



**Save the Children**



# **Treading a delicate path: NGOs in Fragile States**

## **Draft Synthesis report**

# Treading a delicate Path

## NGOs in Fragile States

### Synthesis report

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Special thanks for contributions and comments from staff in the country programmes (Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe)

**Save the Children fights for children in the UK and around the world who suffer from poverty, disease, injustice and violence. We work with them to find lifelong answers to the problems they face.**

**Save the Children UK is a member of the International Save the Children Alliance, the world's leading independent children's rights organisation, with members in 28 countries and operational programmes in more than 100.**

*Cover Photo: Juma Khan, 12, left, plays with his friend. Juma came to Zahre Dasht IDP camp, in Kandahar, after fleeing his home in Faryab province, northern Afghanistan, two years ago. He lives with his grandmother. Save the Children work in Kandahar to improve access to education for children who do not attend school and to protect working children.*

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
BPHS	Basic Package of Health Services
CAFS	Conflict-affected fragile states
CBOs	Community-based organisations
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPAN	Child Protection Action Network
CRSA	Child Rights Situation Analysis
CSO	Civil society organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (Sierra Leone)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid department
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GIM	Global Impact Monitoring
GoSS	Government of South Sudan
HAP-I	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International
HREC	Hiran Regional Education Committee
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
LICUS	Low-income country under stress
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OC	Oversight Committee
OCHA	Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OVC	Orphans and vulnerable children
PRP	Protracted Relief Programme
REACH	Rural Expansion of Afghanistan Community-Based Health
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
TEC	Tsunami Evaluation Coalition

# Contents

<b>Executive summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Introduction .....	3
Contexts of fragility.....	3
Approaches to working in fragile states: lessons from Save the Children UK’s experience.....	5
Partnership and accountability .....	5
Programming approach and analysis.....	6
Conclusions and recommendations .....	7
<b>Part I: Introduction .....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 Overview and purpose of research .....	11
1.2 External context of research: the fragile states agenda.....	13
1.3 Internal context of research: Save the Children.....	14
<b>Part 2: Contexts of fragility .....</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1 What is fragility? .....	16
2.1.1 Definitions of fragile states .....	16
2.1.2 Fragility, emergencies and development .....	18
2.2 Partnership in fragile states.....	20
2.3 Aid architecture and international engagement in fragile states .....	21
2.3.1 Donor policies.....	21
2.3.2 UN co-ordination roles.....	23
2.3.3 Donors and fragile states in practice.....	24
2.4 Conclusion: contextual challenges for NGO operations in fragile states.....	25
<b>Part 3: Approaches to working in fragile states: lessons from Save the Children UK’s experience.....</b>	<b>26</b>
3.2 Working with partners: balancing the ‘three pillars’ .....	28
3.2.1 Working with national governments .....	28
3.2.2 Working with local governments .....	30
3.2.3 Civil society.....	31
3.2.4 Civil society and children’s committees .....	32
3.2.5 International NGOs.....	33
3.3 Participation and accountability.....	34
3.4 The effect of fragility on the sectors of education, health, hunger reduction and livelihoods, and child protection .....	36
3.4.3 Hunger reduction and livelihoods.....	41
3.4.4 Child protection .....	44
3.5 Programme integration and coherence.....	46
3.6 Funding.....	47
3.7 Staffing, capacity and learning.....	50
3.8 Security and humanitarian principles .....	52
3.9 Conclusion: responding to challenges in fragile states.....	54
<b>Part 4: Conclusions and recommendations .....</b>	<b>56</b>
4.1 What can donors do differently? .....	56
4.2 What do NGOs need to do in fragile states? .....	58
4.3 What should Save the Children do in fragile states? .....	60
<b>Annex I: Terms of reference.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Annex II: Country classification for CAFS .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>67</b>

# Executive summary

## Introduction

Fragile states pose some of the greatest challenges to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Among the entire population of developing countries that are falling short of achieving minimum standards for malnutrition, poverty, health and education, fragile states account for more than three times their fair share in terms of total population. Save the Children believes that addressing problems of education, hunger, health and protection can reduce fragility and break the vicious cycle that exists in many such countries.

In early 2007, Save the Children UK commissioned practical research to take an empirical look at its work in fragile states. The purpose was to develop a clearer understanding of commonalities and differences in approaches to our work between different country programmes in fragile states, and the constraints and opportunities posed by operating in such environments. The practical outcome of the research was to identify good practice in NGO (non-governmental organisation) operations in fragile states and to better understand the effects of fragility, especially on the rights of children in order to improve the impact of future programmes.

For Save the Children, a review of its work in fragile states provides the opportunity for both an internal assessment and an external analysis of the contexts for our work, such as:

- promoting ways of improving the overall effectiveness of programmes to support the realisation of children's rights, especially in fragile states
- assessing organisational structure, mechanisms for providing support to operational staff and management skills for fragile states
- analysing the specifics of country contexts, but with a focus on government capacity and the nature of civil society relations
- donor funding strategies and their impact on operations and programming approaches.

*Treading a Delicate Path: NGOs in fragile states* sets out some of the key issues for working in fragile states, using experiences gathered from the country reviews as well as wider fragile states' literature. Although the research focused on Save the Children UK's operations, it is hoped the lessons will be relevant to other NGOs, donors and other stakeholders with an interest in fragile states.

## Contexts of fragility

Fragile states are often defined as states that lack the capacity and/or the will to provide for the well-being and security of their citizens. They provide some of the worst contexts for protecting children from harm. The absence of, or lack of capacity in, national child protection systems, as well as the frequency of heightened conflicts and reduced social cohesion within communities, make children significantly more vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. In

conflict situations, both state parties and armed groups are often implicated in the increased level of risk, including their involvement in the recruitment of children into fighting forces and the separation of children from their families.

Common features of fragile states include the presence of conflict and/or significant violations of civil and political rights (or high risk thereof); weak capacity among duty-bearers at all levels, making partnership more difficult; lack of aid delivery from donors direct to national governments; or active isolation of national governments by donors, and thus the use of a more diverse range of funding mechanisms.

Understanding fragile states and the factors that underpin them is important for donors, Save the Children, other NGOs and stakeholders because the nature of those states profoundly shapes the ways in which the lives of children can be improved in the short and medium term. Furthermore, the ways in which donors define fragile states shapes the ways in which donors choose to engage with them, including whether to fund or not fund specific programmes, the level of funding allocations, and the relative co-ordination/harmonisation mechanisms among donors.

Operating within fragile states is often difficult and costly, and carries a higher risk of failure and reversals of programme gains, particularly when those states are in, or just recovering from, conflict. Aid programmes in fragile states pose difficult policy dilemmas to the point that donors have sometimes decided it is less risky to do nothing or to rely on humanitarian responses. While humanitarian aid can save lives in the short term, it cannot address chronic state fragility. Since the mid-1990s, a stronger donor emphasis on rewarding countries with relatively effective governments and stable macroeconomic policies has led to further neglect of fragile states.

Addressing fragility requires an approach to programming and resource allocation based on analysis of the context that will guide the actions of non-state actors (eg, NGOs) and donors. It is not a fixed set of prescriptions, but an effort to provide better understanding of the key characteristics that shape and constrain how an agency functions.

Approaches to working in fragile states are significantly shaped for international agencies by the aid architecture, which is broader and more complex than traditional country programming approaches. *Treading a Delicate Path* explores the roles of international donors, who play a key role in the aid architecture and whose commitment to a fragile states agenda requires continuing change in systems, structures and practice.

Donor policies in fragile states are closely linked to a human security agenda, which does not always sit well with the humanitarian principles of NGOs. These affect the level of funding for NGOs as well as the coherence and the sustainability of interventions.

While donors have developed new instruments for financing in fragile states, there have been problems with their implementation, particularly with regard to co-ordination and pace of implementation. Reviews of Multi-Donor Trust Funds have focused on indicators of process and outputs rather than on their impact on children and the wider population.

There is increasing recognition that the agreed donor principles on co-ordination, as well as the emphasis on donor harmonisation, do not work easily in practice. Furthermore, finding room for regular engagement with both national civil society organisations and international NGOs remains an additional area for improvement.

In spite of agreeing principles for good international engagement in fragile states, donors have not, in practice, developed consistent mechanisms for building sustainable service delivery systems. They face a two-track problem of building efficient service delivery to meet current needs, and taking on the long-term tasks of state-building that assist in establishing durable, local delivery systems.

### **Approaches to working in fragile states: lessons from Save the Children UK's experience**

Examining the experiences of Save the Children in fragile states brings together internal discussions that explore such issues as planning frameworks, operational issues and programme characteristics with donor policies and aid systems. A central aspect of the fragile states agenda is the movement from development as an economic process to be addressed with certain types of policies and aid resources, to a (still nascent) recognition that politics cannot be separated from or screened out of the processes of economic and social change.

#### **Partnership and accountability**

While governments in fragile states lack capacity and/or will to deliver basic services, Save the Children country programmes have established a number of partnerships with government ministries (eg, in Somaliland and Sierra Leone) to ensure that basic services are expanded and impediments to children's rights are removed. Its analytic work seeks to guide programmes through understanding the relative capacity and commitment of state institutions. There is an emphasis on partnerships with government ministries to ensure that programmes are aligned with long-term system development.

For Save the Children, work with civil society can either be seen as a mechanism for delivering services, or – more importantly – as of value in and of itself for boosting their capacity to fulfil their roles as duty-bearers and/or to demand that the government as the primary duty-bearer fulfils its obligations around children's rights. Save the Children's country programmes engage with a range of local community groups in ways that are often highly demanding due to the nature of fragility. These include traditional authorities whose views on gender, education, healthcare, the role of children and legal structures may be different from international human rights and/or child rights norms.

The importance of accountability to communities has been gaining increasing attention in recent years, especially in emergency contexts. Communities have not usually been able to hold donors and NGOs to account for how emergency programmes are planned and implemented, nor how resources are allocated. Decisions about regional and sectoral priorities, sequencing of actions and allocation of resources have all tended to remain in the hands of outsiders.

One of the principles of Save the Children's child rights programming approach is that children themselves should (where it does not compromise their safety) have the right to participate in decisions relating to matters that affect them; we are accountable to them. One common way of operationalising that principle is the establishment of children's committees. These can focus on empowering children and giving them a voice in a general way, or they can be linked to specific programmes or activities (eg, advising on the location of water points, or carrying out peer education on HIV and AIDS).

### **Programming approach and analysis**

From its experiences in a range of fragile states, Save the Children has identified some of the key aspects of fragility that affect the rights of children and the organisation's programming contexts.

Successful intervention in fragile states begins with strong contextual analysis. The Child Rights Situation Analysis is an important tool to achieve this. It focuses on understanding violations of children's rights, root causes of violations, legal and institutional frameworks for addressing those, and the capacity and will of duty-bearers to address the violations. Thus, it is well suited to a holistic analysis of the problems in fragile states and to focus attention on sustainable solutions.

Save the Children UK's child rights programming approach may provide a helpful framework for ensuring that work in fragile states maintains a longer-term outlook and focuses on building sustainable solutions. Balance should be sought between the 'three pillars' of child rights programming, which are: direct actions on gaps and violations of rights; strengthening mechanisms and structures; and strengthening communities' and civil societies' capacity to support children's rights. Save the Children's programmes demonstrate the positive value of a variety of activities that enable it to work with national or local government or civil society or children themselves, or to directly implement activities as circumstances permit.

### **Capacity**

Partners at all levels in fragile states tend to have weak capacity and, in addition, weak absorptive capacity for support. Thus, capacity-building must be approached as a slow and time-consuming process.

Fragile states pose particular problems for staffing and management in Save the Children's programmes. Insecure, or otherwise difficult, working environments, short-term contracts linked to short-term funding, and often low education levels and high competition for qualified staff mean that weak capacity and high turnover are constant problems. Specific mechanisms are required to improve staff retention, and the skill-set required for all staff should be reviewed to ensure that competences required for effective work in fragile states (eg, around capacity-building, strong human resources management skills, understanding of fragile state contexts, etc) are emphasised. In the meantime, the need for ongoing external support is greater than in other categories of states.

Organisational planning systems that are uniformly applied across all country contexts are not always suited to fragile state contexts. Flexible systems are required to allow adaptation to different and frequently changing contexts.

## **Learning**

The differences in fragile state contexts have led to quite varied interventions and some significant and positive innovation, but documentation of impact and lessons learned in general is weak. More lessons could be learned with improved monitoring and evaluation, which could be shared across countries, across sectors within and between countries, and between staff in the same country where high turnover leads to loss of institutional memory. In some cases, such research could be facilitated by developing better links with in-country research institutions.

## **Multi-sectoral approach**

Protection, education, health and hunger outcomes are typically worse in fragile states than in other types of countries, and demand a high level of engagement in response. Such engagement can reduce the impacts of fragility on children's rights, and may help address the causes of fragility. Save the Children's cross-sectoral integration of programmes is sometimes patchy and needs improvement. The impact of these programmes is often measured in various ways for different groups of children by each of the sectors. Integration can ensure synergies and improved impact. Furthermore, in fragile states, integration can have practical benefits, eg, multi-disciplinary field staff being more efficient and building stronger relationships with communities.

## **Donor funding**

While donor funding for Save the Children programmes in fragile states is often greater than in other types of countries, the funding is usually short-term, emergency-oriented and highly variable, which makes continuity and successful long-term engagement difficult. Save the Children lacks a formal management mechanism for supporting fragile states financially, so country programmes often rely on gap-filling funding from the Emergencies Section. Furthermore, the organisation lacks institutional experience and shared knowledge on how to engage with major new donor funding modalities such as trust funds and consortium-based funding. Investment in learning and capacity in this area is vital, not only for ensuring continued financing of fragile state programmes but also for achieving influence and wider impact.

## **Security**

Security is often a particular challenge in fragile states. This is most obvious in violent conflicts, but it also applies in any context where there are significant divisions within society. Neutrality and impartiality of actions are important, but are put at risk by donors' pursuit of their own human security agenda and the UN's increased use of 'integrated missions'. Building strong relations with communities is important, and programmes must ensure they do not exacerbate existing social tensions.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Engagement by stakeholders with the fragile states agenda should be consistent and committed rather than an add-on or a new donor or NGO fad. There are no shortcuts to development in these states as the international community aims to achieve the MDGs. Working with government agencies from fragile states is a challenge and it is often difficult to engage in a meaningful way on medium- and long-term issues. Furthermore, the relationships involved necessitate careful judgement on the trade-offs involved – for example, the need to balance a

working relationship with government agencies against NGO principles impartiality and independence. This requires consistent context analysis, investment in staff capacity and the ability to engage sensitively with even difficult governments through various mechanisms, depending on context, capacity and issue. The positive lessons highlighted in this report do not change the need for continued reflection on current practices. On the contrary, significant challenges remain for Save the Children, other NGOs and donors.

Addressing issues in fragile states requires changes in practice among both operational agencies and donors. The critical need for ongoing context and political analysis to determine programming response is yet to be effectively integrated into donor programme funding decision-making. A weak context analysis does not deter many funding arrangements that focus on the need to process funds or support certain types of activities that may be in favour with selected donors. To address this issue, aid systems need to focus on both organisational incentives and staff skills, greater commitment to funding and promoting agency co-ordination/harmonisation in practice. Business as usual, or business as usual with some adjustments, will not prove adequate for the future.

### **Recommendations to donors**

*Harmonisation and co-ordination:* Donors need to use fragility as an analytical and programme planning approach. Donor coherence requires balancing the internal commitment of each donor to the ‘whole of government’ approach, with the harmonisation of approaches between donors. Donors need to provide incentives and support for intervention designs that are more context appropriate, which could also help bring together the two tracks of state-building and service delivery into a more coherent approach.

*Aid instruments:* Experiences with trust funds have shown that significant changes are required as these aid instruments are adapted to the lessons of experience. Among the key issues include ensuring that procurement procedures are effective and relatively timely, developing mechanisms for resolving implementation problems, determining whether the trust fund should have more than one funding window for different situations and approaches, and focusing on impacts rather than outputs when evaluating the performance of the trust funds.

*Multi-layered service delivery strategies:* Donors should invest in multi-layered service delivery strategies that mix state and non-state provision, adapt by context for different levels of government engagement, and assess different approaches that could lead to the convergence of delivery systems or at least improved co-ordination. Once the level and type of engagement has been designed, as much as possible, donors should have continuity with partners, and should invest internally and with partners for organisational adaptability.

*Avoiding unsustainable systems* is an imperative for donors, as ‘gold plated’ service delivery systems are usually not sustainable and can undermine the credibility of governments that are genuinely committed to greater services and accountability. Attention needs to be given the design and development of basic management, financial and information systems, particularly with regard to recurrent costs.

*Consultative mechanisms:* Regarding service delivery and fragility, engagement with NGOs on service delivery issues could be expanded to explore the aid modalities, including the

relationships between NGOs and national governments, the contracts and systems for NGO roles, and how service delivery systems could link better with approaches to poverty reduction. For example, in health and education funding, planning should be balanced between individual programme design and how sector programmes could be designed and implemented to address some of the fragility factors in a specific context. Donors could regularly consult with NGOs on the nature of programming in certain areas to ensure harmony in approach, particularly in areas that are traditionally ill defined by donors, such as child protection. However, this approach should seek to incorporate local civil society, not only international NGOs.

*Greater attention to livelihoods:* A fundamental missing emphasis in the current fragile states agenda revolves around livelihoods. Without sustainable livelihoods, reducing fragility becomes more difficult and problematic. Donors have been remarkably reluctant to invest research or resources into the deeply rooted difficulties of promoting sustainable livelihoods in fragile states.

*Promoting greater accountability* There is a need for *accountability instruments* for both donors and NGOs similar to citizen report cards, balanced scorecards, and greater transparency and accountability to national forms of civil society where feasible.

*Commitment to research and evaluation* More investment in *research and evaluation* can help donors determine what works and where, in terms of both services and how to 'build states'. Donors need to fund documentation of programmes in different types of fragile states. They can support and build independent monitoring and research centres such as the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. The centres should be based on context as the starting point and the principles around shared learning. Donors should consider measuring impact on children's and communities lives in addition to the expenditure of money when evaluating the effectiveness of certain aid modalities

## **Recommendations for INGOs**

*Carry out good situation or context analysis:* Although fragile states share some common characteristics, there is great diversity among fragile states. Save the Children's Child Rights Situational Analysis (CRSA) is well placed to assist with the context analysis that is required to understand and respond appropriately to these differences, and all NGOs should carry out similar analysis.

*Choose the right combination of partnerships:* The context analysis provides a good basis for understanding the scope for engaging with central and local government, civil society, donors and other NGOs, and for determining where direct intervention is necessary. Save the Children's rights-based approach and the concept of the 'three pillars' of child rights programming has proved to be a valuable way of ensuring that different combinations of partnerships are considered, under the overarching principle of ensuring duty-bearers fulfil their obligations to uphold children's rights.

*Make provision for dealing with weak capacity:* Weak capacity at all levels is one of the greatest challenges of working in fragile states. NGOs such as Save the Children need to find ways for providing more resources for programmes that have weak staff capacity, and which face significant constraints in terms of local partners and the demands of weak government systems. This might include aspects of both vertical and horizontal capacity development. For example,

capacity built vertically from grassroots up, through local, regional up to national structures and horizontally, by ‘multiplying’ the numbers of competent, motivated and professionally qualified staff across zones, both geographically and technically. International actors often undermine this capacity by recruiting staff out of government.

*Encourage flexibility:* Fragile states require flexible and alternate scenarios for programme development and implementation. Provision needs to be made when changes in conditions require a shift in priorities mid-programme. Opportunities for different types of programming or partnerships may appear at short notice and there should be scope to adopt them as the need arises.

*Encourage documentation, learning and innovation:* Good learning and documentation is essential in fragile state contexts. This is also necessary for good advocacy. In fragile states it is particularly necessary to identify what works and what can be replicated or scaled up.

*Improve NGO funding modalities in fragile states:* There is a need for extra and/ or more predictable resources in fragile states. Programmes in fragile states face greater than normal constraints, such as the need for heavy investment in capacity-building, while also facing problems of retaining staff, especially when short-term funding requires the use of short-term contracts. Many NGOs such as Save the Children rely heavily on grant funding for specific projects from donors, which is usually short-term in nature and highly variable.

## **Recommendations for Save the Children**

*Review and incorporate aspects of fragility assessments:* For CRSAs in fragile states, Save the Children should review and incorporate aspects fragility assessments and adjust the CRSA to incorporate key elements of social and political analysis.

*Higher level and more flexible resources for capacity-building:* Save the Children need to find ways for providing more resources for programmes that have weak staff capacity, and which face significant constraints in terms of local partners and the demands of weak government systems. This could include solutions such as: a percentage allocation increase per fragile state and/or centrally or regionally held fragile states pots. This would need to be discussed by regional directors and regional programme managers.

*Aim for more integrated programmes across sectors:* Save the Children needs to have clarity throughout the organisation regarding how approaches to emergencies, long-term development and fragile states can be integrated as appropriate. The integration would be based upon the organisation’s goals and approaches, with the understanding that where there is overlap, these approaches do not have to be either managed or understood as separate issues. This can help align work with different partners, both external (donors and international NGOs), and internal (national governments, local governments, civil society organisations, children’s committees).

## Part I: Introduction

### I.1 Overview and purpose of research

Fragile states are often defined as states that lack the capacity and/or the will to provide for the well-being and security of their citizens. These are states which have the least opportunity to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The World Bank's 2007 *Global Monitoring Report* (World Bank, 2007), looking at progress towards the MDGs, singled out fragile states (along with gender inequality) as posing the greatest challenge for achieving the MDG targets. Table 1 shows starkly that fragile states are over-represented among all developing countries in terms of all dimensions of underdevelopment. While there are no MDGs for the protection of children from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect, it is clear that fragile states provide some of the worst contexts for protecting children from harm. The absence of, or lack of capacity in, national child protection systems, as well as the frequency of heightened conflicts and reduced social cohesion within communities, make children significantly more vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. In conflict situations, both state parties and armed groups often are implicated in the increased level of risk, including their involvement in the recruitment of children into fighting forces and the separation of children from their families.

**Table 1: Comparison of development statistics for all developing countries and fragile states**

Indicator	Total in developing countries (millions)	Total in fragile states (in millions and % share)
<b>Total population (2004)</b>	<b>5,427 million</b>	<b>485 million (9%)</b>
<b>MDG1—Poverty (2004)</b>		
Extreme poverty	985	261 (27%)
Malnourished children	143	22.7 (16%)
<b>MDG2—Universal Education</b>		
Children of relevant age that did not complete primary school in 2005	13.8	4 (29%)
<b>MDG4—Under-Five Mortality</b>		
Children born in 2005 not expected to survive to age five	10.5	3.3 (31%)
<b>MDG5—Maternal Health</b>		
Unattended births	48.7	8.9 (18%)
<b>MDG6—Diseases</b>		
TB deaths	1.7	0.34 (20%)
HIV+	29.8	7.2 (24%)
<b>MDG7—Environmental Sustainability</b>		
Lack of access to improved water	1,083	209 (19%)
Lack of access to improved sanitation	2,626	286 (11%)

Source: World Bank, 2007

The World Bank estimates that while only 9 per cent of the developing world's population lives in fragile states they account for 25 per cent of the population living in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2007, p 2). Understanding fragile states and the emerging discussions around them is

important for Save the Children, other international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and donors because the nature of those states profoundly shapes the ways in which the lives of children and their communities can be improved in the short and medium term.

In addition, the way donors define 'fragile' states may also affect countries economically. Given the detrimental effects of the label LICUS (Low Income Country Under Stress), as described by Chauvet and Collier, there is potentially a significant loss to the economic growth of a country by the very nature of it being labelled a LICUS and/or fragile state. The LICUS status suggested by Chauvet and Collier (2004, pp 3–8) "...typically reduces the annual growth rate of peacetime economies by 2.3 percentage points relative to other developing economies." Achieving 'turnaround', ie, being able to discard the LICUS status, they argue, is equally difficult given the reduction in annual growth. They estimate that "...the probability of a sustained turnaround starting in any year is very low, at 1.79%. Countries are therefore likely to stay in LICUS status a long time. Indeed, given the probability, the mathematical expectation of the duration of LICUS status is 56 years" (Chauvet and Collier, 2004, pp 3–8). One might wonder how long it would take a 'fragile' country to be able to achieve similar turnaround.

NGOs such as Save the Children have a long history of working in fragile states, being prominent actors in delivering services, engaging with governments and supporting civil society. Fragile states are the most difficult countries in the world in terms of governance and basic development programmes. Working with fragile states is often difficult and costly, and carries a higher risk of failure and reversals of programme gains, particularly when those states are in, or just recovering from, conflict. Aid programmes in fragile states pose difficult policy dilemmas to the point that donors have sometimes decided it is less risky to do nothing or to rely on humanitarian responses. As repeated crises in places such as Darfur, Somalia, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Afghanistan show, this matters because, while humanitarian aid can save lives in the short term, it cannot address chronic state fragility. Since the mid-1990s, a stronger donor emphasis on rewarding countries with relatively effective governments and stable macroeconomic policies has led to further neglect of fragile states. Even taking account of their poor performance, fragile states (particularly conflict-affected fragile states) have received far less per capita aid than would have been their average given the extent of poverty within them.

In early 2007, Save the Children UK commissioned consultants to take an empirical look at its work in fragile states, to develop a clearer understanding of commonalities and differences in approaches to work between different country programmes in fragile states, and the constraints and opportunities posed by such environments.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the research was to assist in identifying good practice in NGO operations in fragile states and to better understand the impacts of fragility, especially on the rights of children. While the research focused on Save the Children's operations, it is hoped the lessons will be of relevance to other NGOs and donors in fragile states.

Two consultants undertook the research between March and June 2007. This involved field visits to country programmes in Afghanistan, Southern Sudan and Zimbabwe, and factored in desk-based reviews of experience in other fragile states where Save the Children is working. These were complemented by a review of literature relating to fragile states, with particular

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<sup>1</sup> The terms of reference of the research are attached as Annex 1.

reference to the external context in which NGOs such as Save the Children work, and additional interviews with Save the Children staff in London and regional offices.

The research report sets out some of the key issues for working in fragile states, using experiences gathered from the country reviews as well as wider literature on fragile states. The report is structured as follows:

- Part 1: The rest of this introduction sets out the background to the emergence of the fragile states agenda and how Save the Children has come to be engaged with it.
- Part 2 looks at the characteristics of fragile states, the implications for delivery of basic services, and connections with the aid architecture within which NGOs operate.
- Part 3 summarises some of the connections between fragility and Save the Children operations, including how operations take account of state capacity, the dynamics of civil and uncivil society and donor approaches to fragile states.
- Part 4 provides conclusions and recommendations on how the impact of NGO and donor operations can be improved in fragile state contexts.

This report is intended as a platform for further interventions to improve the impact of Save the Children and other agencies' work in fragile states. Given the limited timeframe for the research, it cannot be considered a comprehensive evaluation.

## **1.2 External context of research: the fragile states agenda**

The origins of concepts around the fragile states agenda were seen in the 1990s, with the changes in the aid debates. Criticisms of how developmentalism (Duffield, 1994) either deliberately or naively avoided deep issues of political economy, and ideas about the connections between aid and violence (Uvin, 1998; Anderson 1999), spread within aid agencies and among researchers. At national level, aid resources can be used by political leaders to favour supporters, increasing levels of exclusion as well as ethnic, regional and religious conflict. At local level, aid can be captured by warring parties and used to further the power of violent movements. There was a growing acknowledgement that aid had political dimensions in humanitarian and development contexts, and thus needed to be understood more contextually. In addition, the assumption that low-income governments were 'partners' in goals of poverty reduction or response to emergencies was challenged in some contexts, and this called for a re-assessment of aid models. One outcome of this within donor agencies has been the emergence of the designation of 'fragile states', meaning a set of distinct contexts that present donor agencies with difficult challenges of providing resources to countries where the likelihood of improving health, education and other basic services is poor because of deeply rooted governance problems.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The 'fragile states agenda' has primarily originated among public sector donors, not NGOs.

This growing interest in fragile states has been increasing over the last three years. This can be attributed, at least partly, to the increasing recognition that instability and underdevelopment in fragile states have implications not only for human security within the fragile states themselves but also potentially in donor countries (Cammack et al, 2006). A number of donors and international institutions have carried out research and developed strategies for engaging with fragile states. Most prominently, this has led, in 2007, to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) adopting principles for good engagement in fragile states and situations (OECD/DAC, 2007). The principles are summarised in Box 1 and characterise some of the elements of what donors and others have termed a ‘fragile states approach’.

While a lot has been written about the roles of donors and international financial institutions in fragile states, there is a relative dearth of evidence about NGO experience in those contexts.

**Box 1: OECD/DAC Principles for good international engagement in fragile states and situations**

The long-term vision for international engagement in fragile states is to help national reformers to build effective, legitimate and resilient state institutions, capable of engaging productively with their people to promote sustained development. Realisation of this objective requires taking account of, and acting according to, the following principles:

1. Take context as the starting point (all fragile states are different; actors should mix and sequence aid instruments according to context).
2. Do no harm: avoid inadvertently creating societal divisions and worsening corruption and abuse.
3. Focus on state-building as the central objective: support their legitimacy and accountability, and strengthen their capability to reduce poverty.
4. Prioritise prevention.
5. Recognise the links between political, security and development objectives: a ‘whole of government’ approach is required that aims for policy coherence.
6. Promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies.
7. Align with local priorities in different ways in different contexts: support governments where they have the will but lack capacity; elsewhere, seek opportunities for partial alignment at the sectoral or regional level.
8. Agree on practical co-ordination mechanisms between international actors.
9. Act fast... but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance.
10. Avoid pockets of exclusion: address the problem of ‘aid orphans’, including states and regions within states as well as neglected sectors or societal groups.

**1.3 Internal context of research: Save the Children**

Save the Children has a long history of engagement in fragile state contexts. Indeed, having been founded in 1919 to respond to conditions in Europe following World War I, it could be said that its first experiences were of post-war fragility. The organisation’s formal engagement with the fragile states agenda has increased since a reshaping exercise in 2005 that included designating

policy advisers for fragile states in each of the organisation's four priority sectors of child protection, health, education and hunger reduction. This was driven by a belief that greater value-added could be achieved by focusing on common experiences and lessons across typologies of countries irrespective of geographical area, rather than geographical regions. In addition, Save the Children's long and substantial programme experience in fragile states has highlighted specific violations of children's rights in terms of their access to education, health, protection and reduction of hunger (as highlighted in Section 3.4).

All of the organisation's work is carried out within a 'child rights programming' framework whereby organisational programming is undertaken in accordance with the principles of ensuring the best interests of the child, non-discrimination and children's participation. This aims to ensure that all children fully enjoy their rights and that duty-bearers are held accountable with regard to their obligations to fulfil and protect those rights. Programming in all of Save the Children's countries of operation – including in fragile states – is meant to follow these principles.

For Save the Children, therefore, this research fulfils an additional internal purpose of determining the extent to which programmes in fragile states adopt common approaches, and whether these approaches are well adapted to fragile state contexts.

While Save the Children has shown significant capacity to work in and adapt to fragile states, there remain organisational obstacles to greater effectiveness. There remains a widespread lack of understanding of the meaning of 'fragile states' and implications for Save the Children. Rather than addressing this matter alone, it would be more useful to bring together a clear integration and identification of overlaps between long-term development, fragile states and emergencies. Save the Children would benefit from a shared organisational platform that could provide necessary guidance for addressing the specifics of long-term development, emergencies and the particular challenges of fragile contexts.

Just as a good analysis of the country context is required in each case, realism is also needed in terms of goals and targets for country programmes. Country teams need different types of support and flexibility for adapting to fragile states contexts, and so having planning cycles that cannot be easily adjusted can at times be a hindrance rather than a help. Save the Children could establish a mechanism at headquarters to ensure predictable, unrestricted funding to support programme continuity in fragile states. Given the problems with attracting and maintaining staff, and uncertainties in the environment, there is a need for more flexible planning cycles and a culture supportive of innovation. Additional resources could also be provided on a flexible basis and would contribute to support for country programmes in fragile states.

Areas of weakness for Save the Children that have undermined programme effectiveness include patchy cross-sectoral integration, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, as well as poor documentation and follow-through of impact. The recommendations at the end of this study suggest how Save the Children could improve its performance in these areas.

## Part 2: Contexts of fragility

### 2.1 What is fragility?

This section first describes what is meant by a fragile state and why this is important for Save the Children's work. It then considers how 'fragility' fits with the common division of international development work into humanitarian or emergency aid and longer-term development.

#### *2.1.1 Definitions of fragile states*

The primary work on defining fragile states (or 'low income countries under stress' in World Bank-speak) has been led by the Department for International Development (DFID), the World Bank, USAID and the Fragile States Group of the Development Assistance Committee at OECD (World Bank, 2002; DFID, 2004; OECD/DAC, 2005; USAID, 2005<sup>3</sup>). The DAC Fragile States Group employs a concept of fragile states as suffering "deficits in governance" creating "conditions that make development difficult". In such states (OECD/DAC, 2005) there is a lack of ability or willingness to establish preconditions for long-term development, the underlying political and economic conditions are too fluid and too risky to encourage savings and long-term investment, and there is a tendency for communities and individuals to focus on the near term and securing basic needs. The fragile states contexts include aid orphans (countries that are a low priority for donors, often for governance reasons); somewhat similar contexts termed 'pariah states' (countries where donors choose not to engage); and countries in conflict and countries emerging from conflict or where there are notable governance reforms ('improving contexts'). In the last instance, there are particular questions about the appropriate mechanisms for the 'transition' of programmes and funding from emergency aid systems to long-term development approaches (Leader and Colenso, 2005; Education for All (EFA)/FTI, 2005; OECD/DAC, 2006a). Save the Children's classification of Conflict-Affected Fragile States (CAFS) used in its education and financing analysis (International Save the Children Alliance, 2007), emerged from an analysis of data from three different sources. Based on the classification, there is a list of 28 CAFS, which, due to conflict and related fragility, have particular difficulty in delivering education services (see Annex II for the methodology used to classify these states).

Definitions of fragile states vary according to agency and, empirically, Save the Children UK's categorisation of countries into fragile states rather than other categories (eg, poorest, transition) differs from some donors and the World Bank by focusing on the presence of conflict in the present or recent past, or international isolation by donors. Other donors include countries that have not yet faced conflict and where good relations with national governments are still possible, but where various factors place the country at risk of deteriorating governance (eg, Bangladesh or Ethiopia, which is classified as 'poorest' by Save the Children UK).

Common features of fragile states include the presence of conflict and/or significant violations of civil and political rights (or high risk thereof); weak capacity among duty-bearers at all levels, making partnership more difficult; lack of aid delivery from donors direct to national

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<sup>3</sup> The USAID (2005) paper highlights the OECD/DAC definition, as it represents a wide range of donor agencies, as there are distinctions and nuances among the donors.

governments; or active isolation of national governments by donors, and thus the use of a more diverse range of funding mechanisms.

Fragility is a *status* in its own right, distinct from emergencies and development, but featuring characteristics of both. Instability is a feature of fragility. While sharing some common features, fragile states are diverse. Many NGOs and donors are still institutionally divided into emergency and development arms, neither of which are necessarily well suited to achieving impact in fragile state contexts.

The fragile states concept or approach builds on the efforts of several donor agencies (in turn building on scholarly work), each of which has advanced a definition of troubled states in relation to its own mission and programme strategies. The task for donors and policy-makers has been to take the research of various scholars on state-building and governance (Moore, 2001; Cliffe and Luckham, 2000; Ferreira and Bates, 2001), and to define workable categories for donor principles and operational decision-making. One summary of donor approaches cites the view that fragile states “represent a broad spectrum of situations and characteristics that include conflict vulnerable, post conflict countries with fragile institutions, countries with weak or dysfunctional institutions and policies, and strong regimes with a particularly poor governance record” (Anderson, 2005). Another distinguishes between countries that are in crisis or in conflict and those that are recovering from crisis or in post-conflict situations (USAID, 2004). The OECD/DAC paper for the service delivery workstream sets out three contexts: improving, deteriorating and violent (OECD/DAC, 2006a).

Since the emergence of the fragile states definitions, there have been debates within donor agencies, and even more so in the UN system, regarding whether the term ‘fragile states’ is too negative in regards to relations with aid recipient countries. The term has been considered contentious and is regarded by ‘recipient’ governments as counterproductive. In addition, as different agencies have various priorities and definitions, the appropriateness of the term in different contexts is questionable. For Save the Children, fragile states are those that are unable or unwilling to be effective or consistent duty-bearers in regards to realising the rights of children. Save the Children is also particularly concerned about countries where specific dynamics may place the country at risk of deteriorating governance, eg, countries classified by Save the Children as ‘poorest’.

A feature of fragile states, regardless of typologies, is that all are distinct in their histories, the nature of their political fragility and the existing obstacles to effective service delivery. For analytic purposes, it is essential to understand that the fragility of each context is fluid over time. However, fragile states share common characteristics. Notably, in terms of services, they are among the countries most off-track for meeting the key MDGs (High Level Forum, 2004; EFA/FTI, 2005). For example, the populations of fragile states make up one-third of those living on less than a dollar a day and half of all children who die before the age of five. Fragile states also share dramatic examples of bad governance, through both lack of capacity and disinterest in the well-being of their citizens.

Whether the specific problems of fragility manifest themselves as unwillingness or inability to marshal resources for the benefit of its citizens, fragile states create conditions that make development difficult. While capable states are able to establish preconditions for long-term development (sufficient stability and a strong institutional framework for savings and

investment), fragile states cannot or will not do so. At times, these preconditions may be met by a range of local approaches to service delivery gaps, although these may or may not be the basis for a sustainable system.

### *2.1.2 Fragility, emergencies and development*

In assessing fragile contexts, there is a risk that the new emphasis on fragile states will become another fad or separate initiative, and thus it is important to define how fragility relates to long-term development and to tackling emergencies. This is important for both conceptual clarity and organisational practice, and to ensure there is understanding of what distinguishes fragility from long-term development or from emergencies, and also how they relate to each other. Donors use a number of agreed measurements to determine the level of poverty and developmental requirements in a country or region, and to assess how a country is or is not making progress towards the MDGs. Similarly, there is an extensive set of relations and funding systems that have developed within the 'humanitarian system'. The emergence of attention to state fragility risks creating a separate category, when donors should be addressing how fragility, long-term development and emergencies relate to each other, both organisationally and in terms of aid instruments. In considering ways of working in fragile states, there are overlaps between approaches to long-term development work in fragile states, responses to emergencies, and context analysis of fragile states.

The work of Save the Children and other organisations is significantly affected by donor policies in fragile states. Donor policies in fragile states are closely linked to a human security agenda, which does not always sit well with a humanitarian orientation on the part of NGOs. These affect the level of funding for NGOs, which partners (inside and outside of government) can access, as well as the coherence and the sustainability of interventions. This requires a balancing act from NGOs: on the one hand, they must engage with those donors if they are to significantly influence outcomes in fragile states. On the other hand, they must ensure sufficient voluntary funding (unrestricted funding in Save the Children) in order to maintain a degree of independence and successfully pursue their own strategies – or else complement insufficient donor funds to pursue an effective strategy.

Long-term development programmes focus on human well-being and on better ways to improve the lives of the poorest and most marginal groups. Fragile states may be, and often are, among the poorest countries, but the analytical emphasis around fragility is focused on the nature of the state and the wider polity. This means that the instruments and aid systems used for addressing long-term development may not be effective because of the specific aspects of fragility and the ways in which it undermines both state and civil society capacity for long-term development. In relation to the connections between fragile states and long-term development, factors such as donor engagement, state capacity and willingness, the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs), and internal cohesion all affect options for donor agencies. Fragile states are likely to be less able to develop and implement national long-term development strategies with a strong poverty reduction focus that are politically tenable.

As is the case in fragile states, it is difficult to apply a long-term development lens to the design and implementation of emergency responses. Emergencies are defined by the (relative) sudden onset of the harsh and devastating impacts on human well-being of natural disasters (flood, famine, earthquake) or violent conflict. Humanitarian agreements establish an international norm for protected space or humanitarian protection, which may provide an opportunity for donors

and NGOs to engage in contexts where most aid instruments cannot function effectively. One reason for this potential opening is the frequent overlap between fragile states and emergencies, as weaker governments and poorer communities suffer more in emergencies. However, one key distinction between emergencies and fragile states involves the timeframe of action: emergency responses tend to be short-term, but this does not mean that emergency responses should be context-blind (Kent, 2004).

Emergencies produce shocks to the livelihoods of communities and to social cohesion within communities. Responses to these emergencies by governments and civil society organisations vary widely, due to political factors, existing state capacity and the ability of communities to work together. The ways in which states respond to shocks in fragile contexts frequently produces two results: the country will require international assistance beyond existing aid allocations and will need assistance in delivering the resources, at least in the short term. More importantly, in terms of donor aid systems, fragile states are likely to require more time for post-emergency responses than is the norm of humanitarian or emergency funding (Leader and Colenso, 2005).

The long-term impact of shocks in fragile states cannot be alleviated or remedied in the six-month to one-year donor timeframe. In addition, departmental divisions within donor agencies between emergencies and development assistance can be exacerbated when emergency response programmes ignore the underlying relationships between the country's fragility and the nature of the shocks involved. Whether sudden onset, such as the impact of the tsunami on existing conflict in Sri Lanka, or slow onset, such as the spread of drought in the Horn of Africa and the resulting conflict between pastoralist and farming communities, an emergency response cannot be designed without an understanding of state fragility. An emergency may be the result of certain factors of state fragility, or it may exacerbate existing political and economic tensions. Failure to link emergency responses with an analysis of the fragility context, can create an inappropriate aid timeframe and the use of the wrong aid instruments. This can fuel existing tensions and exacerbate a vicious circle of violent conflict and other manifestations of fragility.

In addition, the structure of funding for humanitarian emergencies creates an artificial timeframe. For example, in Sierra Leone, although emergency funding has ended, it has not been sufficiently well connected to development funding to ensure continuity of service delivery. This has caused a funding gap, as well as difficulties in strategic planning. A programme funded for the sub-region of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire by the humanitarian wing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Netherlands will not be renewed. This is because Sierra Leone and the sub-region are no longer seen as requiring humanitarian aid, despite the fact that in terms of provision of services it is still at emergency levels. (Sierra Leone has the worst under-five and maternal mortality rates in the world, yet there are no emergency health donors.) It has also been noted that donor policies in Sierra Leone have hindered programme implementation and recruitment of staff, as well as the securing of requisite level of logistical and human resources support to run programmes in a country in transition that has weak capacity. Donors often indicate that fragile states are difficult to work in when capacity is low and risks are high, yet they are not willing to include the additional costs required to strengthen delivery of service delivery systems. Although some changes in donors' thinking have been observed in the recent Fast Track Initiative (FTI) endorsement of Sierra Leone's education sector plan and the grant of \$14 million from the Catalytic Fund, the arbitrariness of the process

is evident – as seen by the simultaneous rejection by the FTI Secretariat to fund Liberia’s FTI-endorsed education sector plan.

There are also instances when funding modalities can artificially extend the humanitarian timeline. This was the case in Liberia, where the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) agreed to fund a health programme for a further year while development funding came on stream. However, ECHO funding cannot be used for institutional development and capacity-building, which is an essential component of state-building and civil society development. This points to the core issue, which is that fragility must be addressed through funding modalities appropriate to the country context; this is one of the OECD/DAC principles. The funding approach should support humanitarian needs while also addressing activities that can mitigate or reduce fragility, and should improve governance where and when possible rather than just when suitable donor funding comes on stream.

Good context analysis is another way of mitigating fragility and improve governance. For example, a fragile states approach allows for better analysis of context (particularly in relation to how donor funding shapes response capacity), the impact that certain systems have on capacity, and the fragility factors in a specific country. However, despite the potential of fragile states context analysis, a lack of alternative funding mechanisms and longer-term funding frameworks may lead to prolonged reliance on emergency funding and, therefore, emergency-based programme activities (such as food aid) when a livelihoods approach would be more appropriate. Despite donor recognition over the past decade that there is a gap between humanitarian aid flows and the resumption of long-term, steady development assistance, difficulties remain. The financial and programmatic ‘bridges’ currently used by donors for transitions between emergencies (where they are at least partially the result of fragility) and longer-term programmes remain unsteady (Leader and Colenso, 2005). However, some donors are currently seeking to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development aid for education. DFID, for example, has committed a £20m grant to UNICEF for countries in the transition stage.

Fragility in its different manifestations shapes, and also limits, the ways in which donors and international NGOs can address either emergencies or long-term development goals. Finding ways to effectively work in fragile states remains a significant challenge, in regards to both humanitarian needs and the achievement of long-term development outcomes.

## **2.2 Partnership in fragile states**

The above discussion of the nature of fragility highlights the key problems of weak capacity and lack of will to deliver services. When there are obstacles to service delivery by governments, NGOs and other agencies often offer a quick fix solution by rapidly delivering assistance themselves. While this may plug an immediate gap, it does not address those issues that originally resulted in the failure to deliver services, ie, weak capacity, underdeveloped institutions, weak or non-existent policy frameworks and weak civil society. It ignores causes and can undermine institutional development. Fragile states are likely to have fragile communities with more forms of social tension and service delivery costs may be high; an influx of service delivery actors can sometimes exacerbate this. In Sri Lanka, the post-tsunami aid struggles contributed to

local tensions between Tamil and Sinhala communities, and may have added to the mistrust between the government and the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). In Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland, NGO responses to food shortages are inevitably linked to how donors view these orphan states and to local conflict mechanisms.

Different contexts, therefore, will require different types of partnerships – with donors, with various levels of government and with local communities. When there is a lack of will on the part of the state, partnerships can be sought with local government agencies (where feasible), with formal non-state providers, and with a wide range of community organisations. In countries where the state is committed but lacks capacity, partnering with national ministries to build both state capacity and improve programme effectiveness can contribute to greater impact (see the examples of Myanmar and Zimbabwe in Section 3.2.1).

Addressing will and/or capacity constraints has significant impacts on country programmes and on how fragility affects the ways in which organisations implement their goals and objectives. However, lack of will and capacity are only two of the contextual factors facing international NGOs such as Save the Children when working in fragile states. NGO work is affected by the context of the organisation’s work, and by the wider aid architecture that provides the financial resources, the institutional support or restrictions, and the incentives for co-operation among aid agencies.

## **2.3 Aid architecture and international engagement in fragile states**

The international aid architecture (Burall and Maxwell, 2006; Maxwell, 2005) is not a fixed set of relationships or a rigid system, but describes how funds are structured, how different types of funding systems affect programmes, and what resources are directed to specific service providers (Hulme and Edwards, 1997). There are ways in which the aid architecture assists work in fragile states, but also ways in which it weakens NGO operations or slows down programme implementation through lack of co-ordination, inappropriate funding instruments, or inter-organisational obstacles to implementation. International aid architecture and country aid co-ordination mechanisms can be assessed by identifying gaps between the promises of harmonisation and alignment, and gaps in the humanitarian to development transition. Beyond the allocation of aid resources, are the complex roles played by the UN system in terms of humanitarian co-ordination and the work it carries out in different contexts through different specialised agencies.

### *2.3.1 Donor policies*

Aid policies are not simply technical or instrumental approaches to emergencies and long-term development. They are shaped by the internal politics of donor countries, the history of bilateral relations between countries, some aspects of the ‘new security agenda’, and the priorities given to different sectors and instruments by senior politicians in donor countries. There are, thus, potential tensions between the positive aspects of the fragile states agenda as part of changing donor approaches and concerns that international NGO agencies have become conduits for donor driven security policies (Tvedt, 1998; Berger and Borer, 2007). Particularly in the context of the ‘war on terror’ and the complexity of UN, NATO and bilateral roles in Afghanistan, both

NGOs and critics have expressed concern about the nature of humanitarian intervention and the role of NGOs in relation to the policies of combatant states (MSF, 2006).

Even when resources appear to be adequate, the mechanisms for them to be used can be problematic, despite efforts at establishing new instruments for working in fragile states (Leader and Colenso, 2005). For example, implementing agencies have generally had a much easier time working with the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund than with the Southern Sudan Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF). A preliminary overview (Fenton, 2007a) pointed to more effective multi-donor mechanisms in Afghanistan, whereas the MDTF was controlled by the World Bank. Co-ordination and pace of implementation appear to have been notable problems with the MDTF, and there have been reported disagreements between the World Bank and the UN over procedures and rules governing MDTF contracts with UN. In addition, disbursement from the MDTF has been much slower, thus reducing its effectiveness. NGOs are not represented on either fund, there is no donor and NGO roundtable to address implementation issues, and there are no mechanisms for involving community representatives in planning for the future of their communities.

There are also problems with engaging with donor orphans and with the in-country systems around the so-called humanitarian to development transition (eg, in Sierra Leone and Liberia). Turning the good donorship principles into coherent, functioning and consistent practice remains a considerable task for donor agencies.

The isolation or pariah nature of some countries (eg, Myanmar and Zimbabwe) limits funds (both the type of funds and timeframe of programmes) available for NGOs. Donor politics and the countervailing pressures of different CSOs (some promoting sanctions, others promoting active humanitarian engagement) result in low and inconsistent levels of funding, as donors prefer to appear disengaged from some (but not all) pariah states. In countries that are receiving limited assistance from donors, there remain problems of donor instruments and the integration of different types of donor funding mechanisms. For example, in Zimbabwe, because donors remain unwilling to fund development work and support to infrastructure inputs such as healthcare, Save the Children UK staff argue that donors avoided acknowledging the increasing mortality rates of infants, under-fives and pregnant women as a humanitarian imperative, preferring to take the political high road of distance from the government.

Such distancing has been reported in interviews where it is said that key donors such as DFID and SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency) were giving or planning to give all of their funding for health, child protection, education, and HIV and AIDS to the UN. This raises concerns about the ability of NGOs to administer sustainable projects, and reduces the impact on, and the number of, beneficiaries due to funding mechanisms not being accessible to NGOs with effective programmes in particularly vulnerable communities. Additional concerns focus on the relatively slow distribution of funds by UN agencies as compared to bilaterals, and the overhead expenses that UN agencies take out of bilateral funds (Fenton, 2007c). A solution for NGOs in response to the recent move by donors towards pooled funding approaches could be a mechanism such as the Joint Initiative in Zimbabwe, described in Box 2.

<b>Box 2: The Joint Initiative: NGO-managed pooled funding</b>
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In late 2005, seven NGOs\* decided to combine their capacities and resources to develop an integrated programme to address the short- and medium-term needs of highly vulnerable groups in five urban areas of Zimbabwe affected by 'Operation Restore Order', or Murambatsvina. During this operation, in which squatter areas and informal settlements and businesses were destroyed, at least 700,000 people in urban areas countrywide lost their homes, livelihoods and access to food, education and healthcare. Part of the impetus for the formation of the Joint Initiative (JI) was the widespread perception among the NGO and donor communities that the UN had failed to demonstrate sufficient leadership in speaking out and mobilising a response.

The JI has encouraged the justification of overhead costs and prohibited the practice of passing them on to subcontractors. All of Mercy Corps management costs are paid directly by USAID; thus, subcontracting NGO consortium members are able to claim the costs they need for implementation and do not charge national NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs). This approach is in marked contrast to that of the UN.

Feedback from NGOs interviewed indicated that, compared with other consortia they had worked in or with – all formed in response to donor or UN calls for proposals, the NGO-led JI experience has been largely positive.\*\*

Donor-initiated consortia are perceived as highly constrained by donor rules and regulations. The JI reversed NGO–donor power dynamics, and because NGOs were able to design the way in which the consortium would work they were able to avoid many potential areas of friction between different NGOs. Donors were pleased to see NGOs developing this initiative themselves, although SIDA and DFID both commented on the lengthy process of setting up the consortium and agreeing modalities with NGOs and donors. NGOs noted, however, that now this has been done, others wanting to replicate or adapt the JI approach would be able to do so much more quickly.

\* Africare, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam GB, Practical Action Southern Africa, Save the Children UK, Mercy Corps the approach (Interview with Jessica Bowers, OCHA, Harare, May 2007).

\*\* This consortium is believed to be the first of its kind – ie, NGO-led and receiving multi-donor funding (Interview with Rob Moroni, Mercy Corps, Harare, May 2007)

\*\*\* The deputy at UNICEF claimed that the JI does not share information on plans and programmes with UNICEF because they are seen as a competitor (Interview, Harare, May 2007). OCHA, however, had JI information and seemed impressed with the approach (Interview with Jessica Bowers, OCHA, Harare, May 2007).

### *2.3.2 UN co-ordination roles*

Beyond aid architecture or aid instruments, the UN system and UN agencies play a vital role in aid co-ordination. They can legitimise the role of international agencies, and negotiate humanitarian space in situations of conflict or where governments of fragile states are in conflict with key bilateral donors. This co-ordinating role is difficult in any situation, as the different agencies face funding, management and inter-organisational tensions over priorities and resources.

In states where donors view governance as a key challenge, and where bilateral engagement is low, the UN co-ordination role can assist progress towards implementation. For example, in Myanmar, UN agencies, NGOs, and the Myanmar National HIV and AIDS Program collaborated in preparing and implementing a Joint Program for HIV and AIDS for 2003–05, with UNAIDS taking up a co-ordinating role. The Myanmar government, which had been

denying the seriousness of HIV and AIDS, changed its position in the process and now has significant ownership of the problem and the programme. Save the Children's experiences in Myanmar suggest that it is possible to utilise UN mechanisms in order to build co-operative relations to address important social issues, carefully over time, which may allow the UN and NGOs to overcome political antagonisms (High Level Forum, 2004).

In the spirit of such UN and NGO collaboration, a unique opportunity has arisen for even greater partnership, with the first co-led UN and NGO cluster for education in emergency contexts. The formation of the education cluster arose in response to a number of poorly managed responses to several recent emergencies. The UN Emergency Relief Coordinator identified a number of gaps in service delivery during humanitarian responses and commissioned an independent review of the global humanitarian system in June 2005 (OCHA, 2005). In September 2005, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) agreed to establish clusters in nine areas identified as having gaps. The clusters would work on provision of services, relief and assistance to beneficiaries, and cross-cutting issues such as protection and early recovery. One notable absence from the humanitarian review and the establishment of the clusters was the area of education. After continued pressure from education agencies (both UN and NGO), the cluster approach for education, co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children, was formally adopted by the IASC in 2007 (Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2007).

### *2.3.3 Donors and fragile states in practice*

Despite the OECD/DAC Principles on Fragile States (OECD/DAC, 2007), changing the structures, incentives and politics of donor bureaucracies still requires significant work. Faced with a fragile state, donors and their development partners have frequently adopted a strategy that substitutes an international agency or NGO for the state. This is particularly the case in emergencies, where there is a short-term urgent need to provide access to certain services. In these instances, the international entity assumes some, or all, of the policy-making tasks, including identifying the level and quality of services to be delivered and the organisations (frequently NGOs) that should deliver the services.

While this approach may produce short-term benefits in terms of enhanced service delivery, it is not without costs in terms of building sustainable service delivery systems for the long term. Donors end up with two different organisational, planning and programme approaches, reflecting their own internal structures – one focused on services, the other on governance and state-building. This two-track problem – finding the balance between building up basic services quickly to meet dire needs, and the long-term (without shortcuts or quick fixes) tasks of state-building – poses a dilemma between mitigating immediate basic needs and potentially delaying the establishment of durable, local service delivery systems.

Despite efforts in recent years to improve alignment and harmonisation, and to develop more effective instruments for co-ordinated aid programmes, large gaps remain due to donor politics, donor bureaucracies and the complexities of each country's context. These require further attention and reform within and between public sector donors in order to move towards the principles outlined in the OECD/DAC revised outline of April 2007 (OECD/DAC, 2007), as well as the humanitarian commitments set out within the UN system. Given the aid architecture and the operational realities in fragile states, an organisation working in these contexts needs to give attention to how well its own systems are aligned or misaligned to the experiences and parameters of fragile states.

Donors can assess, in consultation with willing governments and civil society, the approaches that will strengthen service delivery. This assessment could look at aspects of public sector management and operational and financial capacities, whether at local or national level. It might also involve consideration of initial mechanisms for both vertical (between citizens and government, different levels of government, or government and local providers) and horizontal accountability (between local providers and citizens, or local government and citizens) that could be connected to service delivery initiatives, as well as initial work on public expenditure tracking and budgets or information campaigns. The service delivery track, even at the earliest stages in the most unpromising context, should never be completely disconnected from the task of rebuilding public institutions. There are many potential ways to begin to bridge the two goals of service delivery and state-building, including: situations where government and opposition groups can co-operate around certain basic services; the establishment of quasi-government agencies for programme implementation; creation of budgets that are publicly administered but managed separately from other state finances; and the establishment of community health groups as the basis for accountability mechanisms in the future. The particular approaches will vary between contexts of post-conflict or state collapse and situations where the public sector retains strength but state legitimacy is contested.

## **2.4 Conclusion: contextual challenges for NGO operations in fragile states**

The work of Save the Children and other organisations is significantly affected by donor policies in fragile states, which are closely linked to a human security agenda rather than the humanitarian orientation of NGOs. Such policies affect funding for NGOs as well as the coherence and the sustainability of interventions. Therefore, NGOs must engage with those donors if they are to significantly influence outcomes in fragile states, while at the same time they must find sufficient voluntary funding to maintain a degree of independence and successfully pursue their own strategies.

Donors have developed new instruments for financing in fragile states but there have been problems with their implementation, particularly with regard to co-ordination and pace of implementation. More significant than such operational issues is the focus on indicators of process and outputs rather than on their impact on children and the wider population. There is increasing recognition that agreed donor principles on co-ordination do not work easily in practice.

In spite of agreeing principles for good international engagement in fragile states, donors have not, in practice, developed consistent mechanisms for building sustainable service delivery systems.

## **Part 3: Approaches to working in fragile states: lessons from Save the Children UK's experience**

This part of the report summarises the findings of research on how Save the Children approaches working in fragile states and how it deals with those findings. It draws out examples of good practice and areas where practice can be improved, both of which will be of relevance to other agencies working in the context of fragile states.

Part 3 starts by looking at some broad issues related to programme design (context analysis, partnership, participation and accountability), goes on to discuss specific issues relating to the sectors of education, health, hunger reduction and livelihoods, and child protection. It then considers a number of operational issues (eg, funding, staffing and security), before drawing conclusions about successful approaches to work by NGOs in fragile states.

### **3.1 Context analysis: the Child Rights Situation Analysis**

The importance of carrying out good contextual analysis was highlighted in the OECD/DAC principles of engagement (see page 15) and has been confirmed in this research. There are considerable differences between the seven fragile states covered in this research:

- Three countries studied could be described as 'post-conflict', although Afghanistan, Southern Sudan and Sierra Leone have attained different degrees of stability to date.
- Two – Sri Lanka and Somalia – have ongoing conflicts, although one has a relatively strong government and is classified as 'middle-income'. The other is 'low-income' and has no effectively functioning central government, but has some government structures in the internationally un-recognised states of Somaliland and Puntland.
- The remaining two – Myanmar and Zimbabwe – are characterised by repressive governments, economic crisis and international isolation, and while there is internal repression they do not suffer from violent conflict in the same way as war-affected countries.

The proposition that context must be taken as the starting point for any engagement connects with the core analytical tool used by Save the Children UK, the Child Rights Situation Analysis (CRSA) (Save the Children UK, 2006a). The CRSA provides a foundation for understanding how fragility manifests itself in terms of the state's responsibility as duty-bearer. It further links with Save the Children UK's emphasis on the realisation of children's rights. The CRSA has four basic elements:

- mapping of violations of children's rights (including gaps in provision)
- causality (or problem) analysis – an examination of the immediate and root causes
- responsibility/stakeholder analysis – who are the duty-bearers and what are they, and other actors, doing
- external analysis of what may help or hinder the realisation of children's rights.

The CRSA, as the starting point for planning for country programmes, can highlight how fragility reduces the ability of non-state actors to promote children's rights and, in many instances, how both state and non-state actors undermine goals in relation to rights. The inability

of the duty-bearer to provide basic services and the failures of basic services, link with the work undertaken by donors on services in fragile states, which is often based on the accountability triangle (between government, donors and civil society) set out in the *World Development Report 2004* (World Bank, 2003). Failures in service delivery are deeply rooted in fragile states, and Save the Children's work in these contexts presents examples of how all three of its pillars (see Section 3.2)<sup>4</sup> are necessary for addressing fragility.

The CRSA allows the organisation to have its own perspective on fragile states as entities that are unable to be effective or consistent duty-bearers in relation to realising the rights of children. As the CRSA is developed in each context, it has the potential not only as a diagnostic tool, but as a mechanism for bringing stakeholders together and co-ordinating activities and responses to the issues affecting that context. In addition, the CRSA work, or at least a review of its issues, could be the focal point for strengthening mechanisms of accountability at national level to civil society groups and representatives of children's committees (see Box 3).

### **Box 3: The value of the CRSA**

The CRSA allows Save the Children to ensure that its country assessment brings together its focus on the rights of children, civil society and state relations into an overall document that sets out clearly the context for the obstacles to realising the rights of children. From the basic analysis in the CRSA, country programmes can engage with governments in situations where limits on state capacity or donor engagement make issues fraught with uncertainty. In building up the Ministry of Education in Somaliland, for example, or in finding room to expand Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) programmes in Myanmar, the approach based on the child rights analysis has allowed country staff to find greater room for engagement with both governments and communities than might have been otherwise expected.

#### **CRSA Zimbabwe**

During 2006–07 the Zimbabwe country office undertook a formal CRSA prior to updating the country strategy and to developing thematic programme plans. Although the CRSA is not explicitly designed as a tool for analysing fragility, it captures many of the causes and manifestations of fragility through analysing and understanding violations of children's rights and the root causes of violations, examining the legal and institutional frameworks for addressing these, and determining the capacity and will of duty-bearers – especially the state – to address violations. In the case of the Zimbabwe country programme, the involvement of a wide range of staff throughout the CRSA research and analysis process contributed to buy-in around recommendations for programme strategy changes to better support the realisation of children's rights.

The CRSA process helped the programme identify issues and opportunities it needed to address to mitigate against the impact of fragility. For example, the negative impact of Zimbabwe's rapid downward economic spiral on the provision of quality health and education services for children is extensively documented in the CRSA. The CRSA also notes that, although activities which support children's rights to health and education are addressed through the child protection and

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<sup>4</sup> 1) Direct actions on gaps and violations of rights; 2) Strengthening mechanisms and structures; 3) Strengthening communities' and civil societies' capacity to support children's rights.

livelihoods programmes, Save the Children no longer has discrete health or education programmes due to lack of funding. Nevertheless, the CRSA identifies several ways in which education, health, nutrition and protection issues could be addressed in a more integrated manner by the existing programme. The CRSA also highlights the opportunities provided by the Programme of Support for the National Action Plan (NAP) for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) to engage in practical as well as advocacy work around a number of issues, including access to reproductive and sexual health, violence and abuse of children.

### **3.2 Working with partners: balancing the ‘three pillars’**

The CRSA tool is underpinned by the three pillars of child rights programming: 1) direct actions on gaps and violations of rights; 2) strengthening mechanisms and structures; 3) strengthening communities’ and civil societies’ capacity to support children’s rights. Within Save the Children there is a strong emphasis on ensuring that all programmes – irrespective of context – contain a mix of programming and activities under all three pillars. This applies equally in fragile states, where there can be a misperception that only direct action is feasible. The experience of Save the Children suggests that it is, indeed, possible to work under all three pillars, and that the OECD/DAC principle for donor engagement in fragile states of “aligning with local priorities in different ways in different contexts” applies equally to NGOs. Save the Children’s experience indicates that a good contextual analysis will lead to a unique balance between the three pillars in each context according to where duty-bearers are failing to protect and fulfil children’s rights, and where there are opportunities to work with those duty-bearers.

The CRSA process has helped programmes like Myanmar and Zimbabwe to identify issues and opportunities it needs to focus on to mitigate against the impact of fragility. For example, the negative impact of Zimbabwe’s rapid downward economic spiral on the provision of quality health and education services for children is extensively documented in the CRSA. The CRSA also notes that although activities which support children’s rights to health and education are addressed through the child protection and livelihoods programmes, Save the Children no longer has discrete health or education programmes, due to lack of funding. Nevertheless, the CRSA has identified several ways in which education, health, nutrition and protection issues could be addressed in a more integrated manner within the existing programme.

The rest of this section describes some of Save the Children’s experiences of working with a variety of partners in fragile states, highlighting the importance of flexibility and patient engagement, often at lower levels of government and civil society. Weak capacity is a feature of most partnerships, so capacity-building must be viewed as a long-term process without shortcuts. However, the greatest challenge is often reconciling the need for such a patient, long-term approach with the constraints of funding modalities.

#### *3.2.1 Working with national governments*

Governments in fragile states lack the capacity and/or the will to deliver basic services. However, Save the Children country programmes have established a number of partnerships with government ministries (eg, in Somaliland and Sierra Leone) to ensure that basic services are expanded and impediments to children’s rights removed. Its analytic work seeks to guide programmes through understanding the relative capacity and commitment of state institutions,

with an emphasis on partnerships with government ministries to ensure that programmes are aligned with long-term system development. While direct work or capacity building within national ministries may be less common, it does occur, as in the case of Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) – see below.

The core commitment to support national governments, based on the second of the three pillars (strengthening structures and mechanisms) represents a notable and consistent quality of country programmes, even in very difficult contexts. Country programme reviews showed that even in difficult circumstances, working with governments in countries such as Myanmar, some form of effective, if carefully nuanced, co-operation has been accomplished. In Zimbabwe, the country programme had assumed that there was a limited prospect of having positive influence within the government agencies. In practice, however, staff found through their CRSA dialogues that some officials within the Ministry of Health had been interested in addressing issues related to the rights of children.

In fragile states, country programmes engage in promoting children's rights through advocacy as well as programme implementation. In very difficult contexts, such as Myanmar and Somaliland, Save the Children offices have been able to strike a delicate and continuously evolving balance in addressing issues such as HIV and AIDS or trafficking in Myanmar, and girls' education in Somaliland. In both cases, the ability of the staff to work with government officials has been based upon the combination of an appreciation for the services provided by the agency with dialogue that could more realistically be labelled 'influence' rather than 'advocacy'. In these situations, time for engagement, evidence from programmes that are effectively implemented, and a careful reading of the internal politics of each government are all required.

Through a long process of meetings, providing evidence, sensitive involvement of UN partners, and other mechanisms, it has been possible to establish agreements in Myanmar which had previously been thought unlikely to happen. Save the Children Myanmar's work with other NGOs and with UN agencies has had an impact on national policies, for example on HIV and AIDS, where one result has been more openness on issues such as homosexuality, intravenous drug users and sex workers. This effort has led to the development of a National Strategic Plan for AIDS. Similarly, in the education programme in Myanmar, through long-standing relationships with the Ministry of Education, the ECCD programme has managed a breakthrough to provide support for the transition from preschool to primary school, at least in the first two years (NGOs have traditionally been prevented from working at all in the primary education sector). The results of this patient advocacy is also illustrated in the case of anti-trafficking, where the country programme worked on the problem of repatriated children from Thailand by meeting with and encouraging local officials to address the issue. Staff found that local officials were able to slowly pass issues up through bureaucracy, and this, combined with international encouragement, led to an agreement with both Thai and Myanmar governments on a new child trafficking law, as well as a new co-operative agreement. The HIV and AIDS and anti-trafficking initiatives are both indicative of the potential value of taking a sensitive approach to 'bad' governments, rather than avoiding any dialogue with government officials.

In situations where it is possible to have a more open, partnership-type relationship with government agencies, such as in Sierra Leone, there are benefits in the greater co-ordination and partnerships, but also in costs of time, resources and other requirements for strengthening weak systems. As donors rarely cover recurrent costs, especially in humanitarian or post-conflict

situations, there can be difficulties in maintaining, let alone enhancing, disrupted or destroyed government systems. Due to donors concerns about governance and capacity, there are often inadequate funds for strengthening government systems or sustaining programme support. Save the Children Sierra Leone has worked regularly with relevant government ministries, but capacity issues within the ministries (MSWGCA, Health and Education) have been problematic in terms of maintaining programme continuity without additional NGO support. This leads NGOs, not just Save the Children, to try to manage areas for which they lack resources. In such contexts – a relief-to-development transition – NGOs are caught between continuing to ensure that programmes function and handing over responsibility to agencies that are still too weak to handle complex management functions.

### **3.2.2 Working with local governments**

For both local and national governments there are central issues of building relationships, influencing changes in policies, and accessing populations at risk. These tasks are difficult due to the fluidity of government positions (particularly in post-conflict settings or where government departments have access to significant funding) but also to staff turnover in NGOs. So the collaboration between government and NGOs often has to be rebuilt. Continuity in programming, advocacy, collaboration and agreed changes in strategic directions because of the context are constantly at risk and undermined. It is important, therefore, to set out institutional relationships around agreed goals, even though interpersonal trust remains vital.

Fragility both constrains capacity and creates situations where Save the Children must invest extra staff time and financial resources into work with local government partners. In relation to local government, in widely diverse types of fragile states, Save the Children has established extensive partnerships with both government agencies and communities, but these partnerships are sometimes constrained by local capacity issues as well as by mechanisms for programme delivery. It has been reported that in Sierra Leone, staff are expected to attend more meetings, to provide various types of support, and to become more involved in both implementation and institutional support in situations where the remit had not been as broad. In working with local government offices, Save the Children staff not only are constrained by the nature of fragility but also have to work through additional (multiple unplanned) tasks to ensure that the basic elements of programmes are delivered and that government partners are capable of carrying out their part of the work.

Despite these difficulties, there are a number of instances where a deliberate strategy has been followed in order to invest in local capacity and relationships. In Southern Sudan, significant attention was given to working with local officials and on local capacity and collaboration with local government. In Warrap State, the State Minister for Education commended Save the Children for working with the authorities, keeping them informed and involving them in decisions about the nature of activities to be implemented or the counties/payams/schools in which it planned to work. It was pointed out to everyone that Save the Children was regularly in contact to discuss the programmes running in Gogrial West County, and that the state government feels it is working alongside a partner, not a competitor. This is the result of a deliberate approach to engage with and support, even in times of disagreements, the building up of local government capacity (Fenton, 2007b).

Sometimes the changes in aid systems and responsibilities may leave local officials unable to manage existing co-ordination processes. In Sierra Leone, it was reported that while a district education office had held co-ordination meetings during the emergency period of the civil war, these were stopped during the transition phase. After some time, meetings were re-organised, but the capacity for real co-ordination and providing meaningful strategic direction to NGOs continues to be limited. Despite plans for decentralisation, many directives still come from Freetown (eg, directing where NGOs should build new schools). This further complicates both the NGOs relationship with local government and the co-ordination with different government agencies. In this situation of weak decentralisation, local governments end up with neither the capacity to co-ordinate with NGOs nor the responsibility to make final decisions.<sup>5</sup>

### *3.2.3 Civil society*

For Save the Children, work with civil society can be seen as either a mechanism for delivering services or, more importantly, of value in and of itself for boosting the capacity of civil society to fulfil its role as duty-bearer and demand that the government, as the primary duty-bearer, fulfils its obligations around children's rights.

Save the Children's country programmes engage with a range of local community groups in ways that are often highly demanding due to the nature of fragility. Civil society is more than either international NGOs or local CSOs. It includes various forms of traditional authorities whose views on gender, education, healthcare, the role of children and legal structures may be different from international human rights and/or child rights norms. Negotiating with, gaining the trust of and working with these local leaders can be among the most delicate and difficult tasks for an external agency. In many cases, Save the Children works with traditional authorities in situations where careful and long-term relationships are required to address issues such as women's rights, access to education, reproductive healthcare and the role of children's committees.

Further challenges exist because in fragile states relationships in civil society are often fractured by mistrust and conflict. In fact, there are often 'uncivil society' organisations that have gained political legitimacy through providing basic services when no other organisation has done so, and by providing security to local communities, though often at a cost of the loss of freedom to criticise the service providers (Mampilly, 2007; de Zeeuw, 2006). Research on armed organisations such as the Sudan People's Liberation Army described them as 'stationary bandits' (Metelits, 2004). This research indicated that these organisations fill the vacuum of a weak, corrupt or indifferent state, gaining political support through providing health and education services. They retain armed militias, creating a complex and risky environment for NGOs in such countries as DRC, Southern Sudan and Somalia.

In fragile states, organisations of and relations within civil society are also affected by weaknesses in relation to their capacity to manage even small projects, as well as the residual effects of mistrust, social tensions and the lack of social cohesion. An assessment in Myanmar noted that the weak capacity of local partners in several counties was an ongoing problem due to partners being overwhelmed by the scale of funding available to them from international NGOs and donors. This caused significant delays in implementation. Save the Children-Myanmar worked to strengthen partner capacity and moved into direct implementation where necessary. The situation in Myanmar represents a common difficulty for Save the Children and other

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<sup>5</sup> Save the Children, telephone interview with Sierra Leone Country Director, May 2007

organisations working in situations where the government and local CSOs have weak absorptive capacity at all levels that make it difficult to start or expand programmes.

One way to approach the obstacles of absorptive capacity is through building up of local expertise. Even in difficult circumstances, involvement of local CSOs from the outset is a critical factor in programme success. Programme experience has shown that creative work can be established with local communities to provide the foundation for implementing sustainable programmes in very fragile contexts. Save the Children in Somalia/Somaliland has had the experience of working effectively through local civic organisations such as community education committees, community health committee, water/sanitation committees, community health committees and social audit committees. Although such committees can be effective at micro level, it is important to ensure that they do not proliferate in a way that reduces opportunities for strengthening governance at higher levels (Manor, 2006).

Engaging closely with local communities and developing civil society institutions with the help of national staff has delivered multiple dividends such as effective programme delivery, enhanced ownership, accountability, security and transparency with increased communication, mutual capacity-building and, finally, enhanced sustainability in Puntland, Hiran and Somaliland. In the Hiran region, the Hiran Regional Education Committee (HREC) has had its capacity developed and is systematically taking the lead in the administration of education in the region. The emergency water and sanitation project in Hiran was implemented through local CSOs. The learning from this intervention will be significant for developing further work with local partners for development programmes.

Working with community organisations can also provide the basis for extending child protection initiatives across a large number of communities. Save the Children Afghanistan has helped to set up a Child Protection Action Network (CPAN), which is comprised of adult duty-bearers connected to about two million children in the country. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, where issues forwarded by children's groups can be considered, chairs the network. One impact of CPAN has been to allow 'working children' to use the same public transportation as other children, as CPAN members were able to convince the authorities to permit equal access for all children. Save the Children Afghanistan facilitated the process by conducting child rights training with the traffic police and the transportation department. Capacity-building efforts involve training duty-bearers such as child-focused agencies, children's employers, journalists, parents and religious leaders or *mullahs*.<sup>6</sup>

#### *3.2.4 Civil society and children's committees*

Just as participation is an important principle of good practice for NGOs in general, one of the principles of Save the Children's child rights programming approach is that children themselves should participate in decisions relating to matters that affect them. One common way of operationalising that principle is the establishment of children's committees. These can empower children and give them a voice in a general way, or they can be related to specific programmes or activities (eg, advising on the siting of water points, or carrying out peer education on HIV and AIDS).

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<sup>6</sup> For another country example, see *JMJ International*, 2006

Children's committees can provide specific mechanisms for dealing with displacement, participation and rebuilding civil society. An example of children providing a direct voice in programmes is found in the experiences of the Afghanistan REACH project. A review found that children's capacity to participate in health service development had been enhanced considerably. Children serving on health committees were beginning to make their voices heard. In some locations, the children's representatives knew what mechanisms they could use to hold healthcare providers accountable. The project demonstrated that children's participation (both girls and boys) in health committees is possible even in quite conservative communities, providing that parents are consulted and well informed of the purpose and nature of their children's involvement (Fenton, 2007a).

In Sierra Leone, child welfare committees were viewed as contributing to the wider building of civil society capacity (Save the Children Sierra Leone, 2007a). They have been engaged in building more protective communities and ensuring that more children are protected. In addition, youth and children's groups have created their own awareness and sensitisation activities, and have actively participated in national and international events such as the 'Day of the African child', 'Lessons for life' and the 'Education for all campaign'. Notably, it was the children's groups that appointed children mobilisers and peer educators – it was a decision by them and not by adults or Save the Children Sierra Leone.

In the health sector, Save the Children Sierra Leone has engaged with children mainly through Sissy Aminata training, which is based on a series of letters written by children to a fictional aunt, 'Sissy Aminata'. Children's perceptions, therefore, are central to the Save the Children programming approach in Sierra Leone when managers meet with them to listen to their primary concerns. Children's committees, and their participation, guided staff in developing an awareness campaign on issues which had been identified by children, eg, early pregnancy. When children told staff that child trafficking (movement of children from rural to urban areas) was one of their main concerns, a decision was made to establish links with urban slums areas to develop a family tracing and family link programme across both districts and in close co-ordination with other agencies (such as ICRC, Goal, and others). These partnerships with other NGOs have formed an essential part of scaling up from individual children's committees to programmes with a wider policy impact.

### *3.2.5 International NGOs*

International NGOs (INGOs) face issues about their engagement with and distinction from the agendas driven by donor foreign policies, where the engagement with fragile states issues includes assessing not only donor aid systems but how these systems or individual donor decisions may reflect foreign policy goals. There are also concerns about the accountability of INGOs to local communities and whether they have become cogs in the aid machinery (Tvedt, 2006; Ebrahim, 2003). As a member of a number of NGO consortia at national and international level, Save the Children participates in mechanisms for co-ordination, joint planning, advocacy, and engagement with the setting of donor policies and priorities. As other NGOs engage more directly with the fragile states agenda and with country co-ordination, new opportunities may emerge for shared learning and common approaches to accountability and effectiveness.

Research on service delivery in fragile states showed that NGOs often were involved in capacity-building efforts (OECD/DAC, 2006a; Christian Children's Fund, 2003; International Rescue

Committee, 2002). In many instances, NGOs have worked and are working closely with government ministries in training, service delivery and policy co-ordination. Difficulties arise at a higher level in terms of the lack of a coherent policy framework among donors or governments on how different NGO programmes can be co-ordinated. In addition, shared funding is not very common, though it is potentially innovative.

The Joint Initiative in Zimbabwe (see Box 2, page 24) is an example of a potentially new mechanism for NGO collaboration in a more structured fashion, beyond programme co-operation. In late 2005, seven NGOs<sup>7</sup> decided to combine their capacities and resources in integrated programmes to address the needs of highly vulnerable groups in urban areas of Zimbabwe affected by Operation Murambatsvina in which around 700,000 people in urban areas countrywide lost their homes, livelihoods and access to food, education and healthcare. NGOs were slow to react, as very few were working in or had experience of working in urban areas of Zimbabwe. The proposal was for an integrated programme working across seven sectors (an initial assessment was carried out and identified priorities which were considered and further prioritised by communities themselves) with child protection (implemented by Save the Children UK in Zimbabwe) as a cross-cutting initiative.

The Zimbabwe example demonstrates that NGO consortia may work more effectively when NGOs lead on programme initiation and development and the negotiation of details. It may demonstrate the capacity of NGOs to manage pooled funding effectively in terms of cost and programming. It also may be a model for use in other countries where fragility is a result of poor governance and policies, where government is isolated by donors and where the funding environment is severely constrained (Fenton, 2007c). However, this type of collaboration, while promising in terms of avoiding competition and duplication, requires institutional support from NGO senior management and donor aid instruments that promote this level of co-operation. Developing these incentives represents some of the continuing, deeply rooted challenges of working effectively in fragile states.

### **3.3 Participation and accountability**

The importance of accountability to communities has gained increasing attention in recent years, especially in emergency contexts. Donors and NGOs have not usually been accountable to communities for how emergency programmes are planned and implemented, or how resources are allocated. Decisions about the allocation of resources, regional and sectoral priorities, and sequencing of actions have tended to remain in the hands of outsiders. After the tsunami, the second stage of aid activity involved donors and NGOs rushing in to the affected communities without consultation processes or mechanisms for accountability first being established. The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) report provides evidence of interesting connections between donor-driven approaches in emergencies and the risk of donor-driven agendas in fragile states. Thus, some of the key points in the TEC report have significant implications for both donors and NGOs working in fragile states, as the report argues that donors and NGOs need to assess (Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, 2007):

- how communities are involved in planning, implementation and evaluation

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<sup>7</sup> Africare, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam GB, Practical Action Southern Africa, Save the Children UK, Mercy Corps and their local partners

- who makes the final decisions
- the real issues in participation (exclusion, information, decision-making)
- how can/should affected populations challenge programmes.

Children's participation is one mechanism common to Save the Children's programming in fragile states that could serve as a means of improving accountability. As mentioned in Section 3.2.4, in country after country, the role of children's and youth committees has been cited as a central contribution of Save the Children to children's rights, child protection and social cohesion.

A focus on children has provided a common entry point and arena for dialogue with governments in different contexts: in cases of weak capacity, emphasising capacity-building to achieve children's rights; in cases of conflict, emphasising the protection of children from violence; and in cases of pariah states, finding common ground with relevant officials, with the level of engagement being dependent on a range of factors (which requires staff skill and adaptability and flexible planning frameworks). The engagement of children and youth directly in programmes, and more tentatively in programme evaluation and national dialogues, has been a key element of Save the Children's approach. This moves beyond child protection from an adult-driven or adult-managed approach to one where children and young people themselves set goals and priorities.

One approach with an innovative programme delivery mechanism that has strengthened child participation is Save the Children Afghanistan's radio programme in Kandahar and Uruzgan. The inability to travel safely through these isolated and insecure regions makes direct programme implementation very difficult. In addition, cultural restrictions prohibit girls from moving freely outside the home, which means they only come into contact with families, immediate neighbours and other girls and teachers at school. Radio programmes have been set up in both provinces to spread child rights and protection messages and provide opportunities for children to participate in debates and discussion around issues concerning them. Programmes have covered topics such as 'why girls should go to school' and 'the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan'. Over 700 children (30 per cent of whom are girls) have been directly involved in this programme, and over one million children, as well as their families and communities, have benefited indirectly by listening to the programme. Government officials have expressed support and the radio station has received many letters and feedback from listeners, most of which is positive.

Despite the good results from children's committees, there are concerns in fragile contexts and more generally about levels of participation and accountability. There is an inherent risk that children's committees and other participatory mechanisms may be superficial in terms of providing a genuine voice for children. In addition, Save the Children does not appear to be good at learning from experiences with its children's committees, even with the experiences from the Children's Feedback Committees and the Children's Advisory Board in Zimbabwe.

Another potential avenue for increasing accountability is the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP-I).<sup>8</sup> This partnership seeks to improve NGO accountability to

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<sup>8</sup> For details, see [www.hapinternational.org](http://www.hapinternational.org)

communities and beneficiaries of aid in humanitarian contexts, and Save the Children UK has signed up to the HAP-I principles. HAP-I goes further than its principles and has developed a system of accreditation to certify that an NGO's work adheres to the principles in practice. While there is a large overlap in practice between humanitarian and fragile states contexts, there would be value in considering applying the HAP-I principles more explicitly to fragile state contexts.

### **3.4 The effect of fragility on the sectors of education, health, hunger reduction and livelihoods, and child protection**

Having considered some broad aspects of programme design and ways of working, this section considers how work in the sectors of education, health, hunger reduction and protection are affected by fragility, and provides examples from Save the Children's experience of different ways of working in these contexts.

In some fragile states, there are overt and widespread violations of children's rights as part of a wider punitive approach to populations associated with religious or ethnic communities, or opposition groups (violent and non-violent alike). In addition, children's rights are often more harshly violated through forms of violence, sexual exploitation, displacement from home and family, and mistreatment by both states' parties and warring parties.

The connections between service delivery and fragility depend partly on the nature of the sector under consideration: health, education and hunger all have their own particular characteristics, which mean that the impact of fragility on outcomes and on the ways in which services are delivered (or not delivered) will vary. In education, the destruction of schools and absence of teachers leads to reduced enrolment and lower levels of literacy and numeracy. The health sector is notably affected by the rapid loss of skilled health personnel (a wider problem in low-income countries in general), which results in clinics without service providers and a drastic drop in basic healthcare services. Fragility affects food security and livelihoods through declining markets, lack of agricultural or livelihood extension, workers and services and weakened nutrition programmes where economic crises undermine livelihoods.

It is important to recognise that work in each of those sectors can contribute to reducing fragility in addition to achieving valuable outcomes in its own right. The rest of this section considers the sectoral impact on fragility as well as Save the Children's response in this regard.

#### *3.4.1 Education*

##### **Fragility dynamic**

The primary and most critical issue for education is that unless fragile states are enabled by the international community to provide education for their children, the Millennium Development Goal for universal access to primary education will not be met. On top of our commitment to the MDGs, there is an impetus for education in fragile states, where the importance of consistent support for education has been shown both in terms of the value of education in dire situations and through studies of the potential for education to have a mitigating role on aspects of fragility. Bush and Saltarelli, for example, argue that the "conflict-dampening" impact of

educational opportunity can encourage the promotion of linguistic diversity, the nurturing of ethnic tolerance and the “disarming” of history (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000).

Quality education is not only important in preventing conflict. It is also a lifesaving tool, protecting children from recruitment into armed forces and providing key survival information such as landmine awareness, HIV and AIDS education, and emergency preparedness. Education is also a tool for development, economic growth and the future stability of a nation. This was emphasised by the OECD/DAC Fragile States Group service delivery workstream when it looked at the links between education and fragility (Rose and Greeley, 2006).

Assessing the relationship between education and fragility requires a recognition that much of the impact of education will be found only in long-term outcomes, which depend in part on the quality of instruction and the content of curricula. For example, several authors indicate that the negative face of education has the potential to exacerbate conflict while good-quality education can have cumulative benefits as a mechanism for conflict prevention (Tawil and Harley 2003; Nelles, 2003; Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). The long-term timeframe required for assessing educational outcomes and the impact of fragility on education and vice versa, has also been noted by the Education for All/Fast Track Initiative (FTI) paper (EFA/FTI, 2005), which explores some of the trade-offs between seeking to focus on education MDGs or on other post-conflict and fragile states goals, such as social cohesion or out-of-school youth.

Educational systems can mitigate poor governance caused by fragility through better local accountability, through mechanisms for parental oversight of teacher performance, by sharing information among civil society organisations (CSOs) on exclusionary practices, and by designing safety measures for in- and out-of-school youth. This can result in enhanced patterns of resiliency, greater tolerance and manifestations of social capital and/or a stronger sense of community. The FTI report notes the value of engaging local communities in ways that can have immediate results on reducing fragility, such as working with out-of-school youth and promoting social cohesion and community involvement.

### **Aid architecture**

Aid allocation for education is rarely based on need. Education aid given to conflict-affected fragile states (CAFS) is often unpredictable and short term, and it fails to account for the transition from conflict to development. The analysis of funding indicates that donors still prioritise middle-income countries in terms of both overall aid allocation, but this is particularly so for aid to education (International Save the Children Alliance, 2007). Despite the clear evidence of its benefits, education fails to feature strongly as a donor mechanism for bringing CAFS out of poverty and into stability. Yet, as Chauvet and Collier (2004, p 16) indicate, “Aid spent on providing a cadre of well-educated people has an expected pay-off far in excess of its likely cost.”

Donor governments are beginning to realising the human security implications of not engaging with ‘bad performers’ but are still risk-averse in terms of financing them. As noted above, one way of addressing fragility is through adequate attention and resources to education in fragile states. Save the Children UK, as a member of the International Save the Children Alliance (ISCA) and as a representative of the Global Campaign for Education (GEC) on the FTI-fragile states task team, has sought to highlight the current gaps in educational opportunities through its recent report, *Last in Line* (International Save the Children Alliance, 2007). This report illustrates gaps in both humanitarian and development aid allocations that

reduce support for education in conflict-affected fragile states. Such gaps are also likely to extend to pariah states.

Consequently, “Children in CAFS are less likely than other children around the world to have the chance to go to school” (International Save the Children Alliance, 2007, p 1). In fact, they are a third less likely to go to school than children in other low-income countries.

### **Programme experience**

The particular role that education can play in reducing (or, in other contexts, exacerbating) conflict has been highlighted in Sri Lanka. The high regard with which both Tamil and Sinhala communities hold education has been utilised by agencies such as Save the Children Sri Lanka as a potential dialogue point on education and common goals in the midst of situations of communal tension and mistrust. The commitment to education has led to local cease-fire agreements during periods of national tests, although leveraging this into longer-term approaches remains a challenge.<sup>9</sup>

Save the Children’s work in education across a range of contexts has been characterised by flexibility in adapting work to the prevailing climate of fragility or stability. For example, in the education programme in Southern Sudan, where there was no national curriculum after the war, Save the Children developed the curriculum with local education authorities in an area in which the agency had been working for some time and then piloted the work with the involvement of the local authorities. Staff consulted with the children and communities concerned, although this had weaknesses in the process and design. (At the initial stages of designing this programme, Save the Children Southern Sudan did not have a CRSA but still followed the principles of child rights programming, ie, the three pillars.) The country programme successfully piloted this work and the government then used it as a basis for developing a nationwide curriculum.

In the case of Afghanistan, cultural restrictions on girls’ mobility meant that community schools had to be established, often in community homes, as otherwise girls would not receive an education. While there have been significant attempts to ensure that these schools are linked in some ways to the formal system (more easily achieved in Kabul than in Kandahar), there are challenges to this in the long term because of continued and escalating security risks. In response to this environment, radio programmes have been set up in Kandahar and Uruzgan to spread child rights and protection messages and provide opportunities for children to participate in debates and discussion around issues concerning them. These have given more than a million children – especially girls – the opportunity to express their views in a risk-free environment to a wide audience.

Through the direct experiences described above, Save the Children has identified some key issues in many CAFS which programmes should address:

- finding the best way to get children who have been out of school due to conflict and/or fragility back into education, or accelerate their learning if they are behind
- working with government or de facto authorities to ensure that devastated education systems are strengthened and restored

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<sup>9</sup> Save the Children Sri Lanka, telephone interview with Country Director, May 2007; de Silva, 1999

- building the capacity of civil society, parents and communities to increase the level of demand and accountability for quality education.

### **3.4.2 Health**

#### **Fragility dynamic**

The characteristics of fragile states which have led to a near or total collapse of basic health services – particularly for poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups – is evident, with fragile states reporting the worst health outcomes in the world. Representing just 15 per cent of the world's population, fragile states account for one-third of the world's poor, 41 per cent of all child deaths under-fives, one-third of maternal deaths and one-third of those under-nourished. The proportion of people living with HIV and AIDS is four times greater and the malaria mortality rate 13 times greater in fragile states compared to other developing countries (Newbrander, 2006). Children bear a disproportionate share of the fragile states poverty, and it is clear from the evidence and indicators presented that they are denied their most basic rights to health and welfare, which will affect them for the rest of their lives. Furthermore, unless the international community finds more effective ways to deliver aid and improve health service delivery in fragile states, the health Millennium Development Goals will not be met

No single formula will fit all contexts, so it is essential that any framework for strengthening health services can adapt funding modalities, aid instruments and approaches to the context. The constraints to the effective delivery of aid to the health sector are immense – poverty, poor governance, lack of political will, lack of capacity, low staff moral among health workers, weak monitoring and evaluation systems and an unregulated, and often proliferating, private sector. Added to this is the lack of co-ordination between donor programmes and vertical funds, and poor alignment of policies and strategies by different agencies and the government.

The challenge to delivering resources to the health sector in fragile states is in addressing essential and priority needs, while also considering approaches that will enable broader health systems, strategies and reforms to develop. The potential tensions between systems and services are heightened by the challenge of equitable access, where some regions may be inaccessible to most agencies. The need for access is notable, given the high disease burden of poor and vulnerable groups.

One consideration is whether improving health services in the short term is primarily a humanitarian imperative, or whether it links with state-building, social cohesion and other longer-term benefits. The Fragile States Group at OECD/DAC produced a number of background papers, one of which emphasised that a core issue in fragile states is to ensure that health sector approaches are contextually astute. In this sense, specific health programmes may be less important than the question of whether and how health sector programmes could be designed and implemented so as to contribute to the identification and resolution of the political, social and even economic drivers of fragility within a given country (Waldman, 2006a).

#### **Aid architecture**

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in and analysis of the ways in which donors, governments and other organisations can deliver aid more effectively to strengthen healthcare systems in fragile states. When addressing health and fragility, one core element is to develop from the start a long-term vision of a pro-poor healthcare system, even when donor and

government efforts are focused on short-term measures to keep the healthcare system going. Recent work has demonstrated the value of developing a strategic framework and policies for the health sector as early as possible (Zivetz, 2006; Waldman, 2006).

Fragile states face specific difficulties in financing healthcare systems and retaining health workers. The healthcare sector is likely to be more expensive in fragile states than other low-income states, and donors need to address this gap. There are also questions about how to make use of diverse service providers – both state and non-state – and how to generate demand in environments where the health sector has performed poorly (High Level Forum, 2004). One proposed solution is to create islands of dependability to help retain health workers and maintain trust in the healthcare system.

Aid effectiveness and resource mobilisation for the health sector remains a significant problem. This not only includes increased funding but also predictability and length of funding commitments, to support the relief-to-development continuum. Aid cannot be used for strategic investment or supporting longer-term change and reform if it is only offered for a year or two. Uncertainty over funding, for both government and non-state actors, also significantly reduces the capacity to scale-up proven and effective health strategies and approaches.

### **Programme experience**

Save the Children UK's approach to health across all its programmes has a clear emphasis on producing beneficial outcomes for the poor, with a priority on ensuring that the most poor and vulnerable have equitable and free access to good basic healthcare. In addition, a core principle of Save the Children UK's work is system-strengthening, even in emergencies. Save the Children's work in health at country level has sought to address these issues through the use of child rights programming. In the absence of key duty-bearers, the rights to basic services may be realised through interim service provision. In situations where communities lack access to health services, Save the Children establishes programmes that fulfil these rights as an interim measure.

As much as possible, Save the Children health programmes also work with national and local government, as well as CSOs for strengthening health systems and structures. In Afghanistan, Save the Children addressed core capacity constraints as well as service delivery systems through its involvement with REACH (Rural Expansion of Afghanistan's Community-Based Health) (Fenton, 2007a). The programme was, from the beginning, in alignment with government and donor strategies, and implementation was designed to support this. The focus was on building government systems and capacity to deliver comprehensive, good-quality health services with the active involvement and empowerment of local communities and the children within them. The programme evaluation found that children's rights to health and survival, non-discrimination, participation and access to quality healthcare services were better fulfilled than before the project started.

CSOs may have a key role to play in terms of advocating for health services, as well as serving as agents of change and holding the government or other duty-bearers to account. Within the REACH programme there were indications of increased capacity among health workers and local communities to support children in the realisation of their rights to health and protection. REACH is a good example of how negotiating with, gaining the trust of, and working with civil groups can be among the most delicate and difficult of tasks. But the involvement of civil society – including children and youth – from the outset, even in difficult circumstances, is a

critical factor of programme success and can deliver multiple dividends. One of the difficulties of engaging community organisations and children's committees, however, is that health systems have higher asymmetries of information<sup>10</sup> than education, yet the impact of poor health and failing healthcare systems are often immediate and apparent through increased morbidity and mortality.

Setting priorities for health programmes, interventions and resource allocation is difficult, as many of the determinants of health lie outside the health sector (eg, water and sanitation, education for mothers, nutrition). Furthermore, the efficacy of certain technical interventions can lead to a narrowly focused set of interventions that are not sustainable and do not address some of the key determinants of health outcomes. In many contexts, it is difficult to determine which vertical programmes will have impact, and the potential impact of different healthcare programmes is dependent on context.

Difficult donor environments and the need for donors and NGOs alike to be flexible in their approach to funding the health sector is also an ongoing issue. In Zimbabwe, the changes in donor funding strategies and policies in response to government economic and political intransigence have had a significant impact on the shape and focus of Save the Children's programme. The impact has been greatest on development programmes, most of which involved working through and building the capacity of local government structures. In the case of Save the Children, a SIDA decision in 2003 not to allow direct funding of or work with government mid-way through project implementation meant that several key activities in the child protection and care programme they were funding could not be implemented as planned. Work to support the expanded programme of immunisation (EPI) had to be discontinued and the training of medical personnel to provide youth-friendly reproductive health services at community youth centres could not take place.

Nevertheless, Save the Children was able to adapt by developing and expanding other activities instead. Community awareness of malaria and how to prevent it was enhanced by working through community leadership to train village health workers and home-based carers. These people were also able to distribute treated mosquito nets more widely. Even though these activities were useful, the SIDA evaluation team noted that the decision to stop support to government had a negative impact on programme effectiveness overall.

### *3.4.3 Hunger reduction and livelihoods*

#### **Fragility dynamic**

The role that poverty and livelihood insecurity can play in contributing to the fragility of states has been recognised increasingly over the last decade. At community and societal levels, poverty creates increased competition for resources that often leads to some form of conflict. In 1994 David Keen highlighted the competition for grazing land in Southern Sudan between poor Baggara and Dinka communities in northern Bahr-el-Ghazal, and how the situation was exploited for political purposes, resulting ultimately in famine (Keen, 1994). A similar process

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<sup>10</sup> In the healthcare market information is not equally shared between the health professional and the client/patient. The medical basis of public health information is not easily understood by the layman. This situation is complicated by the fact that the health professional is required to act in the best interests of the patient, yet also acts as a supplier (or seller) of healthcare. The power and gender dynamics of this information can be significant.

continues at present in Darfur with livelihood insecurity, displacement and malnutrition of children and adults. Conflicts over the exploitation of minerals and other natural resources have occurred in recent years in several fragile states including DRC, Sierra Leone and Liberia. In those cases, poverty has been identified as one of the drivers of child and adult recruitment into armed forces due to the lack of viable alternative livelihoods (Goodhand, 2004; Collinson, 2003). In Afghanistan and Colombia, meanwhile, the profitability of narcotics production relative to other forms of income-earning is also seen as contributing to the fragility of those states.

Recognising this relationship, a number of donors have developed guidance or policy on livelihoods and conflict (USAID, 2005; DFID, 2005). However, work on livelihoods in fragile states has received less attention than, for example, health and education, which might be considered more tangible sectors to work with, and unlike those sectors there was no OECD/DAC workstream looking at the viability and sustainability of livelihoods.

The long-term effect of chronic malnutrition on fragility has not been examined, but nutrition studies demonstrate the inter-generational nature of malnutrition between mother and child. In this regard, addressing the issue of malnutrition poses some of the same challenges as health. It is acknowledged that malnutrition in infancy has a serious and permanent impact on children's development and their potential throughout their lifecycle.

### **Aid architecture**

While there is widespread use of food aid in emergencies and in food-deficit countries, and much debate about appropriate responses to food crises in emergencies, far less attention has been given, particularly by donors, to *hunger reduction*, and even less to the restoration of *livelihoods* in fragile states. Evidence demonstrates that 'ability to afford' a diverse diet and non-food items as well as basic services for child development are critical to reduce chronic and acute malnutrition. Livelihoods do not constitute services, and the relationship between livelihoods and the service delivery model may require more thorough exploration at first than the relationship between the model and health or education. However, livelihoods are affected by services (eg, agricultural extension and veterinary services) and, just as importantly, by the role of the public sector in creating and maintaining an enabling environment for livelihoods.

The dominance of food aid-based responses is being challenged and a variety of donors (especially DFID) and NGOs give increasing attention to various social protection mechanisms such as cash-based safety nets. It would be valuable to see how different social protection mechanisms can work and have an impact on different sectoral outcomes in fragile state contexts. To date, evidence on this area is limited, with large-scale programmes being focused on more stable contexts (eg, Latin America and, more recently, Ethiopia), and only a handful of small pilot projects being carried out in fragile states such as Somalia.

### **Programme experience**

For Save the Children, work on hunger reduction includes 'life-saving' work in emergencies (such as feeding programmes). It also includes longer-term projects and advocacy addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition (focusing on household food security and livelihoods, and caring practices) and support for national systems to address those underlying causes (specifically, the establishment of safety nets and food security and nutrition information

systems – FSNIS).<sup>11</sup> Additional complementary work is carried out on poverty-related root causes of malnutrition in conjunction with the Poverty and Economic Justice team.

In Zimbabwe, one focus of Save the Children's livelihoods and food security work was on reducing chronic and acute malnutrition in children in the Zambezi valley through improving livelihoods as well as access to education and healthcare. Save the Children Zimbabwe focuses on the poorest children, who are often from families affected by AIDS. The activities entail identifying and monitoring the food security situation through annual household economy assessments. The programme then provides support to the identified communities through the distribution of farming inputs and seed multiplication for drought-resistant crops such as sweet potatoes and cassava in order to create local seed banks. It also works on building food security and a sustainable asset base for poor communities through conservation farming and innovative pest control methods. However, the impact of fragility on targeting and programme integration (see Box 4) may be limiting the effect of these interventions.

#### **Box 4: The Protracted Relief Programme**

Save the Children is one of 12 NGOs being funded by DFID to implement its innovative Protracted Relief Programme (PRP). Reducing extreme poverty and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger in Zimbabwe are the main goals of the PRP. The purpose of this £30 million three-year programme is to improve the food security and livelihoods of more than 1.5 million people. The programme, which began in August 2004, aims to assist the poorest and most vulnerable households suffering from the effects of erratic weather patterns, economic decline and the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The main objective is to improve livelihoods and increase food production by the poorest, thereby reducing the need for food aid. Over the life of the programme, mainstreaming the needs of orphans and vulnerable children – through improved analysis of vulnerability and better targeting – has led to a greater focus on households with high dependency ratios, elderly-headed households and child-headed households.

Results achieved by the programme so far are impressive. Over 330,000 households – almost 1.6 million people – are benefiting from the programme. Low-input gardens have significantly improved the nutrition and, in some cases, the income of beneficiaries. In areas where fertiliser and seed have been provided, crop yields have increased by more than 40 per cent. The introduction of low-cost and conservation farming methods in other areas has increased crop yields by over 50 per cent. This has resulted overall in a reduction in the need for food aid, although it unclear whether this reduction can be sustained. Eight hundred new water points have been installed, benefiting over 160,000 people.

DFID has also noted that Save the Children's focus on mainstreaming child rights and participation throughout the programme and its experience of establishing and working with child feedback committees has added value to the programme.

Much of Save the Children's work on hunger reduction in fragile states is in the form of direct operations. As is often the case in fragile states, the greatest challenge the programmes face is balancing support to meet immediate- or short-term needs during periodic crises with work to strengthen sustainable livelihoods of people in order to reduce their vulnerability to food insecurity in the face of increasing number of shocks such as drought and deaths through HIV and AIDS. For example, in response to food security issues in Zimbabwe in the past two years, Save the Children UK in Zimbabwe sought to combine work on immediate food security

<sup>11</sup> Save the Children UK staff email, fragile states adviser hunger reduction, May 2007

approaches and investment in livelihood interventions. The background work involved identifying and monitoring the food security situation through annual household economy assessments. The programme then provided support to the identified communities through the distribution of farming inputs and seed multiplication for drought-resistant crops such as sweet potatoes and cassava in order to create local seed banks. It also works on building food security and a sustainable asset base for poor communities through conservation farming and innovative pest control methods (Fenton, 2007c).

Save the Children works hard to ensure that systems are in place to avoid child malnutrition in the first place. Through the work on Food Security and Nutrition Information Systems (FSNIS), Save the Children seeks to work within government structures to provide regular information on food security and nutrition that can be used for early warning of crises or to help plan longer-term programmes. As well as providing information for immediate response the FSNIS is an attempt to engage stakeholders and duty-bearers at national level and to influence the national policy agenda to ensure that information systems are strengthened and food security and livelihood responses are timely and appropriate in scale and type. This work has included fragile states such as Zimbabwe, Southern Sudan and Somalia as well as the Darfur region. Where Save the Children has engaged with governments, it has often had to strike a delicate balance between seeking accurate and useful information while avoiding political pressure to change information for political purposes (Zimbabwe) or avoiding perceptions that by working with the government the organisation has taken sides in a conflict (Darfur).

#### *3.4.4 Child protection*

##### **Fragility dynamic**

Many child protection problems arise as a direct consequence of fragility. The most prevalent protection issues that threaten children include separation from their primary caregivers and parents, trafficking, sexual exploitation by a range of actors (including fighting forces in either combatant or peacekeeping roles), recruitment into fighting forces, and the placement of orphans or separated children into poor quality institutions.

Protection programming can also play an important role in reducing fragility and Save the Children UK's approach to child protection programming in these contexts works in a multi-faceted way to achieve this. The first example is the support given to the building of effective child protection systems. In the case of family tracing and reunification programmes, for example, Save the Children has implemented these, where possible, in conjunction with local authority social service staff and ministries in order to rebuild capacity. During the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process in Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs in Kailahun district received support from Save the Children-UK to be 'fit for purpose' to run a family tracing and reunification programme using a case management system for separated and unaccompanied children. By doing so the ministry's capacity to provide an effective component of a broader child protection system has been enhanced. Unfortunately the government was not able to uphold standards as government-trained staff moved to other positions where the salary was higher.

In the case of the reintegration of children removed from high-risk environments (particularly children formerly associated with armed groups, but also including children involved in

hazardous labour, sex work, etc) Save the Children's approach rests heavily on mobilising a caring and responsive community-based child protection network. The emphasis is on the role that such networks can play in mediating tensions between the children, their families and the wider community. This approach does much to reduce tension and instability and to begin the process of rebuilding community cohesion and trust, thus contributing to the reduction of many underlying characteristics of fragility.

### **Aid architecture**

Many child protection programmes in fragile states struggle with short-term emergency funding that does not recognise the long-term nature of the support needed firstly, for children affected by insecurity and conflict and secondly, to build community-based child protection structures. This tension is even more apparent in situations of ongoing conflict or fragile peace. While delays in funding or changes of focus are difficult for any programme, they are of particular concern, for example, when working with children associated with armed forces and groups who are often highly sensitive to any failure to keep promises of assistance. Not only do delays risk undermining such efforts but they can even threaten the peace itself.

It is important, therefore, that the amount of resources devoted to the immediate needs of conflict-affected children is balanced more equitably with their longer-term needs. While the pressures to 'frontload' the response are understandable, they are short-sighted both in terms of sustainable peace and in terms of the true involvement of children and young people in post-conflict development.

### **Programme experience**

Save the Children has an established policy and practice basis for responding to child protection issues in emergencies. What has emerged in recent evaluations is that there are tensions between the nature of responses in the 'emergency phase', what is required in terms of ongoing child protection programmes in the 'post conflict' stage, and the degree to which current funding modalities support this transition (International Save the Children Alliance, 2007a). A question that remains to be answered is whether we can determine different child protection issues/indicators for fragile states that are independent of the onset of an emergency (conflict) and its transition to the 'post conflict' or 'recovery phase'.

In answer to this question, it can be said that much of Save the Children's current child protection work in fragile states – as in any other setting – focuses on the reduction of abuse, neglect, exploitation and neglect.<sup>12</sup> The primary objective of Save the Children's work in child protection is to ensure that all children have access to quality national child protection systems, which include elements such as an appropriate legal framework, resources and functioning government ministries and departments with the adequate levels of co-ordination and strong community and civil society networks.

A central and notable part of Save the Children's work in building systems and ownership of child protection goals is through the formation of children's committees and youth committees. This approach has been applied across a range of countries and contexts, including areas of

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<sup>12</sup> Save the Children UK's definition of child protection is: "The protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence."

social conflict. In Sri Lanka, children's and youth committees are mechanisms for addressing exclusion, building voice and addressing weak accountability mechanisms and rights gaps. Given the nature of the country's conflict, the work is highly context-specific.

Save the Children Sri Lanka has also learnt that in order to ensure that children are consulted and allowed to participate meaningfully in programmes, further investment in staff capacity and programme management is required.<sup>13</sup> Children's committees serve as a foundation for child protection action at each level of Save the Children's work, but more could be done to understand their real or potential roles in addressing factors of fragility.

Other areas of child protection that are also particular features of Save the Children's approach in difficult contexts, and where Save the Children has developed programmes to respond, include:

- *Children on the move*: Save the Children implements cross-border projects with local authorities, local communities and civil society to monitor the movement of children and conduct appropriate interventions
- *Children without adequate parental care*: There are many reasons (including HIV and AIDS, displacement, death of parents through direct fighting) why children might be placed into institutions, or live on the street, or move from one temporary carer to another in IDP camps and urban areas. Save the Children advocates and directly assists for the provision of community-based care for these children
- *Sexual abuse and violence*: Save the Children monitors and responds to cases of violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, and strengthens communities and local authorities' monitoring and responses.
- *Reintegration of separated children*: This work encompasses many children – those who were previously on the move, trafficked, displaced, and associated with fighting and armed groups. It usually involves family tracing and reunification, community-based reintegration, mediation, psychosocial support, referrals for access to education and skills training (which can include and economic objective).

In addition to direct programme work in conjunction with partners, communities and local government, Save the Children is significantly involved in shaping global policy and agenda setting in this area. A recent example was Save the Children's involvement in the development of the new Paris Principles for the Protection of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups.

This year the Special Representative to the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict has called for a review of the Graça Machel study (1996) in order to determine the progress made and set the agenda for the coming ten years. Save the Children, as an Alliance of member organisations, has fed into this process to ensure the agenda reflects issues that are central to the protection of children in conflict.

### **3.5 Programme integration and coherence**

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<sup>13</sup> Save the Children Sri Lanka, telephone interview Country Director, May 2007

The OECD/DAC has identified integration and coherence as important working principles in fragile states, but practice still lags behind principles.

When Save the Children does well on integration, it is more likely to be at the level of operations. For example, in Mazar-I-Sharif in Afghanistan, Save the Children’s programmes in health, education and protection are run on an integrated basis, with staff from each sector being sufficiently aware of activities that they are able to answer questions and represent the other sectors at meetings. This was more cost efficient and made better use of scarce resources. Furthermore, the impact was broader in the communities involved because of the integrated approach. While the restricted security regulations negatively impacted scale, scope and some aspects of team morale, there were some positive results through innovation and staff perseverance.<sup>14</sup>

Yet more fundamentally, the sectoral nature of Save the Children’s strategies globally has resulted in a certain lack of coherence in terms of the ages of children being measured in terms of impact by each sector. Table 2 shows the age groups prioritised under the four main sectors of work globally.

**Table 2: Priority age groups of children targeted under Save the Children UK’s four objectives**

Age (years)	<1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Health																			
Education																			
Hunger																			
Protection																			

It is notable that young people over 15 are not a priority group for any sector, and yet the lack of education and livelihoods opportunities for this group is a particular concern in fragile states. Youth (adolescence and young adulthood, ages 12–24) is the crucial time for developing life and livelihood skills, accessing new information and knowledge, but in most developing countries young people lack these opportunities. In fragile states, this is usually more severe (but poorly documented), and the outcome is that young people lack basic livelihood skills. The most vulnerable are those young people who lack education and livelihoods, a large population that donor policies all too rarely address. Lack of education and livelihoods, together with alienation, can lead to violent behaviours, a negative outcome particularly affecting young males – and a heightened fragility factor.

### 3.6 Funding

The implications of the fragile states environment and the aid architecture within those states detailed in Part 2 can be summarised as follows: NGOs are faced with negotiating a system that

<sup>14</sup> Save the Children UK, staff email Afghanistan Country Director, May 2007

provides aid either on a short-term emergency or long-term development basis, neither of which on its own is suited to fragile state contexts. And while some new modalities have been developed by donors to deal with fragile states, eg, multi-donor trust funds, so far direct NGO access to these funding mechanisms has been extremely limited.

Donor policies can create uncertainty or demand for rapid change in country programme planning as shifts in aid modalities can leave individual programmes adrift between different aid systems. At the country level, Save the Children Liberia found that their biggest problem was the ending of ECHO's 'emergency' funding in December 2006, which was part of the transition to post-conflict funding from the European Union.<sup>15</sup> The ability of the programme to access the post-conflict funding has been constrained by a lack of clarity on the EU's goals, beyond broad statements about schools, roads and hospitals, as well as promoting good governance. Notably absent from the view of the EU staff, despite the continued political fears related to the issue, was any interest in work on reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces and adult ex-combatants. Save the Children staff have to track the World Bank's funding decisions, especially around DDR, and thus the programme's reintegration work is stuck between emergency and post-conflict funding phases, which creates a daily challenge of maintaining existing programmes such as child protection committees and non-formal education centres that are the core of the work.

The slowness and inefficiency of the MDTF in Southern Sudan (MDTF-SS) has been widely criticised by NGOs, the government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) and Sudanese civil society. Two years after its establishment, there is very little evidence of impact on the ground. Three of the key reasons for this, noted in a recent review of the performance of MDTFs in post-conflict settings, were the unrealistic, multiple and potentially contradictory objectives of the fund, ie:

- build state capacity and ownership (learning by doing)
- finance quick impact programmes to deliver peace dividends
- be on-budget.

The extremely limited capacity of the newly established GoSS also contributed significantly to the delays and inefficiencies associated with the MDTF-SS. Some of the most serious problems have been related to procurement capacity and issues.

Failure to involve NGOs and civil society sufficiently in the design, implementation and monitoring of MDTF programmes was identified in the review as another key issue which needed to be addressed. Despite these problems and difficulties, the education stakeholders forum (a forum by which the MDTF secretariat briefed NGOs, UN and other education actors) eventually did succeed in obtaining observer status at the Oversight Committee (OC) meetings. This, combined with the linking of sectoral working groups to corresponding programmes being funded under the MDTF, has enabled NGOs to gain increased opportunities for engagement through this mechanism. Save the Children's good relationship with the GoSS Ministry of Education and local education authorities did result in an invitation from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) to participate in the preparation of the final project proposal and in the education budget sector working group (Fenton, 2007b).

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<sup>15</sup> Save the Children, telephone interview with Sierra Leone Country Director, May 2007

Given such funding environments, NGOs such as Save the Children need an organisation-wide policy on addressing the extra costs of fragility in a common manner. This is currently lacking in Save the Children. Such a policy would need to have internal and external elements. The external element would need to focus on influencing donors to ensure better access for NGOs to new aid modalities in fragile states, and also to lobby for a more coherent donor approach that avoids the disruption of the current approaches to linking relief, recovery and development. Internally, the policy may involve ensuring additional funding and support to fragile states. For example, in the cases of Zimbabwe, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and the MDTF, most of the funds are being channelled through the UN, World Bank or in clearly donor-defined programmes. This creates the need for additional funds to have a more effective and comprehensive approach, but such funds are not available through in-country donor sources.

### **Box 5: Donor funding examples**

#### **Southern Sudan**

Over the past two years, increasing amounts of donor funding are being channelled through the UN via the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) in support of the UN Work Plan. The CHF is a pooled funding mechanism which was piloted in DRC and Sudan in 2005 as part of the UN reform process. The CHF was designed to support more coherent, strategic humanitarian responses, enabling the Humanitarian Co-ordinator to target funding to priority needs identified in the field, encourage early donor contributions and allow rapid response to unforeseen needs. A review of the funds conducted in 2006 indicated that the Sudan CHF had improved the humanitarian response planning, prioritisation and co-ordination processes, and strengthened the position of the Humanitarian Co-ordinator. However, from the NGO perspective in Sudan the CHF was not effective in that it created additional layers of bureaucracy and transaction costs, which resulted in significant delays and fewer benefits reaching people on the ground. In the initial round, only NGOs who could pre-finance activities were actually in a position to apply for funds. CHF funding, for both emergency and recovery activities, is also allocated on an annual basis, which makes longer-term planning more difficult.

#### **Afghanistan**

When funding is channelled to NGOs through UN agencies, the UN claims significant overhead costs which then reduces – sometimes dramatically – the funding available to support NGOs in actual implementation. The end result can be that work is more expensive with fewer direct benefits reaching the target population. Under some donor agreements, procurement of goods and services is delegated to UN agencies on behalf of NGOs. Because most UN agency procurement systems are highly bureaucratic and inflexible, this often results in significant delays and inefficiencies which undermine aid effectiveness and impact. These, in turn, can erode local government and community confidence in NGO ability to deliver.

Donor delegation of responsibility and authority for programme management to the UN and Afghan government, and the resultant lack of direct contact with NGOs and the communities they work with, makes it more difficult for donors to get feedback on civil society issues and perspectives. This can result in donors becoming out of touch with realities on the ground and ‘pockets of exclusion’ developing as a result. In fragile states such as Afghanistan, where lack of infrastructure and continuing conflict have exacerbated social fragmentation, it is crucially important that donors support civil society development. There are very few credible, secular grassroots organisations in Afghanistan, and those that do exist need to be supported and nurtured if a more pluralistic civil society is to develop there.

#### **Zimbabwe**

The OECD-OVC working group comprises UN and donor agencies (12) who work closely with government counterparts. The three-year programme supports the implementation of the government's National Action Plan (NAP) for OVC, the development of which was led by the Ministry of Social Welfare in consultation with donors and NGOs. Although the programme of support has received approval up to presidential level, no funding is channelled through government. Instead, donors have established a pooled funding mechanism, managed by UNICEF, which has attracted over US\$70 million. Funding is being channelled through 23 INGOs and around 60 national NGOs and CBOs who are implementing activities in support of the NAP. Relevant government ministries participate in the technical review of NGO proposals. Donors are pleased with the way this mechanism has worked so far and are confident that the programme could be taken over by government should the political environment in Zimbabwe change. From the perspective of Save the Children and other NGOs, however, working through the UN and its bureaucracy has reduced efficiency and increased the costs of operating. Trying to access funding through the UN can be a slow and cumbersome process. Negotiating sufficient overhead costs to support effective implementation can also be a challenge. The application of UN management costs means that less money is available to cover NGO overhead costs necessary for effective implementation. Added to this is the considerable unease within the NGO community regarding the willingness and ability of UNICEF to resist government interference and manipulation and hold the state accountable for rights violations and abuses, given UNICEF's poor record of advocacy in Zimbabwe to date. NGO influence on these issues is limited, given their exclusion from the working group because of potential conflict of interest related to their funding recipient status.

### **3.7 Staffing, capacity and learning**

It has been stressed already that a key challenge in fragile states is the weak capacity of partners and the need to take a patient and long-term approach to partnership. However, capacity is equally an important issue for NGO staff themselves in fragile states. The effects of fragility – such as disruption to education systems – that limit the pool of skilled personnel available to governments, also mean that competition for qualified staff occurs between government, NGOs, UN organisations and donors. The problem of capacity is exacerbated by high staff turnover in fragile states. Some of this can be attributed simply to the difficult operating and living conditions in such countries (especially affecting international staff, but also for mobile national staff with marketable skills), but it is also linked to the funding arrangements for NGOs in fragile states. With donor timeframes often being short, the result for staff is short-term contracts with a high degree of uncertainty. In the case of Zimbabwe, Save the Children was forced to make redundancies, notably in the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit as part of cost-saving measures linked to unusually high levels of inflation. While the working environment is unlikely to change quickly in most fragile states, the best potential avenue to improving staff retention rates is likely to be through finding more stable funding mechanisms – a challenge still to be overcome by Save the Children and, no doubt, other NGOs.

Key to the ability of any NGO to work in contexts where there is weak capacity is support for investment in *front-line staffing*. The approach of Save the Children towards building the capacities of national staff is also an essential approach and is absolutely crucial, but a balance needs to be found in ensuring that the responsibility for capacity building does not overload other staff in the process. This balance is difficult to find – and opportunities for training of national staff still have to be included in funding proposals.

Save the Children Sri Lanka has learned that investing in staff capacity-building at all levels is crucial for quality programming and for shifting from emergency response to long-term development programmes. In 2005, there was little time to invest in capacity-building and training for staff, especially the many new staff recruited post tsunami, due to the emergency situation and the large amount of work required. The programme's focus since then has been changing from an emergency programme to long-term strategic interventions with an advocacy/policy-change component, while still maintaining the capacity to respond to crises. To cope with the resulting changing demands in terms of staff capacity, the programme made a commitment to investing in developing staff capacity at all levels during this transition period. It has drawn upon the resources of its Alliance members, who have contributed significantly to this end by delivering training in child protection, child rights programming, report and proposal writing, and monitoring systems.

Save the Children Sri Lanka identified the skills and qualities that staff would need in fragile state environments. Suitably qualified were retained, and the skills/qualities analysis was used to evaluate potential new staff. The lack of capacity of programme staff, government agencies, and civil society all create extra demands on country management. Being able to train staff, and build capacity are not easy skills, nor everyone's innate skill. This makes selection of senior management particularly difficult, as individuals with strong technical skills and experience may struggle with the particular demands of managing in fragile states. Fragility creates pressures both in terms of multiple demands and management's ability to provide leadership in staffing and human resources.

Building staff capacity in fragile states can have important longer-term effects more widely in the country. Save the Children in Southern Sudan, for example, made a specific decision to rely on its senior Sudanese staff in the field and delegated responsibility and authority to them in terms of running the programme – but maintained sufficient oversight to ensure that those staff members and the programme were not compromised. They were the main interlocutors between the organisation and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement and Southern Sudan Defence Force when they existed. Several of these people stayed with the programme for many years and have now been called back into government, including a director of petroleum engineering in the GoSS Ministry of Mines, while the senior project officers for education and water are now with the corresponding GoSS ministries. The training and grounding these people had will help the emerging government and also position the organisation well in terms of working with and through government and supporting building of capacity. However, when staff do not have capacity, there are significant risks in delegating authority or distance management.

Capacity and staffing issues affect programme continuity as well as the potential for sustaining programmes and learning lessons in fragile states. For example, in Afghanistan (Fenton, 2007a), the success of REACH did not have as much impact as might have been the case. This was because Save the Children's plans to contribute to learning and sharing of ideas on Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) at national level did not materialise due to the departure of the health adviser responsible for leading on this component and the difficulties in recruiting for this post. Remaining project staff did not have the capacity to take this on, and thus Save the Children missed a valuable opportunity to feed lessons from its field-based experience into

national discussions on the BPHS model with government, donors and research institutions such as the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU).<sup>16</sup> One way of mitigating the challenge of ensuring good learning from programmes is to develop closer links with research bodies such as AREU, particularly when those are relatively well funded.

### **3.8 Security and humanitarian principles**

Security concerns affect where services can be delivered in fragile countries, thus impacting on coverage. UN and non-governmental agencies have had to withdraw from high-risk environments due to security concerns for their staff. Relations and interactions between NGOs and military groups, and the impact they have on staff security and programming, are important issues in Afghanistan, Southern Sudan, DRC and several other fragile states. It was reported that staff in Kandahar do not visit the CIDA staff because they are housed together with the Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Being seen to visit the office or associate with these people in public is perceived as a real security risk. In such a context, it is more difficult to develop and maintain close relationships with the biggest donor to the area.

Staff and programme security can be significantly affected by both overt violence and increased social tensions. This can occur at local level and at the level of the organisation's national profile. In a number of fragile states, there are continual difficulties in dealing with armed groups, both government and various rebel forces, sometimes linked to the access to aid resources (Anderson, 1999).

In some countries, the government, donor or NGO security regulations are so tight that organisational staff are highly restricted in regards to access to programmes and communities. Programme staff must engage in time-consuming and, at times, risky processes around access and negotiating spaces for implementing programmes. In areas of insecurity and conflict between different ethnic or religious groups, there are also problems involving the mistrust from different communities or local armed groups regarding aid and favouritism. In Sri Lanka there was mistrust of international NGOs among the Sinhala communities as well as government agencies due to perceptions of favouritism in the tsunami response. Save the Children Sri Lanka faced additional challenges due to the view that Norway's role in dialogue with the LTTE was biased against Sinhala interests, and Save the Children Sri Lanka was identified by many individuals in Sinhala communities as being linked with Save the Children Norway, and thus with Norway's role in the peace process. In order to avoid security risks and negative public impressions, the country management made the decision that it has to invest in programmes in south Sri Lanka, ie, the area where Sinhala communities are a large majority, to show that it is not biased towards Tamil communities.

The inability of managers or technical staff to reach communities can lead to distance management, which may enhance local capacity but can also undermine programmes when staff find themselves isolated and unable to call upon colleagues for support and feedback. Furthermore, while such distance management is seen as a way to maintain continuity, it is likely

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<sup>16</sup> The AREU has been monitoring, among other things, the development and implementation of the BPHS and researching issues associated with it since 2002. The AREU is a well respected independent research institute with links to DFID and other donors through funding and board participation.

to shift the risks of insecurity on to national staff and away from international staff, as indicated in a recent Overseas Development Institute (ODI) study (Stoddard, Harmer and Haver, 2006), which found that for six of the most insecure countries national staff were targeted in 79 per cent of attacks against aid workers.

One useful way of mitigating security risks found in this research was the integration of programmes. In Save the Children Afghanistan, the integration of programmes across sectors (protection, health and education) in the Mazar-I-Sharif district meant that staff members were usually sufficiently aware of other sectoral activities and objectives that they could do supervision visits and attend meetings representing other team members. This meant that less staff travel was required, mitigating risk and achieving the other benefits of integration mentioned earlier.

### **3.9 Conclusion: responding to challenges in fragile states**

Successful intervention in fragile states begins with strong contextual analysis. Save the Children UK's Child Rights Situation Analysis is an important and useful tool in this regard. Save the Children UK's child rights programming approach more broadly, and the 'three pillars' specifically, may provide a helpful framework for ensuring that work in fragile states maintains a longer-term outlook and focuses on building sustainable solutions. Capacity-building must be approached as a slow process. Flexible programmes and systems are required to allow adaptation to changing contexts.

Education, health, hunger and livelihoods, and child protection outcomes are typically worse in fragile states than in other types of countries. This demands a high level of engagement in response, which can reduce the impacts of fragility on children's rights and, in some cases, can help address the causes of fragility.

Cross-sectoral integration of programmes is often patchy and needs improvement. Integration can improve impact and multi-disciplinary field staff can build stronger relationships with communities.

Funding for country programmes in fragile states is usually short-term, emergency-oriented and highly variable, which makes continuity and successful long-term engagement difficult. Save the Children lacks a formal mechanism for supporting fragile states financially, so country programmes often rely on gap-filling funding from the Emergencies Section. Furthermore, the organisation lacks institutional experience and shared knowledge on how to engage with major new donor funding modalities such as trust funds and consortium-based funding. Investment in learning and capacity in this area is vital not only for ensuring continued financing of fragile state programmes but also for achieving influence and wider impact.

Fragile states pose particular problems for staffing and management in Save the Children's programmes. Mechanisms are required to improve staff retention (eg, a Continuity Contingency Fund to guarantee operations and contracts between grants, or salary adjustments for 'hardship' postings). Furthermore, the skill-set required for all staff should be reviewed to ensure that competences especially required in fragile states are emphasised. The need for ongoing external support (from London or regional offices or neighbouring countries, including internal audit, security management, HR, grant and finance management, effective programming experience) is greater than in other categories of states.

Documentation of impact and lessons learned in general is weak. More lessons could be learned with improved monitoring and evaluation which could be shared across countries, across sectors within and between countries, and between staff in the same country where high turnover leads to loss of institutional memory.

Security is often a particular challenge in fragile states. This is most obvious in violent conflicts, but it also applies in any context where there are significant divisions within society. Neutrality and impartiality of actions are important but are put at risk by donor pursuit of their own human security agenda and the UN's increased use of 'integrated missions'. Building strong relations

with communities is important, and programmes must ensure they do not exacerbate existing social tensions.

## **Part 4: Conclusions and recommendations**

Fragile states pose some of the greatest challenges to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Among the entire population of developing countries that are falling short of achieving minimum standards for malnutrition, poverty, health and education, fragile states account for more than three times their fair share in terms of total population. Fragility makes attaining the MDGs more difficult, but on the other hand addressing problems of education, hunger, health and protection can in fact reduce fragility and break the vicious cycle that many such countries find themselves in.

Engagement with the fragile states agenda should not be an add-on or a new donor or NGO fad. There are no shortcuts to development in these states. Working with government agencies in fragile states has generally proven difficult for many reasons, and means taking a longer view than the next three-year cycle. Furthermore, the relationships involved necessitate careful judgement on the trade-offs involved, the risks of being too close for comfort and compromising principles of impartiality and independence. This requires consistent investment in staff capacity and the ability to carefully seek to engage even difficult governments through various mechanisms, depending on context, capacity and issue. These positive lessons do not change the need for continued reflection on current practices and alignment. On the contrary, there are significant challenges for Save the Children and other NGOs, and for donors.

Addressing issues in fragile states requires changes in practice among both operational agencies and donors. The centrality of context and political analysis remains to be effectively integrated into donor decision-making systems. This is apparent in how much attention needs to be given to the understanding of external variables rather than the focus on the ‘design’ of individual programmes or projects. To address this gap requires a focus on both organisational incentives and staff skills, greater commitment to funding and promoting agency co-ordination and harmonisation in practice. Business as usual, or business as usual with some adjustments, will not prove adequate for the future.

### **4.1 What can donors do differently?**

For both international NGOs and public sector donors, there remain deeply rooted challenges in moving past the inherited aid systems and operational models that have evolved over the past two decades. Some key recommendations that can be made to donors from this research are as follows.

#### **(1) Harmonisation and co-ordination**

Donors need to continue to work towards an integrated approach that re-orientes the aid system around state- or polity-building strategies (Ghani et al, 2005). This requires deepening the use of fragility as an analytical and programme planning approach, where context is central. Donor coherence requires balancing the internal commitment within each donor to the ‘whole of government’ approach, with the harmonisation of approaches between donors. Donors should move away from the simple relief-to-development continuum approach to funding in fragile states. Based on a thorough understanding of contexts in fragile states, donors need to provide incentives and support for intervention designs that are more context appropriate, which could

also help bring together the two tracks of state-building and service delivery into a more coherent approach.

## **(2) Aid instruments**

Experiences with trust funds have shown that significant changes are required as these aid instruments are adapted to the lessons of experience. Among the key issues are ensuring that procurement procedures are effective and relatively timely, developing mechanisms for resolving implementation problems, determining whether the trust fund should have more than one funding window for different situations and approaches, and focusing on impacts rather than outputs when evaluating the performance of the trust funds. Donors should explore ways to include civil society representation into operational co-ordination, particularly given the importance of NGOs in the implementation of programmes in fragile states. This could help identify flexible funding mechanisms and faster responses to changing contexts.

## **(3) Multi-layered service delivery strategies**

Donors should invest in multi-layered service delivery strategies that address different combinations of state and non-state provision, adapted for different levels of government engagement and sectoral specifics depending on the context. Donors should assess how different approaches could lead to the convergence of delivery systems within a state policy and planning framework, or at least to improved co-ordination. Experiences with basic health packages and contracting of services can provide more informed programming guidance for mixing approaches by sector and by specific service. Once the level and type of engagement has been designed, as much as possible, donors should have continuity with partners and should invest internally and with partners for organisational adaptability.

## **(4) Avoiding unsustainable systems**

This is an imperative for donors, as 'gold-plated' service delivery systems are usually not sustainable and can undermine the credibility of governments that are genuinely committed to improving services and accountability. Attention needs to be given to the design and development of basic management, financial and information systems, particularly with regard to recurrent costs. Donors need to give careful support to the absorptive capacity of governments, both national and local, as well as to international NGO and local CSO agencies.

## **(5) Consultative mechanisms**

Regarding service delivery and fragility, engagement with NGOs on service delivery issues could be expanded to explore the aid modalities, including the relationships between NGOs and national governments, the contracts and systems for NGO roles, and how service delivery systems could link better with approaches to poverty reduction. For example, in health and education funding, planning should be balanced between individual programme design and how sector programmes could be designed and implemented to address some of the fragility factors in a specific context. Donors could regularly consult with NGOs on the nature of programming in certain areas to ensure harmony in approach, particularly in areas that are traditionally ill defined by donors, such as child protection. However, this approach should seek to incorporate local civil society, not only international NGOs.

## **(6) Greater attention to livelihoods**

A fundamental emphasis missing in the current fragile states agenda revolves around livelihoods. Donors could build upon the critiques of the food aid default that have been developed in the

past few years, the research on livelihoods in conflict settings, and the new resources on youth issues from the joint UN processes, the World Bank World Development Report, and the latest World Youth Report (UN, 2007). The massive scale of unemployment among young people presents a core challenge to the rebuilding and restoring of livelihoods and communities in fragile states. Without livelihoods, reducing fragility becomes more difficult and problematic. Donors have been remarkably reluctant to invest research or resources into the deeply rooted difficulties of promoting livelihoods in fragile states.

#### **(7) Promoting greater accountability**

A major gap is the lack of genuine involvement by civil society, which is quite distinct and different from international NGOs. As indicated by the tsunami evaluation, and evident in recent accountability movements, there is a need for *accountability instruments* for both donors and NGOs similar to citizen report cards, and for greater transparency and accountability to national forms of civil society where feasible. Donors and NGOs remain far removed from any credible system of accountability to communities in fragile states. Scorecards on the performance of donors and NGOs as well as feedback mechanisms and community-based regional and national civil society networks should be tested for effectiveness.

#### **(8) Commitment to research and evaluation**

More investment in *research and evaluation* can help donors determine what works and where, in terms of both services and how to 'build states'. Donors need to fund documentation of programmes in different types of fragile states. They can support and build independent monitoring and research centres, such as the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU). The centres should be based on context and on the principles around shared learning. Donors should consider measuring impact on children's and communities' lives in addition to the expenditure of money when assessing the effectiveness of certain aid modalities

### **4.2 What do NGOs need to do in fragile states?**

For NGOs trading the delicate path in fragile states, we can identify a set of requirements for working successfully in fragile states.

#### **(1) Carry out good situation or context analysis**

Although fragile states share some common characteristics, there is great diversity among them. Save the Children's CRSA is well suited to assisting with the context analysis required to understand and respond appropriately to these differences, and all NGOs should carry out similar analysis.

#### **(2) Choose the right combination of partnerships**

The context analysis provides a good basis for understanding the scope for engaging with central and local government, civil society, donors and other NGOs, and for determining where direct intervention is necessary. There is no single right balance for all fragile states. Save the Children's rights-based approach and the concept of the 'three pillars' of child rights programming has proved to be a valuable way of ensuring that different combinations of partnerships are considered, under the overarching principle of ensuring that duty-bearers fulfil their obligations to uphold children's rights.

### **(3) Make provision for dealing with weak capacity**

Weak capacity at all levels is one of the greatest challenges of working in fragile states. NGOs such as Save the Children need to find ways of providing more resources for programmes that have weak staff capacity and which face significant constraints in terms of local partners and the demands of weak government systems. There are four aspects to this:

- NGOs need to identify and invest in appropriate skills among their staff for fragile state contexts, including ensuring that country management capacity is appropriate for a context that involves slowly building skills, teams and relationships, and ensuring that there is a deepening of skills among national staff.
- There must be a recognition that greater external technical support is likely to be needed by country programmes in fragile contexts compared to other types of contexts.
- Funding and planning provision must take account of the fact that building partnerships and capacity with government and civil society will be a slow and expensive process.
- Timelines for performance, impact and achievement will consequently be longer and different to other contexts

### **(4) Encourage flexibility**

Fragile states require flexible and alternate scenarios for programme development and implementation. Provision needs to be made for the possible need to change priorities mid-programme if conditions change. Opportunities for different types of programming or partnerships may appear at short notice and there must be scope to take such opportunities when they arise. This is an area where Save the Children could improve.

### **(5) Encourage documentation, learning and innovation**

Good learning and documentation is essential in fragile state contexts. As in other contexts, this is necessary for good advocacy, but in fragile states it is particularly necessary for learning about what works and what can be replicated or scaled up. Around advocacy, Save the Children could contribute to the work of both national CSOs and international NGOs through its informal sharing of experiences of advocacy in ‘constrained contexts’, as NGOs generally struggle with issues of staff security or the risk of expulsion from a country and the dramatic violations of human rights they are sometimes compelled to address. It would be good to document more of the community-level advocacy work, as reported in terms of early marriage and girls’ access to education and reproductive health. In programming, existing Global Impact Monitoring (GIM) reports are valuable documents in this regard, and a collation of those related to fragile states would be a useful exercise with other NGOs involved. This type of exchange could identify the most promising experiences in reducing fragility and also explicitly affirm safe space for staff from different agencies to analyse the real world trade-offs in difficult contexts. Similarly, it would be valuable for NGOs to share their experiences of different donor modalities and how they expand or constrain programmes.

### **(6) Improve NGO funding modalities in fragile states**

There is a need for extra and/or more predictable resources in fragile states. Programmes in fragile states face greater-than-normal constraints, such as the need for heavy investment in capacity-building, while also facing problems of retaining staff, especially when short-term funding requires the use of short-term contracts. Many NGOs, such as Save the Children, rely

heavily on grant funding for specific projects from donors which is usually short term in nature and highly variable. Three options for improving on this situation exist.

- There should be greater involvement of NGOs in new donor funding modalities in fragile states, such as multi-donor trust funds. Direct NGO access to these funds should be considered by donors where NGOs have demonstrated comparative advantage, while NGOs themselves need to invest more in understanding and engaging with these new modalities.
- NGOs could devote more unrestricted funding to support fragile states. While there are many competing demands on unrestricted funding in NGOs, a strong case could be made for having a Fragile States Contingency Fund. This could be used, for example, to ensure greater continuity of funding and programming in volatile funding environments; to support greater investment in capacity-building or learning when funding is not forthcoming from other sources; or to support programmes when donor priorities and their human security concerns risk compromising the humanitarian principles of the NGO.
- NGOs should also consider ways in which they can model alignment and harmonisation through joint funding initiatives and pooled programme resources.

### **4.3 What should Save the Children do in fragile states?**

#### **(1) Review and incorporate aspects of fragility assessments**

For CRSAs in fragile states, Save the Children UK should review and incorporate aspects of various fragility assessments (World Vision International, 2006; International Alert, 2004) and adjust the CRSA to incorporate key elements of social and political analysis.

Furthermore, the contextual analysis should be critiqued by knowledgeable external partners and regularly revised. The contextual analysis needs to be accurate and updated. Ways of mapping donors and other NGOs also need to be included. In some contexts, such as the Mano River countries in west Africa, some form of regional context analysis should be carried out.

#### **(2) Increase resources for capacity building**

Save the Children needs to find ways of providing more resources for programmes that have weak staff capacity and which face significant constraints in terms of local partners and the demands of weak government systems. This could include solutions such as: a percentage allocation increase per fragile state and/or centrally or regionally held fragile states pots. This would need to be discussed by regional directors and regional programme managers

#### **(3) Aim for more integrated programmes across sectors**

Save the Children needs to have clarity throughout the organisation regarding its approaches to emergencies, long-term development and fragile states, and how these can be appropriately integrated. The integration would be based on the organisation's goals and approaches, with the understanding that where there is overlap, these approaches do not have to be either managed or understood as separate issues. This can help align work with different partners, both external (donors and international NGOs) and internal (national governments, local governments, civil society organisations, children's committees).

Furthermore, when dealing with children, it must be remembered that children are not

divided into sectors; they are rights bearers whose well-being is at the centre of child rights programming. In practice, both donors and NGOs have the tendency to focus on the internal/technical factors in programme and project design, to the exclusion of the external factors that often are the most important reasons for success or failure (an element of the fragile states agenda often lost in donor practice). In order to bring together sectoral skills, Save the Children's planning for programmes should first focus on context and outcomes, not sectors alone.

## Annex I: Terms of reference

### Working in fragile states: policy, strategy and operations

#### *Background*

Fragile states, and how to improve effective service delivery and mitigate the consequences of fragility, is an issue increasingly on the international agenda, for both human security concerns and as part of the global commitment to assist southern countries to reach the MDGs. The term 'fragile states' is most often seen through the prism of donor priorities – security, financial stability and service delivery capacity – and is variously defined 'in terms of the functionality of states, of their outputs (including insecurity), or of their relationship with donors' (Cammack et al, 2006). Such definitions typically encompass all those states that are either unwilling or unable to deliver on basic services.

Several agencies are engaging in the fragile states debate and have specific working groups attached to this, eg, OECD-DAC, World Bank, USAID, FTI, ODI and UNICEF. Addressing the problems associated with service delivery in fragile states is a relatively new concept to development agencies/donors. Increased emphasis on and commitment to finding alternative mechanisms for supporting fragile states has opened up a unique opportunity for NGOs, including Save the Children, to capitalise on the increased emphasis and funding in this arena.

NGOs and non-state providers are frequently at the front line in terms of service delivery in these states, but need to be more strategic and visible when informing the debate around interventions in fragile states. Save the Children's practical experience is a rich source of information and a wide knowledge base within this arena. It has experience of operating where there are no effective governments, where governments are unable (or unwilling) to act, and where service delivery is non-existent or extremely limited. Likewise, Save the Children has experience of working with governments and in state-building, particularly in post-conflict states. However, documentary evidence to substantiate claims of good practice in fragile states, and within the different contexts, is often lacking. There is also a need to document how best to deliver changes for children in fragile states, an issue that is currently absent from the fragile states agenda with donors and governments.

Therefore, after internal restructuring and through its participation in various development fora such as the World Bank, DAC, DFID, Save the Children has been considering its position more fully in the global agenda around fragile states. The organisation has already designated advisers for health, protection, education and hunger reduction specifically to work on issues related to fragile states and to support country programmes regarded as 'fragile'. Save the Children has, for its own internal reasons, categorised a number of countries as fragile, with a focus on conflict- and post-conflict affected countries as well as those considered to be economically or politically unstable.<sup>17</sup> Other countries are defined as poor or 'in transition', ie, emerging out of fragility/poverty into stability and development

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<sup>17</sup> Afghanistan, Angola, Colombia, DPRK,\* DRC, India (Kashmir) Iraq,\* Ivory Coast, Liberia, Myanmar,\* OPT, Sierra Leone,\* Somalia, Sri Lanka,\* South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda (N),\* Zimbabwe (countries with \* may also be classed in another category – 'poor' or 'in transition').

### ***The research agenda and primary research questions***

Given the international calls for programmatic evidence of how service delivery can work in fragile states, there is a need to study how Save the Children and other actors have been operating in fragile states where Save the Children is working.

Study aims:

- to ensure greater clarity (both internally and externally) for Save the Children's approach to working in fragile states
- to enable Save the Children to provide concrete and grounded evidence on what works (or doesn't) in fragile states which will help us to develop more effectively longitudinal research on effective approaches to working in fragile states
- to collect evidence on how focusing on children in fragile states adds value and contributes to the wider fragile states agenda
- to provide Save the Children with greater visibility in international policy dialogue and with greater clarity in its own work, advocacy goals and objectives for fragile states.

Therefore, Save the Children UK wishes to commission a study which would assist the organisation to strengthen its policy base, articulate its operating principles, and enable it to influence worldwide thinking and strategising in fragile states in favour of the best interests of children.

When undertaking the research, the following should be considered:

- Does Save the Children have a distinct way of working in fragile states, and, if so, what characterises this approach? Is there a difference between the balance of emphasis on direct service delivery versus policy and advocacy, and what has influenced this?
- How could this approach be compared with approaches used by other agencies in fragile states? Is there a difference between the types of actors Save the Children UK predominantly engages with in the different types of countries?
- How does Save the Children's focus on children in its programme, policy and advocacy work add value and contribute to the wider fragile states agenda? What are the main opportunities and constraints to delivering changes for children in the different contexts of fragile states?
- In what ways do donor priorities influence Save the Children UK's activities in each type of country? Does this enable us to be more or less effective in our work for children?
- Can Save the Children demonstrate any 'new', ie, undocumented, best practice that is particularly relevant to working in a fragile states context?

### ***Methodology***

Using a variety of qualitative research methods, review and analyse Save the Children's current portfolio of activities and ways of working in a selection of fragile states and poorest states. This would be achieved through:

- a review of recent documents on service delivery in fragile states and the fragile states agenda
- reviews of annual reports, project documents, GIM reports

- telephone interviews with key staff in selected Save the Children country programmes (programme directors, selected senior/long-standing staff) and regional offices (regional directors, regional programme managers)
- visits to three fragile states to allow for more in-depth analysis and case study collation
- a review of the findings in relation to known best practice, evidence and trends.

Input will also be sought on fragile states issues from Sarah Hague and Alison Holder in the Poverty and Economic Justice supporting strategy team. Regular progress meetings will be held with the consultant, fragile states advisers and the project sponsor. The media department will be consulted during the development of the research tools. Additional media and fundraising opportunities that arise, beyond the outputs mentioned below will be discussed and investigated with the relevant departments – eg, media, Programme Funding Unit (PFU), Supporter Relations and Fundraising (SuRF).

PFU and SuRF will also be consulted on fundraising opportunities following the development of the concept note for a funding proposal to conduct longitudinal research.

The project sponsor will be Katy Webley, Head of Education. Nichola Cadge, Fragile States Health Adviser, will be the project manager.

### ***Recommended countries to assess***

Countries to be covered are Somalia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Sierra Leone.

Regional offices to be consulted are East & Southern Africa, West & Central Africa, South & Central Asia, and South East Asia.

### ***Outputs***

The outputs reflect the need to balance an internal programmatic analysis that is relevant to country programmes with the need for evidence/learning that will contribute to a document for a wider external audience and feed into the development of a longer-term research strategy.

The following will be completed by the consultant:

- research report
- set of case studies
- internal and external recommendations/principles on engagement in fragile states to have wider impact on children
- concept note for a funding proposal to conduct longitudinal research on approaches to working in fragile states.

Following completion of the report, the fragile states advisers will:

- publish a report for external actors
- produce a media/advocacy briefing on problems and solutions.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> This could also draw on the work of Sarah Hague, Janice Dolan, Regina Keith on financing in fragile states and Alison Holder's work on private-public partnerships in fragile states.

### *Tasks and days*

#	Task	Notes	Days required
1	Desk study/ conference calls	Review and analyse existing Save the Children documentation from four target countries and discuss with country programmes' country directors, regional directors, regional programme managers	12
2	Report writing	Analytic report and specific recommendations produced (including draft and revision) and concept note drafted	8
3	Debriefing	Presentation of report to objective teams and revision	
<b>Total</b>			<b>20</b>

### *Time frame*

- To start 19 February 2007.
- The final report and outputs to be completed by the consultant and submitted, in final version, by 31 May 2007 at the latest.

## **Annex II: Country classification for CAFS**

There is no single authoritative list of countries affected by armed conflict that are also defined as ‘fragile’, meaning that they experience income disparity, weak governance and inequality. In order to analyse issues relating to education in those fragile countries also affected by conflict, Save the Children has compiled a list of ‘conflict-affected fragile states’ (CAFS) (International Save the Children Alliance, 2007). To be categorised as conflict-affected, countries are included on the Project Ploughshare<sup>19</sup> list of states, having experienced at least one armed conflict from 1995 to 2004, or are classed as ‘critical’ on the Failed States Index<sup>20</sup> 2006, which assesses violent internal conflicts and analyses mitigating strategies. Countries are then assessed as fragile if they are classified as either ‘Core’ or ‘Severe’ on the World Bank Low Income Countries Under Stress 2006 list,<sup>21</sup> which categorises countries according to their Country Policy and Institutional Assessment rating. This analysis has resulted in a list of 28 CAFS, which, due to conflict and related fragility, have particular difficulty in delivering the right to education. The majority of the CAFS are low-income countries. However, five of this group are classified as lower middle-income countries (Angola, Colombia, Congo, Iraq and Sri Lanka).<sup>22</sup> This list produces a useful grouping for policy analysis. As data is only provided for states, and some conflicts only affect certain regions within a country, not every conflict deserving attention is specified in this list.<sup>23</sup>

### **Conflict-affected fragile states**

Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Republic of the Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Haiti, Iraq, Liberia, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Timor Leste, Uganda, Zimbabwe

For purposes of comparison, the external financing of CAFS is considered within the larger group of low-income countries. The report draws comparisons throughout between CAFS and a group of 31 other low-income countries.

### **Other low-income countries**

Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Comoros, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, India, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Korea, Kyrgyz Republic, Laos, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mongolia, Mozambique, Niger, Papua New Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, Tajikistan, Togo, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.ploughshares.ca/libraries/ACRText/ACR-TitlePageRev.htm>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.fundforpeace.org/programs/fsi/fsindex.php>

<sup>21</sup> [www.worldbank.org/licus/](http://www.worldbank.org/licus/)

<sup>22</sup> The World Bank classifies economies by income groups according to gross national income (GNI) per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method. Removing these countries from an analysis of education aid does not alter the conclusions of this report.

<sup>23</sup> Several countries significantly affected by conflict at regional level are not on the CAFS list, as data is only provided for states. For instance, the occupied Palestinian Territories and Kosovo are not recognised as states and therefore are not listed. Indonesia, India, Russia and Senegal all experience conflict in certain regions of their respective countries, but as they have relatively strong governance as a whole, they are not listed as CAFS.

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*Treading a delicate path:  
NGOs in fragile states*

**Draft Synthesis Report**



Child working around bombed out buildings, Kailahun in Sierra Leone.

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