

HPG Background Paper

Through a livelihoods lens

A case study on the
impact of humanitarian
assistance in
Bosnia-Herzegovina

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About HPG

The Humanitarian Policy Group at the Overseas Development Institute is dedicated to improving humanitarian policy and practice. It conducts independent research, provides specialist advice and promotes informed debate.



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Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Livelihood frameworks and emergencies	2
1.1.1 Save's household economy approach	3
1.1.2 CARE's Coping Strategy Index	3
1.1.3 Oxfam-GB's livelihood approach	4
1.2 Study methodology	4
Chapter 2 Humanitarian assistance and livelihood patterns in Bosnia	7
2.1 Livelihood patterns	7
2.1.1 Food: sources, consumption, emergency assistance	8
2.1.2 Food aid: questions of targeting	9
2.1.3 Shelter assistance: emergency and reconstruction	10
2.1.4 Shelter assistance: questions of impact	11
2.1.5 Remarkable impact: protection	12
2.1.6 The nature of protection	13
Chapter 3 Discussion of findings	15
3.1 Dependency: fact or fiction?	15
3.2 The importance of protection: implications	16
3.3 Discussion of the model	17
3.3.1 Positive aspects	17
3.3.2 Challenges and possible modifications	17
3.4 Conclusion	19
References	21

Chapter 1

Introduction

The amount, in dollar terms, of international humanitarian assistance has grown remarkably since the end of the Cold War. With the increase in the value of humanitarian assistance, the interest in being able to measure the effect and impact of the aid provided has risen accordingly. Donors have become increasingly involved in the processes of programme design, implementation and evaluation, tasks that were once the sole province of implementing agencies. For example, both the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the European Union (EU) run training workshops for implementing partners on the design of projects for funding proposals.¹ Political actors have also become more involved in programme management. The emphasis on demonstrating tangible results also permeates UN agencies, NGOs and community and private giving campaigns. Some recipient governments are taking a greater interest in the impact of international humanitarian funds within their borders.²

The combination of the growing emphasis on results and the increase in financial resources for humanitarian assistance has led to a growing number of evaluations of programmes, projects, strategies and expenditures conducted by implementing agencies, donors, academics or external consultants in order to assess the impact of assistance. In some cases, a critical study has had direct influence.³ All studies are meant, in theory, to improve the impact of humanitarian aid, but the primary focus often is on upwards accountability to the donor. For reasons both of power and practicality, it remains difficult to capture the impact of humanitarian assistance in the lives of disaster-affected people.

This paper uses a livelihoods framework in an effort to understand the relative importance of humanitarian assistance during and after the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Accessing and utilising humanitarian assistance can be one aspect of a household's larger livelihood strategy; rarely is it the sole form of livelihood, even for populations living in refugee camps where livelihood options are constrained.⁴ Where assistance is perceived by external actors to comprise

the bulk of disaster-affected people's livelihoods, this is given the derogatory label of 'dependency', rather than being welcomed as evidence of the relevance of humanitarian assistance in the lives of people whose systems of managing risk and vulnerability are under stress.⁵

Assessing the impact of humanitarian assistance requires a thorough understanding of the range of household strategies and activities over time and place, a task rarely mastered even by anthropologists conducting long-term field research in relatively peaceful settings. In disaster environments, dominated by the rapid generation of information, comprehensive knowledge is often a scarce commodity, while the privileging of select forms of knowledge can dominate the disaster discourse.⁶ Donors, NGOs and UN agencies turn at times to academics to bridge the gap between information and knowledge, a process that requires compromise both by the academics (in terms of the methodological 'short-cuts' such work entails) and by the humanitarian organisations (in terms of the often high costs in time and money hiring academics involves). In the end, what is often produced is a step above information, but a significant step below comprehensive knowledge.⁷

This paper summarises one such effort to bring academics and practitioners together in an attempt to produce a form of knowledge about the impact of humanitarian assistance. OFDA funded a team from Tufts University's Feinstein International Famine Center (FIFC) and Mercy Corps International (MCI) in Bosnia to develop and implement a survey to measure changes in household livelihoods over time in 394 households in six heavily conflict-affected villages in rural Bosnia.⁸ Household livelihood systems were mapped over three distinct time periods: the end of the Cold War (1989), the height of the Bosnian war (as identified by each household) and late 2004. This paper discusses the methods and findings of this survey, and some of the issues pertaining to using livelihoods analysis to measure the impact of humanitarian assistance. The household study sought to address three key questions:

1 Personal communication, Dr. Angela Raven Roberts, 2 May 2005.

2 For instance, in early April 2005 President Karzai of Afghanistan announced that the Afghan government had 'a responsibility towards the Afghan people, as well as the taxpayers in the donor countries, to stop NGOs that are corrupt, wasteful and unaccountable'. In November 2004, the Afghan government reported that thousands of NGOs had failed to deliver effective assistance to the Afghan people. Legislation prevents NGOs from bidding for contracts that are sponsored by the Afghan government. See Maitra and Ramtanu, 'The Party's Over for Afghan NGOs', *Asia Times Online*, 21 April 2005.

3 Examples include Eriksson, J. et al. (1996), *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience: Synthesis Report*, Steering Committee for the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda; and Karim, A. et al. (1996) *Operation Lifeline Sudan: A Review*. Geneva: Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

4 Kibreab, G. (1993) 'The Myth of Dependency Among Camp Refugees in Somalia 1979-1989', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6, 321-49.

5 Harvey, P. and J. Lind, *Dependency and Humanitarian Relief: A Critical Analysis*, HPG Report 19 (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2005).

6 Hendrie, B. (1997) 'Knowledge and Power: A Critique of an International Relief Operation', *Disasters*, 21, 57-76.

7 See Jok, J. M. (1996) 'Information Exchange in the Disaster Zone: Interaction between Aid Workers and Recipients in South Sudan', *Disasters*, 20, 206-15; Keen, D. and J. Ryle (1996) 'The Fate of Information in the Disaster Zone', *Disasters*, 20, 169-72.

8 Stites, E. et al. (2005) 'Coping with War, Coping with Peace: Livelihood Adaptation in Bosnia, 1989-2004', Washington DC: US Agency for International Development. The full report is available at www.famine.tufts.edu.

1. How have livelihoods changed over time in Bosnia?
2. What can we learn about the impact of humanitarian assistance using retrospective livelihood analysis?
3. What are the main challenges facing rural communities in Bosnia today?

The study of Bosnian households sought to examine how they adapted their livelihood strategies to cope with radical changes in the political, social, economic and natural environment. Household livelihood systems in Bosnia have been shaped by three dramatic transformations since 1989: the transition from a socialist economy to a market-based system; armed conflict (1992–95); and the reorganisation of society in the post-conflict period. Within households, these transitions brought major changes in available assets. For example, death, illness and forced migration greatly damaged households' human capital; displacement, ethnic divisions and the fracturing of families eroded social capital among relatives, neighbours, business associates and friends; the collapse of the economy, prolonged war and widespread unemployment drained financial capital; and violence destroyed physical assets and left natural assets such as forests too insecure to be of use. Households responded to these events by using both short-term coping and long-term livelihood adaptation strategies, including changes in household composition and location. The research sought to situate the role of humanitarian assistance within short- and long-term strategies.

The study examined humanitarian assistance, in particular food aid and shelter, only when the survey instrument was able to capture the role that aid had played in the livelihoods of the study population. Based on the known logistical challenges of providing aid to vulnerable populations in Bosnia during the war, and the actual per capita receipts (after taxes, diversions, thefts, dilutions, etc.) of humanitarian assistance recorded in other emergencies elsewhere (see e.g. de Waal 1997), it was not expected that assistance provided to Bosnian households would play an overly important role in their survival strategies. As it turned out, while the targeting of food aid during the conflict was notably impartial, no form of direct assistance had a greater impact on households than protection interventions, in particular the facilitation of third-country refuge. Protection interventions apparently saved more lives and had more long-term impacts in terms of economic security than other forms of humanitarian assistance. These findings are important given the erosion of international support for protection and asylum.

In ranking exercises, food aid proved to be the most important source of food for nearly half of the total households in the study population when facing the worst of the conflict; in some villages, the proportion was two-

thirds or higher. Over two-thirds of the households that received food aid were in the lowest category of economic security, and 90% of households in the very poorest category received food aid. In other words, food aid was well-targeted and appears to have had a high impact on the households that received food assistance at a time of maximum vulnerability.

External shelter assistance was less important than food aid in household livelihood systems during the war, but it still played an important role both during and after the war. During the conflict, households within the study population relied most heavily upon their own resources, such as receiving assistance from friends and neighbours, renting or squatting. When available, external shelter assistance usually came from the government, in the form of emergency shelter assistance for the displaced. Similarly, after the war the majority of households within the study population primarily relied on their own income or their own production to secure their shelter needs, although well over one-half received external assistance, and more than one-third relied on humanitarian organisations as their primary source of shelter. Post-war shelter assistance served an important role in household livelihoods, allowing people to return to their pre-war villages and rebuild homes. The qualitative interviews underscored that, for many, returning home was their desired livelihood outcome throughout much of the period of conflict-induced displacement.

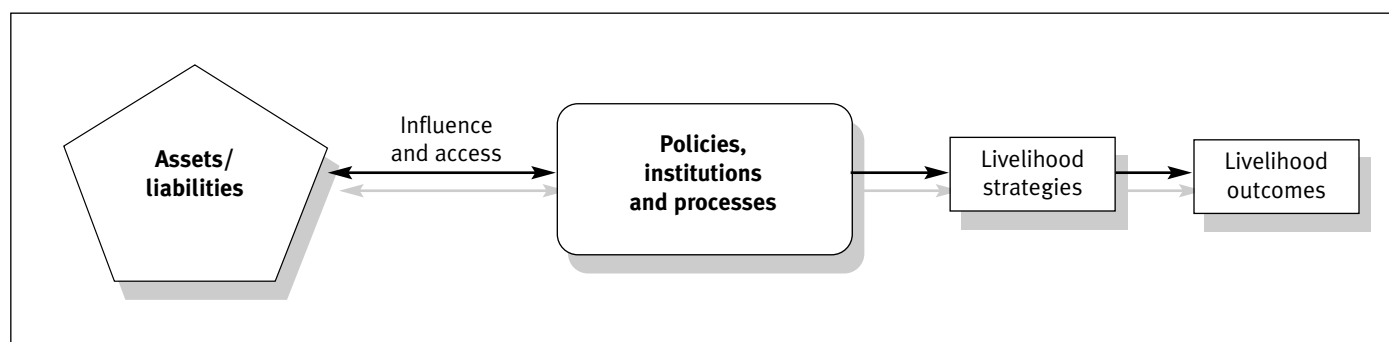
1.1 Livelihood frameworks and emergencies

The research conducted in late 2004 was principally concerned with the nature of the changes in livelihood strategy in rural Bosnia. The particular relationship between the political economy of war and livelihood systems has been explored in other HPG papers, so only a brief introduction to a livelihoods framework is presented here.⁹

Both internal and external factors influence household livelihood strategies, including the degree and nature of ownership and access to household assets. Household livelihood strategies are strongly shaped by the household's asset base and the restrictions and opportunities presented by the policies, institutions and processes – or governance environment – within society.¹⁰ Livelihood analysis considers a range of social issues over time and space, and how these factors in turn help to shape the ways in which households use their assets. While there is an

⁹ See, for example, Collinson, S. et al. (2003) *Power, Livelihoods and Conflict: Case Studies in Political Economy Analysis for Humanitarian Action*, London: Overseas Development Institute.

¹⁰ This governance environment has been referred to as 'Policies, Institutions and Processes' (PIPS), 'Transforming Structures and Processes' or 'Social Relations, Institutions, Trends and Shocks'. See Scoones (1998); Collinson (2000); and Ellis (2000).

Figure 1: Simplified livelihoods framework

abundance of livelihoods models,¹¹ Figure 1 shows a simplified version of a livelihoods framework designed by Lautze and Raven-Roberts.¹²

By using livelihood analysis to investigate the impact of humanitarian assistance, it is theoretically possible to see the relative role of humanitarian assistance within a larger set of household strategies. The livelihoods approach takes households and their efforts to manage risk and vulnerability as the point of departure, rather than using the humanitarian intervention itself as the unit of analysis, as is often done in sectoral evaluations. The livelihoods approach leaves open the possibility that the aid provided may be irrelevant for the household, or is used in ways that relief agencies could never have imagined. A livelihoods approach also makes it possible to examine a range of assistance entering households, such as food aid, shelter assistance or health care. Measuring the impact of this assistance can, however, be difficult because the aim of humanitarian assistance is ‘to avert negative change’ (such as death) and to provide intangibles, such as dignity and protection (Hoffman et al. 2004). Even positive changes or the more visible effects within a household, such as improved health and better economic security, are difficult to attribute to one particular input, such as an emergency health intervention or a food for work project. As a

livelihood analysis underscores, households continuously adapt their livelihood strategies in response to changes in their asset bases and the broader governance environment. When received, humanitarian assistance makes up one part of the asset base, and is not necessarily the main or even a prime factor in the adaptive strategies the household pursues.

1.1.1 Save’s household economy approach

Save the Children (UK) developed the household economy approach based on fieldwork dating back to the Ethiopian famine of 1983–85. It is a tool for examining food access and the effects of shocks upon the future food supply at the household level (SCF 2000; Boudreau 1998). A household food economy analysis allows practitioners to identify population groups that are vulnerable to food insecurity. The model explores the ways in which food sources are likely to change in the event of a shock (such as a crop failure or an increase in the price of staple food). Baseline data is collected, including information on crop prices, food strategies, expenditures, the availability of wild foods and asset sales. Food, cash income and expenditures are then converted into ‘food equivalent’ units. After establishing a baseline, researchers analyse the likely effects of a shock upon a household’s ability to maintain normal consumption patterns from established food sources. This method has been used in a variety of settings, including refugee camps in Kenya (Lawrence, Boudreau and King 1996), Rwanda (Lawrence and King 1997; King and Fielding 1997), Kosovo (Holt and King 2000), Guinea (Lawrence, Reed and Madougou 2000), and Tajikistan (Lawrence and King 2001). The World Food Programme, UNHCR and other UN and international agencies make frequent use of this approach or modifications thereof in their food security assessments and planning exercises.

1.1.2 CARE’s Coping Strategy Index

CARE developed the Coping Strategy Index (CSI) in conjunction with WFP. This model seeks to measure household food security in a simple and relatively rapid manner (CARE/WFP 2003). The analysis is based on a short

11 For example, Scoones, I. (1998) ‘Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Framework for Analysis’, Institute of Development Studies Working Paper 72; Ellis, F. and H. A. Freeman (2004) ‘Rural Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction Strategies in Four African Countries’, *Journal of Development Studies*, 40, 1–30; Schafer, J. (2002) ‘Supporting Livelihoods in Situations of Chronic Conflict and Political Instability: Overview of Conceptual Issues’, London: Overseas Development Institute.

12 See, for example, Lautze, S. and A. Raven-Roberts (forthcoming) ‘Violence and Complex Humanitarian Emergencies: Implications for Livelihoods Models’, *Disasters*; Young, H., Osman, A. M., Aklilu, Y., Dale, R. and Badri, B. (2005) ‘Darfur: Livelihoods Under Siege (Draft) Executive Summary and Recommendations’, Feinstein International Famine Center and the Ahfad University for Women; Lautze, S. and E. Stites (2003) ‘More than Seeds and Tools: An Overview of OFDA Livelihood Intervention 1964–2002’, The Feinstein International Famine Center; Lautze, S., Y. Aklilu, A. Raven-Roberts, H. Young, G. Kebede and J. Leaning (2003) ‘Risk and Vulnerability in Ethiopia: Learning from the Past, Responding to the Present, Preparing for the Future’, United States Agency for International Development; Lautze, S., E. Stites, N. Nojumi and F. Najimi (2002) ‘Qaht-E-Pool: “A Cash Famine”: Food Insecurity in Afghanistan 1999–2002’, United States Agency for International Development.

series of straightforward questions regarding strategies to cope with food insecurity, and the frequency and severity of these strategies. Four general categories of coping are examined, all relating to consumption: dietary change; increasing short-term food access through borrowing, gifts, wild foods etc; decreasing household size through migration, temporary fostering etc; and rationing strategies such as skipping meals, limiting meal size, and prioritising individuals within the household. Field researchers apply a weighted formula to generate a single numeric score indicating the degree of food insecurity within the household: a higher score equals greater food insecurity. A pilot study of the CSI from Eritrea shows that the CSI measure correlates to characteristics normally associated with livelihood status, such as food consumption, the value of household assets and livestock, the household dependency ratio and the area of cultivated rainfed land. This implies that the CSI can be used to rapidly measure household livelihood conditions, as well as tracking longer-term change in household food security (Shoham 2004).

1.1.3 Oxfam-GB's livelihood approach

Oxfam-GB uses a livelihood approach to assess the risks to lives and livelihoods in emergencies. This approach considers the severity of food insecurity in regard to short-term food consumption and potential longer-term impact on livelihoods (Young et al. 2001). Field assessments use participatory rural approaches (PRA), rapid-appraisal techniques and anthropometric surveys to indicate food availability, access to food of different groups, changes in food and income sources and the type of coping strategies employed. A major reduction in a main food or income source and declines in nutritional status imply food insecurity and a possible threat to livelihoods. Unlike the models used by Save the Children and CARE, Oxfam-GB assesses the severity of food insecurity based on changes in a broad range of livelihood strategies, and can identify a variety of possible livelihood interventions as well as the need for emergency food aid. Oxfam-GB has used this approach in natural disasters and conflicts (in locations such as Colombia, Tajikistan and Sudan), but some critics feel that the model remains most applicable for natural disasters and needs to be further modified for use in conflicts or protracted emergencies (Jaspars and Shoham 2002).

The assessment approaches that CARE and Save the Children employ to understand coping systems are intended to evaluate food needs and to identify vulnerable population groups. When conducted repeatedly at regular intervals, these models are also capable of demonstrating the impacts of food aid and assessing a population's food security status over the longer term. Oxfam-GB's livelihood approach is able to take into account a greater range of livelihood strategies and possible livelihood interventions, but ultimately also focuses on the severity of food insecurity. These models have proved effective in identifying vulnerable populations or household

food needs, and may assist organisations and donors in planning and targeting emergency food assistance. Such approaches, however, do not seek to provide comprehensive information on household livelihood strategies or coping systems, or to understand the role of the wide range of humanitarian assistance interventions and strategies within this broader framework.

1.2 Study methodology

The study was conducted in six villages in Bosnia and the Republic of Srpska. The villages were purposively selected to represent a broad cross-section of differing characteristics. They included two Bosnian Serb villages, three predominantly Bosniac villages and one Bosnian Croat village. The populations differed in economic status, access to employment and in the levels of humanitarian assistance received during and after the war. All of the study sites were located in zones of intense fighting during the war. In each location, government military and/or militia forces forcibly displaced all or the majority of the population. Property destruction during the conflict was widespread and often absolute.

The research was designed to document household livelihood systems at three different times: 1989, each household's self-defined 'height of conflict' and 2004. The study drew on three main sources of primary data: 1) data generated from systematic, longitudinal surveys; 2) in-depth interviews with select households; and 3) in-depth socio-economic studies on each of the six villages. Quantitative data collected through surveys regarded the nature and degree of changes in household composition, priorities for expenditures, livelihood strategies and human security.¹³ Qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews further explored shifts over time in each of these areas. The analysis was complemented by a literature review undertaken by the authors with support from research assistants at Tufts University.¹⁴

The sample size for each village was determined based on population estimates (number of households) provided by the local council or the mayor's office.¹⁵ Systematic sampling was used to select participant households. Sampling was representative of households at the village level. A total of 394 households were included in the sample. Sample size was calculated in each community study site to within ± 0.10 percent precision of estimate

¹³ Human security prioritises a focus on individual and human security above state security, and includes four key aspects: human rights and personal security, societal and community security, economic and resource security and governance and political security (Newman and Richmond 2004).

¹⁴ Tufts University graduate students Elizabeth Buckius and Anna Mecagni provided research assistance for the Bosnia report. Leah Horowitz assisted with a literature review for this article.

¹⁵ Brezani, 22 households, 73 persons; Jakes 480 households, 1,800 persons; Krtova 292 households, 856 persons; Potocari, 200 households, 700 persons; Prud 300 households, 1,000 persons; Sevarlije 305 households, 1,000 persons.

(95% CI). The sample size for each community is as follows: Brezani (17 households surveyed); Jakes (82 households); Krtova (74 households); Potocari (66); Prud (80); and Sevarlije (75).

The longitudinal surveys were designed and field tested by staff from Tufts University (FIFC) and Mercy Corps/Bosnia during August and September 2004; surveys were conducted over three weeks in September 2004. These researchers trained teams of Bosnian surveyors to conduct the surveys and team leaders from FIFC and Mercy Corps worked with survey teams in the field each day. The Mercy Corp team leader re-checked the survey data, entered the data into databases and quality-checked the data to within a 3% error rate. FIFC researchers analysed the data and drafted the findings, which were then provided for review and comment to Mercy Corps/Bosnia prior to finalisation and submission to USAID OFDA.

Surveyors and team leaders conducted in-depth interviews to gather qualitative data with approximately 10% of the households surveyed. These interviews were carried out in English with experienced translators, and lasted approximately 1.5 to 3 hours. This data was collected using the same survey questionnaire, with follow-up questions and explanation encouraged. The surveyors also provided qualitative data in the form of their observations, recorded in daily briefing sessions with team leaders.

One respondent was interviewed per household. The interviewee was any member of the household old enough to have an adequate recollection of the pre-war period (i.e., born in approximately 1975 or earlier). The interviewee provided information on every member of the household present at each of the three time periods. A household was taken to include all members in a shared accommodation, regardless of their relationship. Data was collected on household demographics, occupation, employment, expenses and needs, coping strategies to meet household needs, shelter and utilities, food security, health, protection and physical security. Similar questions were asked across all three time periods to track changes within these categories over time. Additional qualitative data was provided through in-depth studies of each site. Journalism students from the region conducted the site studies in each of the six research areas, and the Mercy Corp team leader quality-checked all data and translated the studies.

Situating the relative role of humanitarian assistance was central to the study design given that the objective was to weigh the relative importance of humanitarian assistance in the households' overall livelihood strategies. To this end, the survey did not include direct questions regarding the importance or impact of humanitarian assistance, but rather sought information about the ways in which households met their basic needs in the three time periods in question. These needs were defined as access to food, access to shelter and access to medical care. Respondents ranked the importance of the various ways in which they met these needs. The survey did not seek to capture the quality, quantity or precise source of the assistance received by the household, rendering the analysts unable to draw direct conclusions about the impact of each specific relief organisation active in the communities during and after the war. If humanitarian assistance was not ranked as important by a respondent, the issue was not pursued.

The research was unavoidably biased by the academics' affiliation with an operational NGO. In each of the areas studied, MCI had implemented assistance projects. It should be assumed that the respondents were aware of the interest of humanitarian actors in the study. The extent to which this influenced the information provided cannot be determined, but should be acknowledged. Both Tufts and MCI are recipients of funds from the US government but, unlike other recent studies conducted by Tufts University, USAID had little or no involvement in the formulation of the research questions.

Finally, the three time periods examined in the study cover 15 years of significant political, economic and social change. For the purpose of comparison, 1989 serves as a baseline against which data from the conflict and 2004 are measured, but it should not be assumed that households were not already undergoing major changes in this period. Unlike evaluations or assessments performed in the midst of a crisis or emergency response, this study was conducted nearly ten years after the end of the Bosnian war. This afforded the opportunity to consider the impact of post-war assistance, and also to examine livelihood adaptations over a longer period. In particular, the effects of the post-war recovery and the economic implications of the transition to a free-market economy were more apparent than perhaps would have been the case in the immediate aftermath of the war.

Chapter 2

Humanitarian assistance and livelihood patterns in Bosnia

The survey was initially designed to capture the role of food aid and shelter assistance in household livelihood strategies; quite unintentionally (but helpfully) the survey instrument also documented the impact of protection interventions. Food aid was provided to Bosnia in large quantities over the course of the war, as well as to displaced Bosnians living in Croatia, Serbia and other countries. The delivery of food and non-food commodities to populations within Bosnia was complex and required constant negotiation and renegotiation with the warring parties to establish humanitarian access (Cutts 1999). These negotiations caused some to question the ethics of maintaining 'neutral' dialogue with forces perpetrating gross human rights violations upon civilians (de Waal 1994). Others, including some who worked in Bosnia during the conflict, categorised the humanitarian response as an 'alibi' or 'fig leaf' that provided cover for the international community's lack of action to reach a political solution to the conflict (Minear et al. 2004).

Regardless of possible political motives behind the provision of food aid, external evaluations indicate that humanitarian action, particularly by the UN, 'contributed greatly to feeding the people of Bosnia and preventing starvation for two winters' (General Accounting Office 1994). Similarly, a multi-agency nutrition survey carried out in four areas of Bosnia in 1994 concluded that, 'if humanitarian food aid had not been supplied, the nutritional status of the population would have been seriously compromised' (Minear 2004).¹⁶

Shelter assistance took on special significance because of the nature of the violence in the war in Bosnia. An estimated 2.2 million people – roughly half of Bosnia's pre-war population – were forced from their homes and villages (International Crisis Group 1997). Forced displacement in Bosnia was highly functional: it was the 'overriding aim', not just an incidental consequence, of the conflict, and was central to the strategy of warring parties seeking to establish ethnically homogenous states (Minear 2004). Millions sought emergency shelter in Bosnia, in neighbouring countries or elsewhere in Europe, and turned to relatives, friends, strangers and outside agencies or government bodies for help.

Bosnian households in the study population received shelter assistance in two periods, and from two different

sources. During the war, government bodies (local, national and international) were the most common providers of shelter assistance. This changed in the post-war period, when international humanitarian organisations stepped up their programmes for shelter reconstruction and rehabilitation.¹⁷ Most of the shelter assistance to rural areas came after the conflict ended, as internally displaced people and refugees began to return home. However, the pace of return was not uniform across Bosnia or for all population groups, and those seeking to return to areas where they would be in the minority were less likely to return immediately after the end of the war. Some who returned to their villages more than three or four years after the end of the conflict found that they had missed out on the bulk of reconstruction assistance provided in the immediate post-conflict period.

2.1 Livelihood patterns

The entire study population was displaced by the conflict, and livelihood strategies underwent radical changes. Most households adopted a range of coping mechanisms in order to weather the hardship that, for many, continued into the post-war period. The economy security of households collapsed dramatically during the conflict.¹⁸ In 1989, only 9% of households had been unable to cover their expenses, while the majority of households (56%) were putting money into savings. In contrast, by the height of the conflict 72% of households were unable to cover their expenses. More than half of total households described themselves as being in the lowest bracket of income security, describing their household resources as 'insufficient to cover expenses; could not borrow'. The extent of economic insecurity during the conflict varied by village, from a high of 98% of households from Potocari unable to cover expenses, to a low of 34% of households from Jakes.

¹⁷ For instance, USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) embarked on a \$25 million shelter repair programme in 1996 which funded the rehabilitation of more than 2,500 homes in 48 frontline villages. The Emergency Shelter Repair Program (ERSP) came under criticism for prioritising 'same ethnic' as opposed to minority returns that may have promoted greater ethnic integration, and the programme only rebuilt homes in the Federation, not the Republic of Srpska. Roughly 81% of the rebuilt homes were for Bosniac families. See Fawcett and Tanner (2002).

¹⁸ Economic security was determined based on the respondents' description of their household resources according to six possible income brackets: 1) sufficient to cover expenses and to save money; 2) sufficient to cover expenses but not to save money; 3) insufficient to cover expenses, and had to spend savings; 4) insufficient to cover expenses, and received help from relatives; 5) insufficient to cover expenses, and had to borrow; 6) insufficient to cover expenses, and could not borrow.

¹⁶ The survey found no signs of protein-energy malnutrition in children under five years and no serious micro-nutrient deficiencies in mothers and children, although weight-loss since the beginning of the war averaged 10kg for adults.

2.1.1 Food: sources, consumption, emergency assistance

Most rural households in pre-war Yugoslavia farmed kitchen gardens or smallholdings, and used the produce to supplement their food purchases. People with full-time jobs in industry, manufacturing or the service sector spent a portion of their week working their land. Most households in the study population (69%) relied on purchased food as their primary food source, with the remaining third relying primarily on their own production. Both sources of food declined in importance during the conflict, with 27% of households primarily purchasing food and 12% of households turning to their own production. The decrease in the two main sources of food (markets and own production) was due to problems of access and availability. Contributing factors included massive population displacement, prolonged siege of towns and villages, widespread economic insecurity, hyperinflation, lack of inputs (including labour) and insecurity on roads and in fields.

Reduction of food intake at the household level was a common response to the collapse of supplies of normal food sources. Of the total study population, 62% of households reduced their food intake during the war, in comparison to 6% that reported reducing food intake in 1989. The village of Potocari saw the greatest percentage of its residents reducing food intake, at 89%, while only 22% of households from Jakes were compelled to reduce food consumption during the war. In 2004, more than one-quarter of households (28%) reported that they continued to reduce their food intake.

At the height of the conflict, emergency food aid was the primary source of food for a greater number of households than relied on either purchased food or own production combined. Forty-seven percent of households reported that food aid was their primary source of food, and an additional 17% listed food aid as their second most important source.¹⁹ Table 1 shows the primary and

secondary food sources for the total study population across the three time periods.

As Table 1 illustrates, food aid was an important part of the survival strategies of households at a time when the majority were unable to meet their expenses and were cutting back on food consumption. The importance ascribed to food aid by beneficiary households is substantially greater than seen in some other emergencies, such as the Darfur famine of 1984–85, where food aid was estimated to meet only 10% of consumption needs (de Waal 1987). It should be recalled, however, that the food aid provided in Bosnia did not meet all food needs when households were most vulnerable, as nearly two-thirds of households reported that they were forced to reduce food consumption during the period identified by each household as their 'height of conflict'. Furthermore, accessing the food aid was often difficult and dangerous and the supply was often inconsistent, particularly for households relying on humanitarian airdrops and/or aid convoys.

The percentage of households receiving food aid differed greatly by village, as did the relative importance of food aid in household survival strategies. Food aid by village is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 indicates that food aid was a very important source of food for the households that received food aid during the war, with a majority citing this as their primary source of food in every village except Prud. Households from Jakes and Prud were the least likely to report receiving food aid during the conflict (46% and 45% of households). This is due, in part, to the fact that many people displaced from these villages were able to seek refuge in Croatia or Western European countries (primarily Germany), and many were able to secure employment and purchase their own food.

Households from Sevarlije were the most likely to receive food aid, with 93% receiving assistance and 73% stating that food aid was their primary source of food. This is in accordance with the high rate (97%) of households in

¹⁹ During the conflict, households also relied on government assistance (7%), assistance from friends and relatives (3%), exchange of own products (1%), churches/mosques (1%) and 'other' (2%) for their primary food source.

Table 1: Primary and secondary food sources by percentage of households

Food source	Source rank	1989	Height of conflict	2004
Purchased	Primary	69%	27%	63%
	Secondary	28%	11%	31%
Own production	Primary	31%	12%	34%
	Secondary	49%	7%	39%
Food aid	Primary	0%	47%	0%
	Secondary	0%	17%	2%

Table 2: Percentage of households receiving food aid, and ranking of food aid by village (conflict)

Location	Height of conflict		
	Receiving any food aid	Food aid as primary source of food	Food aid as second source of food
Brezani	82%	65%	18%
Jakes	46%	35%	10%
Krtova	84%	47%	20%
Potocari	85%	62%	18%
Prud	45%	21%	19%
Sevarlije	93%	73%	17%

Sevarlije reporting that they were unable to cover expenses during the conflict. Potocari had the greatest number of households unable to cover costs during the war (98%), but only 85% of households reported receiving food aid, and food aid was the primary source of food for only 62% of households. These relatively lower rates are probably due to issues of supply, as food convoys were prevented from reaching the Srebrenica municipality (including Potocari) for extended periods during the war.²⁰ Much of the assistance that did reach the municipality was through the occasional convoy and the airdrops orchestrated by NATO member states in coordination with UNPROFOR forces.²¹

The importance of food aid for households in the study population was related, in part, to the location of these populations in some of the most war-affected areas of Bosnia. Most residents of Sevarlije, for instance, remained in north-eastern Bosnia for the duration of the war, an area which was heavily contested. Similarly, many households from Krtova relocated directly across the frontline in today's Republic of Srpska, but although fighting was often less intense than on the Federation side, the war was never far away. In contrast, most residents of Prud and Jakes were able to flee the country altogether, suffered fewer direct impacts from the conflict and therefore had less need of food aid.

2.1.2 Food aid: questions of targeting

If we assume that the households closest to intense fighting had the greatest food needs, then the village-specific data on food aid indicates that the targeting of assistance was relatively accurate, at least for the period of time that

²⁰This hypothesis is supported by data from WFP; the agency reported that food aid reached roughly 43% of the civilian population in need in Srebrenica in the first nine months of 1993, compared to 70% in the rest of the country in the same period. WFP coverage rates were low for other besieged enclaves in 1993 as well, reaching 52.4% in Zepa but only 26.4% in Gorazde. Minear et al. (2004: 14).

²¹ Many of these airdrops were part of Operation Provide Promise, which was organised by the US government in July 1992 to provide food and medical supplies to the besieged city of Sarajevo. The effort was supported by military organisations and personnel from 21 countries and expanded to provide assistance to Srebrenica and other enclaves cut off from overland convoys. For bibliography and references see 'Operation Provide Promise (Bosnia)', compiled by Melinda M. Mosley, March 2000, at <http://www.au.af.mil/au/aul/bibs/opprom/opp.htm>.

corresponded to the household's self-defined 'height of conflict'. Food aid was most important for those households closest to the frontline (Sevarlije and Potocari), and generally declines in relevance for more distant populations. Some external reviews of humanitarian assistance to Bosnia, however, show that delivering assistance based on need was often extremely difficult, as the political and military leadership of the various sides insisted that aid be distributed based on pre-war population estimates by ethnicity (Cutts 1999). This meant, for instance, that roughly 30% of all food aid provided by UNHCR (the lead agency) was delivered to Bosnian Serb areas, as Bosnian Serbs had made up roughly one-third of the population prior to the conflict. UNHCR initially distributed food to four categories of beneficiaries: refugees, IDPs, returnees and the 'war affected'. UNHCR moved away from these categories in favour of a single 'casualties of war' category as food needs became more widespread and forced displacement intensified. UNHCR began to distribute food more broadly, and left logistics and the registration of beneficiaries up to local municipal officials (WFP 1999).

By all accounts, need-based targeting during the war was extremely difficult. Surprisingly, data from the survey indicates that the poorest households were most likely to receive food aid, but also that the poorest income bracket received the majority of food aid delivered (by households receiving aid). Table 3 shows the distribution of food aid by income, and the percentage of households within each income bracket that received food aid during the conflict. Note that this table does not show the amount of food aid delivered, only the percentage of households within each income bracket that received some food assistance.

Table 3 shows that 76% of all households receiving food aid during the conflict were in the lowest income bracket. Only 12% of households receiving food aid reported being able to cover their expenses through their own resources. Furthermore, when looking at the percentage of households within each income bracket who received food aid, 90% of the poorest received food aid during the conflict. In contrast to the findings of UNHCR and WFP, our

Table 3: Distribution of food aid by income category during conflict

Income category	% of total HH in income bracket during conflict (no. of HH)	% of total HH receiving food aid, by income bracket*	% of HH w/in income bracket who receive food aid** (no. of HH)
Sufficient to cover expenses and to save money	12% (46)	3%	15% (7)
Sufficient to cover expenses but not to save money	15% (60)	9%	42% (25)
Insufficient to cover expenses; had to spend savings	2% (9)	2%	56% (5)
Insufficient to cover expenses; received help from relatives	4% (17)	4%	65% (11)
Insufficient to cover expenses; had to borrow	7% (26)	6%	62% (16)
Insufficient to cover expenses; could not borrow	59% (233)	76%	90% (209)

* Households per income bracket receiving food aid/total households receiving food aid.

** Households per income bracket receiving food aid/total households per income bracket.

data points to remarkable efficiency in the targeting of food assistance to those who were most in need within the study population. The different findings may stem from the survey timeframe, as these food aid statistics represent the period that households identified as their most vulnerable time. The UN data, by contrast, takes a longer view. One factor behind the high percentage of beneficiaries among the study population may be relatively high rates of residency in collective centres in Bosnia, Croatia or elsewhere in Europe. Most collective centres were supplied with food from foreign donors and aid agencies, and residents in collective centres received regular food assistance.

2.1.3 Shelter assistance: emergency and reconstruction

The forced displacement of nearly the entire study population and the harsh Bosnian climate created pressing shelter needs during and after the conflict. Households pursued a wide variety of shelter strategies, including moving to collective or refugee centres, staying with friends or relatives, squatting in abandoned houses and seeking refuge in unconventional accommodation, such as railway cars and garages. Many households coped through repeated migration, taking advantage of short-term opportunities for shelter, safety or income, and then moving on every six to 18 months.

In 1989, the study population was characterised by nearly 100% home ownership. This changed dramatically during the conflict. People moved to new locations for months or years. One-third of total households rented or leased apartments or homes in their temporary location. Another

37% lived in housing schemes, including collective centres and refugee housing provided by aid organisations or local or foreign governments. A number of households (19% of the total study population) squatted in abandoned houses, most of which had been abandoned under distress by other ethnic groups.²² Rates of squatting were highest for the Bosnian Serb residents of Krtova and Brezani, many of whom sought refuge in the Republic of Srpska, staying in houses vacated by Bosniacs who had fled into Federation territory. Local officials sanctioned the movement of displaced families into abandoned houses, particularly in areas already cleared of minority groups. Table 4 shows the role of government and humanitarian shelter assistance in the conflict and post-conflict periods. Note that some households may have received both government and humanitarian assistance.

During the conflict, local authorities and governments were the main form of shelter assistance for households in the study population. Rates of assistance received start at a low of roughly 25% of households from Krtova and Sevarlije, reaching 66% of households from Jakes. Of this, 32% of households in Jakes received this assistance from the German government.

When provided, government assistance was usually the primary means through which households secured their

²² A 2004 World Bank report states that squatting remained a prevalent means of securing housing for displaced persons in the country. 'According to a recent estimate, almost 80% of the IDPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina remain illegally squatting in the housing of IDPs of another ethnicity or of some of the estimated 600,000 refugees still living outside the country.' Holtzman and Nezam, 72.

Table 4: Households receiving shelter assistance and ranking of government or humanitarian assistance by village, conflict and 2004

	Height of conflict				2004*			
	Government		Humanitarian		Government		Humanitarian	
	Received any	Primary source	Received any	Primary source	Received any	Primary source	Received any	Primary source
Total	38%	35%	12%	7%	8%	3%	57%	36%
Brezani	59%	59%	0%	0%	0%	0%	94%	88%
Jakes	66%	65%	16%	10%	1%	0%	63%	46%
Krtova	23%	18%	9%	0%	11%	0%	53%	34%
Potocari	38%	35%	21%	15%	17%	9%	59%	50%
Prud	30%	26%	2%	0%	4%	4%	41%	8%
Sevarlije	24%	23%	17%	13%	12%	0%	60%	35%

* Reflects assistance received to establish the current residence. This assistance was not necessarily received in 2004.

shelter needs in all villages. In contrast, households that received humanitarian assistance during the conflict were less likely to cite this assistance as their primary means of securing shelter. Respondents that did report humanitarian assistance as their primary means of obtaining shelter during the conflict usually resided in collective centres. For instance, households within the villages of Potocari, Sevarlije, and Jakes were the most likely to list humanitarian assistance as their primary means of obtaining shelter during the war. In these villages, 15%, 8% and 5% of households, respectively, lived in collective centres (not shown in Table 4).

Table 4 shows that the relative roles of government and humanitarian assistance were reversed in the post-war period. Government shelter assistance was received by only 8% of households in the post-war period, while 57% of households received shelter assistance from humanitarian agencies. Humanitarian shelter assistance also increased in importance, with 36% of households relying on it as the primary means through which they established their shelter in the post-war period.

A comparative analysis between the economic security of villages (based on the ability of households to cover expenses) and the receipt of shelter assistance shows that there was little correlation between wealth and the receipt of shelter assistance during the conflict. In other words, unlike food aid, emergency shelter assistance does not appear to have been targeted based on economic need. Social capital proved important for finding shelter, as displaced households moved in with relatives or friends who lived in more secure locations. Others were able to take advantage of their proximity to Croatia (such as many from Prud and Jakes), and moved into collective centres in Croatia or went on to Germany, Austria or Switzerland. Although economic security assisted households in moving

to new locations, the correlation between economic insecurity and shelter needs is less obvious than in the case of food needs when households were most vulnerable.

A stronger link exists between economic security and shelter assistance in the post-war period. When analysed by village, it appears that the poorest villages contained the greatest percentage of households receiving shelter assistance. For example, 82% of households in Brezani were unable to cover their expenses in 2004 (making Brezani the poorest village), and 94% of households received shelter assistance from a humanitarian organisation. This pattern holds roughly true for the other five villages, with the population of Prud, the wealthiest village, reporting the least shelter assistance from humanitarian agencies (41% of households). An analysis based on income bracket paints a slightly different picture, as shown in Table 5.²³

Data by income bracket for 2004 indicate that humanitarian assistance was provided relatively evenly by economic status. In other words, the assistance received by each income bracket was directly proportional to the number of households within each income bracket. This finding suggests that there may have been similar dynamics driving income security and the receipt of humanitarian shelter assistance in the post-war period, but we are unable to surmise what these dynamics might be.

2.1.4 Shelter assistance: questions of impact

It is difficult to gauge the impact of emergency shelter assistance provided during the conflict. Hypothetical outcomes in the absence of shelter assistance could include the continued depletion of assets, the erosion of social

²³ Shelter assistance here refers to any assistance received to construct, reconstruct or rehabilitate the dwelling inhabited by the household in 2004. In other words, if a household had rebuilt their home in 1996 with some humanitarian assistance and were still living in this same home in 2004, this would qualify as shelter assistance in the 2004 portion of the survey.

Table 5: Percentage of households receiving shelter assistance by income bracket, 2004

Income bracket	2004 population distribution	Received humanitarian shelter assistance
Sufficient to cover expenses and to save money	5%	4%
Sufficient to cover expenses but not to save money	25%	26%
Insufficient to cover expenses; had to spend savings	3%	4%
Insufficient to cover expenses; received help from relatives	19%	18%
Insufficient to cover expenses; had to borrow	25%	26%
Insufficient to cover expenses; could not borrow	24%	23%

capital due to overcrowded accommodation with relatives, morbidity and mortality due to crowding or exposure to the elements, a loss of dignity or repeated migration. All households in the study population did manage to find some form of shelter, but its quality ranged widely. The survey did not provide enough data to draw conclusions about the impact of shelter assistance during the conflict.

The impact of shelter assistance in the post-war period appears more tangible, with over one-third relying on humanitarian assistance for their shelter. Further, qualitative data shows that shelter assistance made 'return home' possible for many households. Of course, there were also many other households that returned to their villages even in the absence of assistance. Post-war reconstruction in the six study villages has been extensive, and most of the villages received some funds, building materials and even labour from humanitarian agencies, although rebuilding in Potocari has proceeded at a slower pace than in the other villages.

The data shows that the majority of households in the study population received food and shelter assistance, and this assistance was often integral to livelihood strategies. Such assistance was unable to counter the lasting impacts of both the war and socio-economic transition in Bosnia. In 2004, many households were still experiencing extreme hardship. Although there has been much improvement in the economic status of households in the ten years since the end of the conflict, many households still feel both the repercussions of a brutal war that dramatically altered the nature of Bosnian society and the continuing effects of the transition from a socialist to a market economy. Poverty is a major concern, compounded by the high rates of unemployment, ill-health of household members and lack

of steady income or job security. In many instances, people are still struggling to cover basic necessities, including food, shelter and medicine. In Jakes and Prud, poverty has increased since the end of the war.

2.1.5 Remarkable impact: protection

Perhaps the most interesting finding arising out of the survey data was somewhat unexpected. Food and shelter were important interventions for households, may have prevented further destitution and allowed families to return to their pre-war villages. However, protection was the form of assistance that had the greatest impact on livelihood systems in both the short and longer term. Populations that were able to find safe refuge from the conflict experienced not only better physical security, but also much better economic and food security than those who remained in close proximity to violence. These differences extended well into the post-conflict period, and were still apparent in 2004.

The importance of protection was readily apparent in the collection of qualitative data. The relevance of protection was tested by conducting a statistical analysis of variance on all data by household. This showed that by far the most significant variables in determining the experiences, options and outcomes for households were *time period* and *location*. 'Time period' is a proxy for whether the household was living under war or peace, and 'location' is a proxy for whether a household had a degree of protection from the conflict and was able to access assistance and economic opportunities: i.e., was able to relocate away from the conflict to a safe place.

The role of protection can be illustrated by dividing the study villages into two groups. The populations of Prud

and Jakes had the greatest degree of protection during the war, as many (but not all) of the households from these villages were able to take refuge in Croatia. Many then moved on to Western European nations, where they were granted temporary protected status (TPS). The populations of Sevarlije and Potocari are at the other end of the spectrum. Households from these villages had extremely limited protection, access to services or options for paid employment during the war.²⁴ Residents of Sevarlije fled after Bosnian Serb forces attacked the village in the summer of 1992, but many households sought refuge in towns which subsequently experienced heavy fighting and extended siege. Potocari was part of the UN-designated 'safe area' of Srebrenica, but remained under intense siege for much of the war, and was eventually overrun by Serb forces and paramilitaries in July 1995. This dramatic failure of protection had both immediate and long-term impacts on households in the study population.

Households from the first category of villages – Prud and Jakes – were overwhelmingly better off during the conflict than the populations of any of the other villages, though the differences are particularly extreme when compared to Sevarlije and Potocari. These differences are the most apparent in relation to economic security. Prud and Jakes had the lowest rates of households unable to cover expenses (45% and 34% respectively) during the war, in comparison to 98% of households in Potocari and 97% in Sevarlije. This pattern continues across all indicators relating to economic security: in the entire study population, the households from Prud and Jakes were by far the least likely to cut back on food consumption, educational expenses for their children, the purchase of clothes and shoes and medical care. In contrast, nearly every household from Sevarlije and Potocari reduced these expenditures.

This pattern extended to access to basic utilities during the conflict. Ninety-five percent of households from Jakes had access to sufficient water and electricity during the war. Households from Prud also had very high rates of access to water (85%) and electricity (81%). In contrast, only 13% of households from Sevarlije had sufficient electricity, and 28% had access to water during the war. Potocari's households had access to both electricity and water at a rate of 48%. Health status does not appear to have been affected by location and the protection provided.²⁵

The significance of location across these indicators is influenced by several underlying factors. Most importantly,

²⁴ The populations of the Bosnian Serb villages of Brezani and Krtova are somewhere in between these two extremes. Many households from these villages fled to Serbia or today's Republic of Srpska, where they were more likely to be housed with relatives and experienced fewer direct effects of the conflict, though they still suffered economic difficulties.

²⁵ For instance, households from Prud reported worse health status than those from Potocari at the height of conflict, and households from Jakes reported worse health status than those from Krtova.

households that were able to seek refuge in Croatia or other countries enjoyed much greater physical security than households that remained in Bosnia, and with it, protection from the erosion of their material, financial and social asset bases. Furthermore, economic opportunities were much greater outside of Bosnia, and thus the households that sought refuge outside the country were more likely to be able to work for income. These households also had many or all of their expenses covered in collective centres or refugee housing schemes. In contrast, income-generating activities were rare in Bosnia. For many respondents, the constant threats of attack made farming, market activity or travel during daylight hours a perilous undertaking. These external factors meant that households residing outside of Bosnia during the war were able to focus their livelihood strategies on saving money for the future, maintaining family networks or educating their children. In contrast, households that remained within Bosnia focused their livelihood strategies, for the most part, on staying alive.

There continues to be an important relationship between location and economic security in the post-war period, but this relationship is not as significant as it was during the conflict. Prud remains much better off than the other villages because the largely Bosnian Croat population continues to take advantage of their ties to Croatia to seek employment outside of Bosnia. Overall, however, the return of households to rural villages within Bosnia has had a levelling effect on indicators of economic security. The poorest villages have experienced economic growth, while some wealthier villages have become poorer. For instance, the populations of Prud and Jakes were consistently worse off in 2004 than during the conflict in nearly every indicator related to economic security discussed above. Exceptions to this occur in two instances in Prud, where fewer households reported cutting back on food intake and health care expenses in 2004 than during the conflict. The trend has been particularly pronounced for Jakes, which was comparable to Sevarlije across most indicators in 2004. At the other end of the spectrum, households from Sevarlije and Potocari have seen improvements across the board. In 2004, the village of Brezani fared the worst on most indicators due, in large part, to its limited economic opportunities and isolation in the mountains high above Srebrenica.

2.1.6 The nature of protection

The nature of protection in complex political emergencies is extremely varied, and this was apparent in the Bosnia study. In some instances, protection was effective, in others it was not. The consequences varied accordingly. Households from the study population had access to a range of different types and degrees of protection, including protection in the form of shelter offered by friends and relatives, protection from war by crossing

political boundaries, evacuation,²⁶ international mechanisms such as temporary protected status, protection through the presence of international peacekeepers and protective cover in the form of the threat of military force. Much of the population undertook their own protection directly and joined the armed forces. During the war, active duty in armies and militias increased from five jobs in 1989 (or 0.32% of the 1989 population) to 229 jobs (or 15.71% of the conflict population), including 24 women, seven men over 60 years of age and two male youths. During the conflict, fighting in the army or militia was the primary occupation for men in the study population in every village except Prud. For many, fighting also provided the most important source of income.

Refuge offered by friends and relatives was beneficial for households as long as the relocation sites remained free from insecurity and attack. Thus households from Sevarlije that found accommodation with relatives in Bosnian towns that later came under siege did not fare as well as households from Krtova or Brezani who lived with relatives in Serbia or the Republic of Srpska. All used social or family ties to find temporary protection, but location was the determining factor in the quality of the protection they received. Access to safe locations was influenced by a combination of factors, including timing (whether or not families decided to flee before being attacked) and international policies regarding short- and long-term asylum.

The protection offered by political borders also varied by location. Many of those in the study population who fled to Croatia were able to find accommodation in collective centres, and were removed from the day-to-day violence of the war. Those who moved to Serbia also experienced little violence, but had less access to assistance or accommodation provided by international humanitarian agencies. Economic opportunities were limited in both Croatia and Serbia, and

many who lived in Croatia complained that they were unable to generate income or even pass the time in the crowded collective centres. In contrast, those granted temporary protected status in Western European countries often found work (both legal and informal) and were able to save money for their eventual return to Bosnia.

The international community also failed to protect Bosnia's civilians in more overt ways, the most notorious and well-documented being the fall of the safe haven of Srebrenica to Bosnian Serb forces in July 1995. Qualitative data from households in Potocari (part of Srebrenica municipality) provide a particularly vivid example of the impact of protection – or the lack thereof – on the lives and livelihoods of conflict-affected populations in both the short and long term. In the case of Srebrenica, protection was one aspect of the assistance provided to civilian households, and people incorporated this 'protection' into their livelihood strategies just as they might have included food aid or emergency medical assistance. Before and after the UN safe area designation, more than 20,000 people sought refuge in Srebrenica from towns and villages across eastern Bosnia that had already fallen to Bosnian Serb forces. Although living conditions were extremely poor and Serb forces prevented aid convoys from reaching the beleaguered population, many residents of Srebrenica believed that the international community would provide the promised protection. Surveyed households in Potocari, unable to turn to migration, adapted their livelihood strategies to cope with the insecurity. They farmed at night to avoid sniper fire and grenade attacks and, when possible, went to the market to barter goods such as soap from airdropped humanitarian parcels, or socks made from yarn acquired by unravelling sweaters provided in humanitarian clothing distributions.

The collapse of the protection regime in July 1995 brought an abrupt end to any attempt at normal life in Srebrenica. The population fled as Bosnian Serb troops advanced, and UN and NATO protection failed to materialise. Potocari was the village with the largest number of individual deaths within the study population, with 18% of all household members dying during the conflict, mostly directly killed in the war. These losses constitute a small portion of the estimated 8,500 men and boys massacred as they tried to reach government-held territory.

²⁶ No member of the study population reported that they had been evacuated, but evacuations did occur from contested or front line areas. These evacuations were often arranged by the local Red Cross societies. While many of these evacuations did increase security for those involved, questions have been raised about the motives of the national Red Cross societies and the ethics of helping to contribute to ethnically pure territory (Fawcett and Tanner, 1999). UNHCR also helped to organise evacuations, at times working with ICRC. UNHCR was aware of the inherent moral dilemma of evacuations. Mooney (1995) quotes the High Commissioner as saying: 'If we take them [for evacuations], we are accomplices to ethnic cleansing. If we don't take them, we are accomplices to murder'.

Chapter 3

Discussion of findings

3.1 Dependency: fact or fiction?

The link between humanitarian assistance and a 'dependency mentality' has been raised in conjunction with long-running assistance programmes, and particularly in reference to refugee and displacement camps (Harrell-Bond 1986; ICVA/UNHCR 1985). Several authors have called this presumption into question, including Kibreab (1993), who argues that a range of factors create the impression of refugee dependency. These factors are mostly based on the impressions of external actors who – due largely to their own biases – interpret behaviour in the camps as lethargy or laziness. In fact, argues Kibreab, displaced people may wish to work, but are unable to do so because of unfavourable economic, social and environmental conditions. Furthermore, it is incorrect to assume that basic needs (as provided through humanitarian assistance) are equal to the basic desires of a population. This means that households will often seek to increase their income or commodities even after basic needs have been met through free distributions. By assuming 'dependency', assistance providers assume that the coping systems, traditions and social structures of a displaced population have disappeared, when in fact these systems and structures remain central to the ways that communities or households adapt following their displacement.

Hoddinott (2003) questions the link between food aid and dependency in a study on the effects of food aid on Ethiopian households. Hoddinott generated two sets of results on household and intra-household behaviour and the receipt of food aid. The first model included weak (i.e., no) controls for possible alternative causal factors, and found that households that received food aid spent less time working on their own crops or pursuing non-agrarian occupations. On average, the households that received food aid worked five times less (measured in days) than those households that did not receive food assistance. In the second model, Hoddinott included controls for household characteristics such as age, sex and education of the household head; household size; location; and extent of landholding. Under this more rigorous model, all negative effects of food aid disappeared (except for a trivial reduction in the likelihood of growing enset and a small reduction in agrarian labour, which was offset by an increased amount of non-farm labour). These findings contradict the presumed link between food aid and dependency in Ethiopia, and lead Hoddinott to suggest that 'The anecdotes and case studies upon which dependency and disincentive claims are frequently built are methodologically flawed'.

One could argue that it is nearly impossible for people to become dependent on food aid in emergencies because the food provided usually covers only a small portion of household needs. During the Darfur famine of 1984–85, for instance, food aid was estimated to meet only 10% of food consumption needs (de Waal 1987). De Waal (1994) describes a similar pattern in other famine-stricken areas as well. Regardless of such evidence, the fear of creating dependency continues to influence the planning of large-scale food distribution programmes. In Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, for instance, aid agencies shied away from longer-term livelihood, education or capacity-building programmes out of concern that this would provide legitimacy to the Taliban regime. Instead, programmes focused on 'short-term, life-saving emergency assistance against the better judgment of agencies who knew that this programming would create dependence, undermine local coping mechanisms, and draw rural populations from their villages to displacement camps' (HPCR 2002).

There is little evidence, however, that food aid to Afghanistan established dependency, at least in rural areas. Some people did migrate to camps, but this was usually due either to insecurity or to severe water shortages after the onset of the drought in 1999. Focus group interviews in early 2002 indicated that many of the roughly 1,400 households represented had received some food aid, but 'the distributions were too limited and too infrequent to reverse the multi-year deterioration in food security' (Lautze et al. 2002). In other words, they were low-impact and created no signs of dependency. Countrywide data collected by WFP in rural Afghanistan in 2003 indicates that households do not prioritise any form of food distribution or food-for-work interventions, even in food-insecure areas (FIFC 2004). These findings are inconsistent with a population that is or has been 'dependent' on food aid. Households that do receive food aid are likely to incorporate this assistance into their livelihood, coping and survival strategies, but there is little evidence that the receipt of humanitarian assistance brings the collapse of motivation and initiative at the household level.

One of the common misconceptions underpinning the notion of dependency is that households and communities abandon their existing livelihood strategies and coping systems when humanitarian assistance is provided over a long period. A study of long-standing refugee camps in Somalia shows that, while communities evolve and adapt to changed circumstances, including the receipt of humanitarian aid, this adaptation does not entail

becoming dependent. In the Bosnian case study, all of the households had experienced abrupt and radical changes, and many were living in collective centres or refugee housing, and provided with food aid and other forms of assistance for several years. The ability of households to pursue regular income-generating employment, to grow food or to purchase food decreased dramatically. Regardless of these circumstances, households maintained many of their traditional social networks and livelihood skills and adapted, in one way or another, to the new set of circumstances. For instance, households continued to rely on family and social networks for shelter and remittance systems following displacement and relocation. And while the availability of per capita occupations decreased during the conflict and in the post-war period, household members adapted their livelihoods accordingly, with a sharp rise in military service during the conflict, and an increase in seasonal and occasional jobs in both the war and the post-war period.

There is little evidence of humanitarian assistance contributing to dependency among the study population in Bosnia. Food aid and shelter assistance were provided widely and to those in need, and some households remained in collective centres and almost entirely reliant on food aid for several years. Based on data from qualitative interviews, households sought to leave the collective centres and return to a self-sufficient lifestyle as soon as they were able, regardless of the food, shelter and health care provided in the centres.²⁷ Some respondents who found refuge and employment in Germany were more reluctant to return home, but they attributed this to work opportunities, not to hand-outs provided to those with temporary protected status.

3.2 The importance of protection: implications

The overwhelming conclusion from the Bosnia study data is that the location of households and the nature of the protection available in these locations were the most important factors in determining overall wellbeing. As discussed, there were many protection failures in Bosnia. These were partially due to the international community's failure to make good on its promises of military protection for the safe areas. More deep-rooted problems also contributed to the weakness of the protection regime. The reluctance of the international community to push for political solutions to the conflict was one of the most substantial obstacles to ending the war or enforcing effective protection mechanisms. Some critics felt that Western nations sought to use humanitarian assistance and the presence of UN and UNPROFOR personnel to

compensate for the lack of political or military intervention to end the violence. For instance, describing the role of UNHCR during the first two years of the conflict, Mooney (1995) says: '[I]n the absence of a political resolution of a conflict, humanitarian assistance and international presence cannot by themselves provide effective protection to victims'.

The erosion of third-country protection mechanisms for civilians affected by conflict also prevented Bosnians from accessing secure locations. The study population contains households which were able to reach Croatia, Serbia or third countries, and to find accommodation in these locations. Many other households, however, were unable to reach these places of relative safety and spent much of the war under constant threat of attack. The differences experienced by these two population groups point to the importance of third-country residential arrangements for asylum-seekers and refugees, for the extension and expansion of temporary protected status for civilians from nations affected by conflict, and for the establishment of well-run centres for refugees or displaced persons if and when necessary and appropriate. In practice, however, countries close to states in crisis or turmoil are restricting border access, tightening asylum regulations and creating obstacles for civilians seeking temporary refuge. These trends will make it more difficult for civilians to obtain the protection that, in the case of the survey study population in Bosnia, proved essential to both survival and post-war recovery.

The evidence from the Bosnia data on the importance of protection for the livelihood strategies and overall wellbeing of households has a variety of implications for national governments and the international community. In the context of Bosnia, those households that were able to secure protection were also more likely to be able to access paid employment, medical care and an adequate supply of food. The majority of these households would not have been able to remain in these protective environments without the accommodation and assistance of collective centres and refugee housing. Much evidence, however, has shown that camps or centres are not the ideal residential models for displaced persons in many circumstances (Chambers 1985; Hansen 1982; Harrell-Bond et al. 1992; Van Damme 1995; Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995). In particular, establishing collective centres or camps *through force* on the part of civilian or military authorities is likely to result in the deterioration of physical, economic and human security (CSOPNU 2004; Macrae and Zwi 1994).

On the other hand, if and when civilian populations have already been displaced, are fleeing extreme violence and are in need of shelter and humanitarian assistance, then the relevance and importance of protection systems such as camps and centres become more apparent. Such protection systems can only improve the status of populations if inputs

²⁷ All the households in the study population were returnees, and most were driven by a strong desire to return to their home villages. This resulted in bias in the study design, as we did not interview any households who chose to remain in collective centres or similar accommodation.

such as food, medical care and physical protection are provided impartially and appropriately, and in a transparent fashion. In Bosnia, for instance, people who had already fled to Croatia and were able to reach collective centres which provided shelter, food, schooling for children and medical care were much better off than those who could not. The Bosnia study illustrates the potentially positive role of these residential protection models. The larger message, however, is of the overall importance of protection and the imperative of national governments and the international governments to ensure the success of protection regimes.

3.3 Discussion of the model

The concept of using a livelihood analysis to understand household need and the impact of interventions is not overly innovative, as illustrated in the models of Save the Children (UK), CARE, and Oxfam-GB. These models have distinct programmatic goals, such as assessing food security, and all questions and analysis are ultimately focused on this one aspect. In contrast, the Bosnia study used a livelihood analysis that sought to understand the broader livelihood and coping systems of households. Ideally, such an analysis will illustrate the relative role of humanitarian assistance in these household systems. If a household does not consider outside interventions to be relevant or important, they will not be picked up by a livelihood analysis, even if such interventions existed.

3.3.1 Positive aspects

By covering three time periods, the survey demonstrated how adaptations in livelihoods systems occur over time and in response to shifts both within the household (such as changes in demographics, employment or health status) and in the external environment (such as armed conflict, economic transformation and forced migration). Livelihood systems were not assumed to be either static or geared towards a single goal, such as acquiring food. Rather, respondents ranked the priorities of their household in each time period (such as education, health, security, shelter, income, food or 'other'). The livelihood analysis sought to understand both how these priorities altered over time, and how various households adapted in order to meet their changing goals. Because livelihood analysis is based on households' own articulation of their primary livelihood outcomes (e.g. food security, economic security, physical security), it is appropriate for use in a wide variety of settings and contexts, such as vulnerability assessments, programme design and evaluation in times of famine, natural disasters, armed conflict, and post-conflict situations. In this study, qualitative and quantitative data collection was essential in order to gather enough information to understand trends and patterns. Follow-up focus groups were not possible in the study due to resource constraints, but would have been a useful means of exploring issues in greater depth, ideally after an initial data analysis.

The survey tool used in Bosnia allowed for field work to be completed in a relatively short period of time. The FIFC and Mercy Corps team members spent fewer than three weeks administering the survey. The involvement of Mercy Corps Bosnia greatly expedited the field work, as team members assisted in the study design and field testing, the identification and training of surveyors, the selection of study sites and logistics. They were extremely well versed in the context of the war and post-conflict settings.

Although no substitute for anthropological field work, the use of a livelihood analysis to learn about the impact of humanitarian assistance has the potential to deepen knowledge about the role of humanitarian assistance within households managing risk and vulnerability in deeply challenging environments. Respondents were asked about the role of humanitarian assistance, but only as one of many possible sources of inputs such as food, shelter, and health care. The ranking by importance of these sources showed the relative role of external humanitarian assistance for each household.

The livelihood analysis examined 15 years of tumultuous change. The survey itself was conducted nearly ten years after the end of the war, the period in which the households experienced the greatest upheaval and an event which still influences all aspects of Bosnian society today. This time-lag likely affected the quality of information on emergency humanitarian assistance. Perhaps key interventions have been forgotten, or perhaps people felt more at liberty to be honest about the relative role of humanitarian assistance in their overall livelihoods strategy than might have been the case when humanitarian agencies were conducting assessments in the midst of crisis. The longer timeframe allowed for other important aspects of assistance and intervention to be uncovered. First, many households received shelter assistance years after the war; in many cases, it was this reconstruction assistance which enabled them to fulfill their desired livelihood outcome and return to their villages of origin. Second, the extended timeframe provided enough qualitative data to understand the longer-term effects of the war and post-war recovery. We were able to see the stark differences between communities during the conflict, and the levelling out of economic security in the post-war period. Third, and most importantly, the comparison between three distinct time periods and the wide variations in conditions made the importance of location, as a proxy for protection, apparent.

3.3.2 Challenges and possible modifications

A livelihood analysis allows us to understand the relative role of humanitarian assistance within a larger livelihood framework, but it does not provide a great deal of specific details on the nature of this assistance. We do not know, for instance, about the quality or quantity of assistance

received, where the assistance came from, whether there were concerns of bias in how the assistance was distributed, or what household views were on these important issues. The precise impact of the assistance is difficult to measure because the input – assistance – was never discussed in isolation. We felt that households do not consider humanitarian assistance in isolation, and rather view it as one of a range of possible resources and strategies that might, somehow, be used to better manage risk and vulnerability.

The design of the survey led to a degree of bias in the findings in several ways. First, we only interviewed households that had returned to their pre-war villages, leading to bias in the degree of representation of households during the first two time periods (1989 and height of conflict). Not having a control group comprised of people who have not opted to return to their pre-war homes means that we are not fully aware of the factors that may have contributed to a decision to return or not, including the role of humanitarian assistance. A second source of bias regards the age of respondents. Households comprising elderly adults in 1989 and the height of conflict, whose members did not survive to 2004, were obviously not included in the survey in 2004. This led to an over-representation of healthier elderly adults, i.e., only those healthy, strong or fortunate enough to survive to 2004. Third, the study sites were based on the suggestions of Mercy Corps, our research partner in Bosnia. While the six villages are different in terms of wealth, ethnicity and experience during the conflict, they are all also villages where Mercy Corps and other international agencies have worked in the post-war period. We might have a better understanding of the impact (or lack of impact) of humanitarian assistance on livelihood strategies if we had used an alternative means of selecting the study villages.

Wide variations in coping systems

The Bosnian survey sought to examine a wide range of coping systems and livelihood strategies, but some coping systems proved difficult to capture completely and accurately. For example, we did not pick up any information on engagement in the illicit economy (other than informal employment), even though smuggling, organised crime and black market activity has been increasing in Bosnia since the war. Problems with accessing this sort of information are common in field research, as respondents are often reluctant to discuss illegal or black market activity with interviewers. The extent of change experienced by respondents also created confusion regarding some coping systems. For instance, we included a question on whether households had cut back on rent or mortgage payments during any of the three time periods. We found, however, that the living arrangements of respondents had shifted so dramatically that comparison was impossible.

Data analysis and review of the qualitative material also illustrated some interesting and unexpected differences in the underlying reasons behind certain coping mechanisms. These differences made the specific coping mechanisms difficult to compare across time period and households. For example, we asked respondents if they were able to take vacations, in an attempt to understand changes in economic security and household priorities across the three time periods. Many households were 'financially able' to take vacations prior to the war, but a good portion of these chose instead to use their vacation time to work on their smallholdings. The quantitative questionnaires were not able to pick up this nuance of preference, and thus the quantitative data on this question was not comparable across households or time periods.

In other instances, we lacked sufficient detail to fully understand the ramifications of certain coping mechanisms. For instance, information regarding cuts in educational expenditure proved to be incomplete in two ways. First, the survey did not go into enough detail to indicate if a reduction in educational expenditure meant withdrawing children from school, cutting back on school fees or simply limiting school-related expenses, on items such as uniforms, books and lunches. Second, the survey does not include adequate information on the relationship between school attendance and security or access. In other words, households may have responded that they had 'cut back' on school expenditures if their children were not able to attend school due to security concerns, the closure or destruction of the local school, or lack of access to schools for children of a particular ethnic group.

Survey design

Although the survey was only about ten pages long, it had to be repeated for each of the three time periods, resulting in a document of over 30 pages. The length led to some confusion for both surveyors and respondents. The main source of confusion was due to the large number of household members that respondents were asked to discuss within their households across the three time periods. Many of the respondents were older and it was occasionally difficult for them to keep track of the comings and goings of many individuals across a 15-year time span. For surveyors, translators and respondents, recalling the war era was difficult and troubling.

The survey asked questions about three discrete time periods, but did not discuss the interim years. This led to problems in data collection on household demography, especially calculating rates of change. We were unable, for instance, to adequately track mortality and the migration of individuals who had left the household in one of the gaps between the three time periods. For instance, a quantitative survey was not able to pick up an individual who was wounded in the war in 1994 but did not die until 1998, as

this latter time period was not considered one of our three study years. Allowing households to identify the 'height of the conflict' was extremely useful, as respondents were able to reflect upon the year that signified the greatest upheaval or change for their specific household, regardless of the experiences of their neighbours or other villages.

Data analysis

We encountered several challenges with data analysis after all the data was entered and checked. The first was simply due to our lack of preparedness for the size of the database. We had expected to be able to analyse the data using SPSS, but for logistical reasons had to use Microsoft Excel. SPSS, SAS or another advanced data analysis system would have been preferable. The second challenge related to our unit of analysis. Because the survey was based on a livelihood model that took as its primary unit of analysis the household, the findings were representative of the populations of the six villages based on households. However, as the analysis progressed we became increasingly interested in changes at the individual level as well as the household level, particularly in reference to per capita occupations, unemployment and health status. We were able to include information on individuals in the report, but the trends observed at the level of the individual are only descriptive of the members of the 394 households surveyed, and are not representative of the larger village populations. To conduct a survey that is statistically significant of individuals within households would require a much larger sample size and a much more complex form of sampling (i.e., based on individuals rather than households).

The selection of a unit of analysis brings up interesting questions relating to the design of a livelihoods model. The household is, quite accurately, usually considered the unit of analysis for livelihood analysis, although effort is made to consider important intra-household relations and associated variations in livelihood strategies and outcomes. But the focus on the household makes it difficult to talk about individual household members with authority, as data on individuals is usually not representative and unlikely to be statistically significant. Furthermore, surveyors in Bosnia spoke to one adult per household (not necessarily the household head) and did not collect information from each individual household member. This makes it very difficult to extrapolate in detail about the situation, priorities and lives of those not interviewed. Such are the limits of the livelihood model, and other mechanisms for analysing power relations, such as gender, age, or ethnic differences within households should be employed in conjunction with household-based livelihood analysis.

The surveyors for the study were trained for one full day. The first day of field work was followed by a question-and-answer session in which the team leaders sought to clarify

confusions and make adjustments accordingly. Team leaders checked in with the surveyors daily and talked about findings, anomalies and any problems arising in carrying out the survey. This system was nearly complete, but did not address cases in which the surveyors were unaware that there was a problem in their understanding or in how they were asking/recording survey questions. Our quality checks failed to catch these errors until late in the study or in the data analysis. To prevent this in the future, team leaders should go over surveys question by question with small groups of surveyors frequently, especially in the initial days of the field work.

More extensive field testing of this and similar surveys is needed to ensure that all relevant aspects of the local context have been taken into account. We ran limited field tests of the survey, but these tests did not pick up all sources of potential confusion. One reason for this was that the tests were run by the team that had designed the survey, and thus they were very familiar with all the questions. In retrospect, the field tests should have been run by those who were not involved in the study design, as they would be better able to identify areas of potential confusion or difficulty. As it was, confusion (on the part of surveyors and/or respondents) regarding certain questions and lack of clarity in responses meant that some questions had to be disregarded in their entirety.

3.4 Conclusion

The livelihood analysis model used in Bosnia was successful in many aspects. We were able to collect a vast amount of data in a relatively short period of time, and this data illustrated broad shifts in household livelihood and coping systems. The information on humanitarian aid showed which households had received assistance, and how the assistance was used for survival during the war and for returning home after the conflict, both of which were household priorities in these respective periods.

The model was able to show the impact of assistance upon the larger livelihood strategies of households over time. The model was not designed to show the perhaps more dramatic and immediate results of aid; we therefore do not know how many lives were saved by food aid during the war, or how many people might have continued to squat in occupied houses in the absence of post-war shelter assistance. Efforts to measure the impact of assistance require an understanding of what is to be measured and why. If the pressing question is whether or not emergency food aid has made a difference in rates of mortality and malnutrition over the short term, then a livelihood model is unlikely to be appropriate. In contrast, if an organisation, agency or government is seeking to understand the way in which households or communities function over time in order to plan assistance programmes, then a livelihood survey similar

to the one used in Bosnia is highly appropriate. Such a model could include a more in-depth examination of humanitarian assistance through the use of extended qualitative interviews with pre-selected households, focus

group discussions and participatory rural approaches. These modifications would allow for a more focused evaluation of the impact of humanitarian assistance for a particular area or population group.

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