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5. FOOD AID AND FOOD SECURITY

5.1 Shifting Objectives of OLS: From Saving Lives to Supporting Coping Strategies

Over time, OLS understandings of the problem it is trying to address, and the manner in which needs are identified, has changed. This has led to a broadening of the objectives of the operation, and a change in the focus of interventions.

At the start of OLS in 1989, the problem was clearly perceived as one of a large number of people being at risk of starvation (UN, 1989, March 15). In 1988, death rates among famine victims in Bahr el-Ghazal and Southern Kordofan had been among the highest ever recorded (Keen, 1991). Although not mentioned in the Plan of Action for OLS, it is logical to assume that the objectives of OLS I were to prevent this type of situation from recurring. OLS I aimed to pre-position food and non-food relief in areas with populations at greatest risk, who would be inaccessible during the rainy season. The objective was thus to prevent starvation and save lives, by accessing high-risk populations with emergency relief.

In less than a year, however, these objectives broadened in OLS II to include assisting displaced populations toward productivity and self-reliance. Emergency relief was still considered necessary, but the focus of the Plan of Action was on longer-term solutions, and relief strategies were to be informed by the overall objective of increasing self-reliance (UN, 1990, March 26).

As noted earlier, the initial Plans of Action for OLS were drawn up between the GOS, UN, and NGOs, or between the GOS and donors in Khartoum, with little or no involvement of the Southern Sector. Consequently, the objectives of OLS programmes in the early years were shaped by the perceived needs of displaced populations in government-controlled areas, and needs of people outside of these areas were considered too difficult to estimate (UN, 1989, March 15).

Although OLS III never really got off the ground, events in both North and South Sudan in 1991 firmly re-established the objective of OLS for the next several years as the provision of emergency relief.

In the North, widespread drought had triggered a major drought relief operation among international agencies, and the merging of drought relief with OLS Northern Sector operations:

> Since it is recognised that the drought is a new and urgent matter, the corresponding emergency operation should be treated differently, taking into account that certain of the principles of OLS will be applicable to the relief operation (UN, 1992, September 3).

In the South, no substantial assistance was provided by UN OLS agencies until the return of Sudanese refugees from Ethiopia in 1991, the same year in which splits within the SPLA led to additional population displacements. After 1991, the provision of emergency relief to these groups in the South became the focus of OLS Southern Sector for the next several years.

Although Southern Sector assessment reports for 1992 and 1993 indicate the objectives of OLS as being "to enhance local coping mechanisms in areas of greatest vulnerability", the needs identified are mostly emergency relief for war-displaced and returnee populations, and the provision of food aid dominates the recommendations. In the same regard, a focus on mortality and malnutrition rates (in addition to analyses of vulnerability), and responses that take the form of nutritionally balanced food aid rations and emergency health care provision, indicate that preventing malnutrition, disease, and associated deaths constituted the main objectives of the operation in the South.

In 1993, a review of the implementation agreements of OLS recommended that more resources should be allocated for rehabilitation and development programmes (Traxler, 1993). Subsequently, in 1994, the focus of the OLS assessment shifted to household food security and public health care. This representing a broadening of objectives from the previous few years, and a return to an emphasis on the promotion of self-reliance.

In 1994, with the first signed agreement between the GOS and the SPLA, the objectives of OLS were clearly spelt out first time (GOS/SPLM/UN, 1994, March 23):

* To prevent unnecessary hunger and suffering through the timely delivery of required food aid.

* To lower unacceptably high levels of morbidity and mortality of the civilian population, particularly of women and children.

* To assist the civilian population re-establish traditional survival and coping mechanisms.

* To restore basic social services.

The Southern Sector later modified these objectives to include enhancing the lives and livelihoods of the people of South Sudan, and protecting and promoting the rights of war-affected civilians, particularly women and children. A reduction in malnutrition, in addition to morbidity and mortality, through the provision of relief and basic services was also added (Nichols, 1995, May 5).

The objectives of OLS have given food aid a central role in its operations; indeed, the provision of food aid has been the main activity of OLS agencies from the start of the operation until the present. As the objectives of OLS have shifted from emergency relief to food security, however, the role of food aid has also changed.

Initially, it is clear that food aid is provided as a nutritional resource for people cut-off from their usual sources of food supply, and the inclusion of three types of food aid commodity in the general ration is intended to meet their nutritional requirements. From 1994, food aid is increasingly seen not just as a life-saving input, but also as a means to promote self-reliance by supplementing peoples' own strategies for access to food, enable people to rely increasingly on own production, and in some cases facilitate returns to home areas.

At the same time that the role of food aid has shifted, there has been an overall reduction in food aid rations. This has happened in two ways. First, the quantity of food provided per person or per family has been reduced. Initially, this was done by reducing the number of months in a year when food aid was provided, and later by also cutting full rations to half or quarter size. Second, food aid has been restricted to specific geographical areas, or to specific groups within areas. While the provision of food aid has been reduced, there has been an increased emphasis on the provision of agricultural inputs for food production.

5.2 An Examination of OLS Assessments

5.2.1 Introduction

As OLS objectives have shifted, it is reasonable to assume that the way in which needs assessments are conducted should also have changed to accommodate new priorities. An operational focus on starvation, malnutrition, and death, for example, should be reflected in assessments that concentrate on determining food aid requirements by estimating the number of people at risk, and by the prevalence of malnutrition and mortality. An operational focus on food security, on the other hand, should be reflected in assessments that analyse mechanisms for access to food, and that contribute to the development of understanding of food economies.

However, the Review Team found that OLS assessments in the Northern Sector in particular are not providing information that will enable OLS to fulfil its stated objectives. For example, coping strategies have rarely been assessed. Moreover, OLS assessments in the Northern Sector in particular have, in most cases, been limited to attempting to measure only the most visible aspects of the crisis, in order to determine immediate material needs, with little analysis of the socio-economic situation of OLS beneficiaries, or the root causes of the crisis they face.

An analysis of assessments is provided in this section, beginning with an overview of the role of assessments in the broader context of OLS.

5.2.2 Proliferation and Change

In the highly politicised context of OLS, the provision of assistance based on the objective assessment of needs is held up as proof of OLS neutrality by UN OLS agencies. Of greatest importance is the Annual Needs Assessment, which forms the

basis of the annual UN Consolidated Appeal, and UN/OLS programme activities for the coming year. Annual assessments are thus of critical importance to the UN for continued donor funding; for the warring parties, annual assessments secure resources for areas under their respective control.

Not surprisingly, both access for assessments and the reliability of assessment methods are frequently debated at the highest political levels. In recent years, for example, assessments have often been on the agenda of the missions of Ambassador Traxler, and reviews of the implementation of agreements includes an appraisal of the number of assessments done, and who participates in them.

The objectivity of OLS assessments has been questioned by both the GOS and donors, for different reasons. Whereas the GOS has claimed that assessments are biased, and lead to disproportionate deliveries to non-GOS areas (Traxler, 1995, August 2), donors have claimed that OLS Northern Sector inflates population figures, and that assessments have unsound and unreliable methodologies (UNEU, 1995).

Hence, in analysing OLS assessments, the Review Team considered both their technical aspects, and the extent to which they are influenced by the particular operating environments where they are carried out.

The preparation of the SEPHA Appeal for 1992 marks the start of regular annual assessments conducted in the last few months of each year, which form the basis of the Consolidated Appeal launched early in the following year. Although Plans of Action prior to this time give estimates of the needs of war-affected populations, it is unclear to what extent these were actually based on assessments. Consolidated Appeals include not only OLS requirements, but also the needs of other disaster-affected populations in Sudan. Food aid needs for Sudan are assessed in annual FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Missions, which incorporate OLS requirements. These assessments have used information from OLS Annual Assessments to varying degrees over the years.

From 1993 forward, there was a proliferation of assessment processes. This includes re-assessments of need during the course of the year, and an increased number of emergency assessments, monitoring assessments, distribution assessments, and follow-up investigations. In South Sudan, discussions in Nairobi between the UN, the GOS, RASS and the SRRA in December 1992, led to agreements that air access would be facilitated for locations where displaced persons were assessed as in need, and that updated assessments and monitoring would be conducted whenever the need arose (UN, 1992, December 5). In addition to joint OLS assessments, each UN/OLS agency may also conduct their own sectoral assessments and evaluations. Partner agencies of OLS also carry out numerous sectoral assessments.

An example of the extent of proliferation of assessments was given by the UNICEF Programme Co-ordinator, who indicated that more than 200 assessments were carried out in the Southern Sector during 1995 (Nichols, 1996, April 20). Similarly, WFP monitors in the Southern Sector judge that approximately 75% of their time is now

taken up with assessments, which represents a reversal compared to previous years. This has been made possible, in part, by an increase in staff; prior to 1994, WFP had just one assessment officer for the Southern Sector, whereas now there are 14 monitors, and WFP aims to increase this number to 20.

Aside from a proliferation of assessments, there have also been changes in assessments methods over the course of OLS. These changes reflect changes in levels of access over the years to affected populations, and the different natures of the operating environments in the Northern and Southern Sectors. More importantly, as will be seen later, they reflect changed perceptions among OLS personnel about the extent to which beneficiaries are increasingly able to "cope" with the crisis.

In the Northern Sector, although efforts have been made by UN OLS agencies to improve on assessments, the assessment process and methodology has stayed more or less the same over the course of OLS, as a consequence of a deeply constrained operating environment. Although the number and coverage of assessments has increased, the quality of assessments has been severely hampered both by UN organisational structures and capacity, and by the lack of control by OLS over the assessment process. Further, because all UN energies are invested in negotiating access and participation for assessment missions, there is a perception that there is little scope or time to engage in negotiations on changes that would lead to an improvement in their quality (UNEU, 1995).

In the Southern Sector, on the other hand, the process and method of assessments has progressed over time. Until 1993, assessments included information on malnutrition and mortality; from 1994 onward, they have focused on food security. Hence, assessments have generally reflected changes in the perception of the type of crisis that OLS is trying to address. They also reflect attempts to provide more accurate information and to exploit increases in access. This, in turn, is linked to the relatively less constrained operating environment of the Southern Sector. OLS agencies have taken advantage of the this environment to conduct detailed investigations into the livelihoods of rural people in South Sudan and how these livelihoods have been affected by the war. They have also attempted to tailor intervention strategies more closely to actual needs.

5.2.3 Assessing Needs Versus Determining Access

The objectives of assessments are not always mentioned in assessment reports, but from recent documentation it appears that the broad objectives of assessments for the Northern and Southern Sectors are the same:

> ...to provide the basis for prioritising and projecting needs in Southern Sudan for 1996 planning purposes (OLS Southern Sector, 1995, November).
>
> The objective of the assessments is for the GOS, NGOs, Donors, and the UN to establish by consensus the priority humanitarian needs. The findings provide the

> justification for interventions proposed in the consolidated appeal or in the case of NGOs, by independent means (UNEU, 1995).

Upon closer examination, however, the objectives of assessments in the Sectors are seen to be different. This is, in part, a result of the uneven development of an information base over the duration of OLS between North and South.

Southern Sector assessments, for example, have been focused more on food security because it was felt that sufficient information on other sectors was already available through regular monitoring. The annual assessment exercise is thus increasingly focused not on assessing needs in general, but on assessing needs for food security interventions. At the same time, UNICEF conducts separate surveys to assess its own food production inputs and the needs for the coming year. The annual assessment for the Southern Sector therefore provides the primary input for the estimation of food aid needs.

In the Northern Sector, on the other hand, limited access, or the lack of permanent UN presence in many locations, means that a much broader range of information needs to be gathered (Painter, 1996, March 25).

The different objectives for assessments between Northern and Southern Sectors became clear during the first attempt to conduct a comprehensive assessment of both using a similar methodology:

> The objectives of the assessment are not clear. It appears that OLS Nairobi, UN Khartoum, and DHA Geneva have differing opinions regarding the mission mandate...OLS Nairobi and the UN in Khartoum have discussed extensively the questionnaires to be used on the assessment; it appears that while the two operations agree to assess needs, the Operation ex-Khartoum may have different aspirations as to what can be accomplished with the assessment...the operations ex-Lokichokkio has extensively easier access for INGOs and therefore are not as concerned as Khartoum with some data that we feel is necessary, namely water, medical, nutrition and the sanitation situation. We indicated in meetings with the OLS team that one of our priorities is to determine areas lacking sufficient services in order that we may encourage the GOS to allow expansion of INGO presence (UNEU, 1993, October 3).

The different objectives of the Sectors are also shaped by different levels of UN OLS agency control over the assessment process. In the Northern Sector, UN authority is limited by the fact that the assessment process is largely controlled by RRC and COVA (now HAC). In the Southern Sector, although the SRRA and RASS may attempt to increase in the number of locations assessed, the UN has the final say in where assessments take place. Consequently, UN agencies in the Southern Sector have much greater scope to select, for example, a representative sample of the population, or to identify areas where limited information is available for further investigation.

The lack of clear definition of OLS in the Northern Sector also means that assessments have become a political bargaining exercise. Both the GOS and the UN are aware that

the assessment exercise largely determines the operational field of OLS, and will each argue for locations to be included according to their own priorities. In 1994, the debate over locations lasted for more than six weeks (UNEU, 1995). In general, the UN tries to limit assessments to war-affected populations that it perceives are in need of assistance, whereas the GOS tries to broaden the assessment as much as possible to include locations such as the Red Sea Hills, Nyala, and Kosti. However, this is not universally the case. For example, the UNHCU was unable to persuade the GOS to include the Khartoum displaced in annual OLS assessments until 1994, and even then only those populations living in official displaced camps were included. At the same time, the UN welcomed the inclusion of the Nuba Hills by the GOS in assessments in 1995.

Dependence on the RRC for arranging travel permits further limits the UN's control in the Northern Sector. Attempts by UNHCU to regain a measure of control over the assessment process have been resisted, as excerpts from a letter to UNHCU from COVA indicate:

> ...We object to the UN undertaking the job of the Commission of Voluntary Agencies...The Commission will specify the right organisation in the right place...The proposed list, which has been sent by your office, is not accepted".

Further, some locations are left out of assessment missions by the GOS because they are assumed to have achieved self-reliance:

> You may notice that last year and also this year some locations have been excluded from the annual needs assessment, having achieved self-sufficiency and self-reliance, thanks to your joint co-operation in this regard (Al Agbash, 1995).

In such cases, the UN finds itself in the position of essentially having to prove that needs exist prior to the needs assessment itself.

In general, the Review Team found that for the Northern Sector, locations included in the annual assessment mission are not the result of objective methods, but rather reflect a compromise with GOS priorities.

5.2.4 Problems with the Quality of Access

An important factor in the validity of assessments is not simply physical presence in a given location, but the ability of the assessment team to contact the affected population, and to interview them on any subject judged to be relevant.

In the early years of OLS, access to civilian populations was limited by the respective authorities in both Sectors. It was not until 1993, for example, that the affected population itself became an explicit factor in assessment methodologies, through the development of a household questionnaire. Not surprisingly, this questionnaire became a source of controversy between the UN and the GOS in the Northern Sector, because it

implied a quality of access that was contentious. The issue was only resolved with high-level intervention by Ambassador Traxler. For the UN, the household questionnaire assumed a crucial importance:

> The household surveys are especially important to the Khartoum teams in that it will allow us the opportunity to actually see the population in certain locations. In the past, access to outlying areas, where the majority of the population reside, has been refused mainly to security constraints...If we are only allowed to land on airstrips and interview local authorities we will end up duplicating past mistakes and delivering relief items to non-existent beneficiaries (UNEU, 1993, October 3).

In 1994, the introduction of assessment methods based on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques caused further friction. This method not only required access to the recipient population to obtain information from them directly, but also the freedom to conduct an interview that was not predetermined by a structured questionnaire. Initially, both RRC and counterparts of OLS in the Southern Sector were reluctant to permit the use of the method. Reservations in the Southern Sector were overcome by SRRA/RASS involvement in training sessions, however; indeed, the SRRA not only adopted a similar methodology, but also adopted a food economy approach, meaning that it speaks the same language in terms of assessments as WFP food monitors.

In the Northern Sector, on the other hand, attempts to use qualitative methods such as PRA as part of the annual assessment process have largely been unsuccessful. Although UN OLS agencies state that a food economy approach has been adopted since 1995, and indeed a training workshop which included an introduction to qualitative methods was held, the Review Team was not convinced that this is the case; information is still mainly gathered at central locations, and provided largely by local government officials.

5.2.5 Analysing the Crisis through the Assessment Process

In the Northern Sector, the annual assessment is aimed at all UN sectoral activities, including sectors that OLS covers. The Review Team found a number of significant problems with these assessments.

First, there is a lack of a coherent conceptual framework that informs the assessment process. For example, assessment questionnaires and reports show little attention to the interaction between different sectors, or to the interrelationship between different factors that contribute to food insecurity, malnutrition, and mortality. It is also not clear how various indicators are analysed in order to prioritise interventions.

Second, much of the information gathered does not contribute to an understanding of the health status or level of food security of the populations concerned, but rather concentrates on the level of services or the delivery of inputs. Indeed, the Review Team was surprised to find an emphasis on gathering this type of information through assessments, since it must already exist in the institutional records of OLS agencies.

Hence, for example, the Review Team found it problematic that a joint assessment including WFP and UNICEF asks questions regarding food deliveries, logistics, health facilities, and number of feeding centres, which in many cases are supported by OLS resources. The lack of use of information from NGO partners, who conduct regular assessment and monitoring missions, also exacerbates the problem of duplicating the production of information. By recording the same type of information year after year, analyses of the effectiveness of past interventions is severely hampered.

Third, and as a consequence of all of the above, recommendations are rarely supported by information contained within assessment reports, and do not follow from an analyses of the situation on the ground.

UN and other OLS agencies themselves have questioned the usefulness of the assessment process; for example, at a workshop to prepare for the implementation of the assessment questionnaire, it was noted that:

> ... participants found themselves with a "fait accompli". A thick questionnaire packed with questions which were to produce "data" which in turn would provide useful "information". However, this data information link did not seem evident. On the contrary, participants did observe that much of the data to be collected by the assessment teams (in an already limited amount of time) would not lead to any significant information (Bulla, 1995, October 19).

The lack of a conceptual framework to inform the assessment process in the Northern Sector is surprising, given the institutional expertise that exists in some UN OLS agencies. For example, UNICEF has a well formulated nutrition strategy that includes an explicitly formulated framework to understand both biological and social causes of malnutrition and mortality. The framework breaks down these causes into immediate, underlying, and basic causes of malnutrition, and indicates how these different levels are interrelated. Immediate causes include food intake and disease; underlying causes have been grouped into three clusters of household food security, maternal and child care, and health services and the health environment; basic causes are influenced by potential resources, economic structure, and the political and ideological superstructure (UNICEF, 1990).

In the Southern Sector, there has been an explicit attempt to understand the nature of the emergency through the assessment process. Notably, the Southern Sector has adapted a version of the UNICEF framework for the 1996 assessment. However, it was decided to limit the analyses to immediate and underlying causes only, and to define needs in terms of what was operationally feasible:

> Given scarce resource and the constraints imposed by the civil war, needs are...defined in restricted terms, based on those interventions which are most urgent and currently feasible...Based on this causal analysis, the needs assessment focuses on the two key elements which most affect vulnerability to malnutrition and disease and for which it is possible to develop a meaningful proxy indicator, demonstrating significant change and allowing a prioritisation

of needs in rough regional and sectoral terms; these are health and food security (OLS Southern Sector, 1995, November).

Consequently, the assessment process in the Southern Sector focuses only on what can actually be measured, and what can reasonably be responded to; basic social and political dimensions of the crisis are thus neglected. While it is true that there are no inputs as such that can address the socio-political problems, this information is crucial for determining implementation mechanisms, or for the design of relief programmes and targeting strategies.

Southern Sector assessments for 1992 and 1993 also made attempts to provide a broader picture of rural vulnerability (OLS Southern Sector, 1991, December; OLS Southern Sector, 1993, February). Areas were ranked according to vulnerability, and were to be prioritised according to the type of vulnerability identified. Indeed, this is the only example of assessments that explicitly attempt to incorporate the concept of political vulnerability. However, at the time decision-makers were placing more emphasis on quantitative estimates of numbers of people in vulnerable groups, malnutrition, and mortality. Further, because the 1993 assessment focused on food security at household level, wider contextual factors were generally excluded from the framework of analysis.

The Review Team also noted that early OLS assessments, while less developed in terms of assessing needs, nevertheless included some information on modalities for delivery of assistance. Later assessments, on the other hand, focus entirely on defining need, and have neglected information on how these needs are to be met. This means that there is no analysis of the effectiveness of previous modalities of implementation for reaching beneficiaries, nor are there recommendations on implementation modalities for the future.

5.2.6 The Food Economy Approach: Assessing Food Security by Measuring Food Gaps

In the Southern Sector, WFP with the assistance of SCF (UK) introduced the food economy approach in 1994, in order to better target the allocation of food aid (Allen, 1994, August 16). This marked a change from a focus on malnutrition and mortality rates, and from a food aid programme driven primarily by logistics. This change in focus was the result of increased access to rural populations, which allowed for more decentralised deliveries, as well as bumper harvests at the end of 1994, which meant food needs were likely to be more localised and less widespread, hence requiring better targeting of assistance.

The food economy approach aims to determine the relative importance of different food sources to the annual food requirements of a household. In order to understand the "expandability" of different food sources, information is collected on food sources before the war, as well as in good and bad years of crop production during the war. It is assumed that, as people survived these years, food sources must "add up" to the required

1900 kcals/person/day. A deficit is identified if the loss of one or more food sources cannot be made up by other food sources.

The only food source that can be predicted with any certainty at the time of annual assessments is the expected harvest. Predictions of food deficits are thus made on the basis of the expected harvest, and knowledge of the contribution of crop production to specific food economies. However, since these predictions must make assumptions about access to other food sources (based on knowledge from baseline assessments), re-assessments and monitoring are usually required closer to the time of year of the expected deficit.

The strengths of the food economy approach are its use of qualitative methods - which overcomes problems of sampling - and the introduction of a common framework for assessing and understanding food security. Indeed, the enthusiasm with which the food economy approach was adopted by WFP food monitors reflects the analytical vacuum that existed in preceding years. By providing a simple framework that can be adopted by non-specialists, food monitors and other field workers were effectively empowered in their work. As a result, a degree of decision-making responsibility has been transferred from central offices in Nairobi to food monitors in the field.

The weakness of the food economy approach has to do with the interpretation of food deficits, and underlying assumptions about people's priorities when faced with the threat of famine. While the food economy approach provides information about potential sources of food, it does not indicate whether people will actually be able to make use of these options. For example, although the concept of exchange is included in the food economy approach, knowledge of constraints on exchange that may derive from political causes is very limited. The fact that the food economy approach focuses on the household also exacerbates the lack of broader contextual analysis. In the midst of internal war, the food economy approach's essential concentration of the economic aspects of food supply, to the neglect of the politics of food, is worrisome. Further, because the focus of the food economy approach as used in the Southern Sector is on estimating food aid needs, its ability to understand the constraints on coping mechanisms within the complex dynamics created by the war is limited.

Recently, attempts have been made to introduce the food economy approach to the Northern Sector, with little success. This is due not only to the different degree of access in the Northern Sector, but also to a failure to take into account components of the food economy particular to war-displaced populations. Food economies in the Northern and Southern Sector are substantially different. Whereas the Southern Sector assesses the subsistence economy of rural populations, subsistence for war-displaced populations in the Northern Sector is based primarily on wage labour, including agricultural labour, sharecropping, and low status trades. However, the real options available to the war-displaced to achieve food security have not been investigated in the Northern Sector. The presence of information gaps of this type is considered further below.

5.2.7 Additional Problems in the Annual Assessment Process

In both Northern and Southern Sectors, the UN theoretically co-ordinates the annual assessment process.

In the Northern Sector, as noted earlier, it is the RRC or COVA (now HAC) which finalises negotiations about where assessments will take place, who will take part, and what is assessed. The UN's role, through UNHCU, includes compiling assessment reports from both Southern and Northern Sector to produce a comprehensive report on OLS. However, UNHCU has been unable to accomplish this. Rather, the only assessment report which combines Northern and Southern Sector assessments - that of 1994 - was prepared by the Southern Sector. Further, for the Northern Sector alone, UNHCU has only been able to prepare an assessment report once, for 1995.

In the Northern Sector, although the OLS assessments are commonly referred to as joint RRC/UN/NGO assessments, NGOs actually play little part in planning the assessment process. Rather, they are usually presented the final questionnaire, and informed how they will take part in the assessment. Moreover, until 1995, training and orientation time for NGO assessment personnel was very limited. In 1993, for example, NGOs were shown the assessment questionnaire only two days before the assessment was due to begin.

In 1995, this situation was addressed to some extent by the introduction of training workshops prior to the assessment. The continued lack of NGO involvement at the early stages of the process, however, contributes to the failure to make use of existing information, and to problems for NGOs in making qualified people available.

Information collection during assessments is hampered by the lack of clear assignment of tasks to team members, and of clear direction as to how to conduct surveys; for example, there is no indication on the questionnaire as to who should ask the questions, and who should be interviewed. Limited time to actually carry out the assessment also hinders information collection. The length of questionnaires is also a constraint; for example, the final questionnaire for the 1995 assessment was 24 pages long. Even well qualified and highly trained personnel would find such a lengthy questionnaire difficult to implement. Not surprisingly, assessment reports rarely include all the information requested. Importantly, this means that final reports are of widely varying quality and type of information, making comparisons between years extremely difficult.

In the Southern Sector, NGOs, and counterparts from administrative authorities have only recently become involved in the planning of annual assessments. In 1994, guidelines for assessments were prepared for the first time, and training of assessment teams organised. In 1995, a planning committee was organised, which included representatives of RASS and the SRRA, and meetings were held with heads of agencies (Nichols, 1996, April 20). Importantly, the training of assessment teams in the Southern Sector, in contrast to the Northern Sector, involves reviews of assessment techniques as well as reviews of a wide range of secondary sources on the area to be assessed. Also, as

far as possible assessment teams include those who had already been trained in the food economy approach.

In general, the main use of the annual assessment is to form the basis of the annual Consolidated Appeal. Hence, assessments appear to play little part in programme planning, or in the formulation of a common strategy or plan of action for all OLS agencies. For example, the Review Team was informed by UNICEF staff in both Sectors that they rely more on their own information systems to assess needs for the coming year, than on the annual assessment. It is only recently that UNICEF Southern Sector began to use the annual assessment as the basis for preparing a plan of action for the following year, and prioritising interventions. However, this only includes UNICEF programmes, and does not include those of NGOs (Nichols, 1996, April 20). In the Northern Sector, NGOs rarely get to see final assessment reports, unless specifically requested. In some cases, even UN agency field staff may not be aware of the recommendations made in the reports.

The failure to adequately incorporate NGOs in the assessment process is significant, especially since they comprise a major part of food aid and food security inputs provided by OLS. Without involvement in assessment planning, there is little sense of ownership of the resulting information in the NGO community, and they continue to base resourcing on their own assessments and monitoring systems. This means that the scope for preparing an integrated plan of action for the whole of OLS remains limited.

5.3 Information Gaps in Understanding Livelihoods, Food Security, and Malnutrition

As is to be expected from constraints in carrying out proper assessments, there are significant gaps in information, and hence understanding, about malnutrition, mortality, and their underlying causes. Changes in assessment methods have also meant that it is difficult to get coherent picture of the changing food security situation. However, even when certain indicators are regularly available, they are rarely used. This is the case, for example, for market prices in GOS-held towns. Although prices have been consistently reported, the Review Team was surprised to discover that no one in the Northern Sector had thought of using this information to monitor trends over the years.

This section considers the kinds of gaps in information that exist, and the implications.

5.3.1 Malnutrition and Mortality

In the Southern Sector, reliable estimates of excess mortality based on records of actual deaths are not available. Attempts have been made to estimate morality, but the reliability of these estimates is debatable. For example, the OLS assessment conducted in 1993 reported 220,000 excess deaths over the non-war expectation, based on estimates of population decline and expected peacetime growth rates. Failure to take into account a decline in fertility, and the limited coverage of the estimate, however, makes

the figure of 220,000 excesses deaths open to question. The report itself acknowledges the uncertainty in the estimate, but states that:

> ...the only debate is over the magnitude of excess deaths, not the fact that they are occurring (OLS, 1994, March).

More localised estimates of mortality rates were assessed in household surveys in OLS Southern Sector assessments for 1992 and 1993. These reported extremely high mortality rates, but their reliability is limited due to the small sample size, and bias in selection of households closest to the airstrip (OLS Southern Sector, 1993, February). From 1994 forward, mortality rates were no longer included in Southern Sector.

Although no regular morbidity surveillance system exists, all available assessments report the major causes of morbidity to be malaria, diarrhoea, respiratory tract infections, and measles. Studies of famine-related excess mortality have shown these to be the most common causes of death during famines and in displaced populations; they can thus be expected to have a major contribution to the immediate causes of death in South Sudan. Understanding the causes of death is essential for appropriate programming, especially in determining the relative importance of food aid and health interventions. More-over, without a regular surveillance system it is difficult to determine whether there has been a deterioration or improvement in people's health status.

UNICEF Southern Sector has recently introduced the concept of "health security" to describe the cluster of potential underlying causes of malnutrition and mortality related to access to health services and the health environment (OLS Southern Sector, 1995, November). However, assessments of access to health services is limited to potential coverage, by multiplying the number of health facilities by the numbers of people they are expected to serve; actual utilisation numbers are not produced. The health environment is described mainly in terms of outreach - for example, measles vaccination - and information on morbidity. Other key aspects of the health environment, such as access to safe water, are reported to be difficult to measure, however.

The Review Team is not aware of any such analysis in the Northern Sector, although the lack of hygiene, sanitation, or adequate water supply is sometimes mentioned in assessment reports as a contributing factor to morbidity. On the other hand, there is a great deal of information in the Northern Sector on nutritional status, which is also true of the Southern Sector. Numerous nutritional surveys have been conducted within OLS, and in particular by NGOs. These surveys have concentration on war-displaced populations, both because of the limitations of access until 1993, and because nutritional surveillance of large, dispersed rural population is extremely difficult.

However, methodology varies both within the same location over time, and between locations. In addition, within the Northern Sector UN OLS agencies do not always have access to NGO nutritional survey reports, and their own nutritional surveillance capacity has been limited; for example, UNICEF Khartoum has only recently appointed a nutritionist, as well as field nutritionists in places such as Malakal and Wau. In contrast, although UN OLS Southern Sector has not had a nutritionist on staff, nutrition

consultants have been hired who have attempted to standardise nutritional surveillance, by preparing guidelines and organising workshops. In addition, there have been attempts in the Southern Sector to review past nutritional information, as well as to identify past problems and their implications for future assessments (MacAskill, 1993, August 31/December).

Seasonal patterns in the prevalence of malnutrition have not been systematically investigated, which makes it difficult to distinguish unusual patterns. Nutritional surveys done in rural South Sudan in 1989 during the rainy season indicated malnutrition rates of less than 10% of the population at less than 80% weight-for-height. This rate is now generally used as a baseline for South Sudan, as this was considered a period of relative stability, and none of the populations surveyed were receiving any free food distribution (MacAskill, 1993, August 31/December). However, available information indicates that there are seasonal variations in malnutrition both in rural populations in the South, and among war-displaced populations in the North. Highest malnutrition rates generally occur at the start of the rainy season, and lower rates occur towards the end of the year following the harvest.

Finally, both UNICEF and the Ministry of Health increasingly sample geographical areas for nutritional surveillance, rather than the specific populations included under OLS, as a consequence of the merging of humanitarian relief and country programming. For example, the Ministry of Health in Kordofan began nutritional surveillance of the displaced camps, including peace villages, in 1993, recording rates of around 30% (<80% WFH) in Abyei and Meiram in July. Later sampling, however, shifted to Rural Councils, meaning that even if the displaced camp populations were included, they could not be desegregated as a group. This is also true of a large, multiple-indicator cluster survey recently carried out by UNICEF Khartoum for the entire country (UNICEF, 1995). In this case, surveys were designed to give the prevalence of malnutrition for entire regions, thus masking the differences found among different populations within regions, and effectively "hiding" higher prevalence in certain groups or locations.

5.3.2 Livelihoods and Food Security

From the start of OLS, more information has been available on livelihoods and food security of populations served by the Southern Sector than those served by the Northern Sector.

Especially since the introduction of the food economy approach in 1994, detailed descriptions of livelihoods and production systems in South Sudan have been produced. Baseline information collected in the Southern Sector has recently been compiled by WFP; in addition, the Food Economy Unit in Lokichokkio has prepared "A Background Guide for Field Staff to the Food Economies of South Sudan", which makes use of research studies and historical information. However, as noted by personnel who conduct assessments in the Southern Sector, little is still known about the extent to which social networks such as kinship may function as a coping mechanism, or about

the role of wider economic and trading networks in this regard. Arguably, it is difficult to develop this level of in-depth understanding, especially without a long-term and permanent field presence on the ground.

As noted earlier, the food use of the food economy approach in the Southern Sector involves important gaps in information. With its emphasis on the household, and on quantifying deficits, the food economy approach neglects the wider picture of food security. Prior to the introduction of the food economy approach, a 1990 assessment in the Southern Sector included a detailed qualitative analysis of wider socio-economic support networks of affected populations, and - importantly - how these have been affected by the war (UN/OLS, 1990, June). With the introduction of the food economy approach, however, this type of information has been lost.

In the Northern Sector, little information is available on the livelihoods of displaced populations served by OLS. Assessment reports may give some information on the expected harvest, and agricultural activities, and some of the strategies that war-displaced use to gain access to food. These include the sale of firewood, grass, and mats, collection of wild foods, fishing, and casual labour. Sometimes, kinship links between the displaced and local population are reported. However, the structural conditions for war-displaced that contribute to chronic food insecurity are rarely considered.

Attempts to introduce the food economy approach in the Northern Sector have not helped matters much. This is because the food economy approach has been applied in exactly the same manner as in the South, without regard to the very different food economies faced by OLS beneficiaries in the Northern Sector. Hence, there are descriptions produced such as the following for Wau:

> The main food in Wau are grain crops, wild food, non-grain crops and exchange food from the local market. Meat is used as a complementary food...Income-generating activities especially for women will contribute to improving living conditions of people in Wau.

or for Abyei:

> A local harvest normally lasts for five months for an average family. Since 1995 is the first year for the displaced to cultivate for themselves, it remains to be seen how long a harvest will last. 10% of families were reported to be unable to cultivate. In Abyei the dry season starts in November and ends in April while the wet season starts in May and ends in October. Relief assistance is expected to contribute 40% to the HH in the dry season and 60% in the wet season. However, main sources of income for an average HH are selling grass and mats, firewood, gum, fishing and honey.

Such descriptions reveal nothing about people's actual access to food. In fact, when the Review Team visited Wau, they found people's main source of food to be mango and watermelon. Further, such descriptions contain no information concerning the reliance of war-displaced on wage labour and petty trading, nor how their food security is

impacted by access to employment, wage levels, labour relations, and market prices. Rather, the descriptions above suggest that war-displaced have land. In reality, the war-displaced do not have access to secure tenure on land, and consequently the arrangements through which they are able to farm are in fact more important than the amount of harvest they produce. Unusually, this issue was mentioned in a report on a joint RRC/UN mission to Meiram in 1994:

> ...in the long term, the displaced farmer may not profit. This is because the displaced farmer receives from the landlord advanced food rations during the off season. The cost of food is repaid after the harvest, which subsequently leaves little or no profit for the displaced farmer. During the off-season, the displaced collect firewood and grass to sell in the market to enable them to survive on a subsistence basis (RRC/UN, 1994, March 24).

Food economies of the war-displaced in the Northern Sector are often intricately linked to the food economies of the host population, although not necessarily on an equal basis. Consequently, analysis of the food security of the war-displaced needs also to include an understanding of the host population economy, and the relationship between the two. This type of analysis if rarely evident in Northern Sector assessments, however.

Finally, since assessment reports are generally not prepared for OLS as a whole, it is difficult to obtain a picture of the food security of populations being assisted through OLS as a whole. While it is true that the situation of beneficiaries in the North and South is different, much could be gained by combining and cross-checking information from both Sectors. For example, population movements between North and South, and between GOS-held towns in the South and the surrounding rural areas could be better understood. Instead, GOS-held towns in the South and the surrounding rural areas are analysed separately.

In general, the Review Team felt that the decision to focus assessments on measurable outcomes such as food deficits and malnutrition rates has meant that the "technical" aspects of food insecurity have been separated from their underlying social and political causes in the context of internal warfare.

5.3.3 The Erosion of Standards and Misconceptions About "Coping"

The Review Team was deeply concerned at the way in which the evolution of OLS operations in general, has led to an erosion in the standard of what constitutes an emergency situation for OLS beneficiary populations.

In the Northern Sector, for example, extremely high rates of malnutrition have been reported this year. They were summarised in the appeal for 1996:

> Nutrition surveys conducted in September/October 1995 reflect global malnutrition rates ranging from an acceptable 13.7% to 36.8% in displaced

> camps around Khartoum, and from 16.1% to 30% in the transitional zone and Government-held areas of southern Sudan (DHA, 1996, February).

This statement is surprising in that it considers malnutrition rates of 13.7% and 16.1% to be "acceptable". According to RRC guidelines, nutrition rates are considered to be cause for concern if there are more than 10% of a population less than 80% weight-for-height, which also corresponds to the baseline used for the Southern Sector, mentioned above.

While malnutrition rates cannot be interpreted in isolation, the prevalence of malnutrition indicated above would almost certainly have been used as evidence of an emergency in the early years of OLS. Not only are the malnutrition rates among the war-displaced in Khartoum high at the present time, if they change "it is in the direction of a steadily worsening situation" (Dysinger, et al., 1995,May). Indeed, malnutrition rates in the officially recognised displaced camps in Khartoum, where OLS assistance is targeted, are actually higher than in squatter settlements that fall outside the formal scope of OLS.

Similarly in Ed Da'ein, data from SCF (UK) indicated that in 1994 there was an unusually severe hungry season, and that in 1993 malnutrition rates among the war-displaced were higher than for the host population (SCF (UK), 1993, August). This information was being produced just at a time when general food aid rations were being reduced, on the assumption that people were gaining a degree of self-sufficiency.

In the Southern Sector, nutritional surveillance played a major part in the assessment of conditions of the war-displaced until 1994, and was one of the major triggers for international response:

> ...a significant proportion of the international aid that has gone to Southern Sudan, in the last 10 years, has been in response to crises when malnutrition rates and mortality have reached catastrophic levels (MacAskill, 1994, April 19).

This changed, however, with the start of the food economy approach.

The shift to the food economy approach has meant that nutritional surveillance data has lessened in importance. Although the Southern Sector assessment for 1995 reports both food economy information and nutritional survey results, the two are not combined (OLS Southern Sector, 1994, October). Even in regular assessments carried out during the year, analysis of the food economy and malnutrition information is rarely combined.

In addition, all potential crises are now assessed on the basis of food deficits, whether as a result of drought, war-induced displacement, violence, or other causes. Hence, deficits are the sole basis for determining whether or not food aid should be provided as an emergency relief input, or as an input for support to agricultural production. For example, if a population faces a 5 to 10% food deficit, agricultural support may be the recommended intervention, whereas if a population faces a 25% food deficit, emergency food aid may be recommended (Coutts, 1996, April 9). What this means in practice is that there is no distinction made between periods of severe food insecurity as a result of internal warfare, violence, or other factors, and general famine conditions associated with excess mortality. Indeed, the approach used is unable to differentiate between different causes and implications of food shortages.

While more information on access to food has undoubtedly led to better assessments of food aid needs, it has also led to an unrealistic confidence in the food economy approach. This is illustrated by a dispute between Northern and Southern Sectors concerning barge assessments carried out by the Northern Sector in a non GOS-held area. The barge team reported extremely high malnutrition rates, which arguably were unreliable because of the survey methods used. However, the results were rejected out of hand by the Southern Sector as a result of faith in their knowledge of food economies in the surrounding areas, which was based on crop production, assets, wild foods, and people's ability to exchange livestock for grain with surplus areas (Boudreau, 1995, June 14). In response, the Northern Sector rightly asked:

> If available wild foods are so expandable and waterlily so nutritious, it is difficult to explain why nutrition problems were identified with no apparent health epidemics (Anderson, 1995, June 26).

This example highlights the focus of the food economy approach on identifying potential sources of food and their nutritional content, rather than analysing the types of strategies that people actually use to obtain food, and the constraints they face in so doing.

Indeed, although support for coping strategies is included in the objectives of OLS, the concept of coping strategies is not well defined for war-affected populations in Sudan. The concept is derived from drought-induced famines, and is generally used to describe strategies that are often pre-planned, and adopted temporarily in periods of shortage, after which there is a return to normality. The aim of these strategies is to preserve the basis for livelihood.

However, this conceptualisation of coping strategies is not necessarily applicable to war-affected populations in Sudan. During prolonged periods of acute food insecurity, people may be forced to adopt crisis strategies that threaten their future livelihoods. Indeed, for most war-affected populations in Sudan, the basis for livelihood has fundamentally changed, as a result of the war. In rural South Sudan, for example, many of the strategies that people traditionally used to cope with food shortage are now

blocked either as a result of warfare, or as a consequence of deliberate strategies of either of the warring parties.

For war-displaced populations in the North, the coping strategies people use are essentially an unsustainable adaptation to chronic food shortages. Although the war-displaced may in some situations be meeting their food needs, they remain extremely vulnerable:

> ...the relatively small food deficit of communities in this group should not be mistaken for a problem easily addressed...They are almost totally without access to food sources linked to livestock and with that they have lost their traditional way of life, yet they still manage to cover their total food requirements. Their ability to cover food requirements is dependent on labour for hunting, gathering wild foods, and fishing. They are however, totally destitute in terms of assets. It is this destitution and the related absence of kinship ties to wealthier neighbours that makes this group particularly vulnerable (OLS Southern Sector, 1994, October).

In this regard, the term "coping strategy" is actually inappropriate, because it implies that whatever a household does to secure access to food must be positive, even if leads to costs in the short term. It also implies that people will be able to build on their strategies to achieve food security in the long term.

Given the structural factors that erode food security in Sudan, this kind of orientation to coping strategies is inappropriate. In many cases, the strategies used by the displaced to gain access to food are becoming more limited, and vulnerability is increasing. Nevertheless, there continues to be an assumption on the part of UN OLS agencies that any strategy that contributes to immediate food intake is beneficial.

5.4 Food Aid Programming

5.4.1 Estimating Needs and Calculating Food Aid Requirements

Given the dominance of food aid in OLS, the Review Team was surprised at how little information exists to indicate how food aid needs are actually estimated. Recommendations for food aid needs are rarely given in OLS assessment reports, and FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission reports, although specifying food aid needs, do not desegregate these needs for OLS specifically, but include all war and drought-affected populations in Sudan. (See Chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion on the problems of information management between FAO/WFP missions and OLS assessments). It is only in the last two years, when OLS has been in need of emergency food aid, that food aid specifically for OLS-assisted populations can be distinguished in FAO/WFP reports.

This section examines the way in which food aid needs are estimated, the extent to which a reduction in food aid has been based on information available to OLS, and how

changes in perceptions concerning the nature of the crisis, as well as changes in assessment methodologies, have influenced the estimation of food needs.

5.4.1.1 Estimating Populations in Need

A key component of assessing food aid requirements in Sudan is the estimation of populations in need of food. Estimating populations in need has a political dimension, since these estimates are often also assumed to represent the numbers of people who live on either side of the conflict. The contentiousness of population figures in considered further in Chapter 8. Here, we concentrate on the way populations in need are estimated vis a vis the process of calculating food aid requirements.

In the early years of OLS, estimations of people in need focused on the estimation of number of people in vulnerable groups, for example the displaced. The various difficulties in assessing such populations was expressed by the FAO/WFP mission of 1993:

> The mission found the assessment of the number of displaced a difficult task. In non-Government areas, the mission was denied access to large concentrations of displaced because of lack of security...In the north, the short time available for the visits at the many dispersed sites, and the varying estimates of camp population from various sources at the sites which were visited, presented a different set of problems (FAO/WFP, 1993, March).

In the Southern Sector, many assessment reports prior to 1994 did not include estimates of populations in need in areas inaccessible at the time of assessment. Needs for populations in rural Bahr el-Ghazal were left out of the 1993 FAO/WFP report of March, for example, even though it was realised that people in this area are among the neediest. The situation has improved somewhat with the increased knowledge base developed by the food economy approach. Hence, although some areas were not accessible for assessment in 1995, projections for food aid for 1996 could still be made according to the number of people within a specific food economy identified as having deficits. Greater knowledge about recipient populations, as well as greater access, has thus contributed to increased estimations of populations in need in the Southern Sector.

As WFP food monitors have gained greater access, information about needy populations has become more accurate. However, estimating populations that are in need still remains an exercise in balancing calculations of the same population from different sources. The Review Team recognised that making accurate estimates of populations in need will continue to be a challenge for OLS, in a context where populations are large and dispersed, and where conditions are constantly in flux.

Within these overall constraints, however, the Review Team was concerned by the lack of consistency in the use of criteria for estimating how much food is actually required by needy populations.

5.4.1.2 Estimating Food Aid Requirements

In the Plans of Action, food aid is recommended with little or no supporting information on how these needs were calculated. For OLS II, there is no consistent relationship between the estimated number of people in need, and the food aid required by this number. In 1990, for example, 40,000 displaced people in Meiram and 70,000 displaced people in Yei were both estimated to require 4,000 MT of food aid, while 50,000 displaced people in Kongor were estimated to only require 705 MT (UN, 1990, March 26).

Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 below indicate the lack of consistent relationship between the estimates of populations in need, and the calculation of amounts of food aid that these populations require. The Figures cover both GOS and non-GOS held areas, from 1989 to 1996. No data for 1991 and 1994 is indicated, since it was not possible to desegregate OLS populations from needy populations in Sudan as a whole for these years.

Figure 5.1 - Estimate of Populations in Need of Food 1989 - 1996

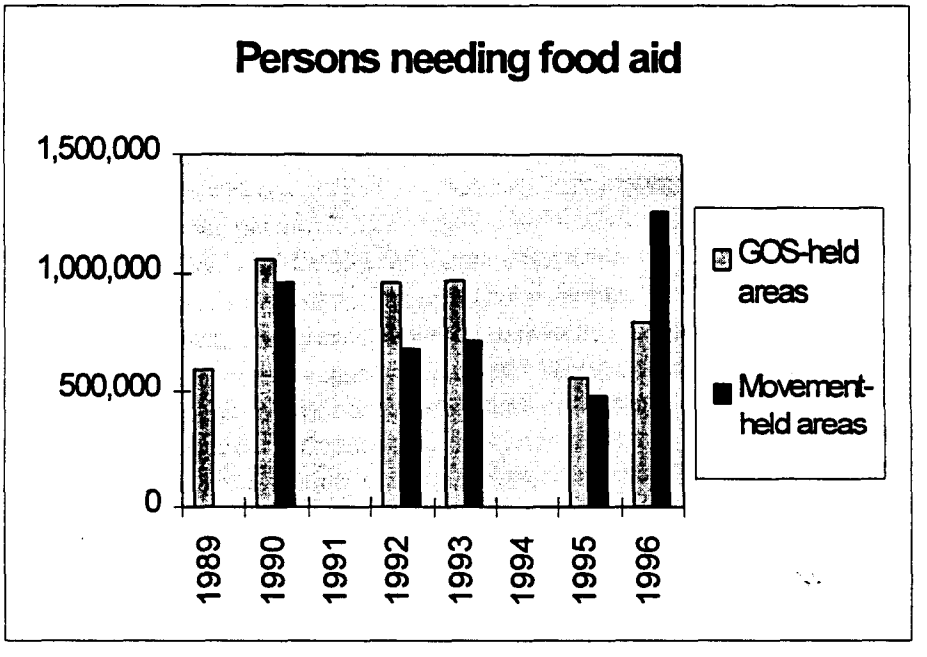
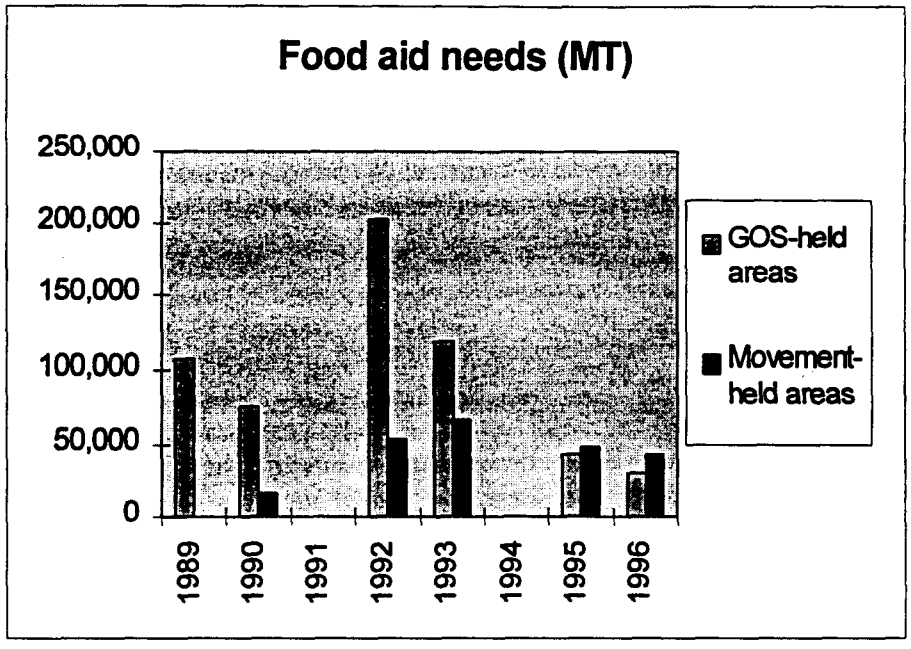


Figure 5.2- Estimate of Food Aid Needs 1989 - 1996



The Figures above show clearly that, although the estimated number of people in need is roughly similar in GOS and non-GOS held areas, the food aid requirement calculated for each is very different. Food aid requirements are estimated to be much higher in GOS areas. Reasons for this are considered later in this section.

In addition, there has also been a lack of consistency in the way information is interpreted to arrive at food aid requirements. Indeed, it appeared to the Review Team that these interpretations vary according to the relative policy importance of food aid within OLS at any given time. More specifically, assessment reports over the years indicate increasingly assumptions entering into food aid calculations about the extent to which needy populations have access to other food sources besides food aid.

In 1992, for example, the Southern Sector assessment recommends different amounts and durations of food aid rations for displaced/returnee populations, as opposed to those affected by natural disasters (OLS Southern Sector, 1991, December). The FAO/WFP assessment for the same year mentions that food aid estimates are based on possible additional sources of food, and a return to a certain degree of food self-sufficiency after a period of 4-10 months (FAO/WFP, 1991, December). A year later, the FAO/WFP assessment considered access to employment in estimating the food aid needs of the displaced (FAO/WFP, 1993, March). Although incorporating a broader understanding of the socio-economic context of OLS beneficiaries in the Southern Sector, these earlier assessments did not take into account the ability of people to actually access of people to food.

From 1994 forward, however, the ability of people to access food sources is assessed for the Southern Sector. Although recommendations for food aid are not provided in OLS assessment reports, the Review Team was nevertheless given information that indicated

how food aid needs were calculated. According to this information, it was possible to see that food deficits identified in the OLS Southern Sector for 1995 were directly translated into food aid needs. Hence, 1995 is the first year where a clear justification is provided for the amount of food aid stated as required. For 1996, the Southern Sector again uses the identification of food deficits as a methodology in the annual assessment, but this time taking into account the self-sufficiency point, or the point at which people switch from strategies that reflect an adaptation to chronic food deficits, to strategies that indicate crisis.

For the Northern Sector, information concerning food deficits, and hence the basis for calculating food aid requirements, is more limited. Further, with an increasing realisation of the complexities of local food economies, there has been an increasing reluctance to provide any recommendations concerning food aid needs. Instead, most area assessments for 1996 recommend re-assessments of food aid needs around March of the following year. This does not solve the problem of estimating overall food aid needs in time for them to be incorporated into the Annual Consolidated Appeal. As a result, food aid needs for the Northern Sector are not only based on very limited information, they are also formulated in the absence of recommendations from OLS assessments.

According to WFP in Khartoum, findings are discussed among team members and WFP staff in Khartoum, who then try to make their best estimate according to the information available (Adly, 1996, March 31). An example of the type of information available is indicated below, which describes the situation in Bentiu, with an estimated population of 8000, including 519 displaced and 187 returnees:

> In the dry season, grain crops, meat, exchange, milk, fish and non-grain crops are the key sources of household food income. In the wet season, grain and non-grain crops, meat, milk, relief food constitute household food income. Cash is derived from livestock sales, labour (Government employees), other sales, petty trade and crop sales (WFP, 1995, November 19).
>
> Given the isolation of the town and difficult access during the rainy season, an assessment for relief needs is recommended before the beginning of the 1996 rainy season (WFP, 1995, November 19).

The recommendation for food aid derived from the above information is a three months half ration for 4500 people, and an eight months half ration for emergency school feeding. The Review Team found it difficult to understand how this recommendation was derived from information provided in the assessment.

Estimates of food aid needs can never be precise, not least because of the difficulties in estimating population size, but also because accurately quantifying access to food is difficult given the complex social and political factors that influence food access. However, the Review Team felt that such difficulties do not justify the estimation of food aid needs purely on the basis of speculation, as appears to be the case in the Northern Sector.

Estimating food aid needs should at least be based on an informed assessment of the food security situation. In the absence of such an informed assessment, the calculation of food aid needs is highly susceptible to unsubstantiated assumptions about the increasing level of self-reliance among OLS beneficiaries.

Although it has its limitations, the introduction of the food economy approach in the Southern Sector has greatly improved the estimation of food aid needs for this Sector, if only because food aid is now allocated on the basis of clear justifications. Estimating food aid needs based on access to food is clearly an improvement on the estimation of needs based on numbers in vulnerable groups multiplied by standard rations.

5.4.1.3 Non-WFP Food Aid Providing Agencies

Further complicating the picture of estimation of food aid needs is the fact that agencies providing non-WFP food aid, whether they are part of OLS or not, do not necessarily estimate food aid needs using the same methods as WFP, nor do they necessarily follow the recommendations of the OLS assessment (if there are any). In the Southern Sector, non-WFP food aid is generally provided to displaced populations, by agencies such as NPA, CRS, and World Vision. NPA, although not part of OLS, is adopting the food economy approach (Calvert & Wood, 1996, April 16). CRS, on the other hand, finds the food economy approach inappropriate for estimating food aid needs of the displaced, and instead bases food aid requirements on population estimates, food production from seeds and tools provided, in combination with nutritional surveys (Chaiban, 1996, April 16). In the Northern Sector, although agencies such as ADRA take part in the Annual Assessment, they resource food for the Khartoum displaced independently from OLS, and distribute it according to their own policies.

5.4.2 Food Aid Targeting and Food Aid Allocations

5.4.2.1 Identifying the Vulnerable

Any food distribution system must have clearly defined target groups who are perceived to be at particular risk. As OLS has progressed, increasing attempts have been made to refine targeting strategies.

In the Southern Sector, whereas initially virtually the entire population was perceived to be at risk, increasing attempts have been made to refine targeting strategies to ensure that the most vulnerable are reached.

In the early years of the Northern Sector, better targeting was thought necessary primarily in order to discourage dependence on relief among OLS beneficiaries, despite a lack of information on health and nutritional conditions of the displaced:

> Efforts will be made to discourage dependency on emergency food aid by the introduction of income generating schemes.. and new approaches, where feasible, in food aid delivery (UN, 1990, March 26).

This approach in the Northern Sector appears to have derived directly from GOS comments on the draft Plan of Action, which include:

> ...relief should be distributed only in emergency cases, including children under five, aged, disabled, pregnant and lactating mothers, malnourished and other urgent cases....Relief operations should be directed to encourage production and promote self-reliance and as FFW wherever possible (RRC, 1989, December 5).

It was not until 1995 that better targeting in both Sectors of OLS became a major part of relief strategy:

> In light of improved food supply prospects, beginning in 1995, food assistance programme focus on: 1. improving monitoring and assessment capacities to better identify needy and vulnerable groups and target assistance (FAO/WFP, 1994, December).

In the Southern Sector, the aim of targeting, in addition to ensuring that food reaches the most vulnerable, is also aimed at allocating limited resources more effectively. This was one of the specific purposes of the food economy approach. In the Northern Sector, however, fears of developing relief dependency still appear to predominate.

Both Sectors face problems in identifying vulnerable households or individuals, due to the difficulties of "measuring" vulnerability in a chronic emergency. Although the problem is now commonly perceived as one of inadequate access to food, this is the result of a complex interaction between economic, social, and political factors. As noted earlier, access to food, as well as malnutrition and mortality, is in many instances related to political vulnerability.

Nevertheless, UN OLS agencies and NGOs have continued to target almost exclusively on the basis of physiological or socio-economic criteria only. In this regard it is also clear that targeting strategies differ between Northern and Southern Sectors. In the North, targeting may include children between 80% and 85% WFH, or all under fives, pregnant and lactating women, elderly, the disabled, etc. (Adly, 1996, March 31). Although criteria for targeting are given by WFP, actual targeting decisions are frequently left up to food monitors, implementing agencies, and local relief committees. In the Southern Sector, there is more emphasis on socio-economic criteria, which often includes female headed households. Where food is also intended as agricultural support, targeting may be extended to include farmers.

Such strategies, which make use of categories of people who have been interpreted as being vulnerable, do not necessarily solve the problem of identifying those who are actually vulnerable in a particular socio-economic and political context, however.

Further, where targeting is left to local authorities, the political vulnerability of beneficiaries is increased.

In the Southern Sector, WFP has attempted to resolve the problem of targeting vulnerable households by setting up community based relief committees. Targeting within displaced populations in the Northern Sector has not been implemented, however, except in the case of the Khartoum displaced. Here, ADRA has introduced a policy of targeting only the malnourished for food distributions, on the basis that this will discourage relief dependency.

However, the Review Team felt that, while targeting only the malnourished may be acceptable in a situation of very scarce relief resources, it is not acceptable when justified by perceptions of relief dependency, especially when such perceptions have not been based on proper assessments. (The extent to which relief dependency actually exists in the context of war-displaced populations in the Northern Sector is considered in Chapter 7). If targeting toward malnourished sections of the displaced population is to take place, it should be done in addition to a general ration that makes up for the structural food deficits which exist. While WFP Khartoum is aware of differences in policy towards food aid for the displaced, it is unable to influence ADRA due to the fact that ADRA has no agreement with WFP, and resources its own food aid. The same is true for agencies that provide assistance to the displaced in the Southern Sector.

5.4.2.2 Balancing Allocations Between North and South

WFP in both Sectors of OLS notes that their operation has progressed from a programme driven by access and logistics, to a more needs-driven programme, as a result of the increase in number of assessments (WFP, 1996, April 13).

Initially, in the absence of detailed assessment information, the OLS Plans of Action targeted food assistance at accessible areas. The amount of food aid allocated was based on estimates of the number of displaced populations within these areas. Although no allocation figures are given in the first Plan of Action, the number of displaced and war-affected people in the rural South was estimated at over 3 million, which must have been close to the entire population (UN, 1989, March 8). In effect, OLS I moved as much food as possible into accessible areas of the South, prior to any assessment of need (Scott-Villiers, 1996, April 15).

At the same time, it appears that during the early years of OLS there was a perceived need to balance food aid deliveries between Northern and Southern Sectors, in the interests of neutrality:

> Mr Grant...insisted that the number of affected population in Sudan should be reported to be 2.2 million, roughly half of which was in government controlled areas and the rest in SPLA held areas (Haider, 1989, March 28).

> Efforts will be made to discourage dependency on emergency food aid by the introduction of income generating schemes.. and new approaches, where feasible, in food aid delivery (UN, 1990, March 26).

This approach in the Northern Sector appears to have derived directly from GOS comments on the draft Plan of Action, which include:

> ...relief should be distributed only in emergency cases, including children under five, aged, disabled, pregnant and lactating mothers, malnourished and other urgent cases....Relief operations should be directed to encourage production and promote self-reliance and as FFW wherever possible (RRC, 1989, December 5).

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> In light of improved food supply prospects, beginning in 1995, food assistance programme focus on: 1. improving monitoring and assessment capacities to better identify needy and vulnerable groups and target assistance (FAO/WFP, 1994, December).

In the Southern Sector, the aim of targeting, in addition to ensuring that food reaches the most vulnerable, is also aimed at allocating limited resources more effectively. This was one of the specific purposes of the food economy approach. In the Northern Sector, however, fears of developing relief dependency still appear to predominate.

Both Sectors face problems in identifying vulnerable households or individuals, due to the difficulties of "measuring" vulnerability in a chronic emergency. Although the problem is now commonly perceived as one of inadequate access to food, this is the result of a complex interaction between economic, social, and political factors. As noted earlier, access to food, as well as malnutrition and mortality, is in many instances related to political vulnerability.

Nevertheless, UN OLS agencies and NGOs have continued to target almost exclusively on the basis of physiological or socio-economic criteria only. In this regard it is also clear that targeting strategies differ between Northern and Southern Sectors. In the North, targeting may include children between 80% and 85% WFH, or all under fives, pregnant and lactating women, elderly, the disabled, etc. (Adly, 1996, March 31). Although criteria for targeting are given by WFP, actual targeting decisions are frequently left up to food monitors, implementing agencies, and local relief committees. In the Southern Sector, there is more emphasis on socio-economic criteria, which often includes female headed households. Where food is also intended as agricultural support, targeting may be extended to include farmers.

Such strategies, which make use of categories of people who have been interpreted as being vulnerable, do not necessarily solve the problem of identifying those who are actually vulnerable in a particular socio-economic and political context, however.

areas. Notably, these allocations can be linked to needs assessments, which indicated roughly similar needs in both areas.

5.4.2.3 Information on Actual Deliveries: The Problem of Monitoring

A key reason why it is difficult to determine how much of allocations actually reached intended target groups is the absence of food monitors on the ground. In the Northern Sector, WFP food monitors did not have a permanent presence in any of the locations served by OLS until 1994. Prior to that, monitors could only obtain access for very short periods of time. Moreover, it was only in mid-1993 that WFP Khartoum introduced principles according to which distributions should take place. Before that time, numbers actually receiving food were estimated on the basis of "gut feeling" of monitors, or were provided by local relief committees (Adly, 1996, March 31).

As noted in previous chapters, the monitoring situation has greatly improved since 1995. WFP now has 12 food monitors with a permanent presence in Wau, Juba, Malakal, and Bor. These monitors make regular visits to South and West Kordofan, Aweil, Yei, Gogrial, and Pibor (Adly, 1996, March 31). However, monitoring is still uneven across the Northern Sector. For example, there are no full time food monitors for Ed Da'ein or the Khartoum displaced. In addition, although monitors try to be present at distributions, and claim food is distributed for only those present, their authority is to some extent undermined by the local relief committees, and little is known about what happens after the distribution. Guidelines for monitoring and reporting have only just been introduced.

In the Southern Sector, food monitors established a permanent presence within South Sudan from the start of OLS, although not necessarily in areas of greatest need. By 1994, for example, there were regional bases for monitoring in Waat and Akon. At the end of 1994, however, this was no longer possible due to increased insecurity. At present, there is a pool of monitors based in Lokichokkio (Coutts, 1996, April 9). Monitoring food distributions has thus become more difficult in the Southern Sector, not least because military attacks frequently coincide with food distributions (see chapter 6 for more discussion on this issue). The risk of attack, especially in Bahr el-Ghazal, also means that distributions have to conducted relatively quickly, thereby possibly limiting access to food aid for populations living far from distribution points.

5.4.2.4 Needs Assessments and Allocations

The proliferation in assessments from 1993 forward, following greater and more flexible access, has meant more information is available on which to base food aid allocations and deliveries. In the Southern Sector, the introduction of the food economy approach was specifically intended as a tool for better geographic targeting of food aid according to need. More assessments has also enabled the UN to refute GOS charges of inequity in allocations, since allocations are said to be made strictly on the basis of needs assessments (Traxler, 1995, August 2).

I am anxious that we maintain the appropriate balance of operation Lifeline Sudan in responding to the needs of both north and south (Baker, 1990, November 1).

This need for balance is also illustrated in barge deliveries, which also applies to some extent today. Based on an informal agreement, a balance was established between GOS and non-GOS areas. The balance was to be achieved through the provision of additional supplies to Juba, where food aid resources in any case were never enough to meet needs (Adly, 1996, March 31). Although deliveries are now based far more on assessments, it is still difficult to pass through an area without delivering at least some supplies (Hayes, 1996, April 4), and barge deliveries still show frequent distributions of 10 MT of cereals by the barges, regardless of the number of people in the "drop-off points".

When the GOS closed OLS II at the end of 1990, agreements on access continued on a more or less ad hoc basis until 1993. In 1991, the balance of allocations between North and South appears to have been greatly influenced by the impending famine in the North, as a result of drought. Although at this time the Southern Sector had established an ongoing system for assessing needs, and a special WFP/NGO/donor assessment mission had estimated food aid needs for both the North and the South, no WFP deliveries took place into the Southern Sector until mid-1991. Indeed, the Southern Sector was unable to obtain clearance for deliveries according to previously assessed needs, despite GOS agreement to the delivery of 10,000 MT of food into SPLM areas. Rather, proposals to deliver food to Juba and SPLM areas were rejected by the GOS as unbalanced (Janvid, 1991, March 20), and both WFP Khartoum and GOS insisted on re-assessments in the Southern Sector. Later, the GOS would also impose a flight ban. It was not until mid-1991 that the GOS finally relaxed its pressure on OLS, when the rainy season made deliveries into the South difficult. 1991 was also the year when the GOS formulated its emergency relief policy, effectively making all relief entering the countr the property of the government (RRC, 1991), and thereby gaining greater control ove the relief allocation process.

Until 1993, food aid deliveries within Sectors were also determined by access. F example, in 1992, the Southern Sector has access to only seven locations, comprisi mainly large concentrations of displaced people and returnees (Wilson, 1996, April Many WFP staff working in these areas at the time believe that the way displa people were concentrated was itself a function of centralised distributions due to lim access.

It has been difficult for the Review Team to analyse allocations between Northern Southern Sectors since 1993, since data on NGO deliveries is incomplete, demarcations between WFP and NGO allocations are not clear. For 1994 for alone, it was possible to note that 57,057 MT of food was allocated to GOS areas 22,846 MT to non-GOS areas. No data on actual deliveries is available, howeve 1994. In 1995, information on actual quantities delivered to GOS and non-GOS a available, including both NGO and WFP. In that year, a roughly equal amount o resources went to both areas - 49,294 MT to GOS areas and 45,063 MT to no

Figure 5.3: WFP relief food deliveries (MT)

Region	Cluster	1994	1995
Bahr el-Ghazal	Northern Bahr el-Ghazal	3,783	3,303
Bahr el-Ghazal	Wau Town	1,180	230
Bahr el-Ghazal	Lakes	326	107
Equatoria	Western Equatoria surplus zone	2	4
Equatoria	Western Equatoria with IDP camps	76	20
Equatoria	Juba Town	5,499	1,324
Equatoria	Eastern Equatoria insecurity zone	1,926	1,014
Equatoria	Eastern Equatoria drought zone	4,801	2,272
Upper Nile	Jonglei war zone	1,900	2,024
Upper Nile	Pibor Pochalla area	523	82
Upper Nile	Western Upper Nile war zone	2,618	874
Upper Nile	Northern Jonglei factional fighting zone	10,538	4,725
Upper Nile	Sobat Chotbura war zone	1,835	49
Upper Nile	Renk Malakal	9,010	1,050
Transitional Zone	South Darfur	2,425	4,101
Transitional Zone	Southern Kordofan	3,926	2,263
Transitional Zone	Central State	3,780	197
Khartoum	Khartoum	30,835	201
	Unclassifiable	*148*	*72*
Total		**85,129**	**23,914**

Between 1994 and 1995, a major change in food aid programming occurred. The total relief food to be distributed was drastically reduced, not only as a result of perceptions of reduced need and a shrunken funding base, but also as a result of access problems that frustrated work in such clusters as the Sobat-Chotbura area. WFP responded to these conditions by concentrating deliveries on a small number of problem areas, and by effectively withdrawing from displaced camps in Khartoum, which were being supplied by ADRA. Within the 18 clusters, six areas received approximately 78% of the entire WFP deliveries for 1995, up from their 32% share in 1994. Figure 5.4 indicates the ranking of location clusters in terms of prioritisation of food aid for 1995. The arrows of the six highest-ranking clusters all point in the same direction of increased priority:

Figure 5.4

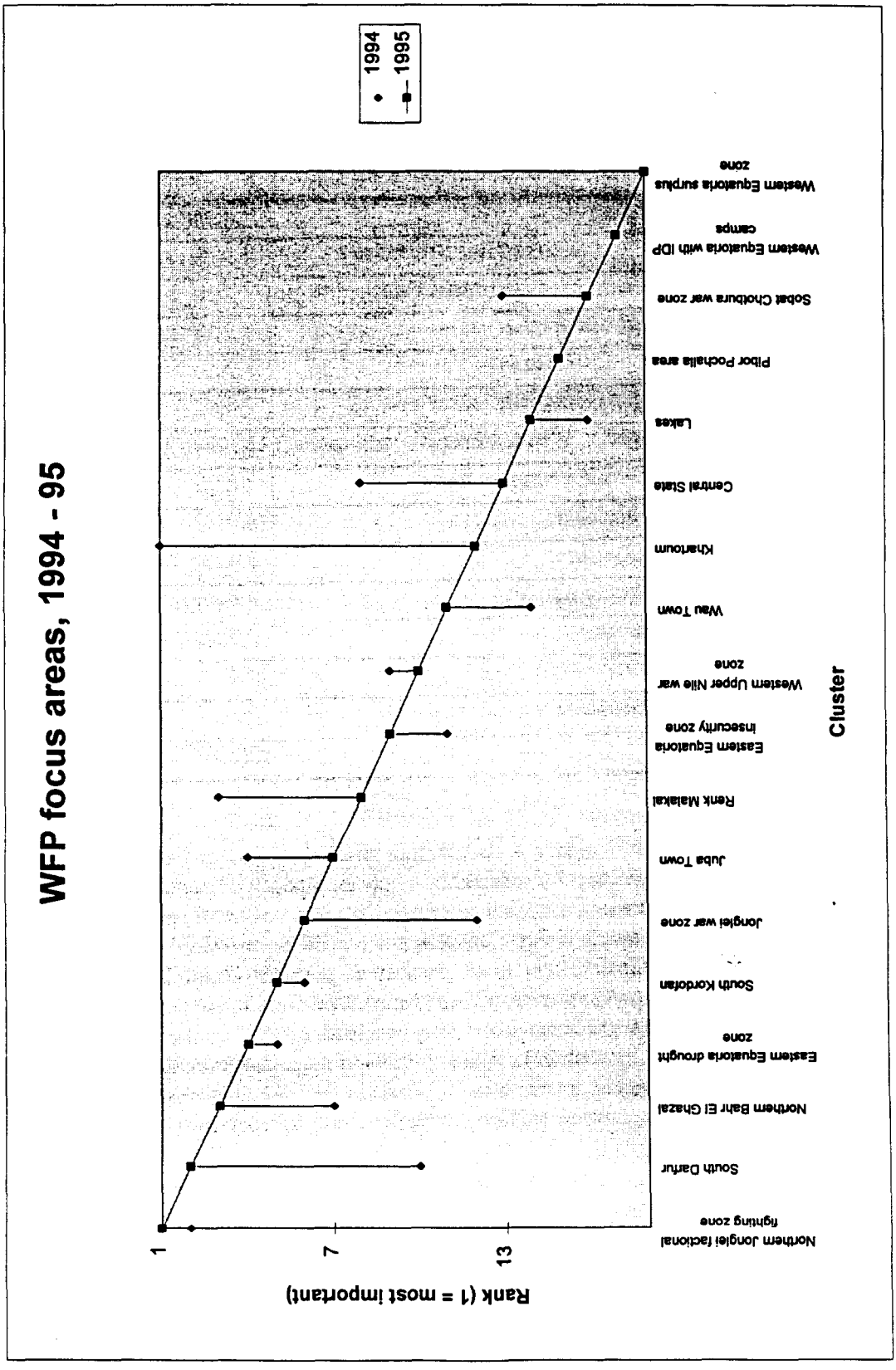
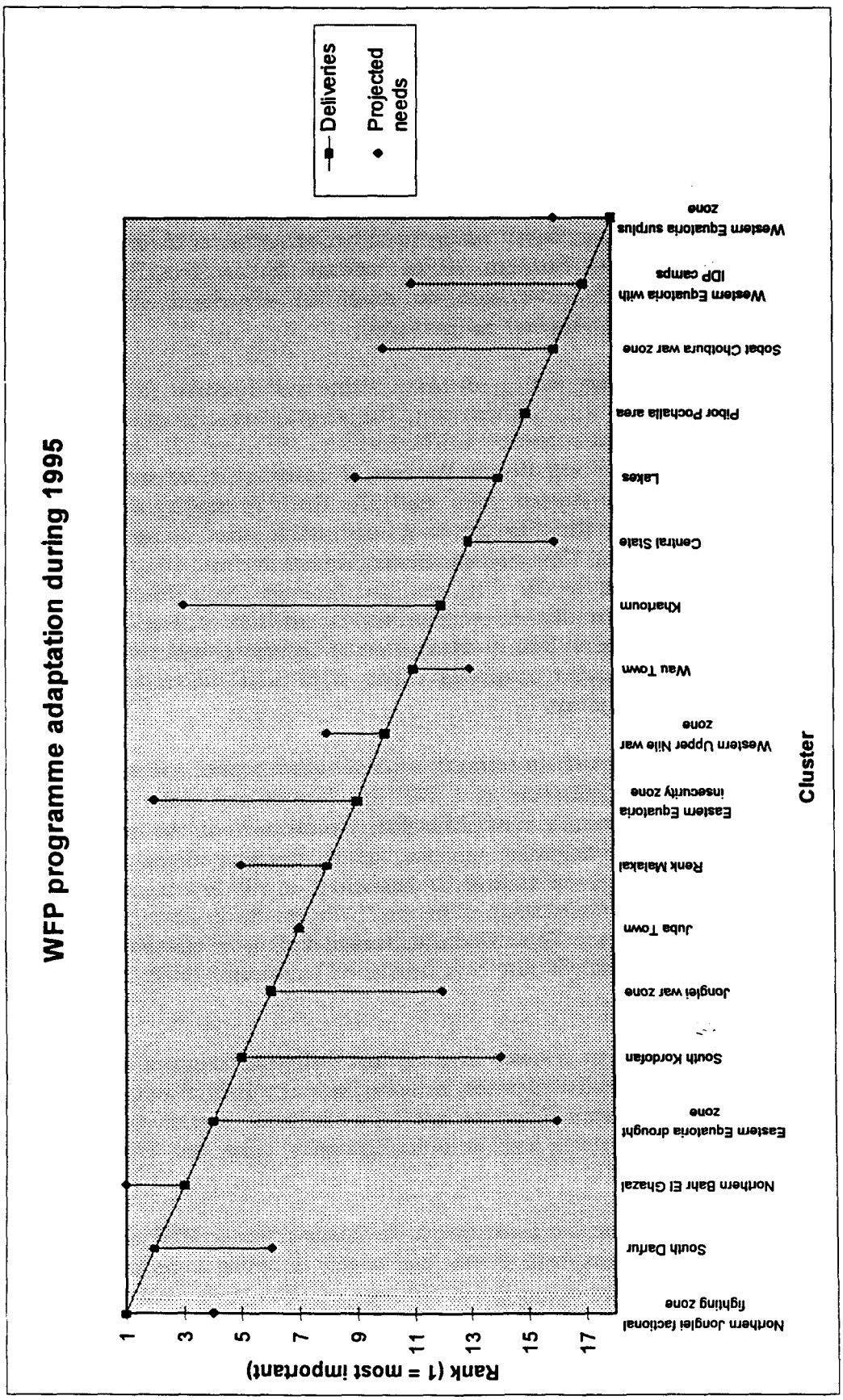

WFP focus areas, 1994 - 95
1994
1995
Rank (1 = most important)
1
7
13
Cluster
Northern Jonglei factional fighting zone
South Darfur
Northern Bahr El Ghazal
Eastern Equatoria drought zone
South Kordofan
Jonglei war zone
Juba Town
Rank Malakal
Eastern Equatoria insecurity zone
Western Upper Nile war zone
Wau Town
Khartoum
Central State
Lakes
Pibor Pochalla area
Sobat Chotbura war zone
Western Equatoria with IDP camps
Western Equatoria surplus zone

Figure 5.4a


WFP programme adaptation during 1995
Deliveries
Projected needs
Rank (1 = most important)
1
3
5
7
9
11
13
15
17
Cluster
Northern Jonglei factional fighting zone
South Darfur
Northern Bahr El Ghazal
Eastern Equatoria drought zone
South Kordofan
Jonglei war zone
Juba Town
Rank Malakal
Eastern Equatoria insecurity zone
Western Upper Nile war zone
Wau Town
Khartoum
Central State
Lakes
Pibor Pochalla area
Sobat Chotbura war zone
Western Equatoria with IDP camps
Western Equatoria surplus zone

The question arises as to whether or not WFP's increasing focus on a smaller number of areas corresponds to a prioritisation of areas according to greatest need. Figure 5.4a, indicates the relationship between needs for 1995 as estimated from the OLS annual assessment conducted at the end of 1994, and the ranking of WFP food deliveries made in 1995.

What is evident is striking is that the ranking of needs rarely corresponded to the ranking of actual deliveries. With the exception of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, the remaining five priority areas for WFP in 1995 all ranked higher in terms of deliveries than in terms of projected needs. Within these, the higher ranking of deliveries versus needs for areas covered by the Southern Sector (Northern Jonglei factional fighting zone, Eastern Equatoria drought zone, and Jonglei war zone) was mainly due to increased access in early 1995, following periods of disruption and insecurity.

In the Northern sector, the high ranking of South Darfur and Kordofan for food deliveries versus assessed needs tells a different story. The prioritisation of South Darfur for food was in part based on a re-assessment in 1995 (Jackson, 1995, April 23), but also on the fact that food for originally intended for Wau was off-loaded in Ed Da'ein due to the presence of a military train (Painter, 1996, April 27). The high ranking of food deliveries to Kordofan was the result of the first joint assessment to peace villages there in April 1995 (WFP, 1995, April). This mission followed requests for food aid by SRC and IARA, and was endorsed by the RRC and the Kordofan State Peace and Resettlement Administration. The mission recommended the provision of food aid to peace villages, despite the failure of DHA to obtain a formal agreement with the GOS for OLS access, and despite earlier misgivings within WFP itself concerning the politicisation of food aid to these areas:

> Before one starts dealing with the technical issues of such a request...one should consider the political implications of a WFP involvement and under which conditions such an involvement could materialise. In order to do so, one should have clear answers to the following questions: Are the displaced offered a fair chance to settle themselves and cultivate for themselves, or will they stay under the patronage of the local inhabitants of the area? Why are the displaced, after being moved involuntarily to North Kordofan, brought back to an insecure area in Southern Kordofan, and will they have freedom of movement? (WFP, 1992, November 15).

The fact that some areas indicate a lower level of food deliveries compared with assessed needs is due to a combination of factors, including insecurity or GOS refusal of access, as was the case for Eastern Equatoria and Sobat-Chotbura, respectively, or because NGOs were already supplying food, as in the Khartoum, Lakes, and Western Equatoria displaced camps.

Given the above, the Review Team concluded that, in the Southern Sector, WFP is able to prioritise food deliveries on a geographical basis, and roughly according to the results

of needs assessments. In the Northern Sector, however, while needs assessments have responded to technical assessments of need, the political dimensions of food aid allocations, especially to populations outside of the OLS framework, were not addressed, and decisions concerning allocations were influenced by the broader politico-military context.

5.4.2.5 Food Aid Deliveries by NGOs

The relationship between food aid deliveries and needs assessment is further complicated by the inclusion of the substantial share of deliveries provided by NGOs. The data available for NGO allocations is less clear than for WFP, however, and cannot be completely broken down into all 18 clusters discussed above. It also includes deliveries by NPA in the South, an NGO that is outside of OLS, but nevertheless a big supplier of relief food (10,559 MT in 1995).

In Figure 5.5 below, the importance of WFP and NGO contributions is illustrated.

As can be seen in the Figure, WFP's share of food aid is highest in regions most distant from Khartoum and Lokichokkio, whereas NGOs tend to cluster into areas that tend to be logistically closer, and also secure.

By including NGO deliveries, needs and deliveries can be compared. Figure 5.6 compares needs as assessed for 1995, with combined NGO and WFP deliveries by region

Figure 5.5:

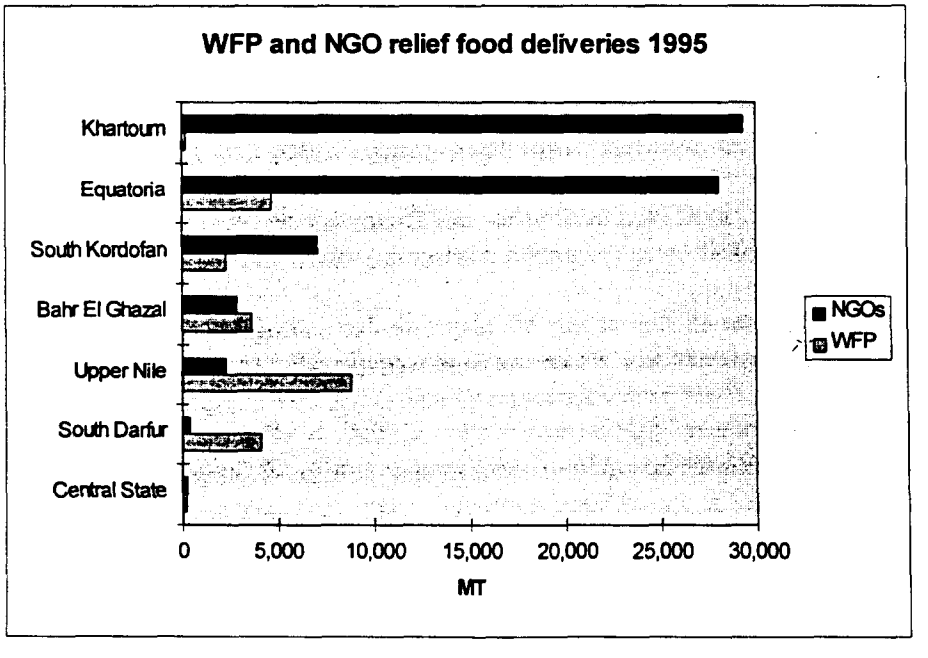


Figure 5.6: Needs and relief food deliveries in 1995

Region	Needs (MT)	All deliveries (MT)	Fulfilment
Bahr el-Ghazal	33,498	6,462	19%
Equatoria	27,615	32,721	118%
Upper Nile	28,531	11,057	39%
South Darfur	6,511	4,507	69%
Southern Kordofan	1,148	9,313	812%
Central State	-	484	-
Khartoum	16,819	29,565	176%
Total	**114,121**	**94,109**	**82%**

As can be seen from the Figure, there are considerable imbalances between needs and deliveries. In particular, needs in Khartoum, Kordofan, and Equatoria were oversubscribed with food aid. Khartoum and Equatoria were both accessible by surface transport in this year, and NGOs chose to work there to a greater extent than in other regions. The prioritisation of Kordofan has already been described above.

On the other hand, although WFP prioritised Bahr el-Ghazal and Upper Nile regions with regard to needs, these were the least well-supplied regions in terms of the percentage of needs actually met by food aid deliveries. Unfortunately, available information will not tell us to what extent the failure to meet the needs in these regions was due to logistical reasons, insecurity, denial of access, or a reduction in resources in 1995. The same applies to the failure to meet needs in South Darfur.

The Figure also indicates the inability of WFP to influence the prioritisation of NGO deliveries. This may be partly for logistical reasons, since some of the most in need are also the most difficult to access. However, it must also reflect the fact that there are no formal agreements between WFP and NGOs regarding the delivery of non-WFP food aid. In the Southern Sector, WFP is merely informed by NGOs such as CRS and NPA about how much food they are intending to deliver to the displaced camps (Oberle, 1996, April 15). WFP has no influence over NGOs strategy in food distribution in the Southern Sector, however. This same is true for the Northern Sector, where, for example, ADRA took over food distribution for the Khartoum displaced, without any formal agreement, or apparently even discussion concerning who was to receive food.

The apparent overfulfilment of the needs in Khartoum according to Figure 5.6 is misleading. Although OLS needs assessment only include the official displaced camps, ADRA supplies food to all displaced settlements (Teller et al., 1996, April 1). Without any formal agreement between ADRA and WFP, ADRA is able to implement a targeting strategy at odds with the actual food security and nutritional situation. Not only were needs of the displaced in the official camps not met, food to the displaced was distributed according to an entirely different policy to that of WFP, and without the awareness of WFP itself.

5.5 Programming to Promote Food Security

5.5.1 Small Rations, Great Expectations

Since 1993, there has been an increasing emphasis on supporting livelihoods, including coping strategies, within OLS agencies. This is part of an overall strategy to improve self-reliance and discourage relief dependency, which includes the reduction of food aid provision and increased targeting of food aid.

However, available information indicates that there has been no gradual improvement from an emergency situation associated with high levels of malnutrition and excess mortality, to a situation of improved food security or increasing self-reliance. Large populations continue to suffer high malnutrition rates, and displacement of populations within the South, and between non-GOS held and GOS held areas continues. In the Southern Sector, pockets of insecurity, and localised crises continue to exist. Evidence of improved self-reliance in the Northern Sector is limited to an improved food supply situation. However, all populations, even those in temporarily stable areas, continue to be extremely vulnerable.

Recommendations for food security interventions, such as the provision of seeds and tools, fishing equipment, and veterinary care, are not new in OLS; they were recommended in the first Plan of Action. Supporting coping mechanisms has been an objective of OLS Southern Sector since 1992, while seeds and tools distributions, as well as veterinary programmes, were part of the Southern Sector operation as early as 1989. Indeed, early assessments in the Southern Sector noted that people themselves identified the need for production support:

> ...the most important and effective input as requested by the majority of those interviewed by international staff, would be items that will help increase food production: basic veterinary services, seeds, tools, and fishing equipment (WFP/OLS, 1989, November 13).

> In all areas, it was made clear to us that support to indigenous production, where possible, was greatly preferred to receiving free handouts except in cases of urgent food need; we found that people were prepared to walk great distances to collect seeds and tools (UNICEF/OLS, 1990, October).

What these statements indicate is that nothing has changed; there always has been, and will continue to be, a need to respond with both emergency relief and support for coping mechanisms and livelihoods.

While needs have not changed, however, OLS objectives have, and this has led to changes in both ideas concerning the role of food aid, and in the amount of food aid provided. As noted earlier, food aid is still recommended in OLS, but for a different purpose than was originally the case. Rather than being a direct nutritional intervention, food aid is now seen variously as agricultural support, support for resettlement, as a

safety net, and other related concepts. What this has meant in practice is that the same free food rations are given as in the earlier years in OLS, but for a different purpose, in smaller quantities, to fewer people; even the ration composition has not changed according to new objectives.

WFP in both Khartoum and Nairobi agree that the objective of providing food aid has changed. Reduced amounts of food aid are seen in recent assessment reports as a means to assist people through unusually severe hungry seasons, or, as more commonly expressed by WFP, as a means of "filling the hunger gap". In the Southern Sector, smaller amounts of food aid is viewed more as a means of preventing the sale of remaining assets, and preventing the adoption of strategies that might conflict with cultivation, whereas in the Northern Sector, smaller amounts of food are viewed as a "safety net":

> If food aid is not given in lean season, people's resilience will be depleted. They have no assets, and would go into debt. Food aid should not be limited to saving lives (Adly, 1996, March 31).

In terms of how much food aid people actually receive, greater amounts of information have led to increasingly complex recommendations concerning partial rations for certain proportions of populations. Aside from the problem of understanding how such recommendations are derived from available information, it is also the case that logistical constraints, as well as local authority interventions, mean that recommended quantities are not necessarily delivered in a timely manner.

For example, WFP Southern Sector monitoring, which recently focused on end use, found that if the already reduced rations provided were distributed over the entire population in the affected area, it would have met only 2.5% of food needs for the two month period the distribution was intended to cover (Kauffeld & Matus, 1996, January). One might what use such small quantities of food aid could possibly have. In the period 1994 to 1995, when the role of food aid as an agricultural support was gaining prominence, although deliveries were timely, food aid provided covered only 40-60% of identified needs. (Timeliness of food aid deliveries is considered further in Chapter 8).

In the Northern Sector, less information is available on the timeliness of distribution. However, the Review Team found that in Ed Da'ein, agricultural support rations in 1995 were late due to late reassessments of the need. In Wau, while half rations had been recommended for 3 months to cover the cultivation period, this was changed by local decision to quarter rations for 6 months, thereby reducing the amount available during the hungry season.

5.5.2 Lack of Co-ordination of Food Security Assessments

Given the changed emphasis on the role of food aid, and especially the reduction in general rations, the Review Team was concerned to know food aid reductions have been

matched by a corresponding increase in food security interventions. The Review Team also examined the extent to which UN OLS agencies co-ordinate both assessments and interventions with regard to food security.

For OLS as a whole, the only quantitative information on food security interventions other than food aid is UNICEF's Household Food Security expenditure. While no information on expenditure is available in the Northern Sector until 1994, information after that time indicates that expenditures on food security interventions were lower in 1995 than in 1994. From this data at least, it would appear that the policy of reduced rations and increased targeting of food aid in the North has not been balanced by an increase in production support. It is not possible to say to what extent this is due to lack of resources on the part of UNICEF, or on a failure to develop a co-ordinated strategy for food security interventions. Expenditure in the Southern Sector is available from 1989 forward, and this data reflects increased expenditure on production support, especially in 1990 and 1994.

In both Sectors of OLS, WFP is responsible for food aid, and UNICEF is the agency mainly responsible for other food security interventions, such as the distribution of seeds and tools, fishing equipment, and the provision of veterinary care. Like WFP, UNICEF has its own assessment and monitoring system. Household food security officers were appointed by UNICEF to both OLS Sectors in 1993.

However, UNICEF and WFP's assessment systems appear to be in contradiction to the respective responsibilities of each agency. While the food security information system in WFP aims to provide an overall picture, the ultimate purpose of the system is to identify food deficits in order to target food aid. At the same time, WFP assessments have increasingly identified the need for other food security interventions, a move that has brought it into conflict with UNICEF Southern Sector, to the extent that WFP Southern Sector no longer provides such recommendations in its reports.

Although UNICEF is responsible for household food security, household food security officers focus almost exclusively on production, and the need for seeds and tools, in their assessments and monitoring activities. Further, an evaluation of the food security programme in the Northern Sector noted that field monitors saw distribution as their principle function (Goodbody, 1996, February). In the Southern Sector, rather than concentrating on their impact vis a vis food security issues, evaluations of seeds and tools programmes have tended to focus on the cost-effectiveness of seeds and tools as compared with food aid:

> In general, for all locations assessed, the provision of seed was 14 times cheaper than providing the equivalent to that produced in food aid. Seed multiplication rate: 40. In total, spent USD 2 million on seed, instead of USD 25 million on food (UNICEF/OLS, 1990, October).
>
> In terms of inputs provided to a very wide area, this has been the most successful year ever (OLS Southern Sector, 1994, October).

These evaluations make little mention of the war in South Sudan, its impact on production systems, and the effect this has on people's ability to achieve food security. The only food security-oriented evaluation carried out in the Northern Sector describes traditional agricultural practices in South Sudan before the war, but does not describe the food security situation for displaced populations that have moved to the North or are in GOS-held towns in the South (Goodbody, 1996, February).

Separate assessments for production support and food aid need not conflict, as long as WFP and UNICEF share a common approach and adequate co-ordination mechanisms exist. Judging from their respective household food security assessments, however, UNICEF and WFP's concept of food security appears to differ. UNICEF assessments include indicators such as the number of health centres, water supply, type of containers used for collecting water, and even in some cases guinea worm infection, although the rationale for including these indicators is not explained (Hughes, 1995, August). UNICEF also applies a more quantitative approach than WFP. WFP food monitors, while they may be able to gain a broad overview of the food security situation, are not qualified to give more sector specific recommendations.

While the OLS Annual Assessment could provide the opportunity to establish a common strategy regarding food security, WFP and UNICEF in Khartoum analyse the results of the food security aspects of their respective assessments separately. For example, UNICEF Southern Sector made use of the vulnerability index in the OLS assessment conducted in 1993, to estimate the need for seeds and tools. By 1995, however, even though a crop assessment formed a major part of the annual assessment exercise, this was planned by WFP rather than by UNICEF, and was mostly used to estimate food aid needs (Hughes, 1996, April 19).

The lack of communication on food security issues between WFP and UNICEF, as well as contradictions between agency responsibilities and information systems, was highlighted in a recent evaluation of the food economy approach. Importantly, the evaluation identified a lack of focus on food security issues within OLS (Holt, 1995, June 6). A food security forum was recommended to discuss food security issues among all relevant OLS agencies. This has proved largely unsuccessful in practice, however, due to differences that had already developed between WFP and UNICEF. The evaluation also suggested a common database for food security information, but at the time of the Review, both WFP and UNICEF were involved in establishing separate databases. At present, the Review Team is not aware of any formal mechanism for communication on food security issues in Khartoum between WFP and UNICEF, either at policy or operational levels.

The lack of communication between WFP and UNICEF extends to the field. In the Southern Sector, this is at least partly because WFP and UNICEF cover different areas; whereas WFP food monitors works mostly in deficit areas, UNICEF household food security officers work mainly in surplus areas. Joint assessments are limited because of the limited number of household food security officers, and the extent of these officers

other responsibilities. Even when WFP food monitors and UNICEF household food security officers are assessing, the same area, there is little communication between the two. During a visit to Akobo for example, the Review Team found that WFP and UNICEF officers had carried out assessments at the same time, but that the WFP monitor was unaware of what the UNICEF officer was going to recommend, and vice versa (Kauffeld, 1996, April 4).

With regard to food security interventions, there are also contradictions apparent within the various programmes of UNICEF. The UNICEF livestock programme, for example, appears to be entirely separate from the agricultural and fishing support programmes, since it is not incorporated within the overall food security strategy. According to the Southern Sector food security officer, this can be justified because livestock and agricultural interventions have different target groups; whereas livestock programme target the rich, agricultural programmes target the poor (Hughes, 1996, April 17). This is the case despite the fact that crop production has been shown to be a traditional mechanism of restocking (UNICEF/OLS, 1994, September). This traditional strategy does not appear anywhere in the objectives of the agricultural programme, however.

5.5.3 Limitations of Technical Solutions to Improving Food Security

Globally, food security programmes are aimed at increasing self-reliance, and are often judged on their effectiveness in terms of sustainability. However, food security programmes in OLS have, in practice, focused mainly on production, and within this, on the delivery of production-related inputs. This narrow focus fails to take into account both the importance of social and economic networks in achieving food security in South Sudan, and deliberate attempts to undermine subsistence livelihoods in the context of internal warfare. The Review Team found the notion that people might become self-reliant in such a context through the provision of production inputs deeply flawed.

Attempts have been made by some OLS agencies, however, to go beyond the distribution of production inputs. In particular, there have been attempts to re-establish economic networks and markets, through bartering schemes and local purchases. These programmes, although extremely popular in terms of the items brought into South Sudan for trading, have largely been unsuccessful because of logistical constraints in transporting locally traded commodities. In the case of the PISCES project, this includes fish. Fish are delivered to feeding centres by air, to hospitals, or used in public kitchens in the location where the project operates. Hence, the sustainability of this project effectively relies on a the continued presence of aid facilities that are addressing malnutrition and disease.

The livestock programme in the Southern Sector also aims to operate on a cost recovery basis through bartering. Cattle owners pay for drugs in grain or other commodities. Community animal health workers take a percentage of these payments as salary, and local relief committees, elders, and village development committees decide how to

distribute the rest. Usually, schools, hospitals, or FFW programmes are the recipients (Leyland, 1996, April 14). However, the cost of drug supply cannot be fully recoverable, as long as supplies have to be flown in by air.

Both the agricultural and livestock programme have incorporated more developmental aspects into their programmes over the years, with uneven success. For example, UNICEF's seed swapping programmes clearly lead to the distribution of more appropriate seeds. Some NGOs have also been able to incorporate extension services in their agricultural programmes in more stable areas, such as Western Equatoria. The attempted introduction of demonstration farms to encourage improved agricultural practices is more questionable, however. Projects were disrupted because of insecurity, but plots were also neglected through lack of continuous follow-up (Nyangor, 1996, April 13).

These criticisms of current food security programmes do not imply that such programmes are unnecessary. Continued distribution of seeds and tools will clearly be needed, because disaster producing activities will continue. This was recognised with the establishment of a contingency stock in the Southern Sector (Hughes, 1995, January), and would be equally necessary in the Northern Sector. Production assistance can undoubtedly assist populations in improving food security in the short term, especially when based on local knowledge of how people have adapted to overcome periods of acute shortage. Further, agencies have found that the distribution of production inputs are more likely to reach intended recipients, and are easier to target than food aid. Community based programmes can also be justified because they are more adapted to a context where a permanent presence of international staff is not possible, and bartering schemes can be seen in the light of bringing in much needed inputs, and overcoming some of the complexities of direct distribution.

However, the Review Team was deeply concerned at the way in which UN OLS agencies appear to believe that food security programming, especially as it is presently practised, will lead to self-reliance and sustainability in the long term. As will be seen further in Chapters 6 and 7, long term food security is not possible in most of the contexts that OLS operates in, as a result of the continuation of disaster producing policies of the warring parties. Moreover, such thinking has led to a shift in the role of food aid, and a reduction in food aid support over time, in a situation where the emergency needs of beneficiary populations have not changed. In this regard, it is difficult for the Review Team to avoid the conclusion that programming around food is linked not to information about the realities faced by populations in need, but on trends and pressures in the policy arena.

5.6 Conclusion

The assessment exercise of OLS is at present inadequate to the task of understanding food security issues for beneficiary populations in the Sudanese context. Among other things, this is a result of the failure to take account of the politico-military constraints

that accrue for displaced and war-affected populations. Although important advances have been made in incorporating socio-economic data into the assessment process, and this is true for the Southern Sector far more than the Northern Sector, the issue of political vulnerability to food insecurity has not been adequately addressed. The present assessment exercise, especially in the Northern Sector, is unsuited to understanding actual constraints in people's access to food in the midst of a chronic political emergency.

Analytical leadership in needs assessments has come almost exclusively from the Southern Sector. Here, at least since 1994, there has been a clear vision and a common framework for assessments, made possible largely by the incorporation of the food economy approach. While limited, the food economy approach has at least enabled Southern Sector agencies and partners to formulate a clear theoretical framework with regard to food issues.

In the Northern Sector, there are a number of factors that render the assessment exercise highly problematic both within the Northern Sector, and for the production of joint assessments between both Sectors of OLS. For OLS as a whole, UNHCU does not have the technical capacity to co-ordinate assessments, nor are the current organisational structures between UNICEF and WFP, and within UNICEF, conducive to the formulation of joint assessments based on common understandings. Within the Northern Sector itself, the extent of GOS control over the assessment process has led to the inability of UN OLS agencies to enforce good practice and professional methods in the assessment exercise. This is a key issue, not only from the point of view of formulating adequate programmatic responses, but also because lack of rigorous assessment practice renders OLS Northern Sector more vulnerable to manipulation by political interests in the context of internal warfare.

The failure to adequately assess the causes of food insecurity, malnutrition, and mortality in the Northern Sector has made it possible for programming to be based on assumptions of increasing self-reliance as the operation has progressed. However, although a belief in the continuum and in increasing self-sufficiency is manifest within OLS Northern Sector, this is contradicted by some of the UN's own Northern Sector programming. For example, the Northern Sector still places great emphasis on supplementary feeding programmes, with the general aim of reducing excess mortality. However, it would appear to be contradictory to simultaneously implement life-saving interventions such as supplementary feeding, and programmes that assume a degree of self-reliance. Moreover, if people are indeed becoming increasingly self-reliant, one could seriously question why it was necessary to have over 100 feeding centres in GOS-held areas in 1995 (DHA, 1996, February).

The annual assessment process has also failed to provide the basis for a co-ordinated strategy for OLS as a whole. This is both due to the difference in assessment objectives and methods between Northern and Southern sectors, and to the failure to develop a co-ordinated planning and follow up process involving all OLS agencies. Although it is essential for both Sectors to adopt a common framework for assessments, it is difficult

to see how the same assessment methods could be used in the Northern and Southern sectors under current operating conditions. Without better quality of access, for example, it would be difficult for the Northern Sector to adopt the food economy approach.

Current organisational structures in UNICEF and WFP also hinder the development of a co-ordinated strategy for improving food security. These two agencies are each responsible for aspects of food security, but essentially carry out separate food security assessments and programming. In the Northern Sector, UN OLS agencies are largely unaware of each other's food security activities, while in the Southern Sector attempts to co-ordinate food security programming both at policy and operational level have largely failed.

The same holds true for nutrition, which has had in the past and still has an extremely marginal role within OLS. Although food aid, and more recently food security, is the major focus of OLS activities, neither Sector has had a permanent nutritionist on their staff until recently. At present, nutrition is limited to nutritional surveillance and supplementary feeding programmes, rather than serving as the unifying principle for a programme which was - and still is - largely nutritional in its objectives. There is little contact, for example, between the UNICEF and WFP nutritionists, in terms of planning rations, co-ordinating general and supplementary feeding programmes, or responding to nutritional problems.

Consequently, issues such as planning rations have rarely been considered in OLS. Had nutrition formed a more integral part of OLS strategy, with clearly defined responsibilities between UNICEF and WFP as to how to respond to nutritional problems, it could be argued that it would never have been possible to reduce rations in the face of nutritional crisis, such as the one among war-displaced in Khartoum. In this regard, the Review Team was especially alarmed at the way in which standards for what constitutes a nutritional crisis appear to have eroded. In effect, it appears that OLS agencies are accepting ever higher levels of malnutrition as acceptable among war-displaced populations.

There is little or no involvement of NGOs in the assessment process, although the Southern Sector is relatively better on this issue than the Northern Sector. In the Northern sector, although assessments are co-ordinated by UNHCU, NGOs rarely get to see assessment reports. In the Southern Sector, NGOs receive assessment reports, but they do not constitute an integral part of the process of assessment plans of actions. The lack of NGO involvement is a key issue, considering that NGOs provide a major part of food aid and food security resources, as well as having a wealth of information from their own assessment and monitoring systems. The failure to include NGOs in OLS programme planning is also evident from lack of agreements between UN OLS agencies and NGOs in some cases, and ineffective sectoral co-ordination mechanisms. WFP, for example, has no agreements with NGOs that provide their own-resourced food aid, which means that food aid cannot be adequately prioritised to areas most in need. It also means that food may be distributed according to different principles throughout OLS.

The development of an appropriate strategy is further hindered by limited information on the effectiveness of past interventions. This includes both the effectiveness of the provision of assistance according to OLS principles, and the impact in terms of improving people's condition.

For most programmes little is known of programme delivery, let alone impact. Systems for monitoring food distribution have only just been established by WFP. However, even the most basic form of monitoring, such as what percentage of the of the estimated needs were met, was done for the first time by the Review Team. Without such monitoring, there can also be no meaningful analysis within OLS concerning the principle constraints in meeting needs. Even less is known about what people actually receive, who receives it, or about the coverage and utilisation of services. While several evaluations of aspects of the Household Food Security Programme have been carried out, these tend to focus on the delivery of programme inputs and cost effectiveness, rather than the impact of programmes on improving food security as a whole.

Considering these basic limitations in information, it has been difficult for the Review Team to comment on the extent to which OLS has been able to meet its objectives of preventing unnecessary hunger and starvation through the timely delivery of food aid, of lowering unacceptably high levels of morbidity and mortality, and of support traditional coping and survival mechanisms. Indeed, the Review Team had questions concerning the validity of some OLS objectives themselves. The objective of promoting self-reliance, for example, fails to take into account the structural constraints that vulnerable populations actually face in achieving food security. The use of food aid as a mechanism for promoting what is seen to be a gradual movement towards self-reliance through production support is also questionable. The Review Team found it hard to understand how the small rations provided, assuming that people actually receive these reduced rations, will indeed contribute to improving food security in the longer term. Similarly, the provision of production inputs will address only a small part of the underlying causes of food insecurity in a context where disaster producing activities continue.

Further, it is widely assumed that if, in cases where OLS has failed to provide the recommended food interventions, there has been no starvation, then these interventions were not necessary. For example, a 50% deficit was predicted in Paluer during July/August of 1995, based on an expected failure of the maize harvest and limited access to other food sources. Due to logistical difficulties, however, food was delivered late, and for a much shorter period than recommended. A later assessment concluded:

> Within the two months, there were no reports of displacement or death.... Therefore, it can be extrapolated that there was no nutritional deficit during this time frame (Kauffeld and Matus, 1996, January).

This kind of thinking results from a lack of clarity in the objectives of providing food aid, combined with a lack of information from assessments on actual conditions of affected populations. For example, if food aid is provided as a livelihood support, it follows that a lack of food aid provision should result in an erosion of peoples coping

strategies and the probable adoption of strategies damaging to future livelihood, rather than excess mortality. However, within UN OLS agencies there is a continued confusion over the difference between seasonal hunger that is part of a chronic emergency, and mortality as a result of an acute emergency:

> Food is given during hungry season because otherwise people would die. 25% ration given at start of hungry season, then 50% ration during hunger gap (Owusu-Tieku, 1996, April 13).

In reality, it has rarely been known what the actual effects of a lack of food aid for affected populations are for OLS beneficiaries (Oberle, 1996, April 15). The incorporation of food aid into the dynamics of internal conflict means that not providing food aid may have extremely serious implications for local populations, even where starvation and death is not evident in a measurable way.

6. PROGRAMMING AND SOCIAL IMPACT IN THE SOUTHERN SECTOR

6.1 Introduction

The shift in OLS programmes in the Southern Sector since 1989 has been from pure, relief-oriented interventions, to programmes that aim to rehabilitate rural production systems and social services in the context of protracted warfare.

In this regard, the focus of programmes in the Southern Sector diverges from those in the North. In the Northern Sector, "development" is seen to involve a transformation of the subsistence economy of rural areas, and pressure on the war-displaced to become part of a large, agricultural labour reserve. In the Southern Sector, programmes are aimed at reinforcement of rural subsistence economies, and "development" has been defined in terms of rehabilitation. Further, whereas in the Northern Sector there has been a tendency to ignore the war in the advocacy of a move away from relief to development, events in the Southern Sector have confronted OLS with the stark realities of war on an almost daily basis.

OLS programmes in the Southern Sector differ in both content and modalities of implementation, depending on the different locations where they are implemented. In Akon and Panthou in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, for example, the presence of INGOs is both sporadic and ad hoc, due to the insecurity of the area and to periodic flight bans, and aid programme structures are either temporary or non-existent. Consequently, there is a heavy reliance on the use of mobile teams to deliver emergency services. There has also been lack of continuity in programmes due to interruptions necessitated by insecurity, and the evacuation of relief staff. The two INGOs in Akon and Panthou - SCF (UK) and MSF Belgium - have only recently returned to these areas after an interruption of activities in 1995.

Ler and Lobone in Western Upper Nile and Eastern Equatoria present a very different picture. Here, relatively stable environments have enabled a continuous INGO presence on the ground, supporting more permanent assistance structures. Programmes in these two places have been less interrupted by insecurity during the war, and tend to be geared toward the rehabilitation of production systems and social services. Gender-related programmes, particularly income generation projects, are also prominent. Lobone also benefits from relief food because of its status as a camp for internally displaced persons.

Despite the shift in emphasis from relief to rehabilitation and support for subsistence economies, the public perception of OLS, produced largely by its own publicity, is still that it exists to prevent famine. OLS thus faces criticism when mass starvation does not follow the denial of access in the Southern Sector. For this criticism to be met, there must be a greater understanding of the impact of the war on rural economies, and the incremental rehabilitative effect of different types of relief interventions on those economies. At present, the level of understanding remains relatively poor. As will be seen later, basic concepts such as "the household" are founded more on superficial impressions and imported concepts, than on solid empirical research or understanding of the social aspects of the civil society. As a result, programme interventions have unexpected consequences, and many of

the benefits that have accrued through OLS interventions have been inadvertent, rather than planned.

This chapter considers OLS programming in the Southern Sector generally, as well as in the different environments of two case areas, Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, and Western Upper Nile; the livestock programme is also considered, as well as various programmes implemented among the internally displaced, programming for social services, and programmes included under the broad category of "capacity building".

6.2 Programme Trends: From Food Aid to Production Support

6.2.1 Food Aid Distributions

The original goal of OLS I was to avert an anticipated famine in the South. The main strategies employed to achieve this in both OLS I and II were distributions of grain, and the establishment of feeding centres for specific populations deemed vulnerable.

However, accessibility, rather than reported needs, determined OLS food aid distributions in 1989. WFP and Norwegian People's Aid food convoys delivered supplies by road mainly to locations in Eastern Equatoria, a region suffering relatively less than more inaccessible areas such as Jonglei, Western Upper Nile, and Northern Bahr el-Ghazal. The high cost and risks of air transport meant that many locations unreachable by road received disproportionately lower amounts of food aid. For example, road-accessible Bor received over 1,400 MT of food from WFP, while Ayod and Waat, supplied by air, received six and 53 MT, respectively (UN/OLS, 1990, June). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which was not part of OLS, also airlifted food aid to these locations in 1989, but again in quantities insufficient to meet reported needs. Distributions in these locations were also restricted to areas immediately surrounding relief centres.

In 1990, the GOS failed to participate in the joint technical committee set up to decide final relief needs. OLS Southern Sector instead implemented its own 3-month plan up to the end of the year. Generally, food was delivered to areas rather more according to assessed needs, but there were still areas, including Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, Western Upper Nile, northern Jonglei, and the Sobat basin, which received little food from either WFP or from INGOs.

In December 1990, the GOS declared OLS II at an end, and announced that a further phase was not to resume until "technical discussions" reviewed modalities. Thus, approval was withheld from WFP's logistical plan for 1991. INGOs were not affected, however, and food deliveries to Eastern Equatoria continued by Norwegian Peoples Aid and World Vision International.

During the early part of 1991, the growing famine crisis in the North diverted attention from OLS, and both the WFP office and the OLS Special Coordinator in Khartoum confirmed the GOS's ban both on WFP convoys into South Sudan, and on the distribution of WFP food stocks already in the South (Page, 1991, March 15). Food stockpiled in the

North, earmarked for delivery to the South, was instead diverted to Kordofan, where the need was felt to be greater. The GOS finally gave its consent to deliveries and distributions in the South, based on the 1990 assessments, only after the rainy season had begun, when overland transportation to the most urgent areas was impossible.

The result of this delay was that OLS Southern Sector (especially WFP) was unable to prepare for the food crisis triggered by the evacuation of refugee camps in Ethiopia in May 1991, though it had been anticipated in many ways. When Itang, Funyido, and Dima were emptied in May/June, OLS and ICRC were forced to attempt airdrops of food and other emergency items for some 200,000 returnees confined to remote areas along the Sudan-Ethiopian border. Subsequently, ICRC managed to secure a comprehensive agreement to supply some 90,000 persons at Pochalla. The agreement between OLS and the GOS was far less comprehensive, however, and OLS was restricted in flights, tonnages of food, and types of relief items that could be provided for some 125,000 to 150,000 returnees in the Sobat basin.

Not only did OLS find itself unable to adequately serve returnees from Ethiopia, it was also unable to gain sufficient access to those parts of Bahr el-Ghazal, Western Upper Nile, and Jonglei to which most of the returnees were ultimately headed. The split in the SPLA in August 1991, which drew an internal battle line across Jonglei, further inhibited OLS's ability to meet the needs of the majority of Southern Sudanese throughout 1992.

For much of 1992 OLS was effectively in abeyance. With expanded access in 1993, the operation resumed. The discussion that follows on programming thus focuses on the impact of OLS since 1993.

6.2.2 A Shift to Production Support

The claim frequently made that OLS I averted famine and saved people from starvation (O'Reilly, quoted in Minear, 1991: 63) was not substantiated in the first general survey of the South carried out in 1990, which concluded:

> 1988 was the year of the worst food crisis in the southern Sudan, with areas in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, Western Upper Nile, and Jonglei suffering from famine, while many other regions experienced severe food shortages. No international assistance went to the worst affected areas that year. By the time Operation Lifeline Sudan got underway in 1989, those who had survived the previous year were attempting to revive their local economies by relying on traditional networks of support and mutual assistance. In 1990 we found that most people were still recovering from the devastation experienced in 1988, and they were relying on their own networks of kinship and exchange. Food produced is distributed mainly through these networks, but lack of transportation restricts their range (UN/OLS, 1990, June: 5).

In light of this finding, the 1990 report recommended a shift from food aid to more sustained support for local production and distribution:

> The needs of the Southern Sudan will not be met by food assistance alone. Greater attention must be paid to increasing local production through the revival of the fishing industry and the distribution of seeds and tools. Attention must also be focused on means of re-distributing local surpluses. Here existing exchange and kinship networks will have to be encouraged and supported. At the same time other means of barter through local markets and co-operatives can distribute food and seed over a wider area (UN/OLS, 1990, June: 6).

During OLS II, a beginning was made on to support food production, initiated by SCF (UK)'s distribution of fishing equipment in the Sobat basin, and UNICEF's first seeds and tools programme. Throughout 1990, WFP also tried to improve its information on likely food deficit areas, and to time more accurately its food distributions to arrive during the "hunger gap" at the end of the dry season. This strategy was thwarted, however, by the ban on food convoys and food distributions.

Since 1994, there has been a more sustained attempt by UNICEF, WFP and a number of INGOs to focus support on food production. There has also been an attempt to refine understandings of food security and the food economy. In general, OLS programming has moved away from a concern exclusively with nutrition, and toward tackling high mortality more generally, through a combined approach of food and health security (OLS, 1995, November: iii).

Presently, non-food programmes in the Southern Sector cover a broad range of areas, including: food security, community health, water, and sanitation, veterinary services and animal health, emergency education, and capacity building. Figure 6.1 gives a sense of the range of programming by indicating OLS activities in the case study areas visited by the Review Team.

Figure 6.1 Summary of OLS Agency Programme Activities in Case Study Areas

CASE STUDY AREA	OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT	OLS AGENCY IN THE AREA	TYPE OF PRESENCE	TYPE OF RELIEF PROGRAMME BY OLS AGENCY
AKON & PANTHOU (Northern Bahr el-Ghazal; SPLA/ SRRA area)	unstable & insecure	World Food Programme (WFP)	Present only for food distribution	* Relief food
		Save the Children Fund- UK (SCF-UK)	Mobile team, 'hit and run'	*Food Security: seeds and tools, fishing equip., animal health and and training of CAHWs. * Water:drilling, hand pump, & training of maintenance team. *Education: supplies and training of teachers. *Relief kits
		Medecins Sans Frontieres - Belgium (MSF-B)	mobile team, temporary structures	*Health: PHCC & PHCU support, training of CHWs; guinea worm.
		UNICEF	periodic visits	* EPI * Educational supplies * Animal health: rinderpest vac. * Water: supply of hand pumps
LABONE (Eastern Equatoria; SPLA/SRRA area)	relatively stable and secure	Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	perm. base/ presence of field staff	* Relief food * Gender programmes: income generation projects, skills training * Agric.: seeds & tools, extension services * Road rehabilitation
		Action Internationale Contre la Faim (AICF)	Perm base with field staff	* Health:PHCC/PHCU support/training * Nutrition * Water and sanitation
LER (Western Upper Nile; SSIM/RASS area)	stable and secure	Norwegian Church Agency (NCA)	perm. base with field staff	* Women programme:income generation projects; tailoring; adult educ.
		Radda Barnen (RB)	perm. base with field staff	* Education: training of teachers, supplies * Re-unification of children + psychosocial needs
		Healthnet International (HNI)	base + presence of staff	* Health: PHCC/PHCU support
		UNICEF	periodic	* Agric: seeds and tools; seed swap * EPI; * Educational supplies * Water: wells + hand pumps
		Medecins Sans Frontiers - Holland (MSF-H)	periodic	* Health: kala azar and TB clinics
		Assoc. of Christian Resource Organisations serving Sudan (ACROSS)	periodic	* Veterinary

In the following two sections, OLS programming is considered in more detail in two very different contexts: the unstable and inaccessible region of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, and the relatively stable environment of Western Upper Nile.

6.3 Food Security in an Insecure Environment: Northern Bahr el-Ghazal

6.3.1 Overview

The case of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal highlights the complexity of the relationship between food aid and food security. It also reveals an evolution of ideas about relief among international agencies since the pre-OLS famine in the region.

6.3.2 Emphasis on Food Aid, But Few Distributions

Agencies involved in the relief operation for displaced people from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal prior to 1989 approached the emergency as a natural catastrophe, which could be alleviated by the provision of food and the establishment of feeding centres. This approach diverged sharply from those of the Dinka, however, who saw food aid primarily as a means to enable them to return to their homes, and reinvest in the subsistence economy (Keen, 1994).

Despite this, and despite recommendations contained in an evaluation of the emergency response, OLS failed to provide agricultural support to Northern Bahr el-Ghazal from 1989 forward. It should be noted that this was also due to the flight ban on the area imposed by the GOS from early 1990 to December 1992. Nevertheless, when OLS did gain access to the area in 1992/93, it gave initial priority to food inputs, and only gradually came around to the Dinka way of thinking.

The present policy of OLS, which aims at supporting the food economy, is in marked contrast to the approach of the late 1980's and early 1990's. It is also in sharp contrast to the approach in the Northern Sector, where the size of food aid rations for displaced populations living in camps continues to be a major preoccupation for international agencies.

Although the emphasis of OLS in Northern Nahr el-Ghazal has historically been on food aid inputs, the region has never been served adequately by food aid distributions. During the first year of OLS, when the SPLA and the GOS agreed to the use of the railway for food deliveries, only 17 MT of food were delivered to stations under SPLA control north of Wau. No further overland deliveries took place until early 1992, when SCF (UK) sent a convoy from Uganda, which reached only to Thiet (Ryle, 1992, December 17-31).

After 1992, overland access became even more problematic with the resumption of government offensives. Since that time, the railroad has presented more dangers than benefits to the rural populace, as it is used more often to resupply government garrisons than to deliver relief supplies, as well as by Popular Defence Force units who accompany

GOS trains and regularly raid villages and cattle (Food Economy Analysis Unit, 1996, January: 12-13).

Air access to the remoter areas of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal has also been problematic. A blanket flight ban from the second to the fourth year of OLS effectively inhibited the development of any relief programmes. Since 1993, air access has been irregular. The withdrawal of permission to fly to certain locations, often following attacks by GOS troops or allies, and restrictions on the size of aircraft, have exacerbated the impact of disruptions on the ground in the renewal of insecurity since 1994. This has measurably affected the quality of relief offered to local populations.

The cumulative effect has been that the people of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal have not been receiving the amount of relief food that OLS assessments suggest they need. As will be seen further in chapter 8, the entire region of Bahr el-Ghazal received only 19% of its assessed needs for food aid in 1995. In this regard, the comment by Save the Children (UK) that "most people in South Sudan survive chiefly by their own efforts and are not dependent on OLS" (SCF (UK), 1993, December) merits further examination, since it points to the complexity of the role of food aid in the overall food economy in the midst of an internal war.

6.3.3 Labour Flight and Rural Povertisation

Given the failure of OLS to adequately access Northern Bahr el-Ghazal during its first four years, and the irregularity of access during the past three and a half years, questions have been raised about the need of OLS itself, since Northern Bahr el-Ghazal has experienced no return to "famine". These questions indicate that the evolution of OLS's approach to food aid, and an improved understanding about the nature of the emergency, have not yet been appreciated by donors, or indeed by various levels in the UN.

The case of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal illustrates some of the complexities of rural economies under stress of civil war. Earlier predictions of widespread starvation have not come to pass, in large part because early needs assessments failed to take into account how a variety of food sources, including food aid, might be balanced during periods of severe shortage. (It should be noted, however, that, since 1995, the Food Economy Analysis Unit of WFP has done considerable research on the availability and nutritional value of wild foods). There has also been a tendency to underestimate how, over a period of years, households may be forced to survive through resource depletion, or, especially in the case of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, by out-migration. In this regard, the effectiveness of both food and non-food interventions can be measured best not by the extent to which they prevent outright starvation, but by the extent to which their cumulative effect stabilizes populations, and retains productive labour within the rural subsistence economy.

The exodus of people out of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal during the late 1980's was a direct product of the raiding tactics of the Murhaliin, who targeted resources as well as persons. Families divided themselves up, some going to look for work and refuge in the North, to refugee camps in Ethiopia, or to remoter farming and grazing areas of Bahr el-Ghazal itself. With the uneven harvest of 1989, the heavy dependence on a few agriculturally productive

areas continued, and there was an internal circulation of people from stricken areas in search of food or work in other parts of the region (UN/OLS, 1990, June). In 1990, there was an influx of returnees from the North, as internally displaced persons from as far away as Khartoum and Sennar were encouraged by the GOS to return to their homes (UN/OLS, 1990, June). The government ban on flights to Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, however, which remained in effect for most of the period from 1990 to 1992, effectively prevented the delivery of either food or production inputs to these returnees, thereby increasing the burden on a rural economy already in contraction.

The truce along the border between the SPLA and Missiriya and Rizeigat, which began in 1990 and continued intermittently to 1996, allowed for freer movement between Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and the Transitional Zone. This enabled people to circulate between their home areas, and relief centres or agricultural schemes in government-held areas, as circumstances required. This, in turn, enabled people to gain access to relief aid and income in the Transitional Zone during certain times of the year, without necessarily having to necessarily deplete their own resources (UN/OLS Southern Sector, 1993, February; WFP, 1993; Food Economy Analysis Unit, 1996, January). The extent to which the people of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal used migration to the North as a temporary coping strategy was discovered, however, only after WFP began airdrops of food into the area in 1993 and 1994.

While the exodus of part of the population may have prevented large scale starvation, by conserving scarce local food stocks, it also reduced further the area under cultivation. The combined effect of denial of relief access and labour exodus during the period 1990 to 1992 was that, by early 1993 when access was resumed, there were instances of high malnutrition and mortality (MacAskill, 1994, April), and evidence of a much contracted agricultural base (WFP, 1993). A major contributing factor to high levels of mortality was also the long term lack of any health care (MacAskill, 1994, April). The recognition of this combined nutritional and health crisis prompted food interventions by WFP, and health interventions by MSF Belgium, AICF, and ICRC.

Food drops by air began in April 1993, with Akon becoming the main distribution centre in Gogrial County. This quickly produced "relief centre syndrome", where the existence of a single centre attracted persons from a wide radius, and where the effective distribution of food diminished the further one moved from Akon itself (WFP, 1993). Attempts at decentralisation, by increasing the number of drop sites, began later in the in the year with the inclusion of Malual Kon (Wanyjok Payam) in July, and Thiek Thou (Lietnhom Payam), in September. Further attempts to expand the area of access in 1994 were hindered, however, by refusals from the GOS. By July of 1994, WFP was airdropping food to eight locations in Bahr el-Ghazal (Food Coordination Minutes, 1994, July 29). Flight clearance to Akon was once again denied from December 1994 to November 1995, just at the time when Kerubino was most active in the northeastern and central areas of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, and food deliveries were diverted to Panliet (Akon Payam), Akak (Wunrok Payam), and Panthou (Wathmuok Payam, Aweil East County) (Food Economy Analysis Unit, 1996, January).

While access caused chronic problems in distribution, limitations in air cargo capacity were also a constant problem. In early 1994, WFP was able to meet only 45% of Bahr el-

Ghazal's assessed needs (Food Coordination Minutes, 1994, February 25/March 11). It was later estimated that, even if all food reached its intended target populations, it would be sufficient to cover only 7% to 9% of estimated needs (Food Economy Analysis Unit, 1996, January). Once on the ground, food aid was subject to taxation and other diversions by the SPLA, further reducing the amount going directly to the civilian population.

Seeds and tool distributions were also made in 1993 and toward the end of 1994, with mixed results. In 1993, very few of these items were distributed beyond Akon, and recipients considered the tool distributions to be too late to be effective (WFP, 1993). In 1994 and 1995, most farmers still obtained their supplies of both seeds and tools either from local markets, or from kin (Hughes, 1995, January).

6.3.4 The Role of Food Aid in Reducing Labour Flight

Given these constraints, why then did food security improve in 1994/5, as food economy and household food security reports clearly indicate? The main reason appears to be that not only did food aid keep people in their home areas during the cultivation season, it began to attract people back who had migrated to the North.

By October 1993, significant numbers of people were returning from Ed Da'ein, Meiram, Nyala, En-Nahud, Babanusa, Abyei, and even Khartoum to Malual Kon, Mayen Abun, and Akon - all centres of food distribution. The effect of this return migration was not so evident in 1993, when the lack of labour and the lack of food were still reported to be the main constraints on cultivation. The restricted number of distribution centres contributed to this, as many of the strongest members in a community travelled long distances during critical periods in the agricultural cycle to obtain relief food for weaker people who could not travel (WFP, 1993).

The effects of return migration began to be seen in 1994. By that year, food distributions had been relatively decentralised, and the rains were good. By the rainy season of 1995, the pattern of labour return and labour retention was clear. While many families still remained divided, with some members living and working in the North, and while there was still some outmigration, the numbers leaving were declining, and the numbers returning increasing. Many informants attributed this reversal directly to the presence of food aid. In Maper, for example:

> Those who we met who had recently returned were saying that conditions in the north had deteriorated and that there was a general trend for people to return to their home areas despite local insecurity. There was also an emphasis on food aid being one of the influencing factors for people's return to the area (Food Economy Analysis Unit, 1996, January: 59).

Further south in Panthou, it was reported that food aid reduced the amount of time spent on other food gathering activities:

> The food input received in Panthou this year has had an effect of bringing back this area to a normal situation. After 3 consecutive years it seems to have increased the

> labour available to households for cultivation by reducing the need to go to out in search of food through fishing, collection of wild foods and working in other areas for food/cash. In addition, competition for these options has diminished (Food Economy Analysis Unit, 1996, January: 97).

Although increased food production did not reduce the need for sale of labour, people moving North were now tending to seek short-term work, and labour migration to the North was increasingly seen as a last resort, when all other alternatives had failed (Food Economy Analysis Unit, 1996, January).

The improvement in subsistence cultivation in Dinka areas also helped redirect seasonal labour movements, and strengthen the labour-crop exchange both within Dinka districts, and between Dinka and Luo districts to the south. In some traditional surplus areas, cultivation was expanded in part by employing persons from deficit areas. Within Dinka communities:

> ...these exchanges are very important for building up kinship ties and supporting community cohesion. It continues to be an important option in addition to loans or begging, especially for poorer families or families in crisis (Food Economy Analysis Unit, 1966, January: 42).

The different harvest seasons in northern Dinka districts and southern Jur-Luo districts also facilitated this reciprocal labour exchange. The Luo came north to work on Dinka farms during the September harvest, but also employed Dinka labour for the harvest of late-maturing sorghum in December to February.

Thus, the real value of OLS food and food production inputs, small as they were, was to keep household labour forces intact, reduce the amount of time spent on alternative sources of food, and re-enforce networks of kinship exchange and exchange between nearby communities.

6.3.5 The Present Situation - A Reversal Back to Labour Flight?

The current disruption caused by the attacks of Kerubino, units of the Popular Defence Force (PDF), and Nuer raiders under the control of SSIM commanders, would appear to be aimed at this modest recovery of the rural economy. Between 1994 and 1996, Kerubino's forces targeted relief food, food stocks, and standing crops, and a correlation can be made between relief deliveries and these attacks (Food Economy Analysis Unit, 1996, January). Increased PDF activity along the railway line to Wau in 1994/5 also appears to have been timed to cause maximum disruption to dry season cattle movements and late dry season/early wet season clearing and planting cycles. Raids out of Western Upper Nile into the northeastern and eastern grazing grounds have also disturbed seasonal cattle movements, forcing cattle owners to send their livestock farther away to more secure pastures.

The pattern of the last two years' raiding has led WFP to conclude that:

> The overall broad scope of fighting in northern Bahr el Ghazal appears to have particularly affected the known surplus areas (Food Economy Analysis Unit, 1996,

January: 44).

As in the early 1980s, so now the people of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal have become vulnerable not because of their poverty, but because of their potential (if not actual) economic strengths. As a result, there is the potential for renewed labour out-migration, as well as a renewed threat that households who choose to remain in the area will once again have to survive through resource depletion.

6.4 Food Security in a Stable Environment: Western Upper Nile

6.4.1 Overview

Liech State in Western Upper Nile has been relatively undisturbed throughout much of the war; most fighting has been confined to the area around and to the north of Bentiu. Like Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, the remoteness of the area has meant that substantial deliveries of food aid have not occurred. Unlike Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, however, the resuscitation of the rural economy has been assisted by both relative stability, and by growing commercial links with the North, which have expanded considerably since 1992. The relatively secure environment of Ler in Western Upper Nile has offered long-termer programme opportunities to OLS agencies.

6.4.2 Food Production Support

While relief food has not been a significant component of OLS programmes in Ler, food still plays a role in OLS programmes there. For example, food has been used in food for work projects, including brick making, school reconstruction, and well digging, and as part of the package of incentives for community workers and RASS counterparts in lieu of wages. The amount of food provided in these ways is less than would have been the case in regular relief distributions, however.

Given the relatively conflict-free environment of Ler, OLS programme strategies have focused on the provision of inputs to support crop production, fishing, and livestock - the three main components of the food economy.

UNICEF is the main agency providing support to agricultural production in Ler. This takes two forms: a seeds and tools programme prior to planting, and a seed swap programme during the harvest period in October. With regard to the latter, surplus seeds are exchanged for items such as salt, sugar, jerry cans, and clothing that are otherwise difficult to obtain locally. The aim of this project is to help revive local markets. UNICEF also supplies seeds and tools in support of a gardening project run by Healthnet International, the produce of which goes to the Ler hospital, and to the community (Paar, 1996, April 5).

Fishing is a key component of the food economy of Ler. Fishing has received the support of some OLS agencies who provide fishing equipment, which is otherwise difficult to obtain locally due to war-induced market interruptions. Until 1994, two NGOs - Pisces Aid

and NCA - both ran projects for fishing support. Whereas the NCA project focused on women, the Pisces Aid project sought to:

> ...ease the malnutrition and hunger among the people...(in South Sudan) by harvesting the fish available in the water ways of south Sudan, while harnessing and directing the self-help spirit of the people themselves (Eyrich, 1994, April).

The project established a bush shop where fishermen traded their dry fish for various items; these fish were then distributed to feeding centres in Ler and other villages in Western Upper Nile, as well as to the Ler hospital. In 1994, the Pisces Aid project was closed as a result of misunderstanding between Pisces and UNICEF.

6.4.3 Expanding Commercial Networks

Food production in Western Upper Nile has always been precarious. Although some parts of the region have benefited in security terms from isolation in the midst of the central swamps, this also means that subsistence production is vulnerable to flooding. During 1988 and 1989, food production was disrupted by flooding, a situation made worse by the lack of health and veterinary services due to isolation.

There has been a long history of interdependence between different areas and different communities within Western Upper Nile. Prior to OLS, people survived largely by seeking food from local surplus areas; support to agricultural production has tended to strengthen this interdependence. At the same time, there has been a parallel strengthening of commercial ties with the North since 1992. This has gone largely unrecognised by OLS agencies, however, despite the fact that it is this trade that provides much of the currency on which local income generating projects depend. Failure to fully appreciate the scope of local commerce has inhibited appropriate planning and development of some of food security programmes in the region.

The market in Ler is linked to other markets in the region, the most significant being Rupnyagai on the Bahr el-Ghazal, which serves as the main trading link between Western Upper Nile and Southern Kordofan. Ler and Rupnyagai are mainly cattle market centres, where commodities are also brought in for sale. Ler is also fed by smaller subsidiary cattle markets; it was also connected, though somewhat tenuously, with the cattle auction at Yirol before the SPLA split in 1991.

In 1990, Ler was a busy market, although not as big as Yirol or Milo in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal. By 1996, however, with Yirol in government hands, and Milo and other markets in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal regularly destroyed by the PDF and Kerubino, Ler had grown enormously. Many more shops had opened, and a greater range of commodities, including clothing, cloth, salt, sugar, soap, medicines, and manufactured goods were available. Dried fish were also available in the market, and a regular cattle auction took place.

Most shops and traders in Western Upper Nile are licensed by the SSIM Department of Commerce and Trade. Although the market is supplied with goods obtained from Northern traders, no Northern traders have been allowed to come further south than Rupnyagai.

Southern traders have thus kept control of the internal market, and have even organised themselves into a Traders' Union.

Commerce in Western Upper Nile has become big business. In 1994, it was estimated that some LS 30 to 40 million worth of currency entered from the North to Western Upper Nile and Jonglei through the cattle trade (EPAG, 1994, July). Rupnyagai, where the highest prices for cattle are paid, is now the centre of a considerable network, and the local Bul Nuer have been able to maximise their mediating position between Kordofan and the rest of Western Upper Nile. They are able to cultivate a surplus of sorghum, which is sold or exchanged within the interior of Western Upper Nile, and to obtain regular military supplies from the government through their militia leader, Paulino Mathip (who is also the SSIM governor of Liech State). The Bul Nuer also engage in cattle trade with Northern Sudanese counterparts, sometimes as merchants, and sometimes as suppliers of cattle through raids into Northern Bahr el-Ghazal.

Commerce between Western Upper Nile and Kordofan has definitely benefited from improved contact between the GOS and SSIM over the years. While trading networks in Bahr el-Ghazal have suffered from attacks in recent years, they are still an important, if under-reported, aspect of the local economy. The Northern Bahr el-Ghazal markets are important cattle auction centres, but people also use them to buy grain, brought in by Missiriya herders and traders. In this regard, periodic government bans on the export of grain to Bahr el-Ghazal can be interpreted as an attempts to limit the supply of grain to South Sudan. It may also have contributed to driving up the price of imported grain in the Northern Bahr el-Ghazal marketplaces.

Commerce between Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and Kordofan contributes to local household economies in a number of ways: in the buying and selling of cattle and grain, in the sale of handicrafts such as grass mats, and in the hiring out of labour. Kordofan is not the only source of commodities for the Bahr el-Ghazal markets; the Review Team visiting Wau found a similar pattern of trade between that town and SPLA held areas, with sugar, medicine, clothing, and soap going out, in return for livestock, grain, honey, charcoal, and firewood coming in. The trade networks of Bahr el-Ghazal link up with a further export market to Uganda. Just as SSIM soldiers do in Western Upper Nile, in Bahr el-Ghazal SPLA soldiers play a part as "protectors", escorting traders and their cattle, and extracting their own duty.

6.4.4 Income-Generating Projects in the Midst of Commercial Expansion

It is against this background of an independent, often expanding commercial network in livestock, grain, other natural products, handicrafts, and manufactured goods, that the income generating projects of OLS in Western Upper Nile should be judged.

The sun-dried fish trade was an important source of income for Western Upper Nile and parts of Jonglei before the war. By 1983, it was largely in the hands of local fishermen and traders, supplying fish not only to various Sudanese towns, but to Zaire as well. Lack of access to markets in the early years of the war caused the collapse of the fish trade, however.

The Pisces Aid programme appears to have made no study of this earlier fish trade, prior to establishing its own project to revive the fishing industry. One of the key weaknesses of this project was the lack of attention to distribution; apparently, it was assumed that fish would be best used supplying relief agency feeding centres, hospitals, and food-for-work projects.

Pisces did make some adjustments to local conditions, however, during the course of the project. In Ler, it switched from the production of salt fish (which requires heavily subsidised quantities of salt), to locally produced dried fish, and also began to accept for barter local handicrafts such as mats and rope. With the exception of limited local demand for rope, however, the project was unable to distribute the mats for sale or exchange (Eyrich, 1994, April).

The Pisces project was also troubled with competition from local traders, who wanted to obtain Pisces barter items for resale. These traders would sometimes buy fish from local fishermen with cash, and then barter the fish directly at Pisces bush shops. Later, traders hired fishermen to act as a front, and to obtained commodities for sale in the market. The obvious irony here is that Pisces, as a relief project, was working on the assumption that barter and food-for-work were necessary in the absence of a cash economy, whereas those involved in the cash economy were able to use cash to siphon Pisces goods their way.

Despite its obvious problems of planning and implementation, Pisces is remembered positively by local people, mainly because it provided a convenient supply of manufactured goods. There also appears to be a greater supply of fish on market than was previously the case, and some attribute this to the higher volume if fishing inputs brought in by Pisces as opposed to UNICEF.

A slightly different problem has developed over the income-generating projects of women's groups, supported by NCA. NCA's fishing project is targeted at women who operate income generating fish shops; however, women still have to contract men to do the actual fishing. NCA also supported women's tea shops. However, the local Regional Coordinator of Commerce and Trade has questioned whether these projects are in deed humanitarian assistance, or businesses. In this regard, the Regional Coordinator of Commerce and Trade has proposed that women's tea shops be licensed and taxed like any other business. The existence of rival tea shops, which are licensed, and which sell tea at the same price as NCA-supported shops, calls into question the claim that women are unable to obtain supplies of sugar and tea locally. On the other hand, it is also reported that they are supplying the independent shops.

6.5 Programming for Livestock Support

This section provides a brief overview of veterinary programmes in the Southern Sector. In a context where livestock forms an essential part of the rural subsistence economy, the approach of OLS programming to livestock is important to consider. Here, the evolution of veterinary programming is discussed. In the following section, the extent of OLS understanding of the livestock sector is considered in more detail.

Veterinary assistance to South Sudan under OLS was originally confined to the re-establishment of anti-rinderpest vaccination teams. Widespread anti-rinderpest vaccination in the first two years of OLS by UNICEF and ICRC had a pronounced effect on reducing outbreaks, but as neither of the implementing agencies normally supported full-scale veterinary programmes, there was reluctance to expand the programme. An outbreak of trypanosomiasis in southern Bor late in 1991 thus went unchecked, in spite of urgent appeals from stockowners. It is only recently, with the establishment of other veterinary projects under NGOs with experience in the field that a more comprehensive veterinary support programme has begun.

The main element of this more comprehensive programme is the control of animal diseases through community animal health programmes. While it is envisaged that the programme will be increasingly controlled by at the local level, vaccines and drugs will need be to provided by UNICEF and NGOs. The stated objective of the programme is economic -to support livestock as an important way of improving food security in South Sudan.

While UNICEF is the main co-ordinating agency in the veterinary programme, specific projects are undertaken by NGOs, and UNICEF becomes directly involved when NGOs are absent. For instance, SCF (UK) expanded its programme in Akon and other places to include livestock in 1994 (SCF (UK), 1996, April). In Western Upper Nile, ICRC began supporting a veterinary vaccination programme from 1989 to 1991, and was subsequently replaced by ACROSS. ACROSS put together a curative drug package, and deployed veterinary coordinators to Ler from other parts of Western Upper Nile. At the same time, ACROSS requested UNICEF to extend its rinderpest vaccination programme to Western Upper Nile. A crash training programme for veterinary workers did not did yield the expected results, however, because trainees were selected from towns instead of cattle camps, livestock owners were not involved in treatments, and trainees did not receive adequate supervision from the veterinary coordinators (ACROSS/UNICEF, 1995).

The lessons from the crash programme led to a change of strategy, from one that was externally-driven to a community-based animal health delivery service with the active participation of community leaders. From 1995 UNICEF, handed over the running of the veterinary programme to ACROSS, with UNICEF still providing free rinderpest vaccine. Unlike other NGOs, however, ACROSS has no staff based in Ler; instead, it has trained a local team of 10 Community Animal Health Workers who run the programme. According to the local RASS coordinator, about 70,000 cattle were vaccinated against rinderpest between January and April 1996.

The principle of cost recovery in the veterinary services was adopted by OLS at the end of 1994, and was introduced in 1995. Rinderpest vaccination continued to be free, but charges were introduced for other curative drugs. The rationale for introducing charges was laudable - to prevent livestock owners from expecting unsustainable free services. Cattle owners pay LS 10 per treatment per cattle. However, this is inappropriately called a cost recovery measure. Money realised from the charges are not ploughed back to into the veterinary programme, but are held by the NGOs for use in community development projects. In practice, charging fees for veterinary services is not cost recovery, as those involved in the programme openly acknowledge (Blakeway, 1995, April; Leyland, 1996, April 26; Fison, 1996, April 12). However, there is little resistance to the idea of paying for treatment, and

community leaders in Akon and Panthou confirmed that they were satisfied with the payment of the LS 10 charge. The main problem for OLS agencies in the veterinary programme is what to do with the Sudanese pounds, since imported drugs must be bought in hard currency.

6.6 Knowledge of Civil Society: Problems and Issues

The consideration of OLS programmes presented above leads directly to an issue that came to the attention of the Review Team; namely, the extent to which programming has relied less on systematic research and a corresponding understanding of social organization and socio-economic trends, and more on assumptions and pre-existing models.

The casual attitude toward data collection and analysis that plagued OLS from the early years has made it difficult to tackle the gap in knowledge of civil society. A start made on accumulating solid data in 1990 to 1992, for example, was frittered away by subsequent headquarters staff, resulting in a loss of publications, pre-war economic and demographic data, assessment mission notes, and even assessment reports. As a result, the present Food Economy Analysis Unit of WFP and the UNICEF Household Food Security Unit have had to make an almost completely new start.

Moreover, because of continued pressure to identify "beneficiaries" and produce figures for "target groups", as well as staff and time shortages, these units have yet to develop comprehensive analyses of local groups and local/regional contexts. Had OLS been committed to this kind of investigation from the outset, the level of understanding would be far in advance of what it is now. As the case of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal illustrates, OLS inputs have supported local subsistence economies in some cases more by accident than by design.

This section considers the environment of social investigation in OLS Southern Sector, with particular focus on UN agencies.

6.6.1 Imported Assumptions and Models

While there is a much greater awareness now than at the start of OLS about dealing with the consequences of ongoing warfare, few OLS personnel have acquired a clear understanding of the working of local societies, especially in the midst of conflict. This stems, in part, from frequent breaks in programme and personnel continuity, and from a shallow institutional memory. It is also the result of a tendency to make assumptions and apply models about "society" and "social breakdown" as a substitute for detailed ethnographic knowledge.

There is concern within OLS agencies about the social costs of the war: the "breakdown" of "traditional" society, the increased burden on women, and the rise in numbers of the "female-headed households". The fear that societies are no longer able to cope, and that an increasing number of "vulnerable groups" are being created has led many agencies to search for ways to support "the community". While laudable, such concepts appear to derive more

from Western social welfare theory than from an informed analysis of field conditions.

6.6.2 Female-Headed Households

Many agencies throughout OLS are now focusing their attention on household food security, with particular emphasis on the problems faced by female-headed households. There are two problems with this strategy, however.

First, there is no agreed working definition of a "household" in the Southern Sector on which to base inquiries and quantitative analysis. The Household Food Security Unit of UNICEF has shied away from a standard definition. NGO staff who have participated in their surveys also note that the working definition has changed from year to year. The current minimum definition of a "household" is people who eat from the same pot (Hughes, 1996, April 17). Since women frequently feed the children of their co-wives, and since there are great seasonal variations in combinations of who shares food with whom, this definition is useless in identifying a discrete unit on which a consistent analysis can be built.

The second problem follows from the first. If there is no reliable and consistent definition of a "household", the identification of female-headed households become problematic. There is an assumption that since war creates widows and abandoned wives, war also makes female-headed households. However, since a married woman in rural South Sudan expects to have her own house within her husband's homestead, by the current definition, all Southern Sudanese households are female-headed, regardless of the war.

Confusion on this concept is evidenced from conflicting findings concerning numbers of female-headed households. In 1993, for example, a WFP assessment found 30% of households in Bahr el-Ghazal were female-headed (WFP, 1993), while the UNICEF 1994 seeds and tools survey concluded that 13.61% of all households throughout Bahr el-Ghazal were female-headed (Hughes, 1995, January). A similar survey of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal carried out by the SINGO SUPRAID in 1995 concluded that almost all household heads were male (Hughes, 1995, August: 5).

Assumptions about the fate of widows and abandoned wives, which are sometimes stated starkly in OLS field reports, do not seem borne out by more detailed questioning. Evidence from a very brief survey in Eastern Bahr el-Ghazal tended to confirm what has been described in more detailed ethnography of the pre-war period - that widows do not normally remain on their own, but are absorbed into the households of their kin, be they in-laws, parents, siblings, or their own children, and that widowed women may expect to move from one kin group to another over a long period of time (Johnson & MacAskill, 1995, May).

It is true that women are subjected to a number of pressures on the death of their husbands; it is also possible that such pressures have increased during the war. As yet, however, there is no OLS-sponsored research which reliably identifies a trend one way or another. There has also been no real examination of divorce, a potentially serious threat to women's economic position, and whether or not divorces are being instigated by men to claim back cattle or limit obligations to extended kin. Admittedly, such investigations would be

difficult to undertake in the current circumstances.

The OLS focus on the plight of female heads of households is an example of the tendency of aid agencies to focus on "vulnerable" individuals or groups, rather than societies. Further, the search for most "vulnerable" groups or individuals has not conducted according to local definitions of poverty, destitution, or vulnerability. Rather, the female-headed household has become the ideal vulnerable group who can be targeted without political repercussions - in effect, they are South Sudan's version of a beleaguered "single parent family" in the West.

In fact, evidence from the Food Economy Analysis Unit's own reports suggest that the weakest in society benefit when the strongest are able to stay in their locations to cultivate. OXFAM reports of 1995 also indicate that the erosion of resources within a community has a direct bearing on the efficiency of the indigenous social welfare system. After years of war, the scale of social welfare demands has increased just at the time when the rural economy has contracted (Johnson & MacAskill, 1995, May).

6.6.3 Understanding the Role of Livestock in Society

The veterinary programme demonstrates both the strengths and weaknesses of OLS. The coordination between UNICEF and other NGOs in the veterinary sector is better than in any other food security sector. There is a serious effort to come up with consistent principles on which policy can be based, at the same time to take into account local conditions and variations. The veterinary programme has taken into account its own experience during the war, and has expanded beyond rinderpest vaccination to include treatment of other diseases, the training of Community Animal Health Workers, and support for the revival of a veterinary service throughout South Sudan.

The programme's weakness, however, is its basis on a surprisingly small amount of reliable information on stock-keeping practices, the social role of livestock, and interlocking networks of the cattle trade. Given that the current justification for the expansion of veterinary services is an economic one - to bring stockowners into the cash economy, and to revive the economy of South Sudan, these omissions are serious. Although access problems are important, the poor knowledge base is a consequence of lack of staff time, and lack of funding. For example, donors were initially reluctant to provide funds for a restocking study in 1994, and an ethno-medicine study to commence in 1996 (Leyland, 1996, April 26).

While a certain amount of lipservice is given to recognising the social role of cattle, it has been assumed, rather than demonstrated, that the absence of cattle must mean social disintegration (Blakeway, 1995, April). The standard OLS response to declining cattle numbers is to improve livestock health.

The restocking report commissioned by UNICEF in 1994 was a serious attempt at addressing the restocking question, but it is in many ways unsatisfactory. It was not, for example, preceded by a thorough review of the substantial body of literature that exists on cattle rearing, bridewealth and divorce, cattle trading, and other relevant aspects of pastoralist life in South Sudan. It also shows considerable confusion about social and

kinship organisation and terms, and it proposes a doubtful distinction between "traditional" methods of restocking, and cash or market economy methods. Although its focus was on the displaced, its conclusions have been applied to other communities who retain cattle but have experienced serious stock loss. Its recommendations against restocking before the end of the war, on the assumption that restocking requires providing each household with a "viable herd", have inhibited the development of restocking programmes by NGOs.

In fact, the experience of a successful restocking scheme in Somlia indicates that the provision of small numbers of animals, at an early stage, can assist people to re-enter networks of livestock circulation and redistribution, and thus enable them to kickstart traditional restocking mechanisms. Such mechanisms of redistribution include the loaning of animals to maximize their use; indeed, the experience of this project has been that loaning becomes more important than marriage as a means to redistribute livestock use during times of massive stock loss. Hence, the provision of a full viable herd is not necessary if restocking is integrated into customary livestock distribution mechanisms (Scott-Villiers, 1996, April).

The approach of OLS agencies to the question of traditional means of restocking has focused on grain-smallstock-cattle exchanges, or the distribution of bridewealth in marriage. This ignores, however, the evidence of long-term resource depletion among Southern Sudanese stock owners, and what effect the repeated decimation of herds may have had on the ability of communities to redistribute livestock through such "traditional" methods. In fact, the impact of livestock slaughter for food can be seen in an almost universal decline in marriage payments. In some cases, marriage payments are being deferred on anticipation of a revival of livestock numbers at some future time, but this can be done only between families who trust one another, and hence is increasingly restricted to a smaller circle of kin (Awan Dinka Elders, 1996, April 6).

Because of the focus of OLS attention on marriage and grain-livestock exchanges, there is presently very little known about the nature of livestock loans in South Sudan. Further, while it is known that cattle markets are currently an important means of restocking herds (WFP, 1996, January), because cattle purchases are made with cash and hence not considered "traditional", the role of the market has not been seriously investigated as a restocking option. There are many segments of South Sudanese cattle owners who have been using cattle auctions since they were first introduced in the 1930s, and the buying and selling of cattle has steadily increased since the 1950s (Burton, 1978; Hutchinson, 1992). However, the tendency to think along the lines of categories such as "traditional" has inhibited real investigation about the potential in this sphere.

There is a case to be made for reconsidering the restocking issue in South Sudan. The present focus on the most destitute, and on widows, may not in the end prove to be the most efficient way to revive livestock redistribution, which should be seen as an essential goal in any restocking project.

6.7 Programming for the Internally Displaced

6.7.1 Displaced Living Among Host Populations

The Southern Sector's first experience of dealing with large numbers of displaced followed the evacuation of the Ethiopian refugee camps in 1991, when nearly a quarter of a million persons re-entered the South. Returnees either camped near hastily prepared distribution centres, or moved as far into the countryside as possible to live with "host" populations.

Attempts by OLS to target returnees were strongly opposed by host communities, and the concentration of populations at large feeding centres created health and sanitation-related problems. As a result, OLS made a conscious decision to avoid differential provision of aid for returnees as opposed to host populations, and to move towards decentralised relief distribution points.

This section briefly considers the response of OLS agencies and NGOs to internally displaced living in Lobone in Eastern Equatoria.

6.7.2 The Internally Displaced at Lobone

The people in Labone represent a population which has been displaced and on the move for the last four to five years. Most come from Kongor and Bor Counties, through there are some local Acoli as well. Labone was the largest of those camps established to receive the displaced population coming from the Triple A camps in 1994.

Labone, as a camp for internally displaced persons, has been largely dependent on food aid. CRS took over supplying relief food to the camp from NPA in 1993. At that time CRS based its rationale for distributing food on the fact that the population was displaced, and hence completely dependent. With dwindling resources, increasing cost of relief operations, and the challenge of dealing with internal displacement in a chronic war situation, this perception has changed. Food aid rations have been reduced, and the number of beneficiaries targeted has been narrowed. The present CRS policy is that if the food harvest is good, then there will be no ration of sorghum and beans from July to September (first harvest), and from November to January (second harvest).

CRS is also involved in encouraging the displaced at Labone to produce at least part of their own food, with the aim of improving their food security and developing self-reliance (CRS, 1995, April/June). This involves the distribution of seeds and hand tools, agricultural extension services, and encouragement for the development of communal farms and vegetable gardens.

CRS has faced a number of problems in implementing this programme, including the expectation of incentives by SRRA staff seconded to the programme, and the weak training of the agricultural extension officers seconded from the SRRA to work on the project. In addition, and perhaps more significantly, the programme has faced difficulties in working with a displaced population whose traditional subsistence practices are agro-pastoral, rather than sedentary agricultural. Whether or not displaced Dinka will be able or interested to

shift the basis of their livelihoods toward greater reliance on crop production, and less reliance on cattle, is open to question. While the idea of encouraging food production in the context of internal displacement has legitimacy, it should not be forced, nor should it be assumed that this is an economic practice that the Dinka will adopt for the long term.

6.7.3 Issues for Consideration

As in the Northern Sector, the relief-to-development continuum appears to inform much programme thinking for the displaced in Labone. The idea has been expressed that, because the Dinka of Bor and Kongor have lost their cattle and presumably will never get them back, their displacement represents a good opportunity for "modernising" them. The organisation of agricultural extension workers is designed to teach the Dinka to cultivate like the Acholi, something that is probably desirable in their new environment. However, it is also assumed that these more modern and efficient methods of farming will be transferable from the hill country near the Uganda border back to the clay plains and swamps of Jonglei. The lack of enthusiasm the Dinka appear to show at being turned into farmers is taken, not as a sign of the inappropriateness of this activity for the long term, but as a sign of relief dependency.

For the displaced themselves, there is much unhappiness at the prospect of long term settlement in the Labone area. A sense of insecurity is also present, more so for the Acholi than the Dinka. Displaced Acholi note that they are reluctant to expand their area of cultivation for fear of offending the local Acholi.

The displaced also express a fear of being attacked. This fear is not unreasonable; throughout 1995, Labone was bombed by the Sudanese airforce, attacked by GOS allies, and its line of supply from Uganda threatened by the Lords Resistance Army, a rebel group fighting the Ugandan government. UN planes attempting to land there have also been fired on. During the time the Review Team visited, there was continued insecurity along the border.

The feelings of insecurity among the displaced in Labone may be increased, rather than reduced, by the presence of the SPLA. The SPLA has used the medical facilities at Labone for the treatment of their battle wounded, has diverted food from the camp during times of military buildup, and there are persistent rumours that the separate camp of unaccompanied minors are regularly recruited into the army. From the GOS's point of view, Labone is a military camp, even if civilians are present, and hence it is considered a legitimate target for attack.

For these reasons, the majority of the displaced are eager to return home, and have even requested OLS assistance to return them. There are no plans as yet for such a return, however, mainly because the security in Jonglei itself remains uncertain. Instead, the SRRA is cooperating with CRS in a new hut count, and has plans to increase the area under cultivation.

6.8 Food Aid Versus Food Security: A Look at WFP's Air Cargo Prioritisation

Before moving on to a discussion of OLS programmes in the area of social services and capacity building, which form the second part of this chapter, it is worth briefly considering the way in which WFP approaches the administration of its food aid programme, especially in terms of air transport, and the effect of this on the balance between food aid and food security.

A great deal of effort is still expended by WFP in determining suitable populations for the targeting of relief food, and the calculation of rations. It is, however, an effort which never meets its self-appointed goals. Restrictions on air access and irregularities in transport mean that WFP is constantly scaling back its actual deliveries from assessed needs. As has been seen in the case study material on Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, food needs have been very poorly addressed by food deliveries. At the same time, the case study material indicates how even small amounts of relief food, if consistently delivered, can have a beneficial effect on reviving and strengthening local food production.

The question which is increasingly asked, especially by non-food delivering INGOs, is why - given that only a small percentage of food sources are provided by airlifted deliveries - does relief food still receive priority over other food security or health inputs in terms of air cargo space? A subsidiary question is whether the effort expended in airlifting food from East Africa would be better employed in finding ways of redistributing food and seeds from surplus producing areas of South Sudan itself.

Relief food continues to be a salient issue in the Southern Sector, not least because of the priority placed on it by the parties to the conflict. Beneficiary numbers continue to be manipulated, and diversions to the military are made by various means, whether indirectly by taxing beneficiaries, or directly by interdiction and raiding. There is an ambivalence within the Southern movements about any shift of emphasis towards food security, as opposed to food aid, and there is still a tendency for counterpart organizations to frame requests in terms of food. As one INGO report put it, the humanitarian wings of the Southern movements have a vested interest in maintaining the "food supply momentum" (Boyle & Shearer, 1994, April).

Nevertheless, there is still a tendency within WFP to define problems in terms of food aid tonnages, and to assume that control of transportation is a given. WFP is also accused of giving preference to the food delivery side of food security over food production, which is the responsibility of other agencies. This has created an imbalance in the food security strategies, with food deliveries still being made, for instance, during harvest time when they are not necessarily needed, and when fewer people show up for food distributions. Some INGOs have also criticised WFP for attracting the attention of raiding militia, such as Kerubino, by continuing to deliver food to Northern Bahr el-Ghazal during the harvest. They allege that these deliveries continued mainly because both transport and flight clearance were available.

Despite clear statements of policy within OLS Southern Sector on the need to maintain a balance between the sectors of food, food production, health, and water, the pattern and

timing of cargo priorities suggests that this goal has yet to be met. In this regard, there is a need to rethink priorities within OLS as they are expressed through air cargo prioritisation.

One way of doing this is to look more closely at what is needed to improve local distributions between areas, rather than just within them. At present, for example, there has been qualified success in moving seed surpluses from one area to another, such as from Western Upper Nile to Jonglei. SCF (UK), however, has been unable to move groundnut seeds from Tembura in Western Equatoria to Northern Bahr el-Ghazal because of a lack of scheduling for backloading cargo planes between the two locations. Uncertain access has meant that WFP was still giving cargo priority to food in April, when preparations for the planting season had to be made. Without the ability to move local surpluses, or to make use of markets and commercial networks, all discussions of greater cost effectiveness in the Southern Sector will remain largely theoretical.

6.9 Delivering Social Services and Programmes that Support Women

6.9.1 Introduction

The absence of a functioning civil administration, and disruptions by the war, mean that social services in rural South Sudan are either absent, or in severe jeopardy. Under the umbrella of OLS, UNICEF and NGOs are providing various forms of support to enable people to access basic social services. This section presents a brief overview of health and education programmes, as well as income generating projects for women.

6.9.2 Delivering Primary Health Care in a Conflict Situation

Sudan is said to have been at the forefront of developing primary health delivery systems in the pre-war period. The protracted civil war has, however, wreaked great havoc to primary health care (PHC), and worsened the health status of Southern Sudanese. International agencies operating under the umbrella of OLS, and other agencies outside of OLS, are helping to deliver emergency health services, and to rehabilitate PHC services. The different experiences of support to the health sector in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and in Western Upper Nile illustrate again the very different operational contexts that pertain in different parts of South Sudan.

In Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, effective PHC programmes are hampered by insecurity. The delivery of health services in Akon and Panthou - and indeed in most of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal - was disrupted first by the withdrawal of ICRC in 1990, and more recently by widespread militia attacks. After humanitarian access to Akon was resumed in 1992, significant levels of severe malnutrition and disease were reported. This prompted the intervention of MSF France, one of the few NGOs willing to work in the region. MSF France was instrumental in identifying and responding to the nutritional crisis in Akon, which in turn prompted WFP to respond by targeting increased food distributions.

MSF France established a feeding centre in Akon and provided hospital-based services. MSF Belgium also started a large programme in Lietnhom. The health facilities in Lietnhom were destroyed in December 1994, however, and those in Akon were destroyed in January 1996. The increased level of insecurity led both agencies to suspend services; they returned, however, in February and March. MSF Belgium has yet to fully re-establish facilities in Akon, however, since they were all destroyed, and the agency must start again from scratch.

In response to the problems of attacks and insecurity, and to the looting and destruction of resources, MSF Belgium has changed its strategy from stationary field bases to small mobile teams, and from and permanent structures to temporary structures providing basic curative and preventive health care. It has a permanent presence only in more secure areas. Another strategy adopted along with mobile teams is that, in insecure and access-restricted areas, the prescription and administration of drugs have been left to trained Sudanese health workers.

In contrast, support to health in Western Upper Nile exhibits a much greater continuity of programming, and longer term planning is possible. Implementation of sustainable services is hampered here not by insecurity, but more by managerial, administrative, and staff problems. In Ler, health programme activities include EPI, which is administered by a local team trained and supported by UNICEF, and the training of Community Health Workers, in addition to support for primary health care facilities.

The Ler hospital is expected to play a crucial role as a complementary component of the PHC programme. Its functioning has been problematic for the past two years, however, due to management problems. Currently, there is an agreement between MSF Holland and RASS which allows MSF Holland to continue to run the TB and kalar azar clinics separately from the hospital, while the RASS Health Coordinator/Medical Officer runs the hospital (Kong, 1996, April 4). Some independent sources in Ler, however, complained about mismanagement in the hospital. MSF Holland sources say they are insisting that the use of drugs be properly accounted for before new supplies will be made available.

Ler also illustrates the practice of NGO succession in programme areas. The transition period during when a new NGO arrives to take over from a departing NGO tends to interrupt the flow of services for some time. In the case of Ler, Healthnet, a sister organisation of MSF Holland, is taking over responsibility for training health workers, and for supporting the PHC centres and units. Like its sister NGO, it has also declined to support the hospital. At the time of the Review Team's visit, no NGO has been identified to provide the required support for rehabilitation and management of the hospital.

6.9.3 Support to Education

Education in South Sudan today is a highly political issue; the Southern movements and the GOS each see education as a key in determining the future character of South Sudan. The GOS has consistently opposed OLS support to schools in non-government areas because they do not follow the Arabic pattern and the Sudan school syllabus. SRRA and RASS, on the other hand, agree with each other on the need to develop a school curriculum in English

that follows the East African syllabus; indeed, this is the only area where they have collaborated together.

Like other social services, basic education in South Sudan has been disrupted by the war for over a decade. The lack of educational opportunities is said to be partly responsible for pushing many children to seek education outside Sudan, in Kenya and Uganda (Ibrahim, 1996, April 2).

Until recently, donors saw education as developmental activity, and hence were reluctant to provide funding. The linkage of education to the Rights of the Child, however, and the psycho-social needs of children, is helping to change this attitude.

The level of support to education possible in any given region depends largely on the level of education achieved in the region before the war. In Western Equatoria, for example, there is a more solid base on which to rebuild the education system, due to the relative abundance of former intermediate and secondary school students, and unemployed teachers. This is not the case in Western Upper Nile, Jonglei, or much of Bahr el-Ghazal, however.

In Ler, the primary School was closed for several years until 1989, when some teachers re-opened the school. The relative freedom from insecurity in the area has enabled primary schools to continue to operate for the past few years, and there is a well-organised inspection and coordination system at community level. The quality of the teaching remains low, however. In Ler primary school, for example, only four out of the 12 teachers have received any form of training, and the highest qualification is secondary school year two. One problem facing the NGOs involved in training is that those trained are easily "poached" by other NGOs who offer better incentives, sometimes with the recommendation of RASS.

Unlike Ler, education in Akon and most parts of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal has been at a standstill for many years. Children have not been able to attend school continuously without some form of military interruption during the academic year. As a result of these disruptions, teachers trained by SCF (UK) have largely been scattered. School buildings have also been burned down by militia raids; wherever classes are held, they are held under trees.

6.9.4 Income Generating Projects for Women

OLS projects designed specifically to benefit women have been inspired by two premises: first, that women have the main responsibility for the management of household food, and second, that women constituted as a group are subject to a particular type of vulnerability in the midst of war.

In Ler and Lobone, income generating projects for women are operating. These included teashops, tailoring, and fish shops (in Ler only). In Ler, income generating projects were initiated by church-based women's groups, and are supported by NCA, while in Lobonne, projects were initiated by SRRA's Family Affairs Office and are supported by CRS.

In general, the projects appear to be managed in a participatory manner by women, who take turns to run shops on a daily basis. They also appear to be providing some income to women. In Ler, women noted that they had been able to purchase cows for their children as a result. In Labone, teashop operators plan to invest their profits in community development activities, and in other income generating enterprises such as selling used clothing.

However, the projects suffer from a problem of sustainability. NGOs admit that the original idea to make the projects self-supporting is difficult to achieve. Women's groups are unable to make independent arrangements for supplies, and still have to depend on NGOs to bring in supplies at subsidized prices that otherwise would not reach the local market due to insecurity, or would reach it at too high prices. It is therefore not surprising that CRS and NCA are finding it difficult to extricate themselves without causing a collapse. Project sustainability is also affected by insecurity. In February 1995, for example, when the population of Labone was forced to evacuate due to insecurity, the assets of the tea shops were looted, and CRS had to intervene with free supplies for two months before the project was able to re-start.

The focus on women, and especially on widows and female heads of households, has sometimes distorted understanding of local realities, and the extent to which it is possible to target programmes for specific types of women in isolation from their broader socio-economic context. The attempt to support women's tailoring projects in Ler, for example, met with opposition from the tailors in the local market, who saw their livelihoods threatened by unfair competition. In Eastern Bahr el-Ghazal, OXFAM attempted to improve the lot of widows by distributing fishing equipment directly to them. As it is men, rather than women, who fish in deeper waters with lines, nets, and hooks, the fishing inputs soon ended up with the men, who put them to use. Having learned something from that experience, OXFAM then undertook to distribute malodas (iron digging blades) to all women in two counties, rather than only widows or the most "vulnerable". This was highly successful, involving civil administration and community leaders alike, and was accepted by both men and women since it assisted women in one of their primary duties - cultivation.

6.10 Capacity Building in a Complex Emergency

6.10.1 Background to Capacity Building

The emergence of capacity building as a distinct OLS project was initiated in June 1993, when UNICEF commissioned an exploratory investigation into the possibilities of institutional development for SRRA, RASS, and CUSH. This was later modified into an assessment of appropriate ways UNICEF could strengthen the capacity of indigenous agencies participating in humanitarian activities in South Sudan.

The rationale for capacity building in the early 1990's was the general recognition of the need for stronger and more effective local structures to support the delivery of humanitarian services. The weak capacity of Sudanese counterparts was seen as a hindrance to the

implementation and coordination of OLS programmes. This led to UNICEF taking on roles normally played by indigenous civil/political institutions.

However, working out the details of what capacity building would entail, and how to go about it, was greeted with both scepticism and lack of consensus among international agencies in the Southern Sector. Some agencies felt that capacity building was inappropriate in an unstable environment, while others saw capacity building as "developmental", and hence a deviation from the main priority of emergency relief. Concerns over the neutrality of international agencies in the South were also raised, as well as the problems posed by the factional split within the SPLM/A.

In 1993, USAID made a grant to UNICEF for an institutional capacity building project. This grant signalled the inclusion of capacity building as part of the Southern Sector's programme, based on an:

> ...increasing recognition at all levels of the humanitarian community that capacity building in complex emergencies is a sine qua non for moves away from relief to rehabilitation and development (O'Brien, 1996, January 3: 2).

6.10.2 Capacity Building - A Slippery Concept

Capacity building is one of the slippery concepts which has become fashionable among development agencies. It imprecision helps explain the lack of consensus among OLS agencies on how it can best be carried out.

Within UNICEF, the first serious attempt at defining the term was at the Capacity Building Workshop in June 1995, which produced what has become known as "The Nairobi Joint Statement II". The Statement, produced by representatives of 15 OLS agencies, two donor agencies, and non-OLS NGOs, endorsed the definition of capacity building as:

> An explicit intervention that aims to improve an organisation's effectiveness and sustainability in relation to its mission and context...

In their document "The Way Forward", the SRRA implicitly adopts the Joint Statement definition, and describes capacity building as human resource development and institutional support. The document then goes on to propose the type of training it would require for development of its personnel, and the type of material and financial support it would need in order to be:

> ...an effective and efficient facilitator of relief and rehabilitation programmes in the new Sudan.

The document notes that the support required ranges from payment of staff salaries and office rents, to equipment and means of transportation.

Despite the Joint Statement, there has yet to emerge a precise agreement between the major actors in the Southern Sector of exactly what capacity building involves, and how it should

be implemented. As one key official associated with the capacity building project has noted, perceptions vary from:

> ...those who consider the support to Sudanese agencies to be in terms of merely improving the delivery of humanitarian assistance, to those who see capacity building interventions to be aimed at influencing policy and institutional levels, promoting good governance, community empowerment, etc...(Ayers, 1995 July 30: 2).

Given the lack of a common definition and agreement on implementation, OLS agencies engage in different activities according to their own ideas. Some NGOs consider the training of local people in water, health, and education to be capacity building, while others concentrate on the provision of technical, financial, administrative, and material support to counterpart organisations, RASS and SRRA, and to SINGOs.

6.10.3 Modalities of Capacity Building in OLS

6.10.3.1 Support to Counterparts from Opposition Movements

UNICEF combines the above two orientations toward capacity building in its programmes. It provides technical advice to counterpart organisations through consultants; both SRRA and RASS have UNICEF-seconded advisors in their Nairobi Offices, paid by UNICEF. It also provides grants to SRRA and RASS to pay salaries, rents, and office expenses. The level of this support is not insignificant. SRRA, for example, receives cash support from UNICEF of USD 10,000 per month (UNICEF/OLS, 1995, November 11; Pace International; 1995, November 21). Approximately five INGOs also provide support to SRRA in the form of capital equipment, training, and support to Joint Relief Committees. This NGO support could not be quantified for lack of information.

Cash payments to RASS and SRRA have raised protests, notably from UNDP and WFP Khartoum. They have led to calls for either scrapping the programme, or designing a similar programme for counterparts in the Northern Sector. Such calls were noticeable during the preparations for the 1996 Appeal, when UNICEF's budget of USD 220,000 for direct financial support to RASS and SRRA - and to SINGOs - became the subject of controversy. The main concern expressed was that such payments could be misinterpreted as support to the rebel movements themselves, and were susceptible to abuse (Jaeger, 1995, December 21). It was also suggested that cash grants would encourage factionalisation in opposition movements, with any new faction laying claim to OLS capacity building support (Adly, 1995, December 19).

Despite the controversy over cash grants, there is a broad consensus among UN agencies and NGOs on the need for institutional support to the humanitarian wings of the rebel movements, if the implementation and coordination of Southern Sector programmes is to be improved. As a compromise, two capacity building projects were presented in the 1996 Appeal, one for each OLS Sector. UNICEF has also accepted the need to reform its mode of financial support to RASS and SRRA in a way that encourages greater financial accountability from these organizations.

6.10.3.2 Support to Sudanese Indigenous NGOs (SINGOs)

OLS agencies are also helping to build the service delivery capacity of Sudanese organizations. These include church-based agencies such as the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) and the Diocese of Torit (DOT), and various indigenous NGOs, who have registered under the OLS umbrella and singed Letters of Understanding. SINGOs receive logistical and financial support from UNICEF, and also benefit from UNICEF-sponsored training workshops.

As part of its strategy, UNICEF encourages INGOs to establish partnership relations with SINGOs of their choice. These partnerships are, almost by definition, unequal however. While INGOs help their partner SINGOs to identify sources of funding, this funding is channelled through the INGO, who also supervises the activities of, and receive quarterly and annual reports from, the SINGO partner. SINGOs therefore have no direct access to donors. Some SINGOs also operate as sub-contractors, implementing programmes on behalf of INGOs in parts of South Sudan. The expectation is that such partnerships will enable SINGOs to learn from their more experienced INGO counterparts.

A noticeable impact of UNICEF financial support to SINGOs is the rapid growth in their numbers. In mid-1993, there were only two SINGOs - the Cush Relief and Rehabilitation Society (CRRS) and Sudan Medical Care (SMC). By late 1994, this number had increased to over 25, and by mid-1995 it reached 30. Many of these organizations existed only on paper, and were aimed at obtaining OLS financial and other resources. This triggered the need to establish a criteria for recognition and registration of SINGOs, with the responsibility for screening them given to RASS and SRRA, depending on where the SINGO proposes to work in South Sudan. As a consequence, many of the less genuine SINGOs disappeared (Dak, 1996, April 12). At present, there are six SINGOs registered with UNICEF and signatories to Letters of Understanding. There are also moves to form an umbrella association of all SINGOs - the Sudan Association of Voluntary Agencies (SAVA) - with the support of UNICEF, but this is yet to be consolidated.

As an extension of the capacity building work of UNICEF, efforts are being made to train Southern Sudanese NGO staff in the application of humanitarian principles to aid work. To facilitate this, UNICEF's Humanitarian Principles Unit is involved in an intensive programme of dissemination of the Ground Rules and their principles (Levine, 1996, April). The Review Team found this an especially important and appropriate programme for the lead agency of OLS Southern Sector to be involved in.

6.10.3.3 Project Related and Community-Based Capacity Building

Apart from organizational capacity building, OLS agencies also support project-specific capacity building activities, mostly in the form of training for the acquisition of skills for community workers in various sectors, with candidates selected by local SRRA/RASS officials, sometimes in consultation with traditional leaders.

The dominant mode of training is short-term exposure in workshops or seminars. While these may be suitable for emergency situations, Sudanese counterparts informed the Review Team that they do not consider workshops and seminars an adequate means of training, and would prefer longer term training that provides both skills and qualifications. Although training is important, it should not be seen as a substitute for the creation of enabling conditions for the use of the those trained.

The issue of incentives for community workers, and field staff of counterpart organizations, is becoming an obstacle to capacity building in some cases, especially since practices vary from one international agency to another. A task force on salaries and incentives for Sudanese personnel working with, or funded by, INGOs has discussed the issue, but no uniform policy has yet emerged. In the opinion of one senior INGO official, the issue of employment of Southern Sudanese in relief work is a burning one, and should have been resolved by now.

6.10.4 Achievements of the Capacity Building Project

There is now a broad consensus on the need for capacity building for South Sudanese organisations. The debate is no longer "why capacity building?" but "how capacity building?". Whatever the weaknesses of the institutional capacity building initiative, it has made significant contributions.

Notably, resources for capacity building provided by UNICEF in the context of acceptance of the Ground Rules has provided a degree of leverage over the humanitarian wings of the rebel movements. The most significant achievement here is to get the movements to discuss humanitarian principles, though much still needs to be done in this area. Given that OLS is operating in an ongoing conflict situation, without any protection force, getting the warring parties to agree on Ground Rules is a key achievement. Capacity building support is also widely believed to have pressed SRRA to make significant organizational improvements over the several years, although RASS is seen to remain less effective due to internal problems.

Further, despite the proliferation of SINGOs triggered by the expectation of UNICEF support, the institutional capacity building project has contributed to the growth and integration of Sudanese NGOs into OLS, and is playing a key role in building intermediary aid organisations in South Sudan. SINGOs are gaining acceptance not only as operational agencies under OLS, but as part of an emerging civil society.