

SUMMARY

1. BACKGROUND

1. The drought which affected most of Southern Africa during 1991/92 resulted in the largest and possibly the most successful internationally co-ordinated food and relief effort of recent times. The greater part of the international response occurred during the fifteen months after March 1992. With the more favourable 1992/93 rains agriculture rapidly recovered, making further large food imports unnecessary (para 1.1).

2. ODA decided to assess its contribution to the overall response to the drought as part of a wider review of its experience in providing emergency relief. The Overseas Development Institute was asked to undertake this evaluation. It included: a review of ODA's general approach, including preparation and organisation, and the speed of response; a costing of the major elements and qualitative assessment of value for money; a review of the impacts of the major components; an assessment of the appropriateness of the assistance provided in terms of balance between financial aid, food aid, funding NGOs, and technical co-operation. The study also looked at the co-ordination mechanisms involved and how affected ODA (para 1.2).

3. The study consisted of a review of ODA files and interviews with the staff of departments involved in the response, followed by detailed case studies involving fieldwork during January and February 1994 in three affected countries, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Lesotho, selected to reflect the wide range of circumstances and different elements of ODA's response. The findings of the study are set out more fully in the Main Report and Annexes 1 to 4 which cover the detailed case studies.

2. THE DROUGHT AND ITS IMPACTS

4. The main direct impact of the drought was to reduce cereal production to below 40% of the late 1980s level, increasing import requirements by some 250% in 1992/93. Actual food imports of the severely affected SADC countries and South Africa, including both concessional and commercial flows, increased by 7.2m tonnes or 235% (para 2.2.3).

5. The direct economic impact of reduced food production were further aggravated by wider impacts on agricultural production and export revenues, as well as non-agricultural impacts which were concentrated particularly in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Consequently, the affected countries were confronted with both internal and external financing gaps to cover massive increase in cereal imports. They had to take measures to facilitate agricultural recovery and to respond to water- and health-related effects of the drought, while counteracting the wider negative economic consequences of the crisis (para 2.2.5).

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6. Thus governments of the region and the international community were confronted with a disaster of unusual scale, severity and complexity. They were differentiated relief problems to be addressed in countries with varied capacities to mount large-scale operations. The drought posed problems of organising recovery, especially for the worst hit small-scale farmers. Water-supply and health problems were also potentially severe. Finally, economic impacts were highly differentiated. An important issue, therefore, in assessing ODA's response is the extent to which it was sensitive to differentiated consequences of the drought and ensured that its assistance complemented other actions (para 2.2.8).

3. THE RESPONSE BY GOVERNMENTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

7. The well-organised early warning systems in Southern Africa successfully drew attention to the impending crisis at an early stage, and then provided rapidly updated assessments of the crisis as it evolved (para 2.3.3).

8. By late February 1992 governments of affected countries and the international community recognised the potentially immense scale of the regional crisis and began to organise appropriate responses, including regional logistics involving the Republic of South Africa, and a co-ordinated appeal for both food and non- food assistance. However, this process, which involved co-ordination by the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs and SADC, was long drawn out, culminating in an international pledging conference in early June 1992 (paras 2.3.4-6).

9. Regional Logistics Response: an unprecedented level of imports required the organisation of supplies and finance and critical physical co-ordination of transport within the region. The combined requirements of RSA and the 9 drought- affected SADC countries were estimated in April 1992 at over 11m tonnes for 1992/93 and, in the event, 10.5m tonnes of food arrived in countries of final destination during 1992/93. Especially impressive were the large increases in imports to landlocked Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi; and the 2.2m tonnes, including 1.3m tonnes in transit to other countries, shipped through Mozambique which was still affected by long-standing conflict (paras 2.3.12-15).

10. The success of the response resulted from the combined efforts of the governments of the region and the international community to establish requirements, make commitments of food and organise the logistics of its delivery. International co-ordination was less successful in assessing non-food relief requirements as these were limited to the appeals of United Nations agencies. A third, relatively successful, parallel process of co-ordinated international economic assistance through country donor consortia, including both the IMF and World Bank, involved assessing additional financial requirements. A number of contingent factors, including concerns about the risk of disruption to the processes of political and economic reform in the region, also contributed to the success of the international response to the drought (paras 2.3.16-17).

11. The financial cost during 1992/93 of the overall response to the drought was around US\$4bn (Pound Sterling £2.4bn) including actions by governments of

affected countries.

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The international food import and logistics operation as well as other relief measures funded by the international community amounted to some US\$1.8bn (approx pound sterling £1.1bn in 1992/93). ODA's own direct bilateral response eventually amounted to some £50m, wholly in grant form. This was some 5 percent of the international response during 1992/3 which itself included significant amounts of loan funding.

4. ODA'S RESPONSE

12. The role of ODA has to be considered in terms of its contribution to the overall success of the response at a regional level. The main elements of ODA's response strategy were determined as a result of its initial assessment of the drought situation at the end of February 1992 (paras 3.4-8). Two separate but complementary objectives were distinguished: to contribute directly to alleviating the suffering of affected peoples and to assist countries in coping with the severe economic effects of the drought. A phased approach was adopted, involving an initial response combining both humanitarian and economic assistance. ODA then reassessed the appropriateness of its overall response in the light of more detailed international assessments of the scale and distribution of the drought impacts (paras 3.9-11). The four basic elements of ODA's initial response on 4 March 1992 of approximately £10m involved:

- financial assistance, to meet balance-of-payments costs of additional drought-related imports in Zambia and Zimbabwe;
- bilateral food aid, targeted on countries where emergency aid was considered the most appropriate response, initially Mozambique and subsequently Malawi;
- technical assistance, particularly in support of the regional logistics effort;
- the use of this early, substantial UK response to encourage and facilitate European and wider donor responses to the crisis.

13. Subsequently, a block of emergency aid funding was earmarked to support technical assistance and the activities of British NGOs, and additional support for the programmes of international agencies including, in particular, the WFP and UNICEF (para 3.12).

14. The phased response involved three tranches of funding and total commitments of £56m, including emergency assistance to Mozambique that was only in part drought-related (para 3.13).

15. Actual expenditure, excluding some assistance to Mozambique which was only partially related to the drought, totalled some £49.2m. In terms of regional resource flows, total bilateral assistance to the severely drought-affected countries of the region increased by £30.5m or 25 percent during 1992/93, the major areas of

increase in expenditure being programme aid to Zambia and Zimbabwe, disaster relief and food aid. Some 43 percent of ODA's assistance was channelled (End p 3)

directly to governments of the drought-affected countries, 36 percent indirectly through British-based NGOs and their partners, and 17 percent via international agencies (paras 3.16-21).

16. The sectoral composition reflects priorities determined by ODA in its initial response, and reactions to proposals from governments, NGOs and international agencies. The largest single element of expenditure, balance-of- payments support (41 percent), reflected ODA's assessment of the severe economic impacts in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Food aid for direct distribution, (35 percent) was the preferred response in Malawi and Mozambique. These decisions reflect at least implicit judgments about the capacities of national institutions in drought- affected countries. The other elements of the response (25 percent) to a large extent reflect the balance of proposals put directly to ODA by NGOs and international organisations, or channelled through the Posts (para 3.24).

17. The important issue for assessment is therefore the relative effectiveness of those allocations which reflected ODA's choice of priority, the provision of balance-of-payments support and the country targeting of food aid; and those activities where it was reacting to NGO and international agency requests (paras 3.25-30).

5. ASSESSMENT OF ODA'S RESPONSE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE THREE COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

18. 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 (see below paragraphs 36-40). The international community more generally and ODA in particular have succeeded in incorporating into their emergency practice many lessons learnt since the previous regional crisis in Africa in 1984/85 (para 6.2).

19. Nevertheless, a closer scrutiny indicates areas of less satisfactory performance. There is need for improvement in the way ODA, NGOs and the international community prepare for and respond to drought shocks given the likelihood of another major drought-related crisis in Africa within the next few years (para 6.3).

i. ODA's General Approach

20. ODA performed well in terms of quickly identifying the worst affected countries, establishing clear objectives and devising its overall response strategy at an early stage using the full range of aid instruments at its disposal. This was because CSAD, in consultation with the officials in post, effectively monitored the situation in the major countries of the region and ECFAD maintained a watching brief on food security and food aid (para 6.4).

21. The principal weaknesses lay in terms of the way ODA organised its response at a country level, where strategies were less clearly developed (para 6.5). In particular:
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- it did not have a specific strategy for targeting its food aid in Mozambique and consequently the NGOs, through which virtually all its assistance was channelled, determined the geographical distribution. In a difficult operating environment most of these agencies preferred to direct additional drought-related resources to their existing relief programmes which were not in those areas most severely affected by the drought. It is not known whether, as a result, there were unmet needs in the latter areas.

- it failed to question rigorously the content of many proposals submitted by agencies, some of which were uninformative and poorly prepared;

- in-country monitoring capacity was insufficient to ensure a necessary minimum number of monitoring visits to the project sites and follow-up on agency reporting. In particular, most grants made to UK-based organisations, sometimes for partner agencies in-country, were not satisfactorily monitored (see below).

ii. Speed of Response

22. ODA initially moved quickly. Its first tranche of support on 4 March 1992 was made only a month after Zambia declared an emergency and before the Government of Zimbabwe had made its official declaration and request for international support (paras 6.6-6.8).

In terms of specific components:

- *balance-of-payments support* was provided speedily and, despite being a new form of emergency response, smoothly;

- the bulk (90 percent) of the *food aid* provided to Mozambique during 1992/93 was distributed by the end of 1992, before the start of the normal 'hungry season';

- the performance of non-food assistance including that in the *agricultural recovery, emergency water programmes and health* sectors, was less impressive. The major part of the water and health assistance failed to yield benefits to the target population(s) until after the 1992-93 rains had begun and the crisis had passed. Many of the seeds and tools provided as part of agricultural rehabilitation activities did not reach farmers until well into the planting season.

23. As some NGOs were slow in submitting proposals for non-food aid assistance, their actions often started comparatively late. The proposals of some NGOs, submitted on behalf of partner organisations in the affected countries, were of low quality, which caused further delay. ODA's performance in terms of the time

taken to process and approve the proposals was satisfactory in most cases, especially taking into account the varying efficiency of those seeking funding and implementing activities.

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iii. Value of the Major Elements and Value for Money

24. Overall, ODA appears to have obtained value for money (para 6.9). In terms of specific components:

- the majority of ODA food aid was distributed free, but there was also some food-for-work and food for subsidised sale by NGOs. Local purchases of food for relief, where direct comparisons could be made, compared favourably with costs of food aid imports by other donors;

- as agricultural rehabilitation projects were implemented relatively late, many agencies had to pay a premium which could perhaps have been avoided had purchases been arranged earlier;

- in undertaking truck purchases, some agencies opted for apparently better deals available from South African suppliers but some of the models so procured may have been less appropriate;

- the procurement and shipping of drugs and other medical supplies by UNICEF appears, overall, to have been cost-effective.

But the issue of cost-effectiveness cannot be considered separately from that of timeliness.

iv. Impact of the Major Components

25. There were difficulties in determining the impacts of most ODA-supported actions in the three case study countries and more generally (para 6.10). 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 and increases in morbidity and mortality. A further problem is that the interventions supported by ODA represented only part of the overall drought response, even at the district or provincial level.

26. The other reason for the difficulty in determining impacts is that very few of the operational agencies involved attempted to measure impact (para 6.11). 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.

v. Assessment of the Major Benefits Delivered in Relation to Costs

27. Inevitably, given the lack of information on impacts, cost-benefit assessment

is, at best, impressionistic (paras 6.13-15).

28. The benefits of *financial, aid for balance-of-payments* support are inherently difficult to assess. Grants to Zimbabwe and Zambia, however, were extremely well-timed and fast acting. This assistance contributed to the success of the (End p 6)

governments' efforts in avoiding the breakdown of the normal food marketing system and the serious economic and political consequences that would have followed. The additional assistance also decreased the governments' financing requirement for drought response, thereby reducing the drought's negative impacts on medium-term economic reform strategies.

29. Although the impact of *food aid in Mozambique* could not be assessed, the bulk of distributions were completed before the start of the next harvest.

30. The lack of information on the results of most *seeds distribution* programmes makes it impossible to assess whether the benefits outweighed the costs.

31. The late start-up and slow implementation of most of the *emergency water programmes* substantially reduced the value of their benefits *during* the drought. Even so, where the boreholes and other supply improvements were late, they have probably been of long-term benefit to the population. It is likely, however, 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 an example of an activity which, by successfully combining immediate relief with longer-term goals, will command considerable local support in a crisis.

32. 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, preventative measures should perhaps have been given a higher priority. The lack of integration between emergency water and health measures is also a less than satisfactory aspect of the drought response.

vi. Appropriateness of the Assistance Provided, Including the Balance Between Financial Aid, Food Aid, Funding of NGOs and Technical Co-operation Input

33. The innovative use of financial aid as BoP support in an emergency situation 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 where financing the response would involve economically damaging foreign-exchange costs. By assisting in this way, ODA also probably helped to galvanise international support for Zambia and Zimbabwe, in particular, to limit the negative impacts on their medium-term economic strategies (para 6.18).

34. Food aid was correctly targeted on Mozambique, where direct relief to victims of the drought, whose needs had been increased by the war, had the highest priority. However, the bulk of ODA food aid was distributed in areas other than those most affected by the drought and concentrated on the provision of cereals. There is evidence in aggregate that Mozambique received a higher proportion of its cereals needs than was the case for oils and legumes. Although
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there is no quantitative evidence that unbalanced rations resulted in nutritional problems, some of ODA's NGOs partners expressed concern at ODA's concentration on the provision of cereals (paras 6.19-20).

35. A strength of ODA's emergency funding is its considerable flexibility and simple requirements for disbursement. This was generally noted as resulting in rapid utilisation. Such flexibility, however, implies a need for further reporting as part of ODA's accountability for the use of public funds (para 6.21).

vii. Co-ordination Mechanisms Available, Their Effectiveness, and How These Affected ODA's Actions

36. The international and regional early warning systems functioned well in providing early information on the drought. The varied responses, however, of the governments of affected countries, and also of donors, indicate that the co-ordination of actions on receipt of such information is still far from satisfactory (para 6.22).

37. Food aid donors' extempore co-ordination 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 (para 6.23).

38. The DESA process, which ODA also supported in a small way, was a less successful but still positive aspect of the international response. The two principal weaknesses of the DESA process were, first, that it was an over-ambitious attempt at regional co-ordination which only delayed action, and, second, that it failed to integrate bilateral non-food aid channelled to governments and NGOs within the process (Para 6.24)

39. 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. Furthermore, it was sometimes difficult for officials in Post to ensure that there was no duplication (para 6.25).

40. NGOs, in retrospect, themselves emphasised the need for stronger co-ordination of their mutual efforts in organising drought relief (para 6.27).

viii. The Effectiveness of Monitoring and Accountability Arrangements

41. 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. Where, however, the Post had an explicit role in monitoring grants, a high standard of reporting was noted (para 6.28).

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42. Weaknesses in NGO monitoring and reporting, as well as in proposals, are considered to be part of the wider issue of transparency in the use of and accountability for public funds. International NGOs and consortia of NGOs, as well as international agencies, are drawing upon funding from many governments and from the general public across the Western world. Although the scope for a single donor such as ODA to establish priorities and to get agencies to improve proposals and monitoring is constrained, this obstacle should not be allowed to block more vigorous efforts in that direction (para 6.29).

ix. Success Ratings and Overall Success

43. The evaluators considered the criteria in Evaluation Department's Success Rating Table for summarising the assessment of ODA's drought response. Performance on technical success, cost-effectiveness and conditions on financial reporting was variable; support to economic liberalisation was successful; and the international effort was highly successful in protecting the reform process. While poverty impact was apparently successful there was insufficient information to assess the success for vulnerable regions and target groups and similarly for the health impact, impact on women and social impact (para 6.34).

44. The evaluators conclude that a set of performance criteria appropriate for assessment of a large complex emergency programme must differ from one devised for assessment of development projects. The assessment of disaster impacts was satisfactory, but the quality of proposals was extremely variable. An overall assessment of timeliness of a range of activities is impractical, but areas of variable performance included formulating and 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, but assessment of NGO proposals was variable. Sensitivity to changing conditions was a positive aspect of performance (para 6.35).

45. Finally, it was not possible to make an overall assessment of success. To do so it would have been necessary for higher priority to have been accorded to monitoring and to impact assessment during implementation (para 6.36).

LESSONS

46. In responding to a large scale regional emergency with a range of impacts, use of all available aid instruments increases the likelihood of a more effective response.

47. The provision of **balance of payments** support in grant form to a low income disaster-affected country is an appropriate response where there is:

- agreement between donor and recipient government on overall aid and public expenditure priorities and the reporting requirements are satisfied by arrangements already in place. It is more appropriate where the government (End p 9)

itself makes the major response, and where there is a related resource gap that would not be filled by existing international compensatory arrangements. Grant finance is of course particularly welcome to poorer countries in these circumstances.

- Directly assisting a government's own import programme should have priority where this complements and underpins relief efforts by local and international NGOs. In Zimbabwe and Zambia NGOs were only able to launch relief operations in a timely way and to sustain these activities because they could draw upon marketing channels that were sustained by the government's own import programme.

- A preference for financial assistance might also be contingent on the pragmatic judgement that commercial imports are likely to provide a speedier response than conventional food aid.

48. For the provision of **food aid support**:

- Initial targeting by geographical area and vulnerable populations are likely to be the critically important decisions.

- As well as responding to requests from familiar partners, the possibilities of providing food aid through less familiar partners should be considered. Choices here depend critically on co-ordination with other donors.

- Regarding sources of commodities, local purchases can provide flexibility and more timely responses. The appropriateness, however, of the commodities in question, as well as assessment of the local marketing implications, should be part of the assessment process prior to the making of a grant.

- That a significant number of agencies more or less automatically turned to ODA to fund vehicle purchases or transport costs reflects on ODA's flexibility. That such activities can, when taken together, account for significant expenditures, suggests the need for a co-ordinated technical co-operation input into future large relief programme to ensure that decisions are made on an appropriate and cost-effective basis, and that equipment is effectively utilised.

49. If improving quantity and assuring **potability of water supplies** during a drought are priorities, then there are lessons to be learned from 1992/93 in terms of appropriate mitigation measures. Some other donor projects concentrated on rapidly implementable measures to improve supplies, such as well deepening and repairs, in order to have more impact during the drought. Slow start-up suggests that effective emergency water measures would benefit from more effective disaster preparedness.

Institutional arrangements also make a considerable difference to effective response: the use of the NGO, Water Aid, as the implementing agency in a government-related programme, achieved more rapid implementation, some sensitivity to changing priorities, and more effective
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monitoring than in other projects. Emergency measures to increase water supplies must be properly integrated with health considerations. There is also the difficult decision-making problem under conditions of uncertainty during a drought, over the balance to be struck between measures to improve water supply almost immediately and measures that would have considerably greater benefit in the long-term or if the drought were to continue.

50. There appear to be three lessons for future **agricultural rehabilitation**, especially as operated by NGOs. First, such programmes and proposals should be prepared alongside those for relief measures because of long lead times and the likely poor performance of late distributions. Second, suitability and quality of seed are likely to be decisive considerations and NGOs may need technical support. Third, performance monitoring and impact assessment need to have higher priority.

51. The drought crisis had a potentially serious **health aspect**, which was worsened by the war in Mozambique and Angola and the movement of people to centres with, initially, poor water, sanitary and health facilities. Some aspect of preparedness is desirable, once a crisis beyond even national dimensions is recognised. Donors such as ODA therefore have a useful role in providing additional foreign exchange to meet import requirements, particularly those of essential drugs related to disorders associated with contaminated water supplies and nutritional stress. The relationship between nutrition, water supply and health actions needs to be recognised, and in this regard monitoring has an important role.

52. Where, as in the case of a drought, agencies are not responding to immediate, life-threatening problems (for example, in organising food distributions over several months; providing seeds for agricultural rehabilitation; or assuring potable water supplies) there remains considerable scope for improving the quality of proposals and for strengthening monitoring, impact assessment and reporting.

53. Early contingent response by key donors is critical in ensuring overall success. International coordination during implementation, in particular at the regional level, is necessary for success in region-wide emergencies.

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