for destocking, and the transaction provided food for two months, which would otherwise have cost US\$97–165 through a food aid programme (Abebe et al, 2008).

Early warning systems are increasingly rigorous, transparent and effective...

Early Warning Systems (EWS) now employ a wide range of communications and satellite technologies, and use objective outcome indicators linked to clearly defined humanitarian phases. The growing degree of consensus around these indicators and phases allows for improved decision-making (RHVP, 2007). The introduction of 'imminent' and 'risk of worsening' phases to the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) should facilitate earlier response. Early Warning Systems warned of deteriorating conditions due to severe droughts in the Horn of Africa in 2005/06, 2008/09 and 2010/11 as early as one year before disasters reached crisis proportions (IFRC, 2011).

...but in some cases still lack appropriate indicators, particularly for pastoral livelihoods.

It is vital that EWSs are designed to understand signals specific to local livelihoods. Evaluations of Niger in 2004/05 and Malawi in 2002/03 observed that underestimating the impact of high prices on poor households led to a late response (IRAM, 2006). Acute malnutrition does not need to reach emergency or crisis levels to trigger an early response when there is adequate historical and seasonal data to detect significant deviations from normal. Unfortunately most systems are not sensitive enough, and severe malnutrition or 'hard evidence' of the crisis appears when it is too late to be prevented. At this late stage, nutritional indicators are not providing early warning.⁴ For pastoral populations, useful monitoring indicators can include: livestock body conditions;

livestock conception rates; milk production and availability; population flows, magnitude and areas of origin; and conflict (FEWSNET/FSNAU, 2011a). Where indicators are sensitive to local livelihoods and conditions, and are able to allow for 'lead time' to put programmes into effect, they have the potential to serve as 'triggers' for non-food interventions (Levine et al, 2009). However, to be truly effective as triggering mechanisms, these indicators would need to achieve the same level of broad agreement as has been achieved by the IPC phases (predominantly based on food and nutrition).

It is essential that early warning is systematically linked to early response.

A variety of political, organisational and financial constraints regularly impede rapid and effective response to early warning (Levine et al, 2011; ODI/REGLAP, 2009). In Kenya, early warning of life- and livelihoods-threatening drought occurred as early as November in 2008 and 2010, but the Government of Kenya did not make a public appeal until June of 2009 and 2011, respectively (IRIN, 2011; KRCS, 2011; ODI/REGLAP, 2009). Similarly, livestock disease outbreaks in the Horn of Africa drought of 2005/06 went unrecognised by the Governments of Tanzania and Kenya, inhibiting a timely and adequate response (Oxfam, 2010; Nicholson et al, 2007). Donors can be unwilling to make funds available until there is evidence that a human disaster is actually occurring (Oxfam, 2011b). Even where funds are available, a lack of organisational readiness can prevent their effective use: while Kenya's EU-funded Drought Management Initiative which includes contingency funds demonstrates promise, the 2008/09 drought-response action was delayed due to a lack of 'off-the-shelf' projects for non-food responses and poor national-to-local coordination (ECHO, 2010a).

LESSON .3

Needs assessments are increasingly coordinated and rigorous, yet remain overly focused on or biased to crop production, and often concentrate disproportionately on food insecurity.

Needs assessments are increasingly coordinated and rigorous, leading to increased donor confidence.

The rolling assessments of the Vulnerability Assessment Committees (VACs) in Southern Africa are a good example of what is possible. In 2002, the VACs coordinated over 36 agencies with multi-sectoral expertise (government, local and international NGOs, UN and donors), in six countries. Because agencies, including donors, perceived the results to be reliable, the response (in this case largely food aid) was rapidly resourced and implemented, contributing to the prevention of widespread human suffering (DEC, 2004; WFP, 2003a).

Assessments – like Early Warning Systems – need to pay attention to the needs of varied livelihood groups.

Increasingly, baselines are distinguishing between different livelihood zones and identifying appropriate early warning indicators (LIU, 2008). But while the Systeme Alert Precoce (Early Warning System) in Niger looks at vulnerabilities in different livelihoods zones, official estimates of food insecurity are based on the Ministry of Agriculture's food balance sheet, contributing to an inadequate response to pastoralists' needs during the 2009/10 drought (Koch, 2010). In Afar region, Ethiopia (2008), the timing of agricultural assessments didn't capture deteriorating pastoral livelihoods evident two months earlier (SCUK, 2009; 2010). Agencies are increasingly aware of the role of markets in the livelihoods of most urban and rural populations, as well as being critical for cash-based interventions. Assessments should include, or be supported by, rigorous market assessment, which analyses market function (rather than simply collecting price data) over time, and includes not only food items but also the trade communities rely on to earn income.

Assessments should pay specific attention to marginalised demographic and socio-economic groups. Drought affects everyone yet the impacts on some vulnerable groups, while extremely damaging, are often hidden. Particularly vulnerable groups in previous droughts have included poor women and children, the elderly, the disabled, internally displaced persons and their host communities, people living with HIV/AIDS and their families, and the food-insecure living in urban areas. In Borana, Ethiopia in 1999/2000, HelpAge International found that older people were forgoing meals to save the lives of other members of the family, by refusing food, eating last or preferring to be left behind when families migrated. Because nutrition surveys measured only children under five years old, the real extent of malnutrition was under-represented. HelpAge successfully advocated for older people to

⁴ Although nutritional indicators may help to determine the scale or choice of interventions (Young and Jaspars, 2009; Longley and Wekesa, 2007).

be included in nutrition surveys. As a result, the government's appeal mentioned older people for the first time as a priority for supplementary food, and at least five interventions were carried out to address older people's needs (HelpAge International, 2001).

Studies also point to the specific vulnerability of women and girls in many pastoral economies. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable given cultural barriers to women's control over household resources (WFP, 2010a; Hampshire, 2009), and increasing aggression toward women when pastoral communities break down (Grunewald et al, 2006a). Successive droughts are leading to new vulnerable groups, as families lose livestock and 'fall out' of the pastoral economy (Akilu and Catley, 2010). This leads to increasing numbers of destitute people, largely women and children, living on the edge of towns and settlements (Steglich and Bekele, 2009). Women's needs are more likely to be represented if women are included in the assessment team (Islamic Relief, 2002; Concern, 2002).

Food security assessments often result in a 'food-first' approach. Livelihoods assessments more accurately describe the impact of drought on a wide range of inter-connected survival needs, potentially contributing to earlier and more appropriate responses.

Even the more successful assessments, such as the Southern African VAC assessments (above) still tend to focus disproportionately on food security, and this can lead to the choice of inappropriate interventions (Koch, 2010; SADC, 2005; DEC, 2004). By contrast, Save the Children UK utilising a livelihoods-based needs assessment in Mandera, Kenya (2009), recommended an integrated emergency programme covering water, fodder, market-based interventions and nutrition in response to worsening drought. Ethiopia is also institutionalising a livelihoods approach to assessment through the Livelihoods Integration Unit (LIU, 2007). Needs assessments should include health indicators, or risk that complementary non-food health and nutrition interventions will be inadequate. In Ethiopia in 2002/03, agencies were ill prepared to provide life-saving health interventions such as measles vaccinations, vitamin A distribution, malaria prevention and treatment, and clean water (REDSO, 2004).

LESSON .4

Drought has multiple and varied effects on people's lives. Agencies should be prepared to initiate multi-sectoral, multi-country responses to meet the real needs of drought-affected populations.

Drought presents multiple threats to lives and livelihoods – it is not uniquely a 'food security' issue.

Drought has often been seen as predominantly a 'food security' problem, and interventions have tended toward the provision of food aid. However, agencies are increasingly aware of the need to plan for a wider range of interventions (Levine et al, 2011). As the understanding of livelihood and food insecurity evolves, evaluations indicate that food aid is not the only possible response to food deficits and, in many cases, not the most cost-efficient or effective (Harvey and Bailey, 2011; Pantuliano and Wekesa, 2008; WFP, 2007a; World Bank, 2005). Yet humanitarian response continues to be dominated by food assistance, which accounted for 50–70% of humanitarian appeals in the Horn of Africa (by cost) since 2005, while livelihoods interventions were less than 15% (GHA, 2011; DRMFSS, 2011). The evaluation of ECHO's RDD in the Horn of Africa drought of 2008/09 noted that, while beneficiaries were grateful for food, what they really needed was water and seed for fodder and crops (ECHO, 2010b). But while increased experience and documentation demonstrate that there are cost-effective alternatives, the broader humanitarian system, including governments, is still slow to shift from food-aid-based drought responses: decisions during droughts are often made based on familiarity and risk-aversion (Grunewald et al, 2006a).

The impact of drought on livelihoods can significantly decrease the ability of populations to survive the present and future drought episodes: saving livelihoods is a life-saving response.

When it is known early enough that drought threatens livelihoods, the most effective way of saving lives is intervening to save assets, protect savings and support social networks, facilitating people's access to food (Jaspars, 2006). By protecting people's livelihoods in times of crisis, the humanitarian response can save lives (Sadler et al, 2009; VSF, 2009; Burns et al, 2008; ODI, 2006). Livelihoods responses also prevent people becoming more vulnerable to future shocks – an important consideration where drought is a recurrent and increasingly regular occurrence. In addition, these interventions are generally more cost effective than large-scale distributions of commodities later in the drought.

However, while there has been a significant increase in the number of livelihood interventions in the last decade, particularly in pastoral areas, there is no 'livelihoods' cluster. Livelihoods interventions are not considered life-saving, and are therefore often relegated to early recovery and not prioritised for the UN's Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) (Pantuliano and Wekesa,

2008). Where interventions to support livelihoods do take place early in the emergency, they are generally small scale, and do not match the needs of affected populations. The problem remains the small scale of early interventions, compared to need (Koch, 2010; Longley and Wekesa, 2007).

Effective interventions in droughts will often be multi-sectoral, and require collaboration across a variety of agencies.

One way to increase collaboration is through consortia, working together to reach critical mass, build on each others' strengths, improve coordination, and facilitate learning (Nicholson and Desta, 2010; Koch, 2010; Steglich and Bekele, 2009). NGO consortia for drought response in the Horn of Africa and Niger facilitated cross-border programming, expanded the reach of cash-based interventions, and contributed to mainstreaming technical issues by giving each agency a responsibility within the consortium, such as for social protection, accountability or livestock interventions (Nicholson and Desta, 2010; Majid et al, 2007). However, successful consortia require time to develop and work only when member agencies have clearly defined responsibilities, good communication protocols and adaptive management. The short timeframes for emergency projects lead to high staff turnover, undermining the learning process (Nicholson and Desta, 2010). The increasing use of websites⁵ to share learning is a start but more proactive translation of learning to practice requires staff time and commitment (RELPA, 2010).

To be effective, agencies – particularly those that target nomadic or transhumant pastoralists – often need to work across borders.

Increasingly, agencies are engaging in cross-border programmes, allowing parallel and coordinated interventions and replication of good practice from one side of the border to the other. A cross-border approach is particularly important for livestock disease management and conflict prevention. Save the Children US found that poor coordination and communication between state veterinary services limited the impact of vaccination campaigns in Kenya and Ethiopia (Beyeda and Bereda, 2009).

LESSON .5

A combination of targeting strategies works, but not all strategies work under all circumstances. Targeting outcomes need to be monitored, and agencies need to be prepared to change strategy on the basis of this monitoring.

In some cases, the targeting approach will be determined by the nature of the intervention. Nutritional and health interventions will, for example, use prescribed, standardised needs assessment and targeting techniques. However, where interventions require the provision of goods such as food, seed, or livestock, there is often a wider variety of options. Targeting can be by area (geographic targeting), or by group (administrative targeting). It can mean letting an individual or family decide themselves if they want to participate (self-targeting), or letting the community decide who will benefit from an intervention and who will not (community-based targeting).

The best approach is often a combination of targeting strategies, depending on the information available and on an agency's resources of time and money.

(WFP, 2006b; WB/IFPRI, 2002). Done well, geographic targeting (GT) correctly identifies the largest number of needy households. Done badly, it can lead to the inclusion of a large number of less needy households. Moreover, GT often relies on secondary data that do not represent individual villages and households and so can hide pockets of need, as happened in Malawi in 2002/03 (WFP, 2006b).

Community-based targeting and distribution (CBTD) has certain clear advantages, but does not work under all circumstances.

Communities often have more information about their members than external agencies can gather, which can be used to target those in need. By involving communities in decision-making, there may be better ownership and monitoring of the process and results (CARE, 2011; Concern, 2006). In some cases the creation of community mechanisms can build social capital and increase cohesion, which may in turn help to save lives and protect livelihoods (WFP, 2006b; Oxfam, 2002a). CBTD can also reduce

⁵ For some examples of sharing learning in pastoral and livestock interventions, see www.elmt-relpa.org/aesito/hoapn, www.disasterriskreduction.net/, www.pastoralists.org/ and www.livelihoods-based-programming-and-impact-assessment-in-pastoral-areas-of-the-horn-of-africa.org/

agency costs associated with administrative targeting and food distribution (WFP, 2006b; WFP, 2004a).

However, there are cases in which CBTD does not work. Communities might resist the idea of targeting some of their members and not others (as is often the case in pastoralist communities – WFP, 2007a); or feel that, by making these decisions themselves, they are undermining existing networks of sharing and redistribution (WFP, 2004a). In some cases, communities may ignore the needs of the socially marginalised, despite the fact that these people are often the most in need. For example, women and the disabled were not identified for participation in livestock vaccination programmes in the Horn of Africa drought in 2010 (ECHO, 2010b).

Successful targeting outcomes are associated with public engagement, clarity around the criteria used, and the ability to appeal.

Even where the final targeting decision does not lie with the community, agencies should consult and communicate with the affected population to ensure successful targeting. Where possible, agencies should begin with communication and social mobilisation to establish trust, transparency and accountable ways of working before the intervention begins (Majid et al, 2007; Ali et al, 2005). Agencies should consult before making targeting decisions, and should provide a public and transparent explanation of the criteria used for targeting, identification and registration of beneficiaries (CARE, 2011). They should also establish an appeal process communicated clearly to communities through a variety of mechanisms, including general assemblies (CARE, 2011): who to appeal to, how appeals should be carried out, and how appellants can expect to be treated (DFID, 2006b). The access of women and other marginalised groups to the appeal process is very important, as women are often under social pressure not to complain. Appeals need to be documented in order to track individual cases and to monitor whether certain groups are systematically excluded or favoured.

Agencies should monitor the effectiveness of targeting, and be prepared to change targeting mechanism if required.

Monitoring should begin before distribution, with the verification of a sample of targeted aid recipients (VSF, 2009; Brewin, 2010), and should continue throughout the intervention. Agencies should be prepared to change targeting strategy where monitoring shows that existing strategies are not effective. Adaptation of guidelines should be encouraged (not penalised), and well documented to promote transparency (DFID, 2006b; Oxfam, 2002a).

LESSON .6

Humanitarians are increasingly demonstrating accountability to an ever larger set of stakeholders. These accountability approaches have the potential to improve programme effectiveness but there is still a long way to go.

Humanitarian accountability is the design and implementation of programmes to ensure that the views of stakeholders are taken into account, and that these stakeholders can hold the implementing agency to account for its actions.⁶ This has received increasing attention in recent years, with growing numbers of member-led initiatives relating to different aspects of accountability. More agencies operate complaints mechanisms (CDA, 2011), and there has been an increase in the number of evaluations.⁷ The Tufts Participatory Impact Project, while not representative, has facilitated participatory impact assessment (PIA) for emergency human health and livestock interventions (VSF, 2009; Abebe et al, 2008; Bekele and Abera, 2008).

The drive for increased accountability comes from a variety of directions. Anecdotally, many humanitarian workers feel that donor expectations with regard to oversight and accountability have increased (Buchanan Smith and Scriven, 2011). At the same time, many agencies, for whom accountability is an important 'value' (Davis, 2007; Bainbridge forthcoming) are becoming more practised in establishing systems and are scaling up. Evaluations of drought response indicate that, when implemented effectively, approaches that increase the inclusion of and accountability to disaster-affected people improve relationships with local people (UNOCHA, 2011b; Ali et al, 2005) and increase the effectiveness of humanitarian operations (FAO/Cordaid, 2010; ECHO, 2006a). However, beneficiaries are often less positive about the effectiveness of these mechanisms (Banos Smith, 2009).

⁶ Adapted from 2010 HAP Guidelines.

⁷ In preparing this lessons paper, the main author reviewed over 100 evaluative and lessons documents written between 2006 and 2011, the vast majority of them from one region – the Horn of Africa.

Donors should ensure that their need for agencies to account for funds does not decrease the impact of humanitarian response.

Humanitarian agencies have multiple accountabilities, and there is always a danger that ‘upwards’ accountability can squeeze out accountability to other stakeholders, particularly beneficiaries (SCHR, 2009). Operational agencies have suggested that heavy accountability and reporting requirements on donor funding lead to operational staff spending a disproportionate amount of time working with ‘timelines, log frames and budgets’ (Banos Smith, 2009). As well as the cost in time, accountability to donors – or rather, the expectation that failure will lead to reduced funding – can, in some cases, decrease the ability of leaders to introduce innovative approaches or take risks (Buchanan Smith and Scriven, 2011). Donors could potentially address these challenges by contributing to joint/pooled funds to decrease reporting requirements, and by clarifying their attitude to risk and failure. In some cases, it may be more effective for donors to take a ‘portfolio approach’ and consider the combined impact of several related actions rather than expecting each action to be an individual success.

The increase in coordinated action requires humanitarian organisations to develop mechanisms for collective, multi-agency accountability.

Successful humanitarian programmes – and particularly those addressing droughts – require high levels of cooperation between agencies. Even in situations where agencies intervene separately, affected populations often do not differentiate between them (Featherstone, 2011). As a result, there is a growing need for collective accountability mechanisms, where all agencies in a group are jointly accountable to beneficiaries and also accountable to one another (CDA, 2011; Featherstone, 2011). While this is extremely challenging, the international community is increasingly recognising the need to structure joint accountability into consortia and other groups addressing drought response. ECHO’s Regional Drought Decision and USAID’s PLI both include accountability and learning as a cross-cutting theme, and dedicate resources to achieving it.

A coherent body of best practice is emerging around becoming accountable to disaster-affected populations.

Key learning from ongoing efforts to improve accountability includes the importance of:

- Clarifying to beneficiaries what agencies are accountable for: to exercise their rights, everyone in the community should know what their entitlement is, who is to receive it and why, and for how long (IFRC, 2005; CARE, 2004).
- Ensuring informed consent: where people provide information or opinions, they should understand the whole process by which the information should be used. They should also be aware of any recommendations or decisions that are made on the basis of their input (CDA, 2011).
- Ensuring that accountability mechanisms are culturally appropriate (Bainbridge forthcoming): agencies should attempt to align their own mechanisms with a culture’s internal mechanism for accountability, to prevent confusion and duplication. Agencies should take care not to duplicate existing, effective legal processes (Banos Smith, 2009).
- Existing or new accountability mechanisms need to be open to all, and not inadvertently exclude sections of the population, particularly women (Concern, 2006; SCUK, 2005a). For example, when they rely on the ability to read or write, or the use of community fora, some approaches may further marginalise certain groups. More inclusive mechanisms can be achieved by asking members of marginalised groups to be involved in their development, and by adding elements to ensure equitable access (SCHR, 2009).
- Instituting consistent and holistic accountability mechanisms: organisations should be internally accountable, as well as being accountable to beneficiaries and other stakeholders (SCHR, 2009; Featherstone, 2010).
- Training agency staff and partners in the management and use of accountability mechanisms: accountability should have the support and participation of management (CDA, 2011).

For accountability to be an effective tool in improving humanitarian programming, organisations need to become better at incorporating evidence from their operations at all levels, from field-level programming to organisational strategy.

While increased experience and documentation, such as that considered for this paper, demonstrate that there are cost-effective ways to save lives and livelihoods, the broader humanitarian system, including governments, is still slow to shift from ‘traditional’ drought responses often based on food aid. Despite the rhetoric on ‘evidence base’ and ‘cost-effectiveness’, decisions during droughts in 2009 (and some say 2011) are still made based on familiarity and risk-aversion (Grunewald et al, 2006a).

LESSON .7

Humanitarian agencies must do more in partnership with governments, taking responsibility for influencing disaster-management policy and turning policy into effective practice.

The actions of government are central to how drought affects vulnerable populations.

Where a government is not willing to act on early warning information, drought can result in famine (OCHA, 2011b; IRAM, 2006). The unwillingness of local militias to acknowledge famine in Somalia, and their limiting of population movements, is one of the cited causes of famine in 2011 (OCHA, 2011b). On the other hand, the change in government in Niger in 2010 followed by its rapid request for drought aid, largely influenced a positive and higher CAP response (ACF, 2011). Similarly, the proactive role of government, including pre-existing safety nets, and good coordination with the humanitarian community in Ethiopia has resulted in a more timely and adequate response, and less loss of life (Carr, 2011). While the role of government is central in most humanitarian responses, it is particularly important in drought response, which calls for multi-sectoral, longer-term programming. In the absence of high levels of communication between international and government actors, the cross-border activities of the Enhanced Livelihoods in the Mendera Triangle (ELMT) project were ultimately undermined (Nicholson and Desta, 2010).

Where government takes a lead role in disaster response, the UN and other international humanitarian actors should redefine their role or risk creating parallel and incoherent structures.

While coordination structures are often created by international agencies to meet their own coordination needs (GPPI/URD, 2010b; USAID, 2003; DEC, 2004), the first priority of international actors in a drought response should be to reinforce those national structures that already exist and fill gaps where necessary (GPPI/URD, 2010a; Grunewald et al, 2006a). Humanitarian actors can also add value by providing coordination and support in specific technical areas such as cash and by focusing government attention on neglected populations through joint advocacy (see below).

Where governments do not act (or do not act effectively) to respond to drought, humanitarian actors should advocate for appropriate response and where necessary build capacity of government counterparts.

Government failure to respond may, in some cases, reflect broadly held societal prejudices against marginalised groups. Certain ethnic or livelihood groups, such as pastoralists, may be disproportionately affected by drought partly because they have failed to benefit from development (Mousseau and Morton, 2010). As a result, humanitarian actors may be required to lobby governments to ensure not only an adequate emergency response in areas with marginalised populations, but also to address the underlying issues, often related to government policy, that result in increased vulnerability to drought (Nicholson and Desta, 2010; DEC, 2004). Both the ECHO-funded Regional Drought Decision and USAID-funded Regional Enhanced Livelihoods in Pastoral Areas through the Regional Livelihoods and Advocacy Project (REGLAP) have a strong focus on advocating for appropriate pastoralists' policies and interventions in the Horn of Africa, influencing both donor and government practice (Mousseau and Morton, 2010). The DEC agencies have acknowledged that opportunities for advocacy were missed in the Southern Africa crisis of 2002/03. The DEC evaluation team recommended that advocacy be included in the job description of any DEC facilitator sent to the field in an emergency (DEC, 2004). Although there are few evaluations of the efficacy of advocacy, effective advocacy appears to require clear objectives, clarity around who to target for advocacy messages, and coordinated strategy involving different stakeholders (Nicholson and Desta, 2010).

In some cases, the problem is not a lack of will, but a lack of capacity. Livelihoods interventions provided through direct support to governments in 2008/09 were crippled by poor centralised planning and inadequate communication with district authorities. This resulted in late and inadequate livestock interventions and reduced the confidence of pastoralists in their government (ECHO, 2010a). As these are the institutions increasingly responsible for drought-risk management, evaluations demand the increased adoption by international agencies of a capacity-building role (Mousseau and Morton, 2010; ECHO, 2009).

Agencies should engage at all levels, including with customary leaders and even local military commanders, based on humanitarian principles.

Drought preparedness and response requires building relationships based on participation, partnership and joint activities (ACCORD/Cordaid, 2010). Horn Relief, a long-term actor in Somalia, was able to distribute cash to tens of thousands of drought victims through seeking acceptance from local military commanders and careful negotiation with customary leaders who agreed not to 'tax' the relief. This demonstrates that, even where governments are weak and security risks are high, delivery of cash relief based on need is possible.

When security constraints demand it, remote management can still enable agencies to provide humanitarian assistance, but risks of the approach need to be managed.

Remote management demands strong relationships built on trust and good communication with national partners and staff members who often remain in highly insecure environments to distribute aid (Ali et al, 2005). There is a risk that internationals no longer in the country have a potentially skewed perspective of insecurity, and that management staff who are not trained to manage remotely do not provide enough guidance to national counterparts on the ground. Further, increased focus on upward accountability to donors may be coupled with even less than the usual downward accountability to beneficiaries (Humanitarian Outcomes, 2010). Cash relief distributed through local partners in Somalia in 2006 was considered successful because of intensive training at the beginning, strong nationals in key leadership positions, and good partnership (Majid et al, 2007).

LESSON .8

Coordination is fundamental to drought response. It is effective where the objectives are clear, the correct actors are involved, and resources are committed to making it work.

Coordination strengthens the capacity of organisations to respond appropriately.

Coordinated assessment, analysis and advocacy allow multiple actors to obtain a coherent and consistent interpretation of the situation. Where this is lacking, as in Sudan in 1999 and Niger in 2005, there can be a lack of agreement on the most appropriate response, leading to delays in implementation. This can lead to pressure on agencies to respond inappropriately (CARE et al, 2005; DEC, 1999).

Coordination improves the integrated responses that are particularly important in droughts.

The nature of many drought responses – particularly those designed to protect livelihoods and prevent and reduce malnutrition – makes coordination particularly important. These interventions must be integrated, cover multiple sectors (water, health, and food both for children and animals), be technically sound and attain good coverage without sacrificing quality. (ECHO, 2004; Duffield et al, 2004). A joint Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (VSF) and SCUK nutrition intervention during the drought in Mandera (2008/09) required coordination with the Ministry of Health so that mothers could access both health and nutrition packages. A voucher project for meat, milk and beans would have been less successful without the market interventions of Islamic Relief and ACF; fodder production by CARE; or the animal health, milk production, management and trade support provided to pastoralists by VSF (SCUK, 2010; Shuria, 2010).

Coordination demands significant staff, time and commitment. Agencies should have clear objectives for coordination.

Coordination needs to be prioritised in work plans and funding proposals (GOK/KFSM, 2001). In Kenya in 1999/2000, the Oxfam programme manager spent more than 50 per cent of his time on coordination. As a result, Oxfam was able to influence policy and programming in early warning, coordination and emergency response (Jaspars, 2006).

LESSON .9

A growing body of evidence underscores cash-based responses as a credible and preferred alternative to in-kind assistance where commodities are available and affordable. Increasingly, but by no means always or everywhere, agencies and donors are taking a ‘cash-first’ response to livelihoods and food crises.

Cash has a wide variety of applications in drought response.

(Harvey and Bailey, 2011; NORAD, 2011). The use of cash in emergency response has increased a hundred-fold over the last decade and has been used in drought response to increase access to water, seed and food, and facilitate innovative linkages between producers and consumers, e.g. through vouchers for milk and meat, or in exchange for animals supporting traditional restocking methods (NORAD, 2011; Abebe et al, 2008). After the crisis, when cash grants are big enough, cash is more likely to be spent on recovery, e.g. restocking, repaying debts, or investing in income-generating activities to provide an alternative source of income (CARE et al, 2005). There is further evidence that cash acts as an incentive for participation in health and nutrition programmes and that providing cash to programme beneficiaries can reduce negative coping mechanisms that would otherwise limit the effectiveness of these programmes, e.g. sharing supplementary or therapeutic food (Bailey and Hedlund, forthcoming, Brewin, 2010; Poulsen and Fabre, 2010) (see more below on nutrition and health).

The careful analysis of markets is essential for an appropriate response option that involves cash.

Cash responses should occur only when commodities are available. Accurate market analysis and monitoring, and adjusting the transfer value or switching to in-kind distribution when necessary is crucial to ensure that cash provided will meet needs as intended and not adversely affect the price or availability of commodities (Oxfam, 2006b; World Bank, 2006a). Availability and prices of food, seeds or livestock can vary considerably between seasons and places, and particularly between urban and rural areas (Oxfam, 2005). Understanding import dynamics, consumption and identifying indicator commodities can help interpret changing prices and inform the choice of responses (FEWSNET/FSNAU, 2011a). During drought in Somalia, the NGO Cash Consortium worked with FEWSNET/FSNAU to monitor the price of imported red rice as an indicator of stable supply and demand (Ali et al, 2005).

To ensure access to food, cash rather than in-kind food aid, may be a more relevant intervention for pastoralists.

Nomadic and transhumant pastoralists, who often form a large proportion of drought-affected populations, have a well-developed relationship with markets for barter and sale of livestock products and purchase of food. Cash is easy to carry (Oxfam, 2006a; ECHO, 2002b), and – where food is available in markets – using cash and vouchers allows pastoralists to continue moving with their herds and protects the health and nutrition of pastoralists’ families (ECHO, 2010b). As cash is more flexible, it can be used in complex and unplanned ways that can reinforce pastoralist communities, including supporting traders, producers and consumers and even revitalising traditional charity and loans (Mattinen and Ogden, 2006).

Cash transfers can often be the most cost-effective form of response, directly benefiting recipients and their communities.

Cash, when provided early enough, can reduce the need for more costly interventions later (and see above on early warning/response) (Pantuliano and Wekesa, 2008). Where markets can provide enough food, and food insecurity is a result of lack of purchasing power, cash can be a more cost-effective means of improving food consumption and dietary diversity (Bailey and Hedlund, forthcoming; Oxfam, 2006b; Concern, 2006). Destocking, another form of cash intervention, directly benefits local communities through multiplier effects. SCUS found that when cash was provided to pastoralists, 70% was spent in local markets and on local services (Bekele and Abera, 2008). Horn Relief found that providing cash relieved pressure on the credit system, benefiting non-beneficiaries as well (Majid et al, 2007; Abebe et al, 2008). When fresh food vouchers were provided to refugees in the Dadaab camps (2008–2011), SCUK and ACF found that fresh food supplies in the markets increased, benefiting families beyond the intended beneficiaries (SCUK, 2011b; Dunn, 2010).

Beneficiaries, particularly women, need to be consulted on their preference for cash versus in-kind distributions, and for their advice on the most safe and effective ways of transfer.

(Ali et al, 2005). While people will often prefer what they are accustomed to (WFP, 2010b), there is an increasing demand for cash. Watching food aid trucks stuck in the mud during the IFRC drought response in Ethiopia (2008/09), beneficiaries asked, ‘Why

don't you just bring cash?' (Majid, 2011).

The combination of food plus cash can provide all the benefits of both while avoiding the limitations of each, and/or can be interchanged as market conditions change.

After droughts in Swaziland and Lesotho in 2007/08, the majority of beneficiaries preferred cash and food rather than only cash or food (SCUK, 2008a; Devereaux and Mhlanga, 2008). This can apply to other commodities as well, such as seed and livestock. In Malawi in 2005/06, providing food aid met subsistence needs while providing cash allowed beneficiaries to meet important non-food needs, such as soap, medicine and school fees (Concern, 2006). In Turkana, when prices were high, Oxfam provided food for work, partly with the intent of bringing prices down. Later, when prices were lower, Oxfam switched back to cash (Oxfam, 2002b).

Cash in the hands of women can increase the likelihood that cash will be spent on the household.

(Brewin, 2010; CARE, 2011). Monitoring the impact of cash distributions on gender dynamics is crucial, as decisions about how cash is spent and who makes that decision may create conflict within households. By providing food vouchers to indigenous women in Bolivia during drought in 2009 women (rather than men) went more frequently to markets and had greater say in food purchases (ACF, 2011).

LESSON .10

In-kind food aid has been used in drought response to the detriment of other often more appropriate interventions. However, where response is late or food is unavailable, food aid is important for saving lives.

Food aid should not be a 'default' response to drought.

In their review of the response to the 1999–2001 drought in Kenya, Akilu and Wekesa (2001) state that 'rather than being the first response, food aid should be seen as a last resort ... when all else has failed, or when nothing else was done to address the emerging crisis'. Humanitarians should resist institutional 'dependence' on food aid (Grunewald et al, 2006b). When local government requested food to respond to increasing malnutrition, ERCS had to make considerable effort to demonstrate that it was in fact a water problem (IFRC, 2011). Food aid does not meet many of the humanitarian needs caused by drought (ECHO, 2010b), and is often not the most effective way of saving livelihoods. Food aid requires considerable supply and logistics capacity, thereby increasing risk of delayed deliveries (IFRC 2011; Dunn, 2010; IRAM 2006), and it may distort local food markets (Maunder, 2006), acting as a disincentive for the private sector (World Bank, 2005).

Food aid remains the best-resourced type of humanitarian aid, to the detriment of other responses, particularly when humanitarian response is late.

(Pantuliano and Wekesa, 2008; Steering Committee, 2004; WFP, 2006a; C-SAFE, 2007). An analysis of food compared to other interventions of the 2010/11 CAPs in the Horn of Africa reveal that, while food aid and nutrition were on average 75% funded, livelihoods and water were only 37% and 32% funded, respectively (OCHA, 2011a). At the same time, at significant cost, scaling up nutritional interventions with high-energy foods such as blanket supplementary feeding and preventive use of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF) prevented a deterioration in nutritional status in Niger 2005/06 and 2009/10, in the latter case until a malaria epidemic caused an increase in malnutrition (SCUK, 2010; Poulsen and Fabre, 2010).

Minimising potential disadvantages and maximising advantages depends on how food aid is programmed and where it is purchased.

To save lives, general rations must be adequate in quality and quantity and over time (Duffield et al, 2004). Food aid distributions need to be well targeted and well timed so as not to coincide with harvests (Jere, 2007; Hammond and Maxwell, 2002). In addition, the source of food aid matters: local purchase of food aid has demonstrated positive impacts on local and regional markets. As with cash, coordination and careful market analysis reduces the risk that local purchases will drive up prices (REDSO, 2004; WFP, 2003a). Contingencies, including cash, should be considered when pipeline breaks threaten continuous consumption. This was the case in the Dadaab refugee camps in 2008/09 when ACF used pipeline breaks as one justification to provide fresh food vouchers (Dunn, 2010).

At crisis stage, debates about the appropriateness of food aid should not preclude a response (food aid or other) that is necessary to save lives.

This was one of the reasons cited for the delayed response in Niger in 2005 (WFP, 2006a; CARE et al, 2005). While delaying the discussion perpetuates the status quo, these discussions should not occur when lives are at stake.

LESSON .11

Cash for work (CFW) and food for work (FFW) can be effective distribution mechanisms, where the work required is appropriate and where they do not disrupt successful coping strategies.

Food transfers in slow-onset disasters are often made in exchange for work. The pros and cons associated with cash for work (CFW) are more or less the same as for food for work (FFW) (Harvey, 2007).

Any activity requiring a high standard of work is probably better as a complementary activity than as a pre-condition for receiving relief.

Factors needed for success of FFW and CFW include high levels of community participation at all stages of design and implementation, appropriate technical guidance and quality assurance. Necessary relief cannot be withheld just because the quality of work is not up to standard (URD, 2007; WFP, 2007b).

FFW / CFW can provide an incentive to invest in unsustainable natural resource interventions, including soil and water management.

ELMT found that CFW/FFW provided pastoralists with a 'perverse incentive' to undertake work on unsustainable water schemes. Had these schemes not been supported by cash and food, the community would probably not have supported them (Nicholson and Desta, 2010; Nassef and Belayhun, 2011). Instead more sustainable approaches actually require a labour or cash contribution from communities (Nassef and Belayhun, 2011).

Work programmes risk preventing poor households from pursuing their own productive activities.

SCUK (2010) used seasonal calendars to avoid planning CFW/FFW during peak work periods. In Ethiopia, instead of being required to attend CFW/FFW, women attended nutrition education: cash coupled with education had the effect of not only improving dietary diversity but also child feeding practices (SCUK, 2005c). An evaluation of CFW/FFW in Ethiopia strongly recommended limiting the required number of hours per day and days per person for an individual to work in order to receive their ration (DFID, 2006b).

LESSON .12

Communities are increasingly dependent on markets during drought. Innovative interventions to maximise the potential for markets to meet people's various needs can have far-reaching benefits.

Drought, in combination with high food prices and conflict, can cause instability in markets, making it more difficult for people who depend on markets for food and trade. Pastoralists in particular want stable markets (ODI/CARE, 2010). Market interventions include increasing people's purchasing power through cash and credit, creating demand by providing vouchers, selling subsidised food or other commodities, including livestock products, or providing incentives to the private sector to make food more affordable. Other market-based approaches include index-based insurance. India and Bangladesh have the longest history of successful market interventions to stabilise prices, using a combination of large public stocks, government commercial imports and trade liberalisation, plus limits on private stocks (World Bank, 2005).

The combination of drought (leading to decreased local food production and low prices for livestock and other commodities) and high international food prices can combine to put staple foods out of the reach of large sections of the population. In some areas of Somalia over the period 2010/11 there has been an 82% decline in the amount of sorghum that can be bought with a day of labour (FEWSNET/FSNAU, 2011b). In Niger, the Donor Common Fund is regularly used to sell tens of thousands of tonnes of food at subsidised prices, contributing to stabilising prices in some parts of the country during the 2009/10 drought (ACF, 2011; FEWSNET, 2010). On a smaller scale, milk vouchers provided incentive to maintain milk supplies during the Kenyan drought of 2008/09, keeping prices reasonable even for non-recipients (Shuria, 2010).

If timely and at large-enough scale, market-based strategies can reduce the need for other interventions.

In Namibia and Botswana in 2002/03, food aid required by the government was procured and distributed through normal commercial suppliers, mitigating the need for these countries to issue an international appeal for assistance (Mano et al, 2003). Even in the severe drought of 2010/11, markets continued to provide fresh food for vouchers in the Dadaab refugee camps, meeting important needs for complementary feeding of infants (SCUK, 2011b).

On a large scale, market-based interventions demand government support and private-sector involvement.

This includes commercial destocking which requires careful planning and good communication with pastoralists (in contrast to problems described in Lesson 13 below). Governments have the authority to regulate prices and markets, movements of food and subsidies or tariffs/taxes. Restrictive trade policies, in combination with large-scale food-aid programmes, have prevented private-sector imports from making a significant contribution to food supplies in Ethiopia (World Bank, 2005). Coordination with grain-marketing boards and associations of producers, millers, traders and retailers is important to assess capacity, willingness to cooperate and mechanisms for distribution (C-Safe, 2004). The private sector will engage only if it sees a benefit in doing so (Mano et al, 2003).

Credit is an integral part of many livelihoods, and pastoral livelihoods in particular.

There is a need for appropriate financial institutions, depending on the target group, that are also sharia-compliant. Pastoral production groups (PPGs) lacked capital to buy animals to meet production commitments (Nicholson and Desta, 2010; Bekele, 2010). Loans provided to traders allowed them to pay pastoralists immediately for livestock off-take, rather than paying later which was the traditional method (Catley, 2007).

LESSON .13

Water interventions, when done correctly, can be extremely effective. But, to meet minimum standards and be cost-effective, they require early intervention, good planning and participation of user communities – not characteristic of humanitarian interventions at present.

Droughts have significant impact on water availability and quality. Water interventions are often needed but they are most frequently late, resorting to the costly option of water trucking.

Water interventions in situations of drought – particularly when conducted in combination with other interventions – can have significant impacts on health and livelihoods. The prevalence of water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea, typhus and intestinal parasites, was reduced by 85% after water interventions by Agri-Service Ethiopia (ECHO, 2010b). In the absence of water, already weak livestock succumbed to death during poorly planned destocking interventions in 2005/06 (ECHO, 2010a). However, timely water interventions are rarely sufficiently funded or successfully implemented (Nassef and Belayhun, 2011; Wekesa and Kanani, 2009; Schimann and Philpott, 2007; URD, 2007; COOPI, 2002). Instead, agencies are increasingly resorting to costly water trucking with limited impact due to the poor standards of water provided (Wekesa and Kanani, 2009). Well-targeted water-trucking interventions have supplied schools, hospitals and IDPs in Kenya (Wekesa and Kanani, 2009).

Ideally, in an emergency the focus should be on the rehabilitation of existing water points.

(Nassef and Belayhun, 2011; Schimann and Philpott, 2007). These interventions generally take longer, but are cheaper (Wekesa and Kanani, 2009) and generally avoid the risks associated with new developments.

Where water trucking is required as a drought response, agencies should attempt to find more sustainable solutions before the next drought occurs.

In 2010, Kenya Red Cross finished a water scheme that connected Takaba village to a borehole 13km away. During droughts in 2005/06 and 2008/09, Takaba required water trucking from sources 140km away. In the 2010/11 drought, the village no longer needed this expensive intervention (IFRC, 2011).

Poorly planned water interventions can have damaging immediate and long-term effects. In drylands, water is a valuable asset, and its distribution has important political, economic and ecological effects.

During the Kenya drought of 2008/09, World Vision provided piped water to several points in a village in an attempt to decongest water points. The intervention was criticised by the poor as the water was piped to more influential members of the community (ECHO, 2010a). More broadly, a history of poorly geographically located interventions focusing on the provision of 'hardware'⁸ solutions to emergency water needs, has resulted in unsustainable water use in drylands (REGLAP/FAO, 2011; Schimann and Philpott, 2007). In some cases, water projects have inadvertently encouraged new settlement in unsuitable areas. Poorly planned interventions can also lead to conflict over water resources, particularly when water development does not consider customary systems of governance (Nassef and Belayhun, 2011). In Ethiopia, emergency water projects by NGOs later managed by government officials caused conflict between and within Boran and Somali ethnic groups (Nassef and Belayhun, 2011).

Negative impacts can be prevented by an understanding of the local context.

Assessments should include potential environmental impacts on water tables, settlement patterns and use of surrounding resources such as pasture (REGLAP/FAO, 2011; C-SAFE, 2007; COOPI, 2002), as well as an understanding of existing water-management systems and customary institutions (Nassef and Belayhun, 2011).

Water users, particularly women, should be included in assessments, planning and implementation.

The 'software' – participation in the site selection, design, sustained management and maintenance through water-use committees, as well as determining meaningful complementary health and sanitation activities – is equally important as the 'hardware' (Oxfam, 2004; COOPI, 2002). Understanding the roles, needs and opportunities for women must be proactively pursued through engagement with women; it won't happen by itself (ECHO, 2010b).

LESSON .14

Acute malnutrition is associated with drought. Humanitarian response does not need to wait to know that it will happen. Improvements in nutritional status are best achieved through an integrated response based on a sound understanding of the local causes of malnutrition.

(WFP, 2011; DEC, 2004; USAID, 2003). Slow-onset emergencies in the Horn of Africa, Niger, Ethiopia and Southern Africa have been characterised by crisis-level rates of acute malnutrition. Humanitarian response is usually too late to prevent malnutrition; therefore the predominant response is more food aid, including RUFs. However, evaluations highlight that interventions appear to be more effective where they take into account the multiple causes of malnutrition. More evidence is needed to identify the right intervention, or combination of interventions, to use when poor nutrition is a structural or chronic problem. This is attributed not only to inadequate food consumption but also to low levels of public health, access to health services and caring practices, as was the case in Niger (WFP, 2010a; FEWSNET 2006; IRAM, 2006; CARE et al, 2005).

Emergency health interventions that reinforce public health services have demonstrated success, particularly in the community management of acute malnutrition (CMAM).

(Deconinck et al, 2011). Evaluations of CMAM in emergencies between 2006 and 2010 highlight the importance of the political and technical leadership of Ministries of Health (MoHs), ensuring supplies and staff, and integrating the humanitarian response with existing health infrastructure and personnel (Deconinck et al, 2011). The provision of support to the Kenyan MoH in the 2005/06 drought helped institutionalise CMAM throughout the country (ECHO, 2005b). In Niger, the humanitarian community advocated for health care to be provided to malnourished children free of charge by the government (MSF, 2005). Similarly, cash distributions, particularly when distributed in clinics, have demonstrated increases in utilisation of existing health care services during emergencies, including immunisation (Brewin, 2010; CRS, 2006). However, different funding sources and mechanisms can often prevent the full integration of emergency health interventions with ongoing health programming (Schimann and Philpott, 2007).

⁸ Increasingly, water interventions are categorised as requiring 'hardware' or physical intervention such as building boreholes, ponds and irrigation systems, and 'software' such as participatory planning and management, complementary health, and hygiene and sanitation education.

While there is some evidence that blanket therapeutic feeding can prevent severe acute malnutrition, there is no reliable evidence that supplementary feeding prevents moderate malnutrition and thereby reduces global levels of acute malnutrition during emergencies.

(Hall et al, forthcoming; Navarro et al, 2008; WFP, 2007a; Duffield et al, 2004; USAID, 2003). The choice to implement supplementary feeding programmes (SFPs) is at best based on nutritional survey results, but rarely on an analysis of the causes of malnutrition. As a result, supplementary feeding has been used to the near exclusion of other complementary and necessary interventions (USAID, 2003). Instead, it may be more effective to expand general distributions or cash transfers, particularly where default rates are likely to be high (Navarro et al, 2008).

In response to poor performance of some targeted supplementary feeding programmes, agencies are experimenting with complementary responses, including cash, with some success.

In Somalia in 2009, receipt of cash transfers increased the speed with which children in the SCUUK therapeutic feeding programme gained weight – children from households receiving transfers gained weight 45% quicker than those from non-recipient households, attributed to beneficiary families being able to provide better for the malnourished child's additional food needs (Brewin, 2010). ACF provided fresh food vouchers to families in the Dadaab refugee camps who participated in targeted SFP, acting as an incentive and increasing coverage (Dunn, 2010). In Ethiopia in 2005/06, Tearfund found that SFPs had limited effect because rations were usually shared within families, and there was usually little other food to 'supplement' (Tearfund, 2006). For similar reasons, WFP/UNICEF provided a cash or food 'protection ration' to families receiving blanket supplementary feeding in Niger (WFP, 2011). SFPs must be accompanied an adequate general ration for families and complementary health and education, including on feeding the malnourished child and on infant and young-child feeding practices (IYCF). There has been a call for more robust reporting on performance of SFP to justify its continued use as a cost-effective means of preventing or reducing acute malnutrition (Hall et al, forthcoming; Sphere, 2010).

There have been advances in monitoring and improving the nutritional status of pastoralist children.

ACF has demonstrated an innovative method for implementing nutritional surveys among pastoralist children (Dunn, 2010). There is increased recognition of the complex causes of malnutrition in pastoral livelihoods, particularly child-caring practices (Hampshire, 2009). Agencies have also experimented with mobile clinics for pastoralists – but with mixed results (Longley, 2010; Grunewald et al, 2006a). The risk is that mobile clinics duplicate efforts, are unsustainable and do not result in stronger capacity of a developing relationship between the health staff and communities (Grunewald et al, 2006b).

LESSON .15

Direct seed intervention is giving way to approaches that allow for greater beneficiary participation, given problems of disrupting seed markets, and ensuring appropriateness of seed and quality.

Seed distribution of drought-resistant or short-cycle seeds provided as a drought mitigation measure or in order to support recovery should be prepared early and implemented quickly.

In Ukambani, Kenya, in 2009, Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) was able to distribute seeds to take advantage of a good rainy season, as a result of forward planning during the drought period preceding the rains (IFRC, 2011). In contrast, when FAO distributed seeds too late to be planted in Somalia, beneficiaries consumed them (Nicholson et al, 2007).

Assessments should not assume that there is a need for seed.

Assessments should determine whether there is a real (not assumed) need for seed, and analyse the capacity of local markets to meet it (FAO, 2005; Levine and Chastre, 2004). Assuming that seed is unavailable can damage local – more sustainable – distribution mechanisms. EMMA surveys in Sudan found that shopkeepers had stopped stocking okra seed because it was so often distributed by aid agencies (EMMA, 2011).

Agencies should, wherever possible, source seed locally...

In Kenya in 2000, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) organised 14 seed fairs in three weeks, providing preferred seed for timely planting to over 8000 families. Other organisations, relying on seed ordered from companies, failed to receive supplies in time for planting (CRS, 2004).

...and trust that people know what is best for them.

An evaluation of seed fairs during drought in Ethiopia, Gambia and Zimbabwe found that among NGO staff there remains a distinct mistrust of markets and a lack of confidence in people's ability to make wise choices (CRS, 2005). However, analysis of seed fairs in different contexts suggests that, for successful emergency seed interventions, there should be minimal restrictions on inclusion of vendors and seed, and on farmers' choice (ODI, 2006).

LESSON .16

Pastoralist and livestock interventions, when done right, hold valuable lessons for the humanitarian community, yet mainstreaming remains hindered by institutional obstacles.

Increasingly, knowledge of best practice in pastoral interventions exists – but to achieve scale involves commitment to systemic change in humanitarian response.

Through trial and error, successful pastoral interventions have reinforced the importance of: working with local government and communities for advanced planning and DCM; increasing capacity and participation particularly of women; integrated and cost-effective livelihoods interventions; not only saving lives but increasing resilience through valuing customary institutions that work; and diversifying livelihoods. However, as an internal review of the Pastoral Areas Coordination, Analysis and Policy Support (PACAPS) project noted, 'small scale initiatives by single donors, by Government departments or by NGOs will never be adequate for the task' (Levine et al, forthcoming 2011: 36). Instead, there is a need to commit to redesigning the present system and mapping a process for reforming it (Levine et al, forthcoming 2011; Mousseau and Morton, 2010; Pantuliano and Pavenello, 2010).

Care must be taken that livestock interventions target those most in need.

For example, increasing the availability of livestock feed through the creation of drought reserves, hay-making and supplemental feed production, was effective in the Horn of Africa drought of 2009/10 (Boku, 2010; Nicholson and Desta, 2010). But not all pastoralists are poor, and some livestock interventions can disproportionately benefit the rich (for example, see Lesson 3 above on needs assessments). Risks of inequitable access can be minimised through public or communal (not private) enclosures and fodder reserves established and managed by government and customary institutions in combination (ECHO, 2010b; Nicholson and Desta, 2010; Steglich and Bekele, 2009). Involving women in management of fodder reserves can result in greater sustainability and more equitable benefit-sharing (Boku, 2010).

To maximise potential impact, minimum standards such as those provided by the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) must be adhered to.

CARE Ethiopia implemented a supplementary feeding programme in which mortality was reduced to 4%. But in Abala, a neighbouring district, where ten animals were fed what was intended for only three, mortality was 24%. Effective implementation has significant impact on cost-effectiveness, e.g. the Borana feeding programme had a cost-benefit ratio of 91:1, while in Afar it was 1.5:1, and in Abala it was .03:1 (Bekele, 2010). Vaccination had limited impact on livestock mortality in the 2005/06 and 2008/09 droughts largely due to a failure to abide by minimum standards related to the use of appropriate vaccines, levels of vaccination coverage and dose, timing of vaccination and correct storage of vaccines, as well as differing cross-border vaccination strategies (Boku, 2010; Nicholson and Desta, 2010; Catley et al, 2009; CARE, 2009, ECHO, 2010a).

As pastoralism relies heavily on markets, reinforcing linkages between market actors and pastoralists has both immediate and long-term benefits.

Pastoralists are willing to pay for high-quality essential services and, where access is an issue, agencies can provide cash or vouchers. SCUS found that livestock death due to animal disease during drought was reduced by 50% when availability of care and medicine was assured through community animal health workers (CAHWs), who in turn earned 20% of profits on the sale of drugs they had purchased through a voucher scheme with local private pharmacies (Bekele and Akumu, 2009). The provision of services by the private sector works better when markets and services already exist, particularly for commercial destocking (Bekele and Abera, 2008).

Innovative use of markets to meet the needs of still-mobile pastoralists, pastoralist 'drop outs' and other peri-urban destitute people can reinforce the links between these groups, in a win-win situation.

Pastoralist destitution or 'drop-out' is a growing problem (Nicholson and Desta, 2010, Beyeda and Bereda, 2009). VSF worked with the urban destitute in northern Kenya to facilitate destocking, and improve the processing of livestock products and livestock support (fodder making) (Shuria, 2010; Nicholson and Desta, 2010). Coupling increased generation of livestock products

with vouchers for milk and meat provided much-needed income and nutrient-dense foods. Further, these interventions have longer-term benefits in terms of diversification of income and creation of an infrastructure for processing and marketing livestock products (SCUK, 2010; Shuria, 2010).

Gender-sensitive approaches have longer-term impacts on the status of women in pastoral economies.

Female CAHWs have shown great capacity and commitment to their work, and are particularly appreciated by women who care for small ruminants around homesteads, but have faced discrimination from male CAHWs (Nicholson and Desta, 2010). Women's associations demonstrated that they could meet standards for quality, hygiene and longevity for milk production, even in rural low-technology environments (Shuria, 2010; VSF, 2009).

LESSON .17

Drought often increases the risk of conflict over scarce natural resources. Through proactive conflict prevention and mitigation, not only do pastoralists have greater access to resources, but humanitarian agencies have greater access to beneficiary communities.

Agencies are increasingly including conflict prevention and mitigation in their programme strategies, with success (ECHO, 2010b; Steglich and Bekele, 2009). Oxfam set up locally appropriate conflict early-warning desks in Wajir, Kenya with trained peace monitors who are linked to IGAD's Conflict Early Warning & Response Network (CEWARN). This network observes cross-border and internal pastoral conflicts, and provides information related to potentially violent conflicts, their outbreak and escalation (Nicholson and Desta, 2010; CEWARN, 2007). In January 2006, CEWARN facilitated a reunion of Turkana warriors who wanted to reconcile with the Dodoth group of Uganda, to share water and pasture with the Dodoth who had been less affected by the drought. After reaching a peace agreement, the Turkana and the Dodoth started to engage in cross-border trade, mainly exchanging livestock for cereals, which greatly benefited the Turkana who were experiencing significant losses of livestock and high levels of food insecurity. Contingency plans need to include conflict mitigation (Nicholson and Desta, 2010).

WHAT EVALUATIONS ARE NOT TEACHING US

The wider view Research for this paper included not only project-specific evaluations but also general critiques of drought response. This is partly because agencies have a tendency to focus on recommendations to improve programmes, rather than wider or underlying factors or systemic problems. As one observer put it, 'a technical solution cannot solve a systemic problem' (Levine, 2011).

Much that is local and non-Western in humanitarian action goes unrecognised: the coping mechanisms of communities, the parallel life-saving universe that includes zakat, migration and remittances. These constitute the unrecorded assistance flows of groups and countries that are not part of the Northern-driven humanitarian system (Donini et al, 2008; Grunewald et al, 2006a).

There are no evaluations of local NGO or other civil society efforts in the mainstream evaluation literature, either because international agencies/donors are not aware of them, or not supporting them, or they are taking credit for work being sub-contracted to local civil society groups. While participation by affected communities in agencies' activities is apparently increasing, agencies' facilitating the efforts of affected communities appears to remain sorely lacking (Telford and Cosgrave 2006).

Cost-effectiveness Finally, although evaluations of drought response seem to be increasing in both number and quality, rarely do they rigorously measure impact or better cost-effectiveness, i.e. comparing the relative cost to achieve similar impacts. WFP's increasing use of cost-efficiency versus cost-effectiveness is a step in the right direction (WFP, 2010b), as are the impact assessments implemented as part of the Pastoralists Livelihood Intervention (Akilu and Catley, 2010). Even where impact is considered, the information from evaluations does not seem to form the basis of decision-making. Rather, at present, decisions

appear to be driven by familiarity rather than hard evidence of effectiveness (Hall et al, forthcoming; Navarro et al, 2008; Grunewald et al, 2006a).

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GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES

A broad range of guidelines, standards and best practice documents is available – often online – to support programme design and implementation. Some of the key documents are listed here.

General

The Sphere Project (2010) *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, Practical Action Publishing, Rugby, available for download at: www.sphereproject.org

Accountability

HAP (2010) *The 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management*, HAP International, available for download at <http://www.hapinternational.org/>

ECB (2007) *Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: The good enough guide*, Oxfam GB, Oxford

Assessments

A wide variety of agency-specific and sector-specific guidelines is available. One of the more commonly used multi-sector approaches is that of the ICRC/IFRC:

ICRC/IFRC (2008) *Guidelines for Assessment in Emergencies*, ICRC/IFRC Geneva, available for download at www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/guidelines/guidelines-for-emergency-en.pdf

Cash programming

See the website of the Cash Learning Partnership (CALP) <http://www.cashlearning.org/resources/library> for a comprehensive list of guidelines, including those from ACF, DG-ECHO, HelpAge International, Horn Relief (specific to Somalia), IFRC/ICRC, Oxfam and WFP.

Crop agriculture, seeds and seed fairs

Shihemi, AM and A Berloff (2010) *Minimum Guidelines for Agriculture and Livelihoods Interventions in Humanitarian Settings*, IASC Agriculture and Livelihoods Cluster, Nairobi. Available for download at http://www.disasterriskreduction.net/fileadmin/user_upload/drought/docs

CRS, ICRISAT and ODI (2002) *Seed Vouchers and Fairs: A manual for seed-based agricultural recovery after disaster in Africa*, Catholic Relief Services, Nairobi; International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, Nairobi; Overseas Development Institute, London, available for download at http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/manual_guide_proced/wfp142691.pdf

Human resource management

People in Aid (2003) *People in Aid Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel*, People in Aid, London, available for download at www.peopleinaid.org/code/

Livelihoods and longer-term interventions

Shihemi, AM and A Berloff (2010) Minimum Guidelines for Agriculture and Livelihoods Interventions in Humanitarian Settings, IASC Agriculture and Livelihoods Cluster, Nairobi. Available for download at http://www.disasterriskreduction.net/fileadmin/user_upload/drought/docs

IIRR / Acacia Consultants / Cordaid (2008) Drought Cycle Management: A toolkit for the drylands of the Greater Horn, International Institute for Rural Reconstruction, Nairobi

Livestock

LEGS Project (2009) Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards, Practical Action Publishing, Rugby, available for download at <http://www.livestock-emergency.net/userfiles/file/legs.pdf>

Markets

Albu, M (2010) The Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis Toolkit, Practical Action Publishing, Rugby, available for download at <http://emma-toolkit.org/get/download/>

Nutrition

Global Nutrition Cluster (2008) A Toolkit for Addressing Nutrition in Emergency Situations, IASC Global Nutrition Cluster, UNICEF, New York, available for download at <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources>

Participation

ALNAP (2006) Guide on Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action: A handbook for practitioners, available for download at www.alnap.org/publications/guide_handbook/index.htm.

Targeting

Although these guidelines are specific to food aid, many of the principles are common to other forms of relief assistance:

Taylor, A and J Seaman (2005) Targeting Food Aid in Emergencies, ENN supplement series, No 1, July, available for download at <http://www.enonline.net/pool/files/ife/supplement22.pdf>

Working across borders

ACTED/CARE (2011) 'Good practice guidelines for cross border programming in the drylands of Horn of Africa' (draft), available for download at: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/reliefweb_pdf/briefingkit-8fa2c43376f434f51c4311567e788f0a.pdf

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