

CHAPTER 3

Responding to protracted crises: The principled model of NMPACT in Sudan

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Abstract

This chapter describes the impact of the conflict in Sudan on the Nuba Mountains population and how a partnership between donors, agencies and local stakeholders, based on principles of engagement, resulted in coordinated efforts to address the key determinants of the conflict and food insecurity. Particular attention is paid to the principles of engagement and the 'political humanitarianism' of NMPACT to illustrate how it broke away from the traditional externally driven responses to food insecurity towards an approach that focused on capacity building, sustainable agriculture and market revitalization, alongside conflict transformation and peace-building. Successes, limitations and challenges are distilled to provide lessons for possible replication in other complex emergency contexts.

The Nuba Mountains region: A geo-political overview

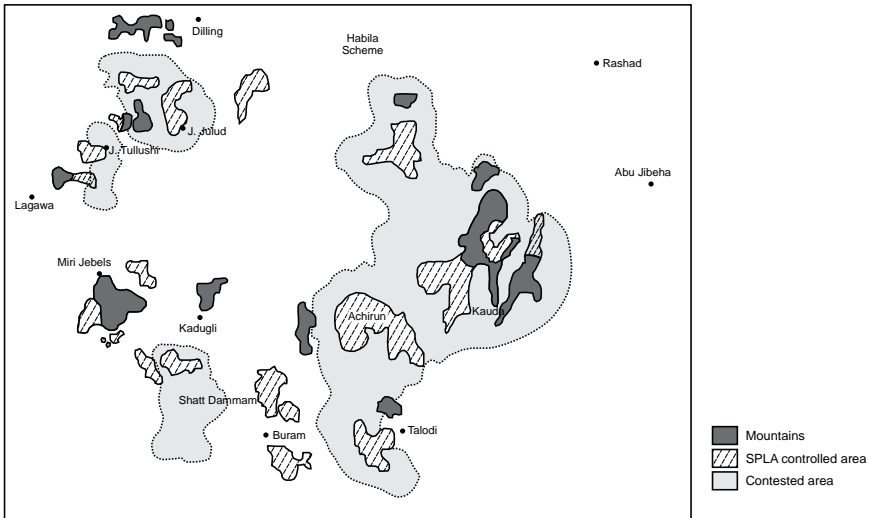
The Nuba Mountains are located at the centre of Sudan in the State of South Kordofan and include the six provinces of Kadugli (the state capital), Dilling, Lagawa, Rashad, Abu Jibeha and Talodi. The region covers an area of roughly 80,000 square kilometres (km²) and prior to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) its population was estimated at between 1.2 and 1.4 million.¹ The main inhabitants of the region are commonly known as the Nuba. This is a highly complex mix of people comprising 50 different groups speaking 50 different languages, who despite this great heterogeneity share a number of fundamental common cultural practices and beliefs, and who widely recognize themselves as Nuba. Culturally and economically the majority of the Nuba are settled farmers, though they share the region with Arab cattle herders, mainly Baggara Hawazma and Shanabla as well as the nomadic Fallata of West African origin (known elsewhere as Fulani). The area has always been recognized as one of the richest and most fertile of Sudan and in the past surplus food production was registered on a fairly regular basis. Unfortunately, the inception of conflict in 1985 and its intensification in

1989 led to a near-total breakdown of the local production system, which has increased the vulnerability of the local population.

The roots of the conflict predate colonial intervention, though the policies promoted by the colonial administration contributed to considerably exacerbate the political and economic marginalization of the people of the Nuba Mountains. Continuing marginalization and discriminatory land policies introduced by various independent governments heightened feelings of frustration and resentment amongst the Nuba people. In the 1970s the abolition of the Native Administration and the introduction of new land laws *de facto* deprived many Nuba of their land in favour of non-Nuba groups and rendered traditional mechanisms of intra- and inter-tribal conflict resolution ineffective. Wealthy northern merchants invested in large mechanized farming schemes on what was previously Nuba land, while local Arab groups invested in small-holders schemes. The mechanized schemes also cut across the transhumance routes of Baggara nomads, who in order to avoid being fined for trespassing frequently re-routed their herds through Nuba farmland. With the absence of a system for settling disputes, armed confrontation started to escalate in the region. The lack of educational opportunities for young people further compounded the feelings of frustration and marginalization amongst Nuba youth at the beginning of the 1980s. Many Nuba became increasingly sympathetic to the plight of the Southerners and decided to support the new civil war when it erupted in 1983 under the leadership of the SPLM/A). The people of the Nuba Mountains entered the civil war in July 1985 led by the late Cdr Yusuf Kuwa, who was an elected member of parliament at the time and was the head of an underground Nuba movement called *Komolo*.

The first incursions of the SPLA in the Nuba Mountains in 1985 sparked a strong reaction from the elected government of Sadiq al-Mahdi, which started to arm Baggara militia as well as Nuba youth forcibly conscripted into the Popular Defence Force (PDF). The militia began a violent and aggressive campaign against Nuba civilians who were indiscriminately accused of supporting the SPLA struggle. In 1988 the government started a policy of systematic elimination of educated Nuba and village leaders, which resulted in an increase in the number of recruits for the SPLA. In 1989 Yusuf Kuwa returned to the Nuba Mountains with a large SPLA force and established a permanent SPLM/A presence in the region, promoted strong political mobilization and reorganized the civil administration in the areas under SPLM/A control (Johnson, 2003). From the late 1980s until the signing of the CPA in 2005 the Nuba Mountains were divided between two administrations, namely the government, which held most of the farmland on the plains as well as the urban centres, and the SPLM/A, which held the crowded hilltops (see Figure 3.1)

Figure 3.1 Map of the Nuba Mountains showing GoS and SPLM areas (2000)



Source: Adapted from African Rights (1995)

Livelihoods systems and food security in the context of crisis in the Nuba Mountains

The farming system

The livelihoods system of the Nuba groups is centred on farming, both in the mountains and on the plains. Four main agricultural systems prevail in the region:

- (1) smallholder traditional farming;
- (2) mechanized smallholder schemes;
- (3) large-scale mechanized farming; and
- (4) horticultural production.

The majority of South Kordofan farmers practice traditional smallholder agriculture, which include the following characteristics: small farm areas; subsistence and labour intensive production; no use of machinery, fertilizers, improved varieties or crop protection and primitive production techniques (AACM International, 1993). On the central clay plains and in the eastern and southern parts of the state, a typical Nuba farm is divided into three different fields: house farm (*jubraka*), hillside (near) farm and far farm, according to the literal translation of the vernacular terms used in most Nuba groups (Harragin, 2003a). The *jubraka*, though the smallest, is the most intensively cropped and it is usually the responsibility of women, who also contribute to the other fields. The near farm is often about 2 km from the village, while the

far farm can be much further (AACM International, 1993). Crops involve swift maturing varieties of sorghum, maize and beans, as well as groundnuts.

The Nuba economy has traditionally been geared towards subsistence, though people also cultivate cash crops for sale in local and regional market areas. Major Nuba cash crops are sesame, groundnuts, *hibiscus*, cowpeas and watermelon, but cash crop cultivation has historically been limited by lack of technology as well as by market constraints. Price fluctuations and lack of control over markets make excessive reliance on cash crops a risky strategy, so farmers have traditionally included cash crops alongside staple food crops as part of a basket of agricultural produce. Charcoal production is another source of cash income, while a critical alternative to cash cropping is labour migration, both within the region and to Khartoum and other major Sudanese towns (Manger et al., 2003a).

Smallholders mainly rely on household members for their farming requirements. The capacity of a family to meet its own farming needs depends on the household size, but factors such as wealth, holding size and the extent of mechanization also contribute significantly. Although the family is the basic unit of production, on the far farms family labour is often supplemented by assistance from neighbours, mainly through reciprocal communal working parties called *nafirs* (SKRPU, 1980f). The *nafir* is an obligatory institution whereby relatives and neighbours of a family help each other execute labour intensive activities. The importance of non-kin is particularly high when the family moves to a new settlement. In this regard, the institution of *nafir* has played a central role in supporting displaced Nuba families in areas where they had no relatives to count on. *Nafir* participants do not receive any cash payment, but are rewarded in kind. The *nafir* is a distributive mechanism that allows members of the same settlement to express their belonging to a community through reciprocal labour support (Salih, 1984).

The smallholder agricultural system varies slightly for the Arab family farms, which predominantly occupy sandy *qoz* plains in the west of the state. The typical farming Arab household has only two fields: the *jubraka* and a main far field. Both Nuba and Arab smallholders have traditionally kept some animals: goats are the most common among the Nuba (though some also have cattle), while sedentarized Arab groups tend to have sheep and cattle. In some cases their herd sizes can be considerable. Success and failure in the management of animals is a major factor creating differentiation among Nuba households. Successful animal keepers could make agreements with the Baggara nomads on their seasonal migrations to northern Kordofan, thus better exploiting available resources, or some Nuba could even establish themselves as nomads, joining a Baggara camp, though the war has curtailed these strategies (Manger et al, 2003a). The conflict has also severely affected herd ownership patterns and today most farming households are virtually stockless.

Traditional smallholder farming has been complemented by mechanized crop production in parts of the state. Mechanized schemes, which have involved clearing large plots of land, have not been successful and most large

schemes have failed. Major reasons for this failure have been the use of follow-on mono-cropping practices, mainly for sorghum and cotton production, with minimal inputs and inappropriate technology (IFAD, 2000).

Constraints to marketing have always been significant in South Kordofan state, particularly given the lack of an adequate road network and market outlets and of appropriate techniques to process or store food. A further factor that prevents smallholders from maximizing the gains of their production is the system of rural credit that dominates in the region, known as *sheil*. The *sheil* system consists of money lenders or merchants who make seasonal advances in cash or in kind to farmers who in turn agree to repay a set amount of produce at a predetermined price (AACM International, 1993). *Sheil* merchants make profits in the region of 40–60 per cent. In addition to the exploitation of the farmers, the *sheil* system is also blamed for hindering agricultural growth in the traditional sector because it gives producers little incentive to increase output as a higher proportion of their gains would go towards the repayment of increased loans (AACM International, 1993). Due to the difficulties farmers face in obtaining formal credit, the *sheil* system remains vital to the seasonal financing of agricultural operations.

The pastoral system

Apart from settled farmers, South Kordofan state is also inhabited by groups of nomadic Arab pastoralists for part of the year. The pastoralists are primarily Baggara Hawazma cattle keepers and Shanabla camel herders and to a lesser extent nomadic Fallata of West African groups (mainly keeping cattle). These groups move over long distances, spending the rainy season in the sandy areas of northern Kordofan and moving southwards into the Nuba Mountains during the dry season, travelling as far as Shilluk land in Upper Nile Province for dry season grazing. These north–south migrations take them through the Nuba Mountains, where they interact with the local Nuba groups.

The cattle herding nomadic groups amount to about 25 per cent of the Nuba Mountains' population, but they own 80 per cent of the livestock (IFAD, 2000), though conflict and drought have significantly affected livestock holdings over the last decade. Nomadic groups spend approximately three months a year on transhumance. In normal rainfall years most nomadic groups end up staying in North Kordofan for about three months before returning to the Nuba Mountains, while in years of poor rainfall they only travel to the northern parts of South Kordofan, where they stay for just six weeks before returning south (IFAD, 2000). Since the signing of the Cease-fire Agreement in 2002 (see below) and even more after the signing of the CPA, some groups have been resuming transhumance along the old routes.

The relations between the nomadic Arab groups and the settled farmers in the Nuba Mountains have been characterized by both peaceful co-existence and confrontation. From a perspective of interacting production systems, settled farming and pastoralism are highly complementary. Until the 1970s

in different parts of the Nuba Mountains pastoralists and farmers tried to capitalize on their interaction to maximize the use of available resources. Arab pastoralists were allowed into the Mountains and other farming areas after the harvest was collected and usually stayed there until the first rains. They grazed their livestock on the harvested fields, thus fertilizing them, and helped the villagers transport their grain to the market with their camels. In some cases production and commercial links between farmers and pastoralists developed, with fodder and grazing being exploited after cultivation. Pastoral nomadic populations were therefore fully integrated in the sedentary political economy (Manger et al, 2003a). However, patterns of political marginalization and economic exploitation of Nuba communities have caused relationships in the region to be characterized by conflict rather than complementarity. The last decade and a half of war has further undermined the viability of previous regulatory agreements. Like the settled communities, but for different reasons, pastoralists have also suffered from the establishment of mechanized agriculture schemes (see below), and also tend to be marginalized within wider Sudanese society.

External shocks on food systems and food security

The consequences of the Unregistered Land Act and the expansion of mechanized farming in the region

The land tenure system in the Nuba Mountains has traditionally been based on customary holdings. The system started to undergo important changes with colonial rule.

The British accepted customary rules over land, but the title to land was vested in the government. During the colonial rule the first cotton schemes were introduced in the region both with the aim of growing cheap cotton for the British textile industry and to increase colonial revenues by involving Nuba people in the production of a cash crop that could enable them to pay the poll and crop taxes (Salih, 1984).

After independence the colonial land tenure management system was abolished and tribal leaders were replaced predominantly by northern administrators. Furthermore, the state started to confiscate land to the advantage of wealthy and powerful individuals who started to invest heavily in agricultural schemes in the 1960s. Northern Jallaba traders took control over large portions of Nuba cultivable land, something that created strong resentment amongst the Nuba who started to show signs of revolt during the mid-1960s (Salih, 1995). The Mechanized Farming Corporation (MFC) Act of 1968 established that 60 per cent of land had to be allocated to local people and that no one could have more than one farm, each of which was to be allocated in lots of between 500–1,500 *feddans*.² This proviso was ignored however, and some outside landowners ended up with more than 20 farms.

The promulgation of the Unregistered Land Act in 1970, which abolished customary rights of land use, led to deregulation and further seizing of land for agricultural schemes, which cut into prime land of small farmers and nomadic pastoralists. The act did not define the legal status of the current land users and gave the government ample powers of eviction. Compensation for the displaced farmers was discretionary rather than compulsory and often consisted in a choice between inferior land outside the scheme or keeping the existing plot but paying rent for it (Harragin, 2003a). Understandably, very few people were prepared to pay for land they considered theirs.

The Unregistered Land Act provided a legal basis for land acquisition for large-scale mechanized agricultural projects (LTTF, 1986). By 1993 2.5 million *feddans* (over 1 million hectares (ha)) were under mechanized farming and it is estimated that today the figure is in the range of 3–4 million *feddans* (1,260,000–1,680,000 ha), i.e. between 9 and 12 per cent of the total area of pre-CPA South Kordofan (Harragin, 2003a). Considering that all the schemes are on the fertile clay plains, the best soils in the region, which amount to about 21 per cent of the total area of the state, it means that half of the total area of the plains is taken up by the schemes.

The introduction of the Law of Criminal Trespass of 1974 made for even more restrictive rights of access for pastoralists and smallholding farmers to land under schemes. Shortly after the enactment of the Unregistered Land Act, the Native Administration was also abolished with the Local Government Act of 1971, which instituted Executive Councils and subsidiary District Councils and rural, village and nomadic camp councils in all the provinces of the country. These institutions though never became fully functioning and land tenure issues therefore continued to be administered by traditional leaders who no longer had a legal basis to allocate land and solve disputes (LTTF, 1986).

The absence of a regulatory body resulted in sustained land grabbing and intensified disputes between farmers and scheme owners and farmers and pastoralists, transforming traditional tribal animosities into political conflicts, latterly involving the use of modern weapons. The recognition of customary rights was undermined even further by the Civil Transaction Act of 1984, which prohibited the recognition of customary land rights in court. The cumulative effect of the act and measures that had preceded it was to transfer control over land to people connected with those in power and to progressively impoverish rural people (Ajawin and de Waal, 2002; Shazali, 2004).

Economically, the large mechanized schemes yielded considerable profits for many of their owners. In 1979 a calculation of the distribution of incomes on the schemes in the Nuba Mountains between the owners and the workers, i.e. between capital and labour (Manger, 1994), found that 53 per cent went to the owner and 47 per cent to the workers. However, there were only one or two owners, compared with several hundred labourers, so the difference in income distribution was dramatic. The skewed income stream, coupled with the increased vulnerability of the once self-sufficient but now wage-dependent

rural poor, further strengthened the already dominant position of northern merchants (Manger et al, 2003a).

Settled farmers were not the only victims of mechanized farming. The mechanized schemes also cut across the transhumance routes of Baggara nomads, who in order to avoid being fined for trespass frequently re-routed their herds through Nuba farmland. In particular, a large number of World Bank supported mechanized farming projects were set up between 1973 and 1993 by the Mechanized Farming Corporation on pastoralists' transhumance routes. This resulted in a lot of conflict between farmers and herders who deviated from traditional routes into Nuba smallholders' land to avoid fines. The most serious problems took place around Habila scheme, which according to IFAD data (2000) today extends across 750,000 *feddans* (315,000 ha).

The abolition of the Native Administration left an institutional vacuum to settle land disputes locally and customarily. Government courts often took the side of the Arab Baggara against the Nuba. Many dispossessed farmers started to seek labour on the schemes or to migrate to northern towns. The lack of educational opportunities for young people further compounded the feelings of frustration and marginalization amongst Nuba youth at the beginning of the 1980s. It is against this backdrop that many Nuba decided to support the new civil war when it erupted in 1983 under the leadership of the SPLM.

The outbreak of conflict in 1985 and its consequences on people's assets and livelihoods

The inception of conflict in 1985 and its escalation in the 1990s led to widespread destruction of traditional sources of livelihoods and massive internal displacement, with few Nuba retaining access to their traditional farming land. This became a key factor in what has become a situation of recurrent food insecurity. Many Nuba ran to the hilltops, where they had no access to the productive clay soils found in the plains. Many areas saw their harvest yields drop approximately ten times (NFSWG, 2001). People were forced to cultivate their main farms on the rocky slopes, in plateaux or next to the mountains, where the soil quality requires heavy labour and where there are restricted areas suitable for cultivation. Livestock rearing was also reduced significantly, since insecurity in the plains made access to pasture land and water points very difficult, especially in the dry season. Looting of cattle also lowered livestock holdings in the areas of the region most affected by the conflict.

The conflict in the Nuba Mountains dramatically changed the pattern and availability of labour opportunities in the region. From the late 1980s until the signing of the CPA the Nuba Mountains remained divided between two administrations, namely the government, which covered most of the farmland on the plains as well as the urban centres, and the SPLM, which covered the hilltops and mountainous terrain. The communities that were

most affected were those living in SPLM-controlled areas. Before the war, men would migrate to towns, agricultural schemes and northern markets to look for work. Those who stayed for long periods would send back remittances, but the war cut off this option for those living in SPLM areas, since access to areas under government control was impeded.

Economic isolation was a tactic of the civil war. Access to formal goods markets in SPLM areas was curtailed. Northern traders exploited this isolation by selling goods at high prices in the so-called 'Arab markets' that would take place in the SPLM areas randomly and without a regular pattern whenever northern traders ventured into SPLM areas.

The war also led to a total collapse of social services, including health and education. The number of health facilities and their quality declined markedly over the 1990s, particularly in areas under SPLM control. Table 3.1 shows the differences in availability of health structures between government and SPLM areas.

The conflict also created widespread displacement. In 2003 it was estimated that 636,000 Nuba IDPs lived in government-controlled areas only (IOM/UNDP, 2003). This figure has changed as Nuba IDPs have started returning to South Kordofan state following the signing of the Cease-fire Agreement in 2002 and of the CPA in 2005.

The war was characterized by serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian principles. In many cases civilians were the prime targets of the violations. Raids on villages, farms, settlements and households, expropriation of livestock, abductions, systematic rape, killing and maiming of civilians including the use of landmines, were reported in the region and thoroughly documented by external observers (cf. African Rights, 1995). During the second part of the 1990s the conflict in the Nuba Mountains started to attract widespread international attention both because of the reported human rights violations and because of the blockade on humanitarian assistance imposed by the GoS on the population living in SPLM-controlled areas. In GoS-controlled areas people had access to external assistance including food relief throughout the 1990s.

Table 3.1 Differences in health structures between GoS and SPLM areas

<i>Type of structure</i>	<i>Ratio population/ structures GOS areas</i>	<i>Ratio population/ structures SPLM areas</i>
Hospitals	128,647	(no hospitals in SPLM areas)
Health Centres	36,972	123,508
Primary Health Care Units	7,980	10,014

Sources: AACM (1993); IFAD (2004b); Office of the UNR/HC (2002a); (2004a).

Changes in food security levels and resilience of food systems

The changes in food security levels over the 1990s in GoS and SPLM areas

The main repercussions of the long years of armed conflict with its consequent displacement of population and destruction of infrastructure were felt in the agriculture and livestock sectors and thus in the food security situation. Production itself was affected by conflict and the previously existing agricultural and livestock support services were eroded to the extent that by the time the war ended they barely existed. Land-use patterns changed during the war, pushing an increasing number of people into distress cultivation on the mountains slopes, especially in SPLM-controlled areas, where a clear relation between the emergence of intensive production systems and the security situation could be observed as a result of the conflict (Manger, 1994).

Land holdings were significantly reduced. In the fertile government-controlled areas of eastern South Kordofan state, where holdings have always been bigger than the rest of the region, also because of the lower population pressure, IFAD (2004a) estimated that the average cultivated area decreased from 34.9 *feddans* (and a maximum of 148) in 1985–1986 to an average area of 30.4 *feddans* (and a maximum of 127) in 2002–2003. In 2000 in the surplus area of El Buram, original villagers were cultivating 3–5 *feddans*, while displaced households only had access to a home garden (*jubraka*) of 0.5–1 *feddan*, leading to food shortages for 60–70 per cent of the total village households (IFAD, 2000).

Crop production also decreased and the ratio between production and consumption sharply changed in GoS areas. Table 3.2 compares data extrapolated from the South Kordofan Rural Planning Unit (SKRPU) for 1980 and from IFAD for 1997–1998.

In the SPLM areas, the amount of land cultivated and the yield per *feddan* decreased for all crops since the war started. Table 3.3 shows the trend for sorghum.

Table 3.2 Per capita staple grain deficit/surplus in GoS areas

	1980	1997/98
Average per capita production (kg)	187	103
Average per capita consumption (kg)	139	130
Staple grain balance (kg)	47	-27

Notes: SKRPU data refer to 70 per cent of pre-CPA South Kordofan state. However, the areas not included in the analysis are the eastern provinces, which usually have higher productivity than the state average. IFAD household data assume an average household size of 10.

Source: SKRPU (1980); IFAD, (2000)

Table 3.3 Trends in crop production (sorghum) in SPLM areas

Average household	Pre-war	1999	2001
Land cultivated (<i>feddans</i>)	5–7	1–3	0.5–1
Yield of sorghum per <i>feddan</i> (90 kg sacks)	4–5	2–3	1.5–2.5
% total energy requirement available to HH (if all eaten)	190%	27%	11%

Source: Office of the UNR/HC (2002a)

Table 3.3 shows that prior to the conflict the average household was able to secure almost double its food needs from sorghum alone. This allowed a household many options in terms of trade and also meant that there were plenty of labour options available for poor households. By 1999 production had decreased substantially but most households could still meet about one-third of their needs from sorghum consumption, with other needs being met from other food sources. However, by 2001 both yields and the amount of land available had decreased even further, mainly because of insecurity preventing access to land on the plains and because of the resulting increased competition for land on or near the slopes. The decline in yields was undoubtedly due to decreasing soil fertility as 2001 was a very good year in terms of rainfall (Office of the UNR/HC, 2002a). Farmers reported to a UN assessment mission that they no longer left fields fallow or rotated crops and therefore the variety and the quantity of crops grown had decreased. The increased competition over land and the abandonment of the 'shifting cultivation' pattern was a direct result of the displacement of communities from the plains and the insecurity (Office of the UNR/HC, 2002a).

Livestock holdings in the region also decreased significantly as a result of conflict. UN data (Office of the UNR/HC, 2002a) estimated that in SPLM areas holdings had dropped by at least 60–70 per cent from pre-war levels, with significant losses being observed in GoS areas as well. Most households lost all cattle, both because insecurity in the plains made access to pasture land and water points, essential in the dry season, very difficult, and because of the limited access to livestock drugs in areas where fighting was most intense. Looting of cattle was also a common feature of the conflict. Since large holdings of cattle acted as a target, an increasing number of families chose to keep their herds very small by increasing livestock offtake. This had implications for livestock production but also undermined coping strategies as cattle were traditionally considered a vehicle to preserve wealth as they could be traded for grain in poor harvest years (Office of the UNR/HC, 2002a).

Tables 3.4 and 3.5 summarize the main changes in livestock holdings as a consequence of the conflict in two sample areas in SPLM and GoS-controlled territory.

Changes in relative wealth since the conflict began were also significant both in GoS and even more acutely in SPLM-controlled areas. Wealth ranking

Table 3.4 War-related changes in livestock holdings, Nogorban County (SPLM areas)

<i>Economic status</i>	<i>No. Cattle</i>			<i>No. Shoats</i>			<i>% in community</i>		
	<i>Pre-conflict</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>Pre-conflict</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>Pre-conflict</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2002</i>
Rich	50-100	4-10	4	35-50	6-10	5	35-45	6-14	10
Middle	30-50	2-3	2	20-30	4-6	3	18-30	15-20	15
Poor	10-20	0-1	0	10-20	1-3	0	22-30	25-35	75
V. poor	6-10	0	n.a.	6-10	0	n.a.	6-14	36-49	n.a.

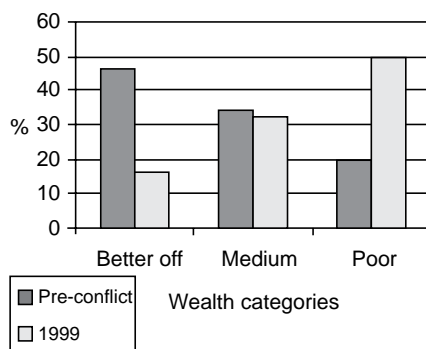
Source: Adapted from UNCERO (1999) and CARE (2002)

Table 3.5 War-related changes in livestock holdings, Dilling Province (GoS areas)

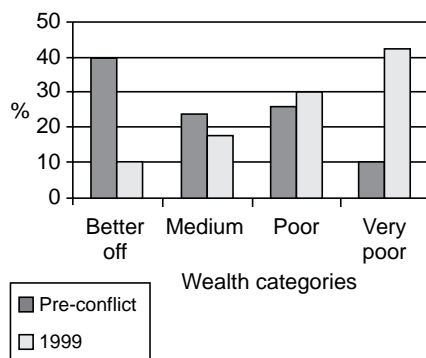
Economic status	No. Cattle		No. Shoats		% in community	
	Pre-conflict	1999	Pre-conflict	1999	Pre-conflict	1999
Rich	200–300	4–8	50–100	10–20	40–52	13–20
Middle	50–100	3–7	30–50	2–7	30–38	30–35
Poor	10–20	0	10–25	0	15–25	45–55

Source: Adapted from UNCERO (1999)

exercises based on crop production, livestock and land holdings show that there was a complete reversal in wealth categories. In Nogorban County perceptions of those falling into the category of being 'better off' stood at 40 per cent prior to the onset of conflict and had collapsed to just 10 per cent in 1999. On the other hand the percentage of very poor increased from 10–42.5 per cent in the same period. In GoS-controlled Dilling the rich were perceived to number 46 per cent pre-conflict and this fell to just 16 per cent by 1999 while the numbers of poor had increased from 20–50 per cent (see Figures 3.2 and 3.3).

**Figure 3.2** Wealth ranking in GoS-controlled areas

Source: Data adapted from UNCERO (1999)

**Figure 3.3** Wealth ranking in SPLM-controlled areas

Source: Data adapted from UNCERO (1999)

Indigenous coping mechanisms and the response to external pressure

The lack of economic opportunity and the pressure on farming and livestock holdings caused by the conflict significantly heightened food insecurity for most households in the Nuba Mountains, particularly in the months preceding the main harvest. People became attuned to finding ways of getting over problems associated with a shortfall of the cultivated foodstuffs such as sorghum and maize that are central to the diet. Gathering fruits and wild leaves is extensively practised and during the conflict there was an increase in the importance of wild plants, nuts, fruits, *Acacia* gums, grass grains and tubers as a source of food by the Nuba population.

In 2002 a joint UN/NGO assessment with government and SPLM humanitarian counterparts observed that in the Nuba Mountains the market for gathered foods, fruits, kernels, leaves and roots was thriving (Office of the UNR/HC, 2002f). Some of the products such as *ardeb* (*Tamarindus indica*), *tabaldi* (*Adansonia digitata*), *nabak* (*Ziziphus spinacristi*) and *lalob* (*Balanites aegyptiaca*) were taken by traders to Khartoum and even exported to other countries. Much of the produce would be used for barter, either for imported goods or for grinding sorghum. In 2002 1 *malwa* (3.3 kg) of *gongolese* (*Adansonia digitata*) could be exchanged for 1 pound (lb) of sugar or 0.16 kg of coffee (Office of the UNR/HC, 2002f). Alternatively, the fruits could be sold for cash.

Another important coping mechanism was charcoal making, although this activity was more significant in GoS-held areas where there was more access to woodland on the plains. Prior to the war casual labour opportunities in towns, agricultural schemes and northern markets were an important strategy to cope in times of food stress, particularly during the hunger gap (May–August). However, the isolation of people in the SPLM areas during the conflict restricted the use of local labour markets. Kinship support was also traditionally a key element of the resilience of the Nuba system, understood as the capacity of the system to absorb shocks and adapt to the changes it had been undergoing so as to still essentially retain the same functions, structures, services and knowledge. In SPLM areas during the conflict the chiefs of a community would collect up to 90 kg of cereals from the medium and rich wealth groups after the harvest. The food would be handed over to the Country Administrator who would store it for distribution to the displaced, the returnees, the poor and the very poor during the hunger gap. The contribution of the better off would be voluntary, with each household determining the amount to contribute (UNCERO, 1999).

In the GoS-controlled areas, during the conflict coping strategies in the rainy season included consumption of wild leafy vegetables and various tree leaves and migration for agricultural labour, mainly weeding on mechanized farms. During the dry season many people migrated to towns and to mechanized farms to seek employment, leaving the old and some women behind. Women would also go to Kosti, Abu Jibeha and other towns and work as maids or be engaged in any other available employment. Reductions in the number

of meals per day, especially in the hunger gap period was common. Cutting trees for firewood, poles for building and for charcoal making were all widely practised. Kinship support mechanisms were also used, but as the conflict had impoverished all wealth groups, there was little surplus for people to share (UNCERO, 1999). However, food aid from international agencies was available to people in GoS areas throughout the conflict to help them maintain an acceptable food security level.

In the SPLM areas, conversely, the Nuba population received only negligible food aid from a small number of international NGOs that were willing to defy the imposition of the humanitarian blockade imposed by the government on SPLM-controlled areas (see below). Such agencies operated through local institutions, the capacity of which was severely limited to assist the very high number of food insecure people living in SPLM areas. An assessment by the Nuba Food Security Working Group conducted between February and May 2001 estimated that 84,500 people in the region were destitute and lived on a day-to-day basis, with life threatening hunger looming on them during the hunger gap period in the rainy season (NFSWG, 2001). The report, prepared by a number of Nuba officials and international food security experts, played a crucial role in supporting the advocacy campaign that led to the end of the humanitarian blockade in SPLM areas and to the signing of the Cease-fire Agreement in Burgenstock (Switzerland) in January 2002.

The institutional response to livelihoods vulnerability

During the conflict, the food security responses undertaken by local institutions were very limited. In SPLM areas the Civil Authorities developed a welfare strategy that envisaged local purchase of grain and seeds for distribution to the 'most needy' households to supplement other sources of food. The strategy only covered people who were facing the risk of extreme malnutrition that could lead to death or forced migration.

Most of the assistance was brought in and provided by the Nuba Rehabilitation, Relief and Development Organisation (NRRDO), a local NGO set up in 1995 (with strong ties with the SPLM and the Civil Authorities) that enjoyed funding and technical support from a variety of international donors and organizations. NRRDO also undertook limited extension programmes for farmers, but the extent and the quality of both the food relief provision and the agricultural technical support remained extremely limited. NRRDO played a crucial role in discouraging international organizations from delivering excessive quantities of food aid to the area in the wake of the cease-fire and advocated for local purchase of food and seeds as much as possible.

In government areas the local Ministry of Agriculture relied heavily on the provision of food aid by WFP and other international and national organizations to address the needs of IDPs as well as local communities. The quality of the extension services of the ministry had also been progressively deteriorating over the years. International assistance in terms of food aid

came to a halt at the end of the 1990s. WFP stopped its operation in the area as a result of the killing of four staff members in June 1998. The agency had been criticized for only assisting populations in GoS areas because of the government ban on delivering aid to SPLM areas. This approach was believed to be encouraging population movement from SPLM areas into GoS areas. The incident sparked much debate amongst international organizations, many of which later decided to withdraw from government-controlled areas until the government agreed to lift its ban on aid delivery to SPLM areas, while others started operating in SPLM areas without permission.

It is important to remark that local authorities on both sides always emphasized that security issues were the primary cause of livelihoods insecurity in the region, which had traditionally been characterized by food surplus in the years before the conflict. In this regard, the cease-fire that was finally brokered in 2002 brought tangible improvements to the quality of life of the people in the Nuba Mountains because increased security allowed people increased access to land and improved trade and access to markets. The concerted action of a number of national and international agencies in supporting livelihoods rehabilitation and strengthening the local food economy in the months following the signing of the cease-fire proved crucial in averting a food security crisis in different areas of the Nuba Mountains.

NMPACT: Beyond conventional humanitarian responses to complex emergencies

The evolution of external interventions in the Nuba Mountains over the 1990s

Following the escalation of the conflict in 1989, the GoS expelled all international NGOs from the Nuba Mountains in 1991 while at the same time intensifying the offensive against the SPLM/A. Soon afterwards, the government imposed a blockade on any relief supplies entering any area under SPLM/A control. The decision was unprecedented in Sudan, since all other areas under SPLM control were covered by the OLS, which distributed relief supplies from its operational base in Kenya.³ Aid was however allowed in government-controlled areas, particularly in support of the government-controlled 'peace camps' where Nuba people were forcibly relocated *en masse* out of the Nuba Mountains. The massive forced relocation of the Nubal human rights organizations to denounce the government policy in the Nuba Mountains as one of 'ethnic cleansing' (African Rights, 1995). The UN estimated that by 1999 there were 72 peace villages in South Kordofan state, with an estimated population of 173,000. UN agencies and a very limited number of NGOs provided assistance to about 105,000 people in 41 peace villages, which were identified as the most vulnerable amongst those affected by displacement (United Nations, 1999).

The humanitarian blockade and the work of humanitarian agencies in government-controlled areas of the Nuba Mountains during the 1990s

attracted the criticism of several human rights organizations (Minority Rights International, African Rights, Africa Watch, Human Rights Voice, Amnesty International and Justice Africa amongst others) and sparked much debate within the humanitarian communities in Khartoum and Nairobi. The aid provided by the agencies in GoS areas was seen as instrumental to the government policy of depopulation of the areas under SPLM control and consequently as a factor in the conflict. International agencies like UNICEF, WFP, CARE and UNDP were sharply criticized for their involvement in the peace villages (African Rights, 1995). The blockade to humanitarian assistance in SPLM areas lasted for more than 10 years whilst assistance to government-controlled areas continued unabated throughout the 1990s, though for most agencies interventions were mainly restricted to emergency activities.

All the national organizations operating in the region, with the exception of the Sudan Council of Churches and arguably the Sudanese Red Crescent, were Islamic relief agencies. Indigenous Nuba organizations complained that these agencies were using relief, particularly food aid, to control and Islamize the Nuba. More importantly, it was felt that food was being used as a magnet to force Nuba people out of the SPLM-controlled areas with the promise of food in the peace camps (Rahhal, 2001). But the work of the international agencies received criticism in equal measure, particularly in the case of the two agencies with the biggest programmes in the region, UNICEF and UNDP. Both agencies came under intense criticism by the *OLS Review* (Karim et al, 1996) commissioned in 1996. The review criticized UNICEF for promoting its Child Friendly Village Schemes in 29 villages in South Kordofan, in a context where internal warfare had placed children at great risk. The review wondered to what extent the UN was 'aware of the realities facing the beneficiary populations and the degree to which development initiatives had been explicitly delinked from the political context in which they operated' (Karim et al, 1996).

The review was even more concerned about a programme UNDP was implementing directly with GoS in the Nuba Mountains, the Area Rehabilitation Scheme (ARS) in Kadugli. The *OLS Review* observed that the objectives of the ARS included supporting the local Peace Administration to 'resettle returnees in peace villages and then promote agricultural development to strengthen their attachment to land' (UNDP, 1996, quoted in Karim et al., 1996). The OLS Review Team concluded that given that the Nuba had been dispossessed of their land, the strategy suggested a disturbing ignorance of local realities and that the programme represented a 'de facto accommodation by the UN with disaster-producing policies of the government' (Karim et al, 1996).

Throughout the 1990s the international response in the SPLM-controlled areas was essentially limited to a restricted number of international NGOs funding the main indigenous organization operating in the area, the Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organization (NRRDO), which was largely unable to meet the acute needs of the local Nuba population, which became progressively more food insecure.

The increasing use of humanitarian aid as a weapon of war, as with the blockade of assistance to the SPLM areas and the experience of UNICEF and the UNDP ARS in GoS areas, highlighted the need for a more conflict-sensitive approach to programming in the region. Towards the end of the 1990s, the Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Co-ordinator (UNR/HC) for Sudan took it upon itself to try and develop a coordinated response for the region, after a period when it promoted intensive efforts to gain access to the SPLM-controlled areas. After years of high-level pressure, which included the involvement of the UN Secretary-General himself in 1998 with an impromptu visit to Khartoum, the UN was finally granted access by the GoS to the SPLM areas to make an assessment in 1999, though a proper humanitarian intervention did not begin until 2002.

The findings of the 1999 inter-agency mission, which visited both SPLM- and GoS-controlled areas, emphasized that assistance to the Nuba Mountains population would be best provided through a comprehensive, multi-sectoral, multi-agency rehabilitation programme addressing both SPLM and GoS-controlled areas, implemented outside the OLS structure, both for reasons of expediency, given the government's strong opposition to extending OLS to the Nuba Mountains, and to identify a response that was more appropriate to the Nuba Mountains context. The political and security situation in the Nuba Mountains prevailing at the end of the 1990s was such that a humanitarian response was required that took into account the difficulty of operating in a complex political environment where humanitarian aid was being used as a weapon in the conflict. It had become apparent to many of the actors involved that only a concerted effort based on policy dialogue with the parties to the conflict and with key external players could have unblocked the impasse around the provision of humanitarian assistance to the region.

NMPACT: Key features

Following the 1999 assessment, a consultative process with a wide range of international NGOs and UN agencies with interest in the Nuba Mountains was started in January 2000 under the leadership of the Office of the UNR/HC, to design the Nuba Mountains Programme. The process was highly inclusive and several meetings were held with all partners involved in the Nuba Mountains, Khartoum and Nairobi with the aim of building a common platform amongst actors, both national and international, who had long been working on the opposite sides of the political divide. After a year-long consultation process with programme partners, a joint programme document was endorsed in May 2001, where emphasis was placed on the development of a set of principles of engagement to be adhered to by all agencies. The implementation of the Nuba Mountains Programme was however hindered by the stalemate over the issue of access to SPLM-controlled areas, which continued to be denied by the government despite repeated promises to the highest levels in the UN. The programme agencies therefore decided to focus their efforts on advocacy

Table 3.6 NMPACT Principles of Engagement

<i>Principles of engagement</i>
All interventions part of a single, integrated, conflict transformation programme
Develop an enabling environment for Nuba-led longer-term peace process
Use 'least harm' approach – avoid endangering opportunities for longer-term peace building
Ensure that interventions strengthen self-reliance, local capacities and opportunities for socio-economic and cultural interdependence
Ensure protection of human rights and sources of livelihoods
Be flexible: responsiveness to changing conditions
Obtain unimpeded, secure access to all areas in Nuba

directed at Western diplomats to facilitate unblocking the humanitarian impasse in the Nuba Mountains, particularly in light of the fact that a food security crisis was maturing in SPLM-controlled areas.

The advocacy action was a major factor in catalysing senior diplomatic interest that in January 2002 resulted in the brokering of the Cease-fire Agreement. The NMP consultation process was extended to all the agencies with an interest to operate in the Nuba Mountains region and benefited from the strong involvement of Nuba partners from various civil society organizations. The new initiative came to be known as the Nuba Mountains Programme Advancing Conflict Transformation (NMPACT). NMPACT was designed as a phased, multi-agency, cross-line programme aimed at enabling all stakeholders to contribute to a Nuba-led response to address the short and long term needs of the people of the Nuba Mountains. Its overall strategic goal was: 'To enhance the Nuba people's capacity for self reliance within a sustained process of conflict transformation guided by the aspirations, priorities and analyses of the Nuba people themselves.' As specified in the strategic goal, the primary target groups of the programme were the Nuba communities, especially in areas of greatest needs. Given the focus of the conflict and the historical marginalization of Nuba communities in the region, the overall goal was formulated to give special emphasis to the Nuba people's role in guiding the programme (Office of the UNR/HC, 2002b).

The programme constituted a major breakthrough in that it became the first and only programme to be subscribed to by both the GoS and the SPLM while the conflict was still in an active state. The GoS Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) and the SPLA/M Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association – later renamed the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SRRC) – were included as equal partners in the NMPACT Coordination Structure together with an international programme coordinator. Such an institutional set up was unprecedented in Sudan's humanitarian context. The full involvement of HAC and SRRC in the coordination structure gave them a strong sense of buy-in into the programme, towards which they consistently showed strong commitment and interest in facilitating its speedy implementation. The Coordination Structure was also made up of field coordinators in both the

GoS and the SPLM areas who worked equally closely with their respective HAC and SRRC counterparts. Many regard the involvement of the warring parties in a single programme and the cross-line focus of the initiative as the most significant achievements of NMPACT (Office of the UNR/HC, 2003).

The extensive consultation process that had accompanied its development produced a large amount of consensus. By the end of 2003, nine UN agencies, 16 international NGOs and 24 national NGOs had endorsed the programme. Seven of the partners took an active role in becoming sectoral focal points for the NMPACT programming sectors, which included: Agriculture and Food Economy, Education, Health and Nutrition, Water and Environmental Sanitation, Livelihoods Rehabilitation and Peace Building. The Coordination Structure was able to benefit from the technical support of two advisers assigned by USAID who were specialized in agriculture and food economy and in land and natural resource issues.

The extensive consultation process undertaken to design NMPACT also actively involved a high number of donors in drawing up the programme framework. This approach proved to be extremely useful in gaining the buy-in of the donors from the start and to ensure that key elements of the programme were funded as implementation began. Although funding gaps remained important for some agencies, particularly within the UN family, the level of funds allocated to NMPACT partners was highly significant, totalling in excess of \$18 million in its first year of implementation (Office of the UNR/HC, 2002c).

The highly participatory approach adopted by NMPACT was reflected also in the design of a policy-making structure that would support the Coordination Structure in orienting collective decision making. A mechanism was created that allowed all implementing partners to meet systematically at a neutral location in the Nuba Mountains in what was called the 'NMPACT Partners' Forum' (see below).

The OLS: Lessons learned and its implications for NMPACT

OLS had been operating for more than a decade with two separate structures in GoS and SPLM-controlled areas and there was a high level of mistrust between the international organizations working on the two sides of the political divide, let alone the parties at war.

The task of lowering the level of suspicion between the warring parties and the international partners working on the two sides of the political divide proved to be a major obstacle and required a considerable investment in staff time on the part of the Office of the UNR/HC, including the UNR/HC himself, to ensure that the consultation process was genuinely participatory and that consensus around the initiative was maximized amongst the potential partners.

NMPACT was able to capitalize on the lessons learned from OLS and to build on the criticism that this had received from various quarters (Karim et

al, 1996; African Rights, 1997). OLS was developed as an access mechanism to allow a rapid response to a critical humanitarian crisis in the South at the end of the 1980s, and it then gradually became an umbrella for coordinated programming as well, while NMPACT set out from the start as a joint coordinated programming framework. The main lesson learned from the OLS was obviously to transcend the North/South divide and to establish one single, coordinated cross-line initiative. NMPACT therefore constituted a departure from the mode of coordination offered by the OLS in that it was the first substantial attempt to bridge the long-established division between agencies based out of Khartoum and Nairobi. The change in approach enabled the programme to attract the involvement of a high number of NGOs, many of which had refused to join OLS and which were not part of its consortium, with only two NGOs operating in the Nuba Mountains and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) remaining outside the NMPACT framework. These three agencies however liaised closely with the NMPACT partners, attended the fora and provided the partners with logistical support when needed.

The Coordination Structure designed by NMPACT also departed from the OLS model in the way it involved the official government and SPLM counterparts. Relations between OLS and its humanitarian and political counterparts had often been strained, both in the North and in the South, with the government and the SPLM frequently being obstructive and displaying dissatisfaction for the operation (Karim et al, 1996). The NMPACT strategy of fully involving HAC and SRRC together in the coordination and implementation of the programme proved to be successful. By working together around a common platform HAC and SRRC neutralized each other's more extreme positions and engaged with the international partners in a constructive manner. Bringing together key actors working on the two sides of the political divide into the programme helped to create a new environment of trust and collaboration that spilled over to other areas of assistance in Sudan.

Another distinctive difference between NMPACT and OLS was that coordination was based upon a set of principles of engagement (see below). These principles were developed by the NMPACT partners and Nuba representatives and provided a solid programmatic framework.

The principles of engagement

Much of the uniqueness and effectiveness of NMPACT derived from the principles of engagement. These provided the partners with an overall framework to buy into and gave the joint response a strong conceptual rootedness. The development of the principles stemmed from the common analysis of the partners of the limitations of traditional approaches to complex emergencies founded on the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality. The experience of the external interventions in the Nuba Mountains over the 1990s had created a shared understanding between the

NMPACT stakeholders of the political functions of aid in conflict situations (Macrae and Leader, 2000). This common understanding led to the articulation of the 'principles of engagement', the underlying theme of which was to integrate the aid framework within a political framework to operate in a conflict context. The NMPACT principles of engagement can be summarized as (Office of UNR/HC, 2002b):

- All interventions to be part of a single, integrated, conflict transformation programme;
- Develop an enabling environment for a Nuba-led longer term peace process;
- Use 'least harm' approach – avoid endangering opportunities for longer-term peace building;
- Ensure that interventions strengthen self-reliance, local capacities and opportunities for socio-economic and cultural interdependence;
- Ensure protection of human rights and sources of livelihoods;
- Be flexible and responsive to changing conditions; and
- Obtain unimpeded, secure access to all areas in Nuba.

Though it has been difficult to assess the level of success of the Coordination Structure in ensuring partners' adherence to all the principles, these are regarded by all involved as providing an extremely valuable programming tool. The principles focused on sustainability of programmes, national ownership, equitability of interventions across the political divide, transforming conflict and 'doing least harm', as the 'do no harm' approach (Anderson, 1999) was renamed by the NMPACT partners. The principles of engagement represented an innovative instrument of aid coordination in the context of assistance to Sudan, especially in areas affected by conflict.

The NMPACT internal review of 2003 emphasized that, thanks to the principles of engagement, such as the focus on capacity building, NMPACT had been effective in generating a strong sustainability focus that cut across the work of the partners and that had resulted in the implementation of programmes that were directed more towards training and capacity building than to the delivery of external inputs (Office of the UNR/HC, 2003). This trait is particularly significant given the fact that agencies were operating in an environment where the cease-fire had not yet matured into a peace agreement and represented an important departure from the model of assistance used in other areas of conflict in Sudan.

One of the most fundamental principles of engagement was that of equitability. The principle advocates for the use of measurable and fair standards to ensure that partners' interventions respond to local needs and capacities without re-enforcing the underlying causes of conflict. In order to provide the partners with an objective basis to apply the principle, the First NMPACT Partners' Forum recommended that a region-wide cross-line survey be undertaken in order to provide the partners with the necessary data and information to prioritize areas of intervention and target the population in an equitable manner. The survey, carried out by the partners and their counterparts

in November 2002, aimed to analyse strategies and goals of the Nuba people and the barriers they faced, especially with regard to return, resettlement and recovery, in order to understand the socio-economic and political contexts of the possible interventions of the NMPACT partners, and to collect sufficient information to compare livelihoods and geographic differences in people's quality of life in order to support the principle of promoting equitable and fair interventions.

The data collected during the survey showed that there was a profound gap in terms of access to facilities, with communities in SPLM areas being distinctly disadvantaged compared to those in GoS areas. However, the survey report emphasized that the key element for the NMPACT partners was not the provision of services, as most of the people interviewed were still affected by the main consequence of the crisis in the Nuba Mountains: displacement. The survey team argued that for the process of rehabilitation to be sustainable, provision of services and other type of assistance had to be linked to people's return to their land, as this was the only strategy that would have allowed people to have access to a sustainable livelihoods resource base and to take advantage of existing economic opportunities. The results of the survey were presented to the Second Partners' Forum, where the partners decided to collectively embark on a series of studies on land tenure to inform partners' efforts to support the return of IDPs (Office of the UNR/HC, 2002e).

The principles of engagement indirectly became an important instrument to formulate policies, as the information collected to underpin the implementation of the principles had an inevitable impact on the policy-making processes within the programme, resulting in the prioritization of the issues of displacement and land tenure. Other principles, such as that of the protection of sources of livelihoods, drove the Coordination Structure jointly with some NMPACT partners to formulate clear environmental guidelines (including specific procedures for dam construction) to be adopted by the NMPACT partners (White, 2003).

Lastly, the principle of supporting national ownership made NMPACT unique in its involvement of government and SPLM counterparts in the coordination of the programme, thereby conferring ownership of the process to the national authorities. Local ownership was also reinforced through the participation of a large number of national representatives in the partners' fora, where key programming decisions were discussed and agreed upon. The fora, as well as other cross-line meetings, were held in a neutral location in the Nuba Mountains established with the consensus of both warring parties. The fact that NMPACT brought the GoS and the SPLM together on Sudanese soil several times in a neutral environment has been seen by many programme stakeholders as a substantial contribution to the conflict transformation process in the region, which remains the ultimate goal of NMPACT.

'Political humanitarianism' and collective advocacy

The process of programme design for NMPACT went hand in hand with a strong and coordinated advocacy action directed at Western diplomats to facilitate the unblocking of the humanitarian impasse in the Nuba Mountains. This had particular significance in light of the fact that a food security crisis was evolving in SPLM-controlled areas. Such action culminated in the collective decision between 2000 and 2001 of most of the agencies operating in GoS-controlled areas either to suspend their operations in the North or to initiate activities in SPLM-controlled areas where access was denied by the GoS. This move was aimed at applying pressure on government officials to open up access to SPLM-controlled areas, where needs were known to be great and increasingly acute. The decision to withdraw from GoS areas was difficult to take, as this *de facto* meant depriving more needy people of external assistance, but the common analysis of the partners was that aid was being used to lure away people from SPLM areas into GoS areas, thus contributing to exacerbate the conflict in the region. For this reason, it was felt that temporary withdrawal from government-controlled areas was the most ethical short-term choice.

The partners were aware that the mounting crisis in SPLM territory required a political solution and that they needed to attract more international attention to the situation in the Nuba Mountains to resolve the access issue. The UNR/HC at the time therefore used his offices to increase advocacy with western diplomats on behalf of all the partners. This action was a major factor in catalysing senior diplomatic interest that in January 2002 resulted in the brokering of the Cease-fire Agreement. The accord was aided by the offices of US Senator John Danforth, who had been appointed US Envoy for Peace in Sudan by President Bush on 6 September 2001. The signing of the agreement presented those involved in the Nuba Mountains with a major opportunity. The NMPACT programme finally had a chance to become operational. In its final design it became closely linked to the implementation of the Cease-fire Agreement and stipulated close cooperation with the Joint Military Commission/Joint Monitoring Mission (JMC/JMM), the international force mandated to monitor the cease-fire as well as the military and policing roles of the parties in the region. Once again, this represented a novel development in the context of Sudan in that a humanitarian intervention was expressly linked to a political initiative.

The vigorous interaction with key political and military actors involved in the Nuba Mountains was an important constant of the NMPACT approach. From its very inception NMPACT was actively engaged with the JMC/JMM and there was regular and structured interaction between NMPACT and the Friends of Nuba Mountains, a group made up of senior diplomats working in the Sudan, which provided political leadership for the JMC/JMM. The actors concerned, particularly the JMC/JMM, were not always entirely amenable to the concerns raised by NMPACT. However, a deliberate commitment to active, constructive engagement cemented relations and over time proved crucial in

ensuring that a number of important issues, which are beyond the remit of humanitarian organizations but that impacted on the response, were addressed in a timely and adequate manner. These included land tenure issues, conflict between nomadic and farming groups and the harassment by the authorities of civilians returning to farms (Office of the UNR/HC, 2003).

The multiple forms of advocacy and engagement with a range of national and international political bodies promoted by the UN agencies and the partner NGOs since 1999 allowed NMPACT unprecedented links, on the part of a humanitarian operation, to the political sphere, an approach that was defined as 'political humanitarianism' (Pantuliano, 2003). Some of the partners argued that particularly in the early period of the Cease-fire Agreement, NMPACT was a key factor underpinning the first extension of the cease-fire since it was seen as an important element of the peace dividend (Office of the UNR/HC, 2003). Later on, NMPACT's research work on land tenure issues (Alden Wily, 2005) was used to inform the special negotiations on the contested areas that took place in Kenya from January 2003 to January 2005 within the context of the wider Sudan peace process. In addition, the studies provided the basis for developing the Terms of Reference of the Nuba Mountains Land Commission envisaged by the Two Areas Protocol regulating peace in the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile, agreed in Naivasha, Kenya, in May 2004 and endorsed in the implementation modalities of the CPA signed in January 2005.

Food security and land tenure

The vigorous advocacy action that had been promoted as a result of the collective adherence of NMPACT partners to the principle of 'do no harm' (Anderson, 1999) to obtain a cease-fire agreement in the region had largely been prompted by the need to avert a severe food security crisis looming over the SPLM-controlled areas of the Nuba Mountains. These areas had not received international assistance since 1989 and there was therefore a danger of destabilizing the local economy and creating a dependency syndrome through the provision of food aid, as had happened in many parts of southern Sudan. A new approach was designed within NMPACT where food delivery was coupled with programme interventions strongly focused on supporting local capacity and enhancing sustainability through strengthening the local food economy.

The NMPACT food security approach prioritized capacity building over the delivery of external inputs (food aid and infrastructure) and removal of the constraints to food security (insecurity, barriers to access to land, market constraints, amongst others) from the onset of the intervention. Delivery of food aid and seeds and tools also took place in the Nuba Mountains the context of NMPACT to support more vulnerable communities, but these interventions were coupled by joint efforts to root the partners' response into a deeper understanding of the causes behind food insecurity in the region.

The population of the Nuba Mountains was subdivided by the NMPACT partners according to the livelihoods activities in which people were engaged, i.e. rural farmers (in GoS and SPLM areas), pastoralists, urban dwellers and IDP camp occupants, the latter three categories only found in GoS areas (Office of the UNR/HC, 2002d). The rural farmers were later divided between poor, average and better off depending on their holdings (Office of the UNR/HC, 2002f). The principle of equitable assistance, which was one of the fundamental principles of engagement of NMPACT, required that assistance be provided in an equitable manner on the basis of need. This meant that the partners had to prioritize camp occupants and farmers, who had been identified as the most vulnerable groups, in removing barriers and recovering assets to rebuild their livelihoods security. The findings of the cross-line survey in late 2002 highlighted the need to address the issue of displacement within the Nuba Mountains as a priority, particularly for people confined to IDP camps, in order to facilitate people's return to their homeland and their access to a sustainable resource base.

The partners' fora and the cross-line survey also showed the need for the partners to place a special focus on land tenure issues, which were perceived to be one of the greatest constraints to food security in a region that had been considered largely food secure in the past. Several studies were carried out (Manger et al, 2003a; Manger et al, 2003b; Harragin, 2003a), including a three months survey that covered all parts of the Nuba Mountains region (Harragin, 2003b). The survey analysed and recorded traditional land ownership, existing land titles and illegal land alienation to non-Nuba owners. This work was undertaken in order to underpin advocacy action to ensure that IDPs could reclaim land grabbed in the past and return to their farms in contested areas of the Nuba Mountains or receive compensation. It is important to emphasize that the research work on land tenure was carried out while the conflict was still active, albeit under conditions of cease-fire.

Advocacy action was promoted by the NMPACT partners to ensure that local purchase of food from within the Nuba Mountains was maximized and that food aid was limited to areas of extreme need where cultivation had not been possible. The advocacy action brought limited results during the first two years of operation of NMPACT but was successful in ensuring an adequate targeting of communities and more strategic use of food aid.

Analysis of NMPACT food security using the FAO twin-track approach

FAO has developed an analytical framework that aims to assess the health of a food system in crisis. This is an attempt to help those responding to food emergencies to consider their interventions in terms of the resilience of the system to withstand shocks in the longer term and in so doing think well beyond the immediate and temporary efficacy of emergency responses to immediate and life saving needs. Elements of such resilience include 'strengthening diversity; rebuilding local institutions and traditional support

mechanisms; reinforcing local knowledge and building on farmers' capacity to adapt and reorganise' (Pingali et al, 2005).

The framework is organized in terms of two 'tracks' that are considered mutually reinforcing. Direct and immediate access to food is the first and is what is considered essential in the immediate term and important for medium-term planning. Rural development and product enhancement is the second track and consists of elements that its creators consider are essential for stability and predictability.

The twin-track framework, which is premised on the assumption that food emergencies are social and political constructions, is consistent with the thinking that underpinned NMPACT. An analysis of the NMPACT interventions using the twin-track framework is therefore useful in determining the extent to which the programme lived up to its objectives. Figure 3.4 shows how the food security related interventions of the NMPACT partners evolved over the period 2002 to 2004 and are compared with the state of interventions of the same organizations prior to the establishment of NMPACT in 2002.

The summary of the 188 interventions covering the work of 14 NMPACT partners involved in the agriculture and food economy sector, shows a number of clear trends.⁴ Key to these is that since the inception of the programme the balance of interventions increasingly falls into the category of 'rural development and productivity enhancement' in both GoS and SPLM-controlled areas as opposed to those that are described as belonging to 'direct and immediate access to food'. This is significant given that until the beginning of 2002, major parts of the Nuba Mountains were under an effective aid embargo and the region was in the midst of conflict. In other

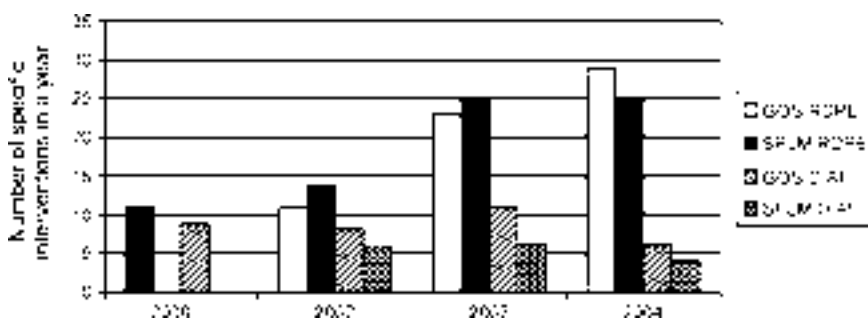


Figure 3.4 Analysis of NMPACT using twin-track approach

Note: RDPE = rural development and productivity enhancement; DIAF = direct and immediate access to food.

Source: Information derived from a series of NMPACT documents, chiefly the information tables produced between 2002 and 2004, and from a stocktaking exercise detailing agencies' activities in South Kordofan State, which was prepared during the development of the Nuba Mountains Programme, NMPACT's precursor. The information tables can be found in Pantuliano (2005).

circumstances the trends would be quite different, but here it would appear that NMPACT, with its emphasis on local capacity building, sustainability and protection of livelihoods, delivered in its own terms, and in line with the twin-track approach successfully facilitated a collective response that buttressed the stability of the food system. The direct and immediate access to food element remained fairly constant in terms of the numbers of interventions, though showed signs of tailing off in 2004. The modest nature of this element of the response in a crisis of this nature and magnitude is likely to be unusual (and for example is in direct contrast with what happened under OLS) given the tendency for agencies to solicit as well as receive encouragement to provide food and other short-term emergency provisions such as seeds and tools, which are part of this framework.

From the NMPACT information tables it is difficult to assess the full extent of the impact on the ground of the collective NMPACT partners' intervention in support of the recovery of local food systems, since a full impact assessment is yet to be undertaken. However, at the peers review workshop organized by FAO in Nairobi in January 2005 during the preparation of this study, representatives from Nuba communities and international food security experts working in the Nuba Mountains emphasized that significant changes have taken place in the region since NMPACT became operational. Some of the examples quoted included the increase in the number of markets throughout the region, the levelling of prices between markets in GoS and in SPLM areas (in 2001 market prices for non-locally produced goods in SPLM areas were at least double the prices in GoS areas), the increased diversity and availability of goods in SPLM markets, the opening of cattle markets and increased market access for farmers and livestock keepers. Participants also mentioned improved access to key services such as water.

These preliminary observations, which obviously will need to be corroborated by in-depth research and analysis, seem to suggest that NMPACT's approach to food security had an important role in strengthening people's own strategies to enhancing resilience and lowering the dependency on external food aid, as the decrease in the number of agencies involved in emergency delivery of aid and seeds seems to demonstrate. It was commented at the peers review meeting in January 2005 that NMPACT's innovative food security approach was made possible because it was part of a wider institutional context where local counterparts were genuinely committed to promoting more long-sighted responses and not to manipulating external emergency assistance for political purposes. Undoubtedly, NRRDO's role in discouraging international organizations from delivering excessive quantities of aid to the Nuba Mountains in the wake of the cease-fire and its advocacy in favour of local purchase of food and seed played a crucial role in shaping the design of NMPACT and its food security strategy.

The interface between local institutions and external stakeholders

Since its formation, NMPACT strove to promote Nuba leadership in the implementation effort and to confer ownership of the implementation process to the national authorities. The SPLM-controlled areas of the Nuba Mountains had developed a remarkable and unique experiment in grassroots democracy that was unparalleled in the rest of the country, be it in government or SPLM administered areas. This was largely thanks to the vision of the late Yusuf Kuwa Mekki, the first SPLM governor of the Nuba Mountains, who endeavoured to initiate a democratic political process in the areas under his control. The centrepiece of such process is the South Kordofan Advisory Council, a Nuba parliament that has been meeting yearly to decide on the most important matters of policy facing the Nuba (cf. Flint, 2001). The council, established in 1992, was the supreme legislative body in the SPLM areas of the Nuba Mountains and had the authority to overrule the executive (the governor). A functioning judiciary was also in place in the SPLM areas. This form of collective, democratic decision making was a remarkable achievement in the context of Sudan, especially in an area that was at war for nearly two decades, and the NMPACT partners were committed to ensuring that the programme would not undermine emerging Nuba institutions.

The strong involvement of HAC and SRRC in the Coordination Structure provided the partners with a channel to address issues with official counterparts both at the field and central (Khartoum/Nairobi) levels, thereby facilitating prompt resolution of problems when they arose. Although the programme did well to involve government and SPLM counterparts in the coordination of the programme, the Coordination Structure and the partners were not equally successful in extending this ownership to the Nuba NGOs and the community on the ground during the first phase of the programme. The aim of promoting genuine Nuba leadership within the response as a whole therefore remained elusive. The lack of local Nuba control over the interventions that were being designed and carried out was a flaw that came to the surface as the programme was rolled out. While many partners focused their efforts on capacity building of local communities, very little was done to support the emergence of genuine Nuba leadership, as envisaged by the NMPACT document. This limited the capacity of the local communities to steer the rehabilitation and development process and the ability of the partners to focus their response in line with a genuinely Nuba analysis, set of aspirations and priorities. The imbalance of power was skewed in favour of international humanitarian representatives when it came to setting agendas and priorities for the interventions in the region, including food security responses. However, many of the NMPACT partners recognized that it was incumbent upon them to remedy this situation in order to be true to the philosophy and mandate of the programme (Office of the UNR/HC, 2003).

More efforts were undertaken at a later stage to involve the Nuba at the grassroots level in all phases of the programme cycle. A NMPACT Monitoring

and Evaluation Unit made up of staff from the Nuba Mountains was set up with the support of the World Bank, which trained Nuba Mountains communities in participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation techniques (World Bank, 2004). The underlying idea was that trained communities will be empowered to set priorities for rehabilitation and development interventions in their areas, monitor implementation of programmes and projects and review the performance of external agencies vis-à-vis the principles of engagement.

Information flows and links with the NMPACT response and policy framework

The success of NMPACT in its early days was due in large part to the fact that the programme had a dedicated coordination structure at both the local and the central levels that facilitated the flow of information between the partners. In the 2003 internal review many of the NMPACT partners observed that the NMPACT framework and the Coordination Structure had been instrumental in helping them define, prioritize and coordinate activities.

Within the programme, information was mainly shared through circulation of written material via the Coordination Structure as well as through personal interaction. Regular reports and in-depth studies were circulated to the partners by the Coordination Structure, which would also circulate partners' document to the whole range of partners. Furthermore, a detailed 'NMPACT partners' information table' was regularly prepared and shared with all programme stakeholders, including donors.

Attempts to create a database accessible to all partners and stakeholders were also made following the conclusion of the Baseline Data Collection Survey in November 2002, during which team members were able to gather a high amount of data for each of NMPACT's technical sectors. However, the establishment of the database was hampered by the turn over of personnel in the coordination of the programme.

Regular monthly meetings of the partners were scheduled in Khartoum and in Nairobi as well as at the field level, both in Kadugli (GoS headquarters) and Kaoda (SPLM headquarters), with the main aim of sharing information and reviewing progress towards the implementation of the principles.

The most important avenue for information sharing was obviously the partners' fora, where all stakeholders both at the capitals and the field levels were gathered together to review progress, share information and discuss policy issues. The fora provided an invaluable opportunity for national and international partners operating at the local level to meet in the same place with managers, donors and policy makers stationed in Khartoum and in Nairobi and take joint decisions on key aspects of the programme. This meant that Nuba people from local CBOs and NGOs had a chance to actively influence and direct the NMPACT policy agenda and orient the priorities of the programme. At the fora the partners would collectively review the implementation of the planned activities, share information and discuss the collective research agenda to inform policies aimed at strengthening partners' interventions.

For example, at the First Partners' Forum in July 2002 the decision was made that more analysis and investigation was needed to identify disparities and different levels of needs in the region and prioritize interventions on actual needs (Office of the UNR/HC, 2002d). This led the partners to plan and carry out the region-wide cross-line survey that provided the basis for the second phase of NMPACT, which was focused on rehabilitation. At the Second Partners' Forum in December 2002, a collective decision was made that more research was needed into the issue of land tenure, also to underpin the results of the cross-line survey, which had identified displacement and return as the most critical issues to be addressed by the NMPACT partners (Office of the UNR/HC, 2002e).

Limitations in delivering the model and new challenges

Institutional failings and their effects on implementation

The central role of the Coordination Structure in the success of NMPACT was further brought to light by a year-long staffing gap in 2003, both at the central and field levels, which was largely the result of bureaucratic and administrative delays of both UNDP and UN-OCHA (Office of the UNR/HC, 2003). This gap left the programme without leadership and support and especially affected the partners' focus on the principles of engagement and the interaction between the counterparts. The absence of field coordinators on the ground led counterparts and partners to complain that insufficient attention was being paid to peripheral areas of the Nuba Mountains region, with the consequence that the 'doing least harm' principle was neglected (Office of the UNR/HC, 2003). The resultant lack of information on needs and disparities undermined the development of the intended focus on equitable responses across the region, particularly along political lines and for the different livelihoods groups. Furthermore, the prolonged lack of field coordinators weakened the capacity building process of HAC and SRRC, frustrating their efforts to play their coordinating role effectively, as well as undermining attempts to root the response more deeply amongst a diverse set of local actors.

Crucially, collective decision making, which had so marked the evolution of NMPACT, was restricted by a change of leadership within the UN system, which put strong emphasis on the internal coherence of UN activities and structures. In an attempt to restructure the UN operation throughout Sudan, unilateral decisions about the NMPACT programme were made that did not fully involve either the counterparts or the partners. This had negative effects on the trust building that had been forged in the preceding years. In particular, the official counterparts were disappointed with this turn of events and over time relations gradually deteriorated. Both parties disliked the change of approach and the SPLM in particular felt that certain decisions had considerably affected their interests.

The absence of a fully functioning Coordination Structure was felt particularly in relation to the monitoring of the principles, especially that of equitability. It is interesting to note that the JMC/JMM commented that in general terms they perceived the NGOs as having better incorporated the NMPACT principles into their operation than the UN agencies, whose adherence to the principles diminished once the Coordination Structure became less operational (Office of the UNR/HC, 2003).

The changes that arose around the implementation of NMPACT reflect weaknesses within the UN coordination system as a whole. NMPACT was born out of the vision of an array of national and international actors and many within the UN system provided it with leadership. Despite the presence of a wide number of influential backers, ranging from donors to Bretton Woods institutions, and the obvious buy-in of both the warring parties and of numerous UN agencies and international NGOs, the Office of the UNR/HC was ultimately in a position to override consensual decision making to give priority to the restructuring of the overall Sudan operation. The very considerable autonomy of the UNR/HC and the lack of a clear accountability structure meant that NMPACT was very vulnerable to changes in priorities and policy from the top.

A further change of leadership in late 2004 – both with the NMPACT coordinator and the UNR/HC – has allowed the programme to refocus on its original objectives and the principles of engagement and to rebuild its partnerships with national counterparts and institutions. In March 2005 the Coordination Structure carried out a review to examine the continued relevance of NMPACT in a post-peace scenario and to analyse ways in which the programme can readjust its goals and principles in order to contribute to the implementation of the CPA.

The post-peace scenario: Reinventing NMPACT to support the implementation of the CPA

The Third Partners' Forum, which was held in February 2005, focused on reassessing the continued role of NMPACT in a post-peace scenario. The forum concluded that the NMPACT framework, its goal and its principles of engagement continued to be highly relevant to the current regional context. The partners felt that the emphasis on 'conflict transformation' in the approach of the overall programme framework remained relevant, if not critical, in a post-CPA era (Office of the UNSRSG and R/HC, 2005).

There was widespread concern amongst the NMPACT partners, including the official counterparts, that the protocols making up the CPA had not addressed all of the root causes of the conflict. However, the partners believed that underlying issues that could lead to renewed tension had to be tackled through democratic, non-violent means by the local community and that the NMPACT model could be instrumental in fostering dialogue and constructive interaction in the region. The Third Partners' Forum affirmed the commitment

of the NMPACT partners to a renewed effort to focus on the principles of engagement, particularly on the principle of fostering an enabling environment for an indigenous, Nuba-led long-term peace process, which remains essential in this phase. The forum also concluded that NMPACT partners should focus on supporting successful power sharing between the warring parties and the integration of the two administrative entities, the Nuba Mountains (the old South Kordofan state) and West Kordofan state, which have been merged into a new, enlarged State of South Kordofan according to the provisions of the CPA (Office of the UNSRSG and R/HC, 2005). This required an official clarification or amendment to the original programme document by the two counterparts as the NMPACT mandate is currently restricted to the areas covered by the Burgenstock Cease-fire Agreement, i.e. the five provinces of today's South Kordofan and only Lagawa Province in West Kordofan.

Given the special conditions accorded to the Nuba Mountains by the Two Areas Protocol signed in Naivasha in May 2004 and endorsed within the CPA in January 2005 and the general dissatisfaction of many Nuba about the agreement⁵ (cf. Nuba Survival, 2005), failing to successfully implement the CPA in the new South Kordofan state may pose a challenge not just for the reconstituted state, but for the entire CPA in the country as a whole (Office of the UNSRSG and R/HC, 2005). In this regard, it is important that the spirit and the principles of NMPACT be retained in any new humanitarian and development intervention and in the coordination of the aid efforts that will have to be redesigned to reflect the change of context in the Nuba Mountains. Drawing on the experience of NMPACT, any new arrangement should be built on an analysis on how to best support the implementation of the protocol, including the merger of the state institutions and the engagement of the Missirya communities of West Kordofan, a large pastoralist group belonging to the Baqqara Arab tribe, with Nuba groups in the state.

Conclusions and lessons learned for policy and practice in complex emergencies

Coordination in complex emergencies

The experience of NMPACT and the processes that led up to it, albeit short, offer significant lessons for programming in complex emergencies, be it in other areas of Sudan or in countries with a similar context. NMPACT was developed out of learning from the OLS experience and capitalized on the shortcomings of that response to bring about changes that were unprecedented in the history of humanitarian engagement in Sudan. In particular, NMPACT set out to bring a long-term perspective into an emergency context through its focus on the principles of engagement and its emphasis on national ownership, participatory development as related to programme design and decision making and collective advocacy. The strong inter-agency coordination around the principles allowed the programme to break with the pattern of traditional

externally driven responses to food insecurity and to adopt an approach focused on capacity building, promotion of sustainable agriculture and market revitalization alongside conflict transformation and peace building.

Coordination in crisis contexts is traditionally difficult to achieve. Agencies' focus on visibility, competition for funds and an excessive attention to organizational self-interest (emphasis on own mandate rather than the interests of the intended beneficiaries) means that often coordination has little appeal in humanitarian contexts. Furthermore, in acute emergencies the humanitarian sector tends to privilege speed over quality of assistance and there is a fear that coordination would cause unnecessary delays (Van Brabant, 1999). In this regard, agencies do not consider that emergencies often become protracted and therefore the most effective responses are not necessarily the speediest ones. NMPACT's experience has shown that it is important to learn lessons that can help plan for the medium and long-term while the crisis is still ongoing. The research work on land tenure issues, which was carried out while the conflict was still active, has been crucial in informing the peace process and today is providing a sound basis for external interventions aimed at supporting IDPs' return and agricultural rehabilitation in the region.

In complex emergencies, agencies are also reluctant to create another 'layer of bureaucracy', so the challenge is to make coordination effective. This usually requires a cost, as effective coordination is time and staff intensive and needs to be properly resourced (Van Brabant, 1999). Again, the lessons learnt from NMPACT are that in the absence of an adequately staffed coordination structure the effectiveness of the programme was much reduced, the focus on the principles was weakened and, more importantly, the sustained interaction between the warring parties, which was a crucial element of success of the model, was severed, with the unwelcome effect of hindering the feasibility of cross-line operations for the partners.

Van Brabant (1999) argues that in order for coordination to be effective, it needs to fulfil a number of functions, which range from serving as a contact point to providing situational updates, fulfilling security, learning and training functions as well as performing functions related to programming, political analysis, representation and strategic decision making. Table 3.6 summarizes the main functions performed by the NMPACT Coordination Structure.

The model of coordination offered by NMPACT was uncontroversial because it focused on providing services to partners and facilitating learning and analysis, rather than assuming a strong lead role in decision making or management of security issues. The principles of engagement were originally designed to prevent the Coordination Structure from focussing on day to day management of the operation on the ground, something some of the partners were reluctant to accept. The emphasis of the Coordination Structure was therefore shifted to exercising quality control of the operation and supporting the partners in their endeavour to be true to the principles. The donors' support for NMPACT was also undoubtedly another important factor that made the framework appealing to some of the partners.

Table 3.7 Key functions of NMPACT coordination structure

<i>Key functions</i>	<i>Details</i>
Services to members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venues for cross-line meetings • Salary surveys and labour legislation • Maps
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective agency contact point/agency directory • Facilitation of information flow • Lead baseline assessment
Situational updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce situational updates • Monitor and collate needs assessments and surveys • Monitor and collate resource availability
Security Learning/evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information exchange on security situation • Collect programme reports/reviews • Identify research and commission studies (e.g. on land and environment) • Interagency discussion of reviews/evaluation • Carry out reviews/evaluations • Develop institutional memory of lessons identified
Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of projects (sectors/area) • Sectoral policies/guidelines • Facilitation of interagency programme planning and cross-line programming • Review programming gaps/duplication • Operational role to fill gaps
Political analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict analysis • Agency position in the political economy of the conflict • Scenario development • Mediation and confidence building between HAC and SRRC and between them and the agencies
Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To powerbrokers to negotiate framework of consent and access to humanitarian space • To donors for resource mobilization • To ceasefire monitoring mission and political actors for advocacy
Strategic decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About agency position in the conflict and principles of engagement

Source: Adapted from Van Brabant (1999)

NMPACT's experience shows that there is much to gain from strategic coordination in complex emergencies, when analysis, discussion, monitoring and review of the situation and ongoing and planned interventions are required.

NMPACT and innovation: The principles of engagement and political humanitarianism

The focus of the principles of engagement on sustainability, equitability and 'do least harm' pushed for a shift in emphasis within NMPACT away from short-term emergency intervention and externally driven aid delivery. The medium- to long-term focus of NMPACT's food security intervention has

proven to be effective in enhancing the potential for recovery and building the resilience of local communities in the Nuba Mountains. The findings of the twin-track analysis presented in this study document the change in trend from emergency interventions to longer term responses over the three years of life of NMPACT. Preliminary observations from peer reviewers on the impact of the NMPACT partners' interventions seem to indicate that NMPACT's approach to food security, with its emphasis on advocacy to remove barriers to sustainable livelihoods security, including through collective advocacy to obtain a cease-fire and a monitoring body, had an important role in terms of strengthening people's own capacities to enhance their resilience and lower their dependence on external food aid.

The NMPACT framework was also successful in using aid to foster dialogue between the warring parties. The adoption of the 'do least harm' approach resulted in joint advocacy to end the humanitarian blockade and to press for a cease-fire. The response was characterized by extensive engagement with the GoS, the SPLM, key diplomatic players and the cease-fire monitoring operation. The so-called 'political humanitarianism' of NMPACT can be looked upon as a model to address livelihoods issues in a complex emergency by focusing on responses based on political analysis, advocacy, fostering links with key actors in the political and peace-keeping spheres of operation, and strong local ownership of the recovery process. The significant results achieved by NMPACT in a relatively short space of time indicate that much can be learned from a response that is informed by a political analysis of food insecurity and entitlements deprivation, which departs from the more conventional technical and community-centred responses of aid agencies to such crises.

Much remains to be tested and understood in the context of programming in complex political emergencies. NMPACT's experience, while of a short duration, shows that there is a clear role for applying long-term and systematic development thinking to emergencies and supporting learning and analysis of the deep-rooted causes of the main elements of a crisis to generate informed responses. While the need for quick external aid delivery cannot be avoided in the event of major crises or emergencies, there is definitely a need to adopt and adapt alternative models in contexts where such emergencies have become chronic and where there are political elements that need to be tackled to unblock the crisis. Its relevance for Sudan is particularly high at a moment when peace and confidence building are very much on the agenda and when the situation in Darfur risks becoming a chronic emergency, where the international response is strongly driven by the provision of external inputs and needs to further invest in understanding local political and livelihoods' realities to inform interventions; realities to inform interventions.

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