

Martin Büttner

# **Concept Paper: Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD)**

**- Draft -**

April 2008

The following concept paper is a draft only, and is not to be quoted. Accordingly, we welcome feedback on this document as well as the project in its entirety. If you have any suggestions, please contact Martin Büttner at [mbuettner@gppi.net](mailto:mbuettner@gppi.net)

## Introduction to LRRD

### *Value of concept*

Even though conceptual thinking about Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) already started in the 1980s<sup>1</sup>, surprisingly, there still appears to be no common understanding of the nature, scope and practical relevance of the concept. The most *broadly* associated idea with LRRD is that both humanitarian relief and development assistance should be structured in ways that reduce the need for humanitarian aid and promote developmental objectives before, during and after emergencies. This is intuitively plausible. However, apart from general agreement on this ostensibly ‘political’ objective of LRRD, there seems to be a lack of consensus as to how best translate the concept into concrete practice. In fact, some have questioned whether the LRRD concept has any practical value altogether as it is deemed “too vague and general to have a real utility” for aid programming and implementation. Rather than clinging to an abstract notion of LRRD, aid agencies and government authorities on the ground have to take context-specific actions in relation to key needs of affected populations which may or may not be in line with the broader objective of LRRD.<sup>2</sup>

### *Context-related thinking on LRRD*

There is overwhelming consensus now that LRRD is not (just) about ensuring the linear transition from the relief phase to that of development, a notion which originally inspired the thinking on LRRD (“continuum model”). If ever, relatively straightforward transition may be possible in situations of stable development which are exposed to either slow or sudden-onset natural disasters, and in which governments dispose of relatively strong emergency response capacities. In such contexts, relief and rehabilitation may be temporary measures necessary for returning to pre-existing levels of development cooperation.

Even in clear-cut natural disasters with strong government response, however, transition would not be linear in the sense of rehabilitation succeeding the relief phase, followed by that of development. Rather, it has been suggested that LRRD in corresponding situations is best pursued if rehabilitation and (return-to) development measures are implemented immediately *after* the start of and *alongside* relief activities. This has been coined the “contiguum” model of LRRD, which by now is generally considered more appropriate than the original “continuum” model of LRRD.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> For an overview on LRRD thinking, see Margie Buchanan Smith and Paola Fabbri (Tsunami Evaluation Coalition): LRRD – A Review of the Debate, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> See the findings on LRRD by the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition; Hugh Goyder, Cowan Coventry, Jerry Adams, Tania Kaiser, Suzanne Williams, Ian Smilie: LRRD Policy Study (2006).

<sup>3</sup> Margie Buchanan-Smith and Paola Fabbri (Tsunami Evaluation Coalition): LRRD – A Review of the Debate (2005)

Compared to natural disaster settings, linear progression from relief to development is even less likely in conflict-related emergencies. Here, the relief phase may well be protracted and affected populations are likely to have different needs (that may be best catered to by a mix of relief, rehabilitation and development interventions) at the same time and/or across different parts of a region/country. Also, once hostilities cease, moving into recovery and early-development type assistance may be hampered by a lack or incapacity of local authorities and the prevailing need for socio-psychological coping with the past. Under such circumstances, achieving LRRD, even in the more flexible ‘contiguuum’ version, remains a particular challenge. In policy and operational terms, applying a contiguuum LRRD approach to conflict-related emergencies has essentially culminated in the realization that relief, rehabilitation and development measures must be *simultaneously applied* over an extended period – and that donors should provide *simultaneous funding* for these measures. Obviously, the goal of this approach is still to promote transition objectives at the earliest stage, and wherever possible.

Also, conflict-related emergencies seem to be difficult to approach in terms of LRRD as conflict dynamics can be highly volatile and there usually exist few clear indicators for sociopolitical transition, i.e. whether and when it will materialize and, if it does, whether it is sustainable. Some of today’s major emergencies, especially in Africa, have been described as “pendulum situations,” where transition seems possible at one moment – either due to the end or low-intensity of conflict – and is again made impossible, when the region slips back into full-scale emergency setting, due to the exacerbating impacts of climate-related events and/or the resumption of armed hostilities. In such contexts, the principle question is whether a LRRD approach is applicable at all, and if so, in what form. If applicable, the core question from a LRRD perspective would appear to relate to the scope of relief and transitional aid activities, but also to how both relief and transitional aid should be interlinked in order to foster each other to the greatest extent possible. So far these questions have hardly been addressed by the debate on LRRD.

#### *Practical lessons learned*

Most policy research and evaluations on LRRD have focused on the ‘LRRD quality’ of aid projects by implementing aid agencies, either by sector (e.g. food security, shelter, water and sanitation), by project region or a combination thereof.<sup>4</sup> As far as actor constellations in LRRD are concerned, findings point to the crucial importance of coordination among all actors: local authorities (if existent), donors, UN agencies, local civil society and INGOs. This involves field-level coordination between all actors but also, and equally important, internal coordination between different departments of aid agencies, governmental authorities and donors. Especially for those crisis contexts where local authorities are strong

---

<sup>4</sup> The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition e.g. focussed on how LRRD had been achieved (or not) in tsunami-hit Aceh and Sri Lanka. Also see Aqua Consult: Concept Paper for Mainstreaming Water and Sanitation in Emergencies, Protracted Crises, LRRD and Disaster Preparedness Operations, Commissioned by DG ECHO (2005); Peter M. Schimann, Joanne Philpott (AGEG Consultants): Mid-Term Evaluation of DG ECHO Financed Actions in the Greater Horn of Africa (2007)

in terms of capacity and strategic approach, it has been pointed out that adopting LRRD-conducive aid strategies and a related division of work may in fact be hampered by different understandings as to which actor's 'relief', 'rehabilitation' and 'development' should be followed. In other words: ideally, what is needed in specific crises is a common understanding of how LRRD is to be achieved, shared by all actors involved – local and international aid agencies, government authorities and donors.

This raises the fundamental issue of accountability both of humanitarian and development aid and the question of who is to ultimately 'benefit' from aid strategies adopted under the heading of LRRD. Clearly, the answer should be: affected populations. Therefore, recipient-centered concepts such as livelihood protection (short term) and livelihood reinforcement (long-term) as well as vulnerability reduction have been proposed as unifying frameworks for any LRRD approach. Under that reading, a LRRD focus would span short-term efforts to protect lives and livelihoods with long-term concerns to strengthen and reinforce livelihoods. The challenge is to save lives, including through relief, while encouraging self-reliance at the earliest moment possible, thereby lessening aid dependency. Accordingly, one possible indicator for determining an agency's LRRD record could be its capacity to make the (timely) shift from the phase of protecting and saving livelihoods to that of strengthening and reinforcing livelihoods.<sup>5</sup> We argue that if adopting a general LRRD focus is conducive to such practical outcomes at the field-level (through appropriate aid programming, coordination and provision of funding), the LRRD concept – as general as it may be – bears validity, especially from the perspective of recipients.

### **Study Focus: Donor Capacity to Promote LRRD**

The study group adopts a donor perspective on LRRD, asking: to what extent can the EC and the US, as the most important donors of humanitarian and development aid, promote LRRD outcomes at the field-level? The underlying premise is that adopting a LRRD focus, spanning policy formulation, as well as response planning and funding decisions in times of crises, can increase the effectiveness of donor assistance strategies. Increased effectiveness in that sense may mean that: livelihoods of affected populations are more effectively protected; dependency on relief assistance decreases at an earlier point of time; coping strategies of affected populations are more comprehensively enhanced; and affected populations are made more resilient to future shocks.

So far most policy research and evaluations concerning LRRD, including those commissioned by donors themselves, have focused on the 'LRRD quality' of aid projects by implementing aid agencies. Studies have mostly focused on LRRD by sector (e.g. food security, shelter, water and sanitation), by project region or a combination thereof.<sup>6</sup> Given

---

<sup>5</sup> Buchanan Smith/Fabbri (2005); TEC Policy Study (2006), p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g. Helen Versluys: Coherence in EU External Action: the Case of Humanitarian Aid, Paper presented at the 10th Biennial EUSA Conference, Montreal, 17-19 May 2007; Tasneem Mowjee (ODI): European Union Policy Approaches in Protracted Crises, A Background Paper for HPG Research Report 18 (2004).

the often high numbers of relief agencies on the ground and the corresponding challenge of proper coordination, this focus on implementing agencies is understandable. At the same time, the extent to which donors, as one important actor group in humanitarian action, may be able to promote LRRD objectives – particularly through their funding mechanisms and decisions – remains understudied.

The study group therefore seeks to assess the enabling or prohibitive impact concrete donor assistance strategies and decisions may have on reaching LRRD outcomes in a specific crisis context. To this end, it compares EC and US headquarter policies and strategies as well as field-level activities, identifying what may be best donor practices with regard to promoting LRRD. It is assumed that best practices for promoting LRRD are context-specific, i.e. what may be an appropriate LRRD strategy in ‘pure’ natural disaster settings will differ from the kind of LRRD strategy required for conflict-related emergencies. The study group will thus specifically look at the way different contexts of emergencies are reflected in donor HQ strategies and are responded to by donors through funding and other assistance schemes.

In general, identifying best donor practices for promoting LRRD in specific crisis contexts is expected to contribute to institutional learning by both the EC and the US, particularly as regards the importance of coordination between the two actors at HQ and field level.

## **Field-Level Case Studies**

Field-level case studies will shed light on the guiding question to what extent donors – primarily through providing funding – have been capable of promoting LRRD objectives in specific countries/regions. The LRRD case studies will compare EC and US assistance strategies towards specific crisis contexts and analyze to extent to which each has been conducive to outcomes along the LRRD logic. Case studies are expected to identify possible obstacles to donors promoting LRRD, including insufficient institutional coordination (internal and external) and inadequate funding (timely and needs-responsive). Thus, case studies will not primarily examine whether aid agencies have achieved LRRD outcomes in their specific sectors of aid, but whether donors have been/are well-prepared to support agencies’ and local governments’ efforts in their attempts to do so.

In order to achieve comparability and allow for triangulation, two case studies each (4 in total) will be done in a natural disaster and in a (post-)conflict-related emergency setting, where windows for transition currently exist or have existed in the past (“pendulum situation”).

As with the analysis of general donor LRRD strategies and policies, case studies focus on assistance strategies and funding provided by the European Commission (DG ECHO, DG Development, EuropeAid, DG RELEX) and the US Administration (especially Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), Office for Transition Initiatives, Department of State, Department of Defense, where applicable).

Other bilateral actors (e.g. EU Member States), multilateral donors/agencies (e.g. World Bank, UN humanitarian and development agencies) major international and local NGOs may be included if particularly relevant for aspects of EC/US coordination and donor harmonisation (division of work).

## **Expected Outputs**

The study group will produce five outputs: four case studies (see above) and one framework study on donor support to LRRD. The LRRD framework study will place case study findings into a broader analysis of the enabling or prohibitive impact EC and US assistance strategies have on reaching LRRD outcomes in specific crisis context. In particular, the LRRD framework study will:

- identify the strategic and institutional approaches to LRRD by the EC and US, as well as the corresponding enabling or prohibitive 'LRRD potential' of these approaches;
- document best practices by the EC and US in promoting LRRD at the operational level, aggregated per crisis context;
- analyze the extent and potential of EC/US cooperation and coordination in the promotion of LRRD both at the strategic and operational level.

Based on such analysis, concrete policy proposals as to how the EC and the US can (better) promote LRRD, including through mutual learning and cooperation, will be made.