

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The conclusions from the evaluation are organised according to the seven items posed in the Terms of Reference for the study in Chapter 1. In addition, the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting is also considered. Finally, the criteria in the Evaluation Success Rating Table for summarising the performance of an emergency operation are examined. All these more specific conclusions concerning ODA's response and the problems of assessing that response should, however, be placed in context.

6.2 The response of the affected countries and the international community to the 1991/92 drought is widely regarded as a success story, and this evaluation broadly endorses that conclusion. ODA itself performed well in responding early and with a coherent strategy. Both the international community more generally and ODA appear to have succeeded in incorporating many lessons in their emergency practice since the previous regional crisis in Africa in 1984/85.

6.3 Nevertheless, a closer scrutiny indicates areas of less satisfactory performance. There is scope for improvement in the way ODA, NGOs and the international community prepare for and respond to drought shocks. The need for this should be stressed, given the likelihood that there will be another major drought-related crisis in Africa, or another major natural disaster elsewhere, before very long.

6.4 ODA's general approach: ODA performed well in terms of identifying the worst affected countries and devising its overall response strategy at an early stage. That performance resulted from the effectiveness of CSAD, in consultation with the officials in post, in monitoring the situation in the major countries of the region, and the maintenance by ECFAD of a watching brief on food security and food aid.

6.5 The principal weaknesses were found in terms of the way that ODA organised its response at a country level where strategies were less clearly developed. In particular:

a. It did not have a clear strategy for its actions in Mozambique and consequently allowed NGOs, through which virtually all its assistance was channelled, to set the agenda. Most of these agencies preferred to direct additional drought-related resources to their existing relief programmes which were not in the areas most severely affected by the drought. Whilst not one of the largest donors, ODA, as a significant donor, should have taken a more proactive role. That would probably have required reinforcing the Post with someone with relief experience.

b. It failed to question rigorously the content of many proposals submitted by agencies, some of which were uninformative and poorly prepared. This suggests the need for a strengthening of the technical capacity within ODA for reviewing proposals, including those for food aid and emergency grants. The poor quality of some proposals suggests the need for more guidance to agencies submitting proposals. (As indicated in paragraph 5.6.10 this was provided in May 1994).

c. Monitoring capacity in-country was too limited to allow a necessary minimum number of monitoring visits and follow-up on agency reporting. Consequently, for example in Zimbabwe, the officials
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post tended to concentrate their attention on the few projects initiated with their direct involvement. In particular, most grants made to UK-based organisations, sometimes for partner agencies in-country, were not satisfactorily monitored (see below).

6.6 The speed of response: The balance-of-payments support was provided speedily and, despite being a new form of emergency response, smoothly.

6.7 The bulk of the food aid provided to Mozambique during FY 1992/93 was distributed before the start of the normal 'hungry season' - 90% (percent) of it by the end of 1992. This compares favourably with food aid provided by some other donors. The performance, however, of agricultural recovery and emergency water programmes was less impressive. The major part of the assistance did not yield benefits to the target population until after the 1992-93 rains had begun and the crisis had passed.

6.8 Analysis of the proposals submitted to ODA indicates that many NGOs were slow in submitting proposals for non-food aid assistance and consequently their actions often started late. In the case of some NGOs submitting proposals on behalf of partner organisations in the affected countries, the poor quality of the proposals resulted in further delay. ODA's performance in terms of the time taken to process and approve the proposals was satisfactory in most cases.

6.9 The value of the major elements and value for money: The main categories of expenditure are summarised in Table 6.1. Overall, ODA appears to have obtained value for money. Local purchases of food for relief, where direct comparison could be made, compared favourably with costs of food aid imports by other donors, eg skimmed milk powder in Zimbabwe. Because of the relatively late implementation of many of the agricultural rehabilitation projects, many agencies had to pay a premium which could perhaps have been avoided had they arranged purchases earlier. In truck purchases, some agencies appear to have opted for the better deals available from South African suppliers. This may not, however, always have led to the purchase of the most suitable models. The procurement and shipping of drugs and other medical supplies by UNICEF appears to have been generally cost-effective. It is important to stress that the issue of cost-effectiveness cannot be considered separately from that of timeliness.

Table 6.1: O DA Bilateral Response to the Southern African Drought by Recipient Sector

(Table format)

<i>Recipient Sector of</i>	<i>£ million</i>	<i>%(percent)</i>
		<i>Total</i>
<i>Balance of Payments</i>	<i>20.0</i>	<i>40.7</i>
<i>Water</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>6.2</i>
<i>Health</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>2.2</i>
<i>Agricultural Rehabilitation</i>	<i>4.5</i>	<i>9.1</i>
<i>Food Aid and Distribution</i>	<i>17.0</i>	<i>34.6</i>
<i>Multi Sector</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>7.3</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>49.2</i>	<i>100.00</i>

6.10 Impact of the major components: There were difficulties in determining the impacts of most actions supported by ODA. Impacts can only be inferred indirectly by the way in which affected groups, regions and countries recovered without evidence of intensified problems of economic distress, eg migration an increases in morbidity and mortality. A further problem is that the interventions supported by ODA represented only part of the overall drought response, even in one district or province.
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6.11 The other reason why it is difficult to determine impacts is because only a few of the operational agencies involved attempted to measure impact. In Mozambique the security situation meant that it was especially hazardous for agencies to monitor distribution or to carry out surveys of impact. The bulk of ODA food was channelled through CARE. There was, however, no proof of delivery to beneficiaries for a substantial proportion of it, because of a change in transportation arrangements and a lapse in monitoring by the agency. That World Vision did at least attempt to assess the impact of a seed distribution in Mozambique suggests that others might have followed suit. Given the scale of the assistance provided and its importance to the intended beneficiaries, agencies should have striven to assess the impact and effectiveness of their relief actions more frequently at least on a selective basis.

6.12 An assessment of the major benefits delivered in relation to costs: Inevitably, given the lack of information on impact assessment, assessment of benefits in relation to costs is at best impressionistic.

6.13 The benefits of financial aid for balance-of-payments support are inherently difficult to assess. However, grants to Zimbabwe and Zambia were extremely well-timed and fast acting. This assistance contributed to the success of

the government's efforts to avoid the breakdown of the normal food marketing system and the serious economic and political consequences that would have followed. The additional assistance also reduced the government's financing requirement for drought response, thereby reducing the negative impacts of the drought on its medium-term economic reform strategy.

6.14 Though the impact of the food aid in Mozambique could not be assessed, most of it was distributed during the period when it was needed.

6.15 The lack of information on the yields obtained from most of the seeds distribution programmes means that it is not possible to comment on whether the benefits outweighed the costs. Had the distributions been more timely the likelihood of this would have been enhanced.

6.16 The problems of timeliness with most of the emergency water programmes substantially reduced the value of the benefits during the drought. But even where the boreholes and other improvements in supply were late, they have probably contributed to the long-term benefit of the population. It is likely, though, that such longer-term benefits could have been achieved more cost-effectively had the activities been undertaken in a carefully planned way as part of a normal development programme (for example in Lesotho) rather than as an emergency intervention. The combination of food-for-work, as a relief measure, with construction of dams to improve village-level water supply (Christian Care, Zimbabwe) is also an example of successfully combining immediate relief with longer-term goals that will command considerable local support in a crisis.

6.17 The health sector was not identified as a priority area for ODA support in its initial assessment but, given the outbreaks of drought-related diseases, perhaps preventative measures should have been given a higher priority. The lack of integration between emergency water and health measures is also a less satisfactory aspect of the drought response.

6.18 Appropriateness of the assistance provided, including the balance between financial aid, food aid, funding of NGOs and technical co-operation

Input: The innovative use of financial aid as BOP support was a very positive action. Such a response is especially appropriate where the recipient government has the capacity and commitment to organise an effective national disaster response, but (End p57)

Where financing the response would involve economically damaging foreign-exchange costs. Assisting in this way, ODA also probably contributed to galvanising international support, for Zambia and Zimbabwe in particular, to limit the negative impacts of the drought on their medium-term economic strategies.

6.19 Food aid was correctly targeted on Mozambique where the drought exacerbated the war's effects. However, within Mozambique the bulk of ODA food aid was distributed in areas other than those most severely affected by the drought. This reflected ODA's established practice of inviting 'bids' from familiar trusted implementing NGO partners even though trusted implementing NGO partners even

though these efforts were not concentrated in the most severely drought-affected areas. As appropriate information is lacking it is not possible to determine whether these allocations were part of a coherent overall response or whether the pattern of distribution diminished potential overall international effort in the most seriously affected areas.

6.20 The concentration on the Provision of cereals aid may have resulted in ODA's implementing partners distributing rations that under certain circumstances could result in increase of micronutrients deficiency diseases in all age groups and PEM in weaning-age children. The information required, however, to determine whether this was in the areas where ODA food aid was distributed was not available.

6.21 A strength of ODA's emergency funding is its considerable flexibility simple requires for disbursement. This was generally noted as resulting in rapid utilisation. Many NGOs also welcomed the freedom to begin operations on the basis of a commitment in principle prior to the issue of a letter agreement. A further valued aspect of flexibility was in changing the actual, utilisation of funds in accordance with changing needs in an emergency however, implies a need for further reporting as part of responsibility for the use of public funds.

6.22 Co-ordination mechanisms available, their effectiveness, and how these affected ODA's actions: The international and regional early warning system functioned well in providing relatively early information on the drought. The variable performance, however, of the governments of affected countries, and also of donors, in responding to warnings indicated that the co-ordination of actions in relation to such information is still less than satisfactory.

6.23 The improvised co-ordination by food aid donors was successful in initiating an adequate international response and support for the regional logistics operation, which ODA funded in a small way but also strongly supported in policy terms. It was an outstanding example of international co-operation.

6.24 The DESA process, which ODA also supported in a small way, was less successful in but still positive aspect of the international response. A shortcoming was the delay resulting from a perhaps over-ambitious attempt at regional co-ordination. The DESA was also unable to find a satisfactory way of integrating bilateral responses, direct to government and through NGOs, with an appeal organised around food aid and the non-food proposals of UN specialised agencies.

6.25 Because of the reactive nature of ODA's funding in relation to NGO proposals, it is sometimes difficult for the officials in post to ensure that there was no duplication. The 'broker role' of some UK-based NGOs in seeking funding for their local partners from a number of donor sources, and their apparent lack of co-ordination, meant that it was extremely difficult for ODA to know whether it was funding activities with the highest priority. This reactive
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stance and the fact that most of the UK-based NGOs operating in Mozambique kept to their existing locations, prevented ODA from targeting its assistance on the worst affected areas to the extent that it would have preferred. Another issue for consideration is whether ODA should, in effect, through its financial grants, be meeting some of the ITSH costs of the food aid relief operations of other donors.

6.26 The lack of co-ordination between emergency water supply activities and related health measures was a particular weakness of programmes in both Lesotho and Zimbabwe.

6.27 More generally, NGOs retrospectively emphasised the need for stronger coordination amongst themselves in organising drought relief.

6.28 The effectiveness of monitoring and accountability arrangements: The country case studies consistently highlight weaknesses in monitoring and reporting on the part of a high proportion of the agencies operationally involved in the drought response. Reporting was generally delayed, and in some cases perfunctory. This problem included both directly operational agencies and those providing funding for local partner agencies. In the case of the latter, the limited capacity of partner agencies is not a satisfactory explanation for inadequate reporting. The onus of responsibility rests with the UK-based grant-receiving agencies to ensure adequacy, if necessary through the provision of technical assistance to their partners. The lack of follow-up, or response, by ODA on reports was also widely cited by NGOs as a disincentive to do more than report in a minimal way. Where, however, the Post had an explicit role in monitoring grants, eg WaterAid and LSM in Zimbabwe, a high standard of reporting as noted.

6.29 Weakness in monitoring and reporting, as well as in proposals as already noted, is considered to be part of a wider issue of transparency in the use of and accountability for public funds. As the scale of the resources committed to relief operations has grown, this has been associated with the emergence of a quasi-autonomous system of relief organisations in which accountability is diffuse and diluted. International NGOs and consortia of NGOs, as well as international agencies, are drawing upon funding from many governments and the general public across the Western world. The scope for a single donor agency such as ODA to establish priorities is therefore severely constrained.

6.30 Subsequent to the period covered by this evaluation, ODA issued revised guidelines for NGOs applying for and in receipt of ODA funding for humanitarian assistance activities (ODA, 1994). These represent a welcome step in recognising monitoring and accountability concerns of the sort revealed by this study and, in general terms, how these might be addressed. In the light of the findings of this evaluation there is still scope for the further development of these guidelines. For instance, it would be helpful to develop *activity-specific* checklists of questions to be covered by agencies when preparing project proposals and monitoring reports so as to reflect the very wide range of activities frequently undertaken in providing humanitarian

assistance (eg general action distributions, supplementary feeding programmes, water programmes, health programmes, agricultural rehabilitation and logistics activities). Similarly the provision of explicit unit-cost information related to the different types of activity is also needed, to show the cost-effectiveness of proposed and completed actions.

6.31 Evaluation success ratings: The terms of reference do not ask for an Evaluations Success Ratings Table (ESRT) for ODA's drought response. It was, (End p 59)

however, subsequently agreed to consider the criteria for summarising the performance of this regional emergency programme.

6.32 The ESRT method has been developed and refined in relation to development projects. But the ODA's response to the Southern African drought was quite unlike a conventional development project in a number of respects:

a. This was a regional programme of activities involving a wide range of components in nine countries affected in different ways and degrees by the drought during 1991/2. In contrast, the ESRT covers particular aspects of performance of quintessentially the individual project.

b. ODA's response combined humanitarian with developmental objectives. However, in the absence of any explicit statement, it is difficult to assign relative importance to these concerns. For example, 40% of expenditure was provided as direct financial assistance to the Governments of Zambia and Zimbabwe's own emergency efforts, but also to help protect their longer term development priorities;

c. ODA's bilateral response constituted a relatively small component, approximately 5%, of the overall international response. Consequently, apart from particular sectors or geographical areas within the affected countries where ODA's assistance may have been concentrated, it represented a minor part of international assistance, and in most cases it was difficult to determine separately the effects of ODA's contribution. The relevant assessment questions concern the overall response and, regarding ODA's contribution, whether it was complementary to and enhanced the overall effort.

d. Emergency grants typically provided partial support to the relief programmes of UK-based NGOs and international organisations that were in turn often directly supporting only components of the activities of governments and NGOs in affected countries. For impacts, therefore, the chain of causation was often tenuous.

e. Emergency operations are by their nature transitory and, with certain exceptions such as emergency water interventions, often leave no 'footprint'.

f. Therefore, because performance monitoring and impact assessment were not accorded high priority by ODA in making grants or by its grantees in most of their actions, little can be inferred with confidence about impacts. The few

exceptional cases of fuller impact assessment are not necessarily representative of the overall programme.

g. *Ex-ante* appraisal is a standard feature of the development project cycle, but in the absence of systematic appraisal for emergency operations, the benchmarks are typically lacking for *ex-post* evaluative rating.

6.33 To conclude, the appropriate performance criteria and the balance of performance criteria are different for emergency operations and development projects. Because of lack of performance monitoring and evidence on impacts, the qualitative assessment of ODA's drought response within the conventional ESRT is
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difficult and potentially misleading in two respects. First, it would provide a false sense of precision in the assessment. Second, it would focus only on some of the relevant criteria for assessing the performance of an emergency operation. In order to illustrate these issues, we have provided a commentary rather than a scale rating for the drought response in terms of the standard set of project performance criteria. This assessment is then complemented by a similar review of other criteria not usually included in the ESRT which are considered as potentially relevant to evaluating the performance of an emergency action.

6.34 Development project performance criteria

Cost over-run / under-run: not relevant: Most activities involved fixed sum grants for specific purchases or the financing of activity within a fixed budgetary limit. Precise performance targets were not usually set. The built-in flexibility within emergency grants also allowed discretion in altering the balance of activities or specification of purchases.

Time overrun / under-run: relevant only in certain specific cases, such as emergency water projects. A more appropriate criterion is timeliness of action (see below). In addition, the changing nature of needs is typically accepted as allowing a departure from the original timetable in an emergency request established on the basis of highly imperfect information.

Technical success: variable performance was indicated by the evaluation, but weak performance monitoring makes overall assessment difficult. In view of uncertainties, however, high and uniform performance is not to be expected.

Cost-effectiveness: variable performance, but strongly shaped by the need for timely action.

Adherence to project conditions: variable performance in terms of financial reporting on grants. More generally, grants are made in a highly flexible way.

Promoting ODA's development priorities: emergency objectives are generally

expressed in terms of preventing or limiting negative impacts.

Economic liberalisation: financial aid given successfully with regard to this objective. Otherwise this is not a direct priority of emergency programmes.

Enhancing productive capacity: only the overall drought response could be assessed on a regional, country and sometimes a more restrictive basis, as protecting the erosion of productive capacity at various levels.

Good governance: an indirect objective of ODA's response was protecting the reform process in Southern Africa. Overall, the international effort was highly successful in this regard.

Poverty impact: an important objective of humanitarian assistance is to prevent impoverishment. The overall regional response was apparently successful, but, with few exceptions, data were lacking to assess the relative success in the most vulnerable regions and in groups targeted by ODA grantees.

Human resources: education: an objective of the school feeding activities supported in Zimbabwe was preventing disruption of schooling. Only impressionistic evidence available for ODA-assisted programmes.
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Human resources: health: prevention of mortality damage to long-run health, and disease and nutritional stress. Not initially a high ODA priority, but apparently a relatively successful aspect of the overall drought response to which ODA contributed. Lack of monitoring information from relief and health interventions assisted by ODA.

Human resources: children by choice: not relevant.

Environmental impact: in practice this is only an indirect objective of emergency responses - to assist affected populations to cope without irreversibly damaging their environment. No direct evidence for ODA-assisted activities. However, other evaluations eg Tiffin and Mulele (1993) for severely affected Zambia, indicate no significant, irreversibly negative environmental impacts.

Impact on women: some emergency grant-assisted programmes were explicitly targeted on women. In practice, however, this constitutes an indirect objective as a high proportion of vulnerable populations in several seriously affected countries were female headed households. There was an almost complete lack of monitoring information on gender-specific impacts in the three case-study countries.

Social impact: an important objective of emergency aid is minimising social dislocation. In these terms, the overall response was apparently relatively successful, but there was a general lack of micro-information for ODA-assisted grants.

Financial rate of return; Economic rate of return; Financial sustainability; Institutional sustainability; Overall sustainability: these are not relevant criteria for emergency actions. However, as some actions involved investment in water supply, the return to and sustainability of such investment ought to have been appraised more systematically. Emergency aid involves the management of resource flows by a co-ordination of government and non-governmental organisations and multilateral agencies. Substantial resource flows invariably confer some benefits to the 'channelling' organisations, resulting in their strengthening relative to other organisations. For instance, a decision to channel resources through UK NGOs operating in parallel to agencies of the host government may strengthen their power in relation to the latter. Judgements as to whether this constitutes a positive or negative effect are invariably subjective.

6.35 Additional project performance criteria relevant to an emergency operation:

Amongst the criteria missing from the standard list are the following:

Quality of assessment of disaster impacts and related quality of proposals for emergency action in terms of appropriateness and the other criteria listed below. In conditions of uncertainty many initial assessments and proposals will be retrospectively invalidated and highly variable performance is to be expected. The evaluators judged that the assessment of disaster impacts was satisfactory but the quality of proposals was extremely variable.

Timeliness: a quantitative assessment is required of impacts, as well as the management performance of grantees in preparing proposals, ODA in processing proposals and grantees in implementation. As emergency requirements are critical, timeliness overrides many other standard financial and technical considerations. An overall assessment of timeliness of a range of activities is impractical, but areas of variable performance included formulating and (End p 62)

submitting requests. In terms of sectors, food distributions were relatively timely, seeds and tool distributions were variable and emergency water supply measures had little impact in relation to drought-created needs. ODA's own performance was satisfactory in terms of the time taken to review requests, and good in the provision of BOP support. Its performance in assessment, however, was variable.

Sensitivity to changing information and conditions was a positive aspect of performance.

6.36 In order to provide summary success ratings for emergency operations the criteria for assessment would need to be restated in terms of a relevance for judging the efficacy and efficiency of emergency actions. According higher priority to monitoring and impact assessment is also a necessary pre-condition for more meaningful assessment.

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