

# International and DFID Responses to the Southern African Humanitarian Crisis 2001-2003: selected issues from reviews and evaluations<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

1. This paper summarises findings from an illustrative selection of reviews and evaluations of responses to the humanitarian crisis in Southern Africa, which the international community recognised as being a regional crisis in first half of 2002. The objective of the paper is to provide background for a DFID learning review to be held in Pretoria, 24-25 September 2003.

2. The paper is 'selective' in two senses. First, it highlights issues thought worthy of discussion from the still provisional findings on an emergency that has not officially ended, as evidenced by the 2003 CAP.

3. Second, the review focuses on the international aspects of the response to the crisis, drawing mostly upon review documents that are in the public domain. The distinction between formal evaluations and other types of review document has been blurred by the emergence of the 'real time evaluation' (RTE) generating what are in effect monitoring reports for limited circulation. Examples are the WFP evaluation, the DFID sponsored evaluation of OCHA and the ALNAP 'Learning Support Office' (LSO) in Malawi (WFP, 2003; Taylor and Gaonette, 2003; Borton, 2003).

## 2. Big issues and process grumbles

4. It is useful to try and distinguish '*the big issues*' such as the nature of the crisis and the overall impact of the response from '*process issues*' about the way the actual response was organised and implemented.

5. This crisis has been unusual in that there is a still continuing controversy both in academic and official circles about the nature of the crisis, and what should have been the appropriate international response to the evolving situation in the region. This is highlighted by the publicly funded e-conferences such as that organised by ODI ([www.odi.org.uk/food-security-forum](http://www.odi.org.uk/food-security-forum)) and that supported by UNDP on 'new variant famine' ([www.sahims.net/archive/variant\\_famine/](http://www.sahims.net/archive/variant_famine/)). The paper therefore includes at Annex 1 a brief account of the crisis, its causes, and the implications for action in the immediate future. More detail on the chronology of the crisis is available in a companion document from ODI.

6. The main part of the paper summarises a selection of findings, conclusions and recommendations. This is done starkly in tabular form<sup>1</sup> to provide a focus for discussion.

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7. Evaluations and various kinds of internal monitoring and completion reports are, as one might expect, reporting successes, and this is reflected in Table A on 'Major Outcomes'. There have also been some widely acknowledged 'problems' such as GMO.

8. A closer reading reveals what might be called 'process grumbles' indicating ways in which things might have been done better, and which may be areas for improved practice. These are summarised in Tables B-D on performance versus targets in the emergency food operations, organisation and management issues and information.

### **'Reinventing the wheel', 'new wine in old bottles', etc**

9. There is a widespread sense that this crisis has in some senses been a 'new variant emergency', generating a new agenda. However in looking at the international response, especially in terms of process, it seems reasonable to compare the findings, 'lessons and recommendations from the latest regional crisis in Africa' with the regional drought response in 1992/3 or even the 'African food crisis of 1984'. To what extent is the agenda changing or the attempt to learn from the 2001/3 crisis actually re-articulating for a new audience some old and clearly difficult to solve problems? So the paper includes a few comparisons between the SAHC and the last major regional international emergency in 1992/3.

## **3. Responses: government and donors**

10. The crisis of 2001–03 developed relatively slowly. Early warning systems recorded the modest harvest losses, the draw-down on stocks and the possibility of food shortages. But in almost all cases, governments delayed reacting to these warnings. For example, in Zimbabwe, NGOs warned of the scale of the mounting problem in November 2001, but the government declared an emergency only in April 2002. Moreover, none of the six EMOP countries appear to have had a contingency plan to handle crisis. Strategic grain reserves were low just as they were needed most. It also seems that the three worse-affected countries, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, were the least prepared to deal with the emergency.

11. NGOs have been widely used to distribute the grain brought in by WFP and CSAFE. They have used community targeting, calling on local residents to set the criteria for access to relief food. .

### **Implications**

12. Four issues are raised by the way the crisis emerged and the form of the initial international response: the extent to which the crisis is about food; the debates on liberalisation; social differentiation; and, the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

- First, the crisis has been defined as one of food security with official responses focused on food imports, with some thought as to subsequent recovery of domestic food production.
- Second, how to restore, revive and promote the region's food and agricultural economy? In particular, there is a sharp divide on the merits of a liberalised agricultural economy. .

- Third, NGOs and some official donors have been acutely aware of social differentiation and the ways that the crisis thus hit some groups harder than others. But governments and some donors appear reluctant to consider such differences.
- Fourth, the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is not sufficiently known and there are substantial differences in opinion on its seriousness and the appropriate response.

#### **4 The international response: findings and implications**

13. Eventually almost all the international agencies, donors and NGOs will review or evaluate their contribution to the emergency response to the Southern African humanitarian crisis. Then a considered synthesis of findings and lessons learnt will be possible. Meanwhile a selection of findings and implications, focusing only on the international aspects of the response, provides a useful input to the DFID learning review for two reasons. First, the largest element of the UK response was channelled through the WFP and other international agencies (some 40 % of bilateral commitments were to the WFP EMOP and 10% to other agencies). Second, a synthesis of other agencies' findings to date in relation to the crisis provides useful context for the learning that will take place during the review.

14. There is a real challenge – how can DFID contribute to a collective international process of learning from the crisis? There is also an urgent need to learn from the crisis, because as is now widely accepted there is a 'new aspect' to these events. This includes an emergency or exceptional situation that is apparently continuing because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and severe problems of governance, especially but not only in Zimbabwe. This makes 'learning-in' drawing upon earlier experience such as the droughts of the 1990s less relevant and 'learning-out' drawing on crisis experience that much more important (Borton, 2003).

15. The range of issues raised in even a few of the reviews of international performance, such as the WFP Real Time Evaluation (RTE) and the OCHA RTE, is difficult to summarise. Furthermore, the intention in this paper is to flag issues for discussion rather than provide a considered judgement. So a tabular form of presentation has been adopted. This presentation broadly follows the standard way in which an evaluation is organised, proceeding from findings to conclusions and then recommendations with relevance to the current situation, and then future crisis response and preparedness in Southern Africa. The relevance of each Table to the learning review timetable is indicated in brackets. Inevitably the approach is bold and oversimplified, but it makes possible a wider coverage of issues from which participants can select questions for discussion.

16. The presentation begins with major outcomes of the international response in Table A. That is followed in Table B by findings that compare performance and targets for the EMOP and other food related international relief. A selection of organisational issues and process grumbles are summarised in Table C. Finally, because questions of the accuracy of assessments of the extent and character of the crisis have loomed large, Table D summarises findings on information issues. Where the reviews fail to follow up on a finding, making no explicit recommendation, what would seem to be the implicit message is suggested in *italics* as a question. The presentation draws particularly on the WFP RTE (WFP, 2003); the OCHA RTE (2003), the ODI HPG review on assessment (Darcy and others 2003), the IDC 2002 report, reviews of the Learning Support Office in Malawi

(Borton, 2003) and documents presented at the June consultation on humanitarian assistance needs in Johannesburg.

17. *A new variant emergency?* Almost all the process issues raised in the Tables A –D would find parallels in the many evaluations of the responses to the previous regional crisis in Southern Africa in 1992/3 and even earlier crises such as the African food crisis in 1984. To provide some indication of these many parallels, Table E includes recommendations from both *the Assessment of the response to the 1991/2 drought in the SADC Region* (SADC, 1993) and the evaluation of ODA's response to that same crisis (Clay and others 1995; and Annex 3). The weaknesses of international crop and food assessment is a very old issue (Table E). This implies that there are some problems that are systemic and institutional. However the more specific ways in which assessment is being strengthened, notably the VAC, suggest that there is improvement. The only really new issues are GMO and the consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The recurrent nature of many 'data problems' suggests too that it is difficult to achieve sustainable improvements in disaster management and information systems in Southern Africa. The damaging 'too late – too much food aid' issue is all too familiar from many earlier crises (Table E). The similarities between many of the recommendations made a decade ago and in reviewing the 2001-3 crisis response, suggest that institutionalising lessons from crisis responses is neither simple nor straight forward.

**TABLE A: Responding to the Southern African Crisis: major outcomes**

<b>Findings (Report)</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
1. Regional food crisis is redefined as 'New variant emergency' ( <i>OCHA RTE and others</i> )	Assessment failure ( Table C) Unprecedented situation in which familiar formulae not appropriate (Table B)	A complex shift from crisis mode to continued emergency support needed in several countries Re-examine information basis of policy
2. Catastrophe averted but the danger not eliminated' ( <i>WFP RTE</i> )	An Adequate response by International agencies, Donors, Governments and Civil Society	<i>Keep it simple?</i> <i>Food assistance is an easier, practical option?</i>
3. Initial failure to addresses the food security problems in a sustainable way ( <i>WFP RTE</i> )		Transition from large EMOP to PRRO requires conceptual clarity
4. Asset depletion in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique. ( <i>WFP RTE</i> )	EMOP only partly met its livelihood objectives –	'Not by food alone' A broader approach is required?
5. Logistics operation relatively successful, despite many problems ( <i>WFP RTE</i> )	WFP again demonstrates capacity to manage large EMOP	<i>Strengthen role of WFP as UN humanitarian relief agency</i>
6. Extensive cost-effective use of private sector ( <i>WFP RTE</i> )	Demonstrates effectiveness of PS	<i>How to increase operations uses of PS?</i>

**TABLE B Southern African Crisis: response performance versus targets**

Report and Findings	Conclusions	Lessons for 2003/4	Lessons for future response
<b>WFP RTE Food Operations</b>	<b>Accountability?</b>	<b>Repetition of experience in 92/93?</b>	
1.. Slow implementation country differences July 02: 25%; Dec 02: 43% (266K) Mar 03: 75% Over 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> of balance of 900,000 t not distributed in 02/03 –	Donor response Sept 02 37% Mar 03 84% overall , but 97% food	Too late – and so too much? Risks of disrupting recovery with excessive food distribution and overhang of public stocks? OR HIV necessitates continued large scale relief supported by food imports?	<i>Ambitious targets are essential to ensure good enough performance? Improved assessment is needed to prevent excessive commitment?</i>
2. Wide country differences (from c. 100% in Malawi to 30% in Zimbabwe)	Local partner weakness: - Government - Lack of NGO partners		Strengthening Disaster preparedness in Southern Africa
3. GMO issue caused costs escalation and delays	Donor and/or recipient inflexibility?		More cash and less tied food aid.
4. Disparate time lines Donor commodities 3-5 months Cash for LPs and RPs 1-3 months	Donor and/or recipient inflexibility?		
3. Unable to establish full pipeline of all commodities	Difficult to program a balanced ration for large scale or general relief.	Simplify excessively complex food assistance operations?	A broader approach: not just food assistance?
<b>CSAFE</b> failed to start until early 2003 failing to fill additional food gap	WFP justifiable concerns about parallel operations	Rationalise relief and safety net operations at country level?	<i>Strong guidance against parallel donor initiatives?</i>

**TABLE C Institutional and organisational issues**

<b>Findings (Report)</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>Lessons for 2003/4</b>	<b>Lessons for future response</b>
Special Envoy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• highly effective at governmental and international level (<i>WFP/ OCHA RTEs</i>)</li> <li>• High level envoys does not support operations managers ( <i>Bennett, 2003</i>)</li> </ul>			Need to rethink linkages within the UN operation
OCHA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- deployments taking 6-12 months</li> <li>- Delays in DFID funding (5 months)</li> </ul>	OCHA added little to country-level programming		Need for OCHA and DFID to look at ways of speeding up funding thru complex UN bureaucracy
CAP ( <i>Darcy et al; OCHA RTE</i> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'not substantive and not integrated'</li> <li>• non food elements underdeveloped</li> <li>• useful to donors without country representation</li> </ul>	Does not reflect comprehensive process of assessment or analysis of needs	Rethink the role of CAP	: OCHA and partners need to develop more appropriate planning and resource mobilisation tool for exceptional circumstances
SAHIMS failed to provide value added at country level; ( <i>OCHA RTE</i> )	An inappropriate model Inadequately staffed		Management information systems must be tailored to met specific requirements
Financing the EMOPS 'Cash flow problems were systemic'	'Donors delays of months between pledging and availability of funds' Internal WFP accounting issues	Issue of non traditional donors funding; 'Major donor' (US?) failing to provide full cost recovery under core pledges	
Need to rehabilitate Nacala to Malawi Railway	<i>Weak infrastructure delays food movements</i>	<i>Continue to rehabilitate</i>	Infrastructure planning to include disaster preparedness

**TABLE D: Information and the Southern African humanitarian crisis**

<i>Findings and report</i>	<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>1. Assessment – various WFP RTE ,SC IASC, IDC, HPG,OCHA</b>		
<b>Excessive focus on food security</b>	Failure of UN to appreciate complex requirements of 'new variant emergency'	Need for 'joined up' assessment of future crises
FAO WFP crop and food assessment missions over-estimation of country and overall regional requirements	Too great reliance on unsatisfactory macro-data	Strengthen WFP's needs assessment
Assessment hampered by serious data weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of reliable data on official commercial imports (Zim.)</li> <li>• Underestimate of informal cross-border trade ( Malawi-Mozambique)</li> <li>• Initially inaccurate population statistics</li> <li>• Deteriorating crop forecasts</li> <li>• 'Lack of reliable baseline data on non-cereals consumption</li> </ul>	Assessment of import requirements hampered (c.f. 1992/93 all through SADC/WFP Logistics Unit)	To reassess efforts to strengthen national information systems
Nutritional surveillance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No benchmarks</li> <li>•Lack of comprehensive surveillance in the region with govt operated systems no longer functioning'</li> </ul>	Major factor in inability to assessment needs of specific groups	Permanent surveillance required;
2. Monitoring – mostly WFP RTE No standard reporting formats and none readily available from WFP	Lack of consistent strategies for performance monitoring	Needs dedicated funding

<p>3. Logistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular information much enhanced by ReLogS website</li> <li>• Weakened by retrospective donor info. E.g. bilaterally chartered vessels (US) only retrospectively</li> </ul>	<p>Good, an improvement on 92/3</p>	
<p>4. Information initiatives</p>		
<p>RTEs</p>	<p>Bringing early improved information</p>	
<p>SAHIMS</p>	<p>Beware of one fits all model</p>	
<p>LSO in Malawi</p>	<p>Helpful test of how to learn as emergency proceeds</p>	
<p>VAC Brings micro- vulnerability assessment into National Food Assessment</p>	<p>An initiative that brought considerable improvements in assessment of within country food security</p>	

**TABLE E Lessons from the response to the 1991-2 drought**

Conclusions	Recommendations
<b>I. Regional and international response (SADC, 1993)</b>	
1. A qualified success – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mass starvation avoided</li> <li>• Particular aspects could be better carried out</li> </ul>	Many wide ranging and specific recommendations within context of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better preparedness on part of SADC countries</li> <li>• Continued international support with efforts to shift to sustainable regional funding</li> </ul>
2. EWS were successful in predicting major drought from August 1991	Need for continuing international support at regional and country levels
3. Assessment: existing procedures led to over-estimate of food import requirements.	Improved methods of estimating food deficits by EWS.
4. <i>Price distortions and oversupply of food imports</i> : April 1993 600,000 t unshipped balance of food aid, whilst Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe have bumper harvests.	Need for reassessments of import requirements as the relief operation proceeds
5. Lack of disaster preparedness in most countries	SADC should assist each state to review plans
6. Contingency food reserves were insufficient to prevent panic driven import programming	SADC and member states should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop appropriate formula for strategic grain holdings and routine monitoring of stocks</li> <li>• continue efforts to develop regional facility</li> </ul>
7. Transport and logistics were largely successful due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mostly high standards of infrastructure</li> <li>• high levels of cooperation on trans-shipment</li> </ul>	
8. Particular problem area: <i>Two poorly performing transport corridors notably Nacala rail link</i> (handled only 25,000 out of 665,000 imports to Malawi) and also Dar es Salaam	Nacala corridor critical for any future emergency operations in Malawi requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• completion of rehabilitation</li> <li>• Improved system management (routing procedures)</li> </ul>
9. Weaknesses in logistics and coordination capacity overcome by special units for routing (WFP-South African rail and ports authorities) and monitoring (SADC-WFP Logistic Advisory Centre)	SADC should retain capability for handling future emergencies whilst catering for other traffic
10. Extensive cost-effective use of private sector in timely	Governments and donors should make fullest use of private sector.

importing and logistics	Use of Financial aid to be considered
11. UN/SADC Appeal was poorly integrated, heavily weighed to food aid and belated (June 1992, 5 months after 1st national emergency declared in Zambia) due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overambitious regional coordination</li> <li>• waiting on the FAO/ WFP regional assessment</li> </ul>	Re-examine the consolidated appeal process
<b>II.ODA (DFID) Response (Clay et al, 1995)</b>	
1. Performed well with early response and coherent overall strategy but many particular opportunities for improvement	To continue the strengthening of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EMAD (aka CHAD) and ECFAD technical capacity</li> <li>• procedures for grant proposals from partners</li> </ul>
2. Organisation and personnel: weaknesses at country level where strategies were less clearly developed in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• responding to requests;</li> <li>• insufficient scrutiny of proposals;</li> <li>• patchy monitoring.</li> </ul>	Strengthening country level response through – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ad hoc additional staffing</li> <li>• working with government s and NGOs to improve quality of proposals</li> <li>• incorporating impact assessment and monitoring into grants with additional funding and TC</li> </ul>
3. Successfully combining different forms of support and channels according to country circumstances	Prepare country strategies for response to drought (climatic variability) Need for greater willingness to support non-UK based and local NGOs
<i>BoP</i> support is speedy and effective response to countries with strategies and (implied) relatively good governance (then Zambia and Zimbabwe)	Clear policy framework required for emergency programme support
<i>Food aid</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriately targeted on countries with weak governance (then Malawi and Mozambique)</li> <li>• lack of adequate monitoring on distribution and impacts</li> <li>• concentration of cereals resulted in unbalanced diets</li> </ul>	Grants should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• design for assessment of distribution and impact with linked funding and TC</li> <li>• Investigate issues of imbalance in rations</li> </ul>
<i>Water programmes failed to address immediate needs</i>	Investigate ways of making water programmes more effective including incorporating in disaster preparedness.

## **Annex 1: The Southern African humanitarian crisis of 2001-03 and its interpretation<sup>2</sup>**

### **The crisis: what happened?**

There is now broad agreement on the sequence of events that led to the UN appeal of June 2002 to the international community for US\$ 611 million, including \$500mn for 1 million tonnes of food to feed 12 million people in 6 countries, plus \$111mn for health, water and support for agricultural recovery. The maize harvest in 2000/01, variously affected by excessive and erratic rainfall, was between 10-25% below the previous 5-year average. In the absence of countervailing measures, including imports, stocks in SADC as a whole were drawn down in 2001/02 from close to 3mn tonnes to less than 400,000 tonnes. There were severe food insecurity problems in Malawi by late 2001. Other countries saw concerns over localised acute food insecurity, where there had been most severe crop losses.

Then the 2001/02 maize crop was down by 14% - 31% in the 6 countries covered by the international emergency operations (EMOP) – on the 1995/96 – 1999/2000 average, and more than 70% in Zimbabwe, also because of the disruptive effects of land redistribution. By mid 2002 it was clear that national supplies and planned commercial imports would be insufficient to cover anything approaching normal consumption levels. There were also localised areas of severe distress. Between February and May 2002, governments declared emergencies, and by July 2002 the UN had organised the Consolidated Appeal Process for Emergency Operations (EMOP) 10200.

This sequence of events is broadly accepted. But there are two sets of questions that have been posed about the emergence of the crisis. First, is the extent to which this has been a regional disaster with countries all suffering the covariant effects of influences impacting at a regional scale. The alternative view is that the crisis was the coincident effect of a series of similar events in neighbouring countries with some common causes (Darcy et al. 2003). Treating the crisis as regional makes sense for economies of scale in organising relief activities — especially if the aim is to ship in an additional 1Mm tonnes of grain. It may be expedient for addressing political difficulties, notably the Zimbabwe problem. On the other hand a regional focus may be a distraction when trying to assess issue needs at the district level.

The second question is more troubling. What constitutes a crisis in these countries? The official appeals are based on declarations that large numbers of households in the six countries would not have access to food for the whole of the marketing year. The numbers affected and the size of the food deficits estimated are impressive. For example, the regional vulnerability assessment for December 2002 estimated that, for the six countries covered by the emergency, 15.2 million people, or 26% of the population of those countries, required food aid amounting to 735kt for the period December 2002 to March 2003.

But how does this compare to any other year, when emergencies have not been declared? CARE (2003) estimates that the number of rural people having to look to market and other supplies to feed themselves in the 2002/03 marketing year has been perhaps twice the

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<sup>2</sup> For more on this, see [www.odi.org.uk/food-security-forum](http://www.odi.org.uk/food-security-forum)

normal level. Food insecurity that is chronic and pervasive for the poor in any year has been widened in 2002/03 to embrace a set of people with transient food insecurity.

This invites the question of what degree of additional food insecurity or food poverty makes a crisis that warrants an international response? And the answer is that there is no benchmark, no common standard for this — just as there are no commonly accepted measures of food insecurity or famine. (Darcy et al. 2003) The point is not academic, either. While relatively few deaths — perhaps a few thousand — have been directly attributed to loss of harvests 2001–03 in the region, the scale of mortality to HIV/AIDS is alarmingly high, with hundreds of thousands of deaths every year. Does this indicate a humanitarian crisis appeal for the pandemic?

### ***Causes of the crisis***

The *immediate triggers* for the crisis consist of two elements: the consequences of natural hazards, and policy failures.

- The natural hazard of variable weather and its effect on food crops has been described above. In addition to this, Zambia has also been hit by loss of cattle to disease, so that crop farmers have lacked animal traction.
- Government policy has, however, exacerbated the problems in Zimbabwe and Malawi, whilst Zambia stands accused of delaying and impeding relief shipments by its refusal to allow any GM maize imports from the USA.

### ***Increasing poverty and vulnerability***

Most commentators insist that these triggers created extremes of distress because of the widespread underlying and increasing vulnerability in the affected countries. Over much of Southern Africa poverty and vulnerability have increased in the medium term, beginning between the 1970s and early 1990s, depending on the country and area. There is the problem of over-determination, more than enough factors to explain the trends.

At the most general level, economic development has been weak, with stagnation and decline across the main production sectors of the Southern African economies — mining, industry, and agriculture. Interactions affecting the rural economy and society are especially deserving of note.

Poor performance of the mining and industrial sectors has meant that most countries in Southern Africa have remained heavily dependent on *agriculture* to provide jobs, incomes and foreign exchange, but agricultural development has not been sustained.

*Policy failure*: the state-led approach to agricultural development was dismantled throughout the region in the 1980s and 1990s, under regimes of structural adjustment and market liberalisation, but the results to date have been disappointing.

Economic disappointments have tended to transmit across economies and societies. Problems with mining and manufacturing industry have meant fewer urban jobs or lower wages or both, so remittances to rural areas have fallen. The failure to stimulate broad-based agricultural development has put a damper on the rural non-farm economy, since

many of the businesses and services in that sector depend on direct interactions with farming or else on the demand of farmers with cash earnings to spend.

Poor economic performance has left governments without the revenues to invest or to provide services and adequate social protection programmes. Foreign exchange has been at a premium, leading either to shortages or to depreciating currencies that have raised the cost of imports and tended to stoke the fires of inflation.

Most countries in the region have seen the bulk of their rural populations left largely dependent on farming, and rain-fed farming at that, barely managing to subsist at poverty levels in years with good weather. They have been left highly vulnerable to the vagaries of the weather, as well as to those arising in the economy and from government policy.

*Environmental degradation:* in some areas, an increasing rural population, lacking both options other than farming and the means to invest in their land, has put increasing pressure on arable land and on the grazing and woodland resources. Reports of soil fertility decline are common, exacerbated by inability to access manufactured fertiliser or having sufficient livestock to produce enough manure.

The *HIV/AIDS pandemic* has placed a major burden on households and their livelihoods, and made them all the more vulnerable. It has also deprived government and private enterprise of trained and experienced staff.

Some see the insidious, progressive impact of the pandemic as being sufficient in itself both to explain the depth of the current crisis, and to represent a humanitarian crisis in its own right.

### ***Vulnerability and social differentiation***

There is a danger that policy-makers, faced by a crisis that leaves few untouched, see victims as fairly homogenous groups — and in particular, see the rural population as one that normally feeds itself from its own farm production. Evidence, however, shows considerable and important differences amongst the poor. In rural areas, the poor and vulnerable may be seen in two groups.

First there are the economically disadvantaged who lack land (in quantity and quality), tools, and oxen to farm; or formal education and skills needed for the better-rewarded non-farm jobs; or both. The other group of poor consists of those whose disadvantage lies in social and health conditions, including women and girls, children, and those unable to work or to move, including the elderly, the disabled, the sick, and those caring for those sick (especially the carers in households with members suffering from HIV/AIDS).

The urban poor have been hard hit too: harvest failures may not directly affect their incomes, but they are vulnerable to changes in the price of staple foods. Much less is known about hardships affecting those living in urban and peri-urban areas and their coping strategies, compared to their rural counterparts.

## Annex 2: References

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## **Annex 3 – RECOMMENDATIONS from Clay, Edward, and others, Evaluation of ODA’s Response to the Southern African Drought (Revised draft report, November 1994)**

### **I. Organisation/Personnel**

1. There should be stronger technical assessment capacity in London to support EMAD, ECFAD and Desks in assessing proposals put to them.
2. In countries where NGOs are the principal channel for ODA’s response:
  - the Posts should be strengthened *ad hoc* with personnel with previous relief experience to assist in the formulation of a response strategy, the increase in administrative workload, the preliminary vetting of proposals, liaising with traditional NGO partners and also forming links with non-traditional, potential partners, and finally providing ODA with a stronger capacity locally to monitor the activities of agencies it is supporting;
  - a response strategy should be developed which, in the context of the plans of the recipient government, UN agencies and other donors, indicates ODA’s sense of priorities in terms of the geographical areas and activities that it would like NGOs’ partners to address in submitting their proposals. If traditional NGOs do not come forward with proposals that reflect ODA’s strategy, then resources earmarked for the response should be directed to those agencies whose activities and plans do reflect ODA’s sense of priorities, such as the ICRC and non-NGOs, such as MSF.
3. ODA should consider revising those sections of its Office Procedures relating to all potential forms of emergency aid (balance-of-payments support, food aid, support to international organizations and to international and local NGOs) which reflect and provide guidance on the complex routing and approval processes involved in most emergency operations.

### **II. Proposals**

4. ODA should be more demanding in requiring a higher standard of proposals for emergency funding. Except where agencies are responding to immediate, life-threatening problems, organizations should be asked to provide evidence of:
  - consultation with intended beneficiaries;
  - priority for the most seriously affected areas and groups;
  - priority for effective monitoring of utilisation and beneficiary status;
  - a clear account of how ODA’s assistance is expected to fit into the wider programme of support for an activity;

- a clear account of where the proposal fits into the wider response, including co-ordination with other NGOs, other international agencies and governments.

In this connection, ODA should be more willing to consider proposals from European or international NGOs, apart from those based in the United Kingdom. ODA should also be more ready to fund local NGOs in disaster-affected countries directly. This recommendation is linked to '2' above on the temporary strengthening of the Post.

5. To help agencies which may submit funding proposals to improve the quality of their proposals, ODA has prepared new 'Guidelines on Humanitarian Assistance' (ODA, 1994). In the light of study findings, there is still scope for helping agencies to strengthen their proposals further. ODA should do this by developing activity-specific checklists of the questions it wants covered by those preparing the proposal (e.g. vehicle purchases, food distribution and supplementary feeding, water projects, health interventions, agricultural recovery projects and logistics activities). As well as indicating the technical and operational points to be covered in the proposals, the checklist should include questions on the targeting of the assistance, the view of the target group and an explanation of the ways in which the assistance will support, rather than undermine, their 'coping mechanisms'. As is the practice with Joint Funding Schemes (JFS) and other NGO funding proposals, the proposal should indicate how the effectiveness and impact of the activity will be monitored and assessed. The indicators of effectiveness and impact to be used by the agency should be described in the proposal. All proposals should have maps showing the extent of the proposed project area and how this relates to the activities of other agencies operating in the same broad area.

### ***III. Monitoring and Reporting***

6. To improve the quality of monitoring and reporting on the actions it supports, ODA should provide agencies in receipt of grants with activity-specific checklists of questions to be covered in the reports by the agency. For instance, grants involving the procurement of vehicles should include information on the utilisation of the vehicles in terms of distance traveled, amounts carried, areas served and time spent idle or under repair and so forth. Where food aid is involved, the reports should indicate the extent to which the agency was able to provide a balanced selection of commodities to beneficiaries, the regularity with which beneficiaries were supplied, the extent to which distributions were able to serve the same beneficiary population. All reports should be copied to the Post in order that they can follow up with the agency where necessary (e.g. where vehicles are impounded by Customs or where vehicles are being under-utilised for a reason which ODA might be able to assist in resolving) and provide the agencies with feedback on the quality and content of the reporting. All final reports should attempt to describe the effectiveness and impact of the activity, referring to the indicators that were selected at the proposal stage and provide cost information for the different activities funded.

7. Where the type of activity involves the provision of assistance to beneficiaries (e.g. seed distributions), agencies should be required to indicate the views of a sample of beneficiaries on the characteristics of the assistance provided, such as timeliness, appropriateness, beneficiary selection, the extent to which it helps them and what other form of assistance they would have liked the agency to have provided.

8. Where ODA builds some elements of impact assessment into a grant, it should also consider including additional funding to finance this. In a highly technical area such as seeds distribution, ODA should also consider building into the grant a TC component from a UK center or from an international institute, such as CGIAR center.

9. ODA should discuss with ICRC and IFRC the possibility of increasing the donor specificity of their reporting so as to clarify how the support provided by ODA has been utilized. This may be achieved by such agencies adding an ODA-specific annex to their present general reporting on their emergency programmes.
10. ODA should monitor the performance of agencies in providing timely and complete reports. It should also monitor its own performance in providing feed-back to agencies.

#### **IV. Financial Aid**

11. The provision of financial support to a disaster-affected country is an appropriate response in the following specific circumstances. First, the major response is by the government itself. Second, there is a related external resource gap resulting from the disaster shock that would not be filled by existing international compensatory arrangements. Third, directly assisting a government's own import programme should have priority where this complements and underpins relief efforts by local and international NGOs. A preference for financial assistance might also be contingent on the pragmatic judgment that commercial imports by government are likely to provide a speedier response than conventional food aid. Fourth, ODA is satisfied that the government already has in place an appropriate medium-term policy framework, with acceptable monitoring arrangements for public expenditure, for reasons of accountability. This is most likely to be the case where the government is already implementing a structural or stabilisation programme in agreement with the international financial institutions.

12. ODA should review the *de facto* policy of concentrating its assistance on the provision of cereals under the UK bilateral food aid programme. Recognising the UK's obligations under the Food Aid Convention, where an emergency operation is being supported, the assessment of a proposal should carefully examine whether other complementary food requirements are likely to be met. A study should be commissioned of the incidence of agencies supported by ODA food aid providing rations which are nutritionally unbalanced and the risks that this results in micronutrient-related disorders and malnutrition in the target populations.

13. ODA funds should not normally be used to make good the inadequacies of other donor funding, especially for ITSH costs of emergency food aid.

#### **VI. Emergency Water Programmes**

14. These projects were in general disappointing in their ability to address the immediate water needs, including minimizing health-related risks in affected populations. ODA might consider commissioning a study to explore ways in which emergency water programmes that are more effective in addressing disaster-related needs can be organized in the future and perhaps included in preparedness measures in drought-prone regions.

#### **VII. Retrospective Funding**

15. The use of emergency grants for purely retrospective funding should be avoided. In practice, this is merely releasing an agency's funds for other unspecified activities and, as such, is a form of *unconditional* budgetary support.