

A Stitch in Time?



Volume 1: Main Report

Independent Evaluation of the
Disasters Emergency Committee's
Southern Africa Crisis Appeal

July 2002 to June 2003

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Independent evaluation conducted by Valid International

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Several staff at agency headquarters were key in facilitating the evaluation field visits. Josie Buxton at Oxfam was an enormous help, as was Ilaria Dettori at CARE.

The evaluation team would like to give particular thanks to all the DEC agencies that facilitated the field visits. The contribution of DEC agencies at the debriefings was also much appreciated.

Cover Photographs

The cover photograph for volume one shows a crowd waiting for a CARE distribution of seed and fertilizer vouchers at Sikombingo in Zimbabwe.

The cover photograph for volume two shows an ox cart waiting for beneficiaries of a Zimbabwe Red Cross distribution to load their relief food. The cart owner's wife holds the cart while the food is loaded. They charge the equivalent of 2kg of maize for carrying one person's luggage ten to fifteen kilometres.

The cover photograph for the executive summary only report shows children eating maize and fish at a TearFund supported school feeding programme in Gwembe District. Gwembe is a district with very poor access in Zambia's Southern Province.

Executive Summary

Readers should note that the appendices to this report include some well-written and interesting material. This includes two beneficiary assessments for Malawi and Zambia, the Financial Management Report, as well as pieces on HIV/AIDS and Humanitarian Space in Zimbabwe.

Introduction

The Southern Africa Crisis Appeal was a new departure for the Disasters Emergency Committee. Here for the first time was an appeal that was intended to prevent a humanitarian crisis rather than respond to one. This led to a response that was a mixture of traditional relief activities together with activities that were more akin to rehabilitation or traditional development.

The evaluation team found a mixed picture. It encountered a large number of examples of better practice, with instances from all the DEC agencies. However the quality of the interventions varied between countries and between agencies, and sometimes between different country programmes belonging to the same agency.

On the positive side there was probably more beneficiary participation in this crisis than in similar crises in the past. Because of the political situation in Zimbabwe agencies were experimenting with feedback mechanisms that could have far wider application. Beneficiary participation was also very good in Malawi though participation here was largely limited to implementation as opposed to the design of the intervention. DEC agencies were important actors in highlighting to the world the difficulties faced by the region. Some of the nutrition surveys and analysis carried out by them, for instance, were instrumental in raising awareness of the impending crisis.

In general the DEC agencies carried out their emergency responses in the areas where they had their development programmes. The evaluation team considered this appropriate since these areas were often the poorest. It also meant that the programmes funded were often appropriate to the problems faced by communities, though timeframes were often shorter than optimal.

Some of the communities assisted by the DEC agencies in the crisis had previously been assisted by the development programmes of the DEC agencies. The evaluation team noted that such communities did not seem to be better able to weather the crisis than adjoining communities that had not had been assisted by DEC agencies before the crisis.

Programme coverage was generally good and co-ordination mechanisms in the region worked well, though there were major constraints to humanitarian space in Zimbabwe. Agencies were sensitive to the cultural norms of the communities with which they worked and made efforts to support local capacity. However, improvements could be made in some of the partnership arrangements that DEC agencies have with local organisations.

The crisis revealed that DEC agencies did not always have a deep enough understanding of the communities in which they worked. Underestimations of the importance of remittance or of coping strategies were common. Agencies were also sometimes slow to scale up in response to the crisis though this does not seem to have had any serious adverse effect on programme impact.

HIV/AIDS is a major factor in the region, with up to one third of adults affected in the worst areas. Despite this the links between HIV/AIDS, coping strategies, and food security were not well understood and further research is needed on these.

One of the biggest problems was that the DEC agencies, like the rest of the humanitarian community, lacked a conceptual model for dealing with the crisis. The crisis was overstated in terms of the threat of famine, but at the same time the chronic roots of the crisis were understated. While internal agency analysis was often more sophisticated and nuanced than the message presented to the media, even this did not capture the whole picture. The lack of an appropriate conceptual model led to some inappropriate responses.

DEC agency advocacy, though sometimes good, was nevertheless patchy across the region and across agencies. More should have been done in this crucial area.

Agencies had a strong framework in place to ensure good financial management, though narrative and financial reports were of a very variable quality. Agencies were also good at carrying out

evaluations, but more could be done to standardise approaches, improve the quality of evaluation methods and promote inter-agency learning.

Methodology

The evaluation consisted of the following:

- Initial interviews with agency headquarters in London.
- Beneficiary assessments in Zambia and Malawi.
- Evaluation team visits to Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi.
- A desk study of agencies' own evaluations using the assessment proforma developed by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Assistance (ALNAP).
- A review of agency financial management procedures based on a series of questionnaires.

The evaluation consulted over 1,300 people of whom more than three hundred were key informants.

Appendix 3: on page 80 has details of the persons met, and Appendix 14: on page 194 contains the evaluation team itinerary.

The DEC appeal supported the work of twelve agencies in seven countries. The evaluation team did not have the resources to analyse individual agency programmes in detail. The examples that have been given, both of good and bad practice, are inevitably somewhat random. Where examples of individual agency practice have been highlighted they are meant to be illustrative of broad themes and should be seen in that light rather than as representing detailed analysis of particular programmes.

Conclusion

The evaluation team concluded that the DEC Southern African Crisis Appeal was justified in that the DEC agencies contributed to prolonging lives and preventing suffering. However, the complexity of the underlying chronic problems means that the response offers large opportunities for learning for the DEC agencies.

Recommendations

Below are the key recommendations of the report. No time frame is given for the recommendations though the following mechanism is suggested:

- After the agencies have had time to consider the recommendations and their implications, the DEC to hold a meeting in three months' time to discuss which of the recommendations the DEC agencies as a body accept, and how they plan to implement them. The plan from this meeting to be placed on the public area of the DEC site.
- The DEC to hold a further meeting in twelve months' time to review the progress in implementing the recommendations. The minutes of this meeting again to be published on the DEC website.

The financial management report contains numerous other recommendations that are not summarised here.

No	Page	Recommendation
1	24	DEC member agencies should devote some resources to jointly investigating the links between HIV, coping strategies and food security, at both the micro and macro level.
2	24	DEC members should review how they can improve their understanding of the contexts in which they work.

- 3 25 The DEC Secretariat should approach a research institution to encourage the institution to undertake a review of better practice in scaling up operations for humanitarian response.
- 4 25 The DEC Secretariat should include a specific review of scaling up mechanisms in the evaluation of the next DEC appeal that yields more than 5 million pounds.
- 5 25 In the next DEC emergency response, the DEC should send a facilitator to the field at the start of a response to ensure that those responsible for managing the response fully understand the flexibility that the DEC funding offers as well as the DEC's requirements for reporting.
- 6 25 In any future appeal intended to have a preventive effect the DEC Secretariat should allocate a higher proportion of funding to the extended response period to provide a more even funding pattern.
- 7 32 The DEC agencies should, for nutritional surveys, present the 95% confidence limits for prevalence first rather than the sample prevalence.
- 8 32 DEC agencies should, when comparing two nutritional surveys taken for the same population at different times, indicate the probability that surveys reflect a change.
- 9 32 DEC agencies should introduce the general principle that food assistance packages are proportionate to family size.
- 10 32 DEC agencies should undertake a joint study of why gender and generation analyses are still so weak.
- 11 32 The DEC Secretariat should make gender analysis one of the central themes of the next DEC evaluation.
- 12 32 The DEC Secretariat should consider introducing a requirement for the disaster response period quarterly reports to identify what differential impact DEC- funded projects have had on men and women.
- 13 33 DEC agencies should formally adopt the policy that emergency assistance, while it may be facilitated by existing social structures set up by the agencies or supported by them, should not be directed exclusively at the members of such groups.
- 14 36 The DEC Secretariat should consider amending the format of the Disaster Response Programme document to specifically include a reference to advocacy under the programme proposal. A suitable wording under the programme proposal section might be: "Indicate what advocacy initiatives you intend to undertake to achieve the objectives of your response programme".
- 15 36 The DEC Secretariat should consider including the promotion of joint advocacy by the DEC agencies in the job description of any DEC facilitator sent to the field for any future DEC emergency response.
- 16 43 DEC agencies should review their arrangements for partnership in emergencies, including providing support where partners are being asked to scale up, and formal agreements on areas like audit.
- 17 43 DEC agencies should incorporate dispute resolution procedures into their partnership agreement. Such dispute procedures might include referral to a mutually trusted third party for arbitration.
- 18 43 The DEC should consider whether to adopt the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) principles on the sexual exploitation of aid recipients.
- 19 46 DEC agencies should consider introducing the practice of estimating the cost to beneficiaries of participation in relief projects, and including these costs in project proposals.
- 20 46 The DEC agencies should jointly review their policies for actively gathering feedback on their performance from beneficiaries and disseminate whatever best practice is identified.
- 21 49 DEC agencies should review their policies on emergency preparedness planning in southern Africa.

- 22 54 If DEC agencies sell assets worth more than £20,000 that were purchased with DEC funds the resulting funds should be returned to the common pot, for allocation in a future emergency.
- 23 54 The DEC should set further guidelines for agency reports to the DEC to encourage succinct and lucid reporting. One of these requirements should be the clear linking of financial and narrative reports.
- 24 54 The DEC should consider publishing agency final reports for future appeals on the DEC website, together with commentaries on the report quality by the evaluation team.
- 25 54 The DEC Secretariat should propose a model to members whereby their own evaluations could be part of the DEC evaluation.
- 26 54 The DEC Secretariat should consider using a facilitated self-evaluation approach for evaluating the use of the DEC funds in Liberia. This could be combined with an initial beneficiary assessment.
- 27 54 The DEC should, during 2004, consider how it can add value to inter-agency learning other than exclusively through the evaluation. Such mechanisms might include DEC fora such as that in Mozambique or other learning support systems.
- 28 57 The DEC agencies should provide training in the principles of the Code of Conduct, and possibly an introduction to Sphere for their marketing staff. Cross-training for the programme staff by the marketing department should also be considered.

Table of contents

Volume 1: Main Report

Acknowledgements.....	2
Cover Photographs	2
Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction	3
Methodology	4
Conclusion	4
Recommendations	4
Table of contents.....	7
Acronyms	12
Map of Region	13
1 Humanitarian imperative.....	14
1.1 The extent of the crisis	14
1.2 Timeliness	21
1.3 Scaling up.....	21
1.4 Appropriateness	22
1.5 Impact	23
1.6 Was the appeal justified?.....	23
1.7 Examples of Better Practice.....	24
1.8 Conclusions and Recommendations.....	24
2 Non-discrimination	26
2.1 Assessment	26
2.2 Basis of need	27
2.3 Constraints on Humanitarian space	27
2.4 Proportionality.....	28
2.5 Coverage	30
2.6 Gender.....	31
2.7 Examples of better practice	31
2.8 Recommendations	32
3 Religion and politics	33
3.1 Differences between relief and development.....	33
3.2 Recommendations	33
4 Foreign policy	34
4.1 Donor policy	34
4.2 Subcontracting approach	34
4.3 Advocacy	35
4.4 Examples of better practice	35
4.5 Recommendations	36

5	Culture and custom.....	37
5.1	No culturally inappropriate assistance	37
5.2	Targeting and culture	37
5.3	Example of better practice	38
6	Build on local capacity.....	39
6.1	Low initial capacity	39
6.2	Relationships with partners.....	39
6.3	Connectedness	40
6.4	Impact on community capacity	40
6.5	Impact on government capacity	41
6.6	Training	41
6.7	DEC co-ordination	42
6.8	Example of better practice	42
6.9	Recommendations	43
7	Involve beneficiaries	44
7.1	Beneficiary participation	44
7.2	Costs of participation	44
7.3	Accountability to beneficiaries	45
7.4	Feedback mechanisms	45
7.5	Examples of better practice	46
7.6	Recommendations	46
8	Reduce future vulnerability	47
8.1	Coherence	47
8.2	Overt preventive strategy.....	47
8.3	Lack of planning	48
8.4	Examples of better practice	48
8.5	Recommendations	49
9	Accountable to donors	50
9.1	Cost effectiveness.....	50
9.2	Accountability to donors	51
9.3	Monitoring and evaluation	52
9.4	Examples of better practice	53
9.5	Recommendations	54
10	Dignity in representation.....	55
10.1	The image used by the DEC	55
10.2	The presentation of the crisis	55
10.3	Examples of better practice	57
10.4	Recommendations	57

Volume 2: Appendices

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference: Independent Evaluation - Southern Africa Crisis Appeal	59
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A1.01 Background	59
A1.02 The DEC Evaluation Policy:.....	60
A1.03 Key areas of special concern to the DEC evaluation of the Southern Africa Crisis.....	61
A1.04 The Monitoring Report.....	61
A1.05 Support and Documentation	61
A1.06 Evaluation Methodology.....	62
A1.07 The Report	62
A1.08 Evaluation team and timeframe	63
A1.09 Follow up.....	63
A1.10 Tenders and Evaluation Management	63
A1.11 Further information	64
A1.12 ToR Appendix 1: Southern Africa Crisis Monitoring Report	64
A1.13 ToR Appendix 2: The Red Cross/NGO Code as a Management and evaluation Tool.....	65
A1.14 ToR Appendix 3: DEC Membership Criteria.....	67
A1.15 ToR Appendix 4: Map Of Agency Presence In The Three Countries	68
Appendix 2: Contextual Chronology – Southern Africa Crisis 2001-2003	69
Appendix 3: Persons met	80
A3.01 Group meetings and Exercises for the Zambia Beneficiary Assessment.....	90
A3.02 Group Meetings for the Malawi Beneficiary Assessment.....	91
A3.03 Group interviews by Margie Buchanan Smith in Zimbabwe.....	91
A3.04 Group meetings with Alex Jacobs in Malawi.....	92
Appendix 4: Malawi Beneficiary Assessment	93
A4.01 Introduction.....	93
A4.02 Executive Summary for Malawi Beneficiary Assessment	93
A4.03 CoC Principle 1 – The Humanitarian Imperative	94
A4.04 CoC Principle 2 – Basis of Need	96
A4.05 CoC Principle 4 – foreign policy.....	98
A4.06 CoC Principle 5 – Respect Culture and custom.....	98
A4.07 CoC Principle 6 – Build on local capacity	100
A4.08 CoC Principle 7 – Beneficiary involvement.....	101
A4.09 CoC Principle 8 – Future Vulnerability.....	104
A4.10 CoC Principle 10. Dignity in images	105
Appendix 5: Zambia Beneficiary Assessment.....	106
A5.01 Introduction.....	106
A5.02 Findings	108
A5.03 CoC Principle 1: Humanitarian imperative.....	108
A5.04 CoC Principle 2: Basis of need	109
A5.05 COC Principle 5 – Respect for culture and custom	112
A5.06 CoC Principle 6 – Building Local Capacity.....	113
A5.07 CoC Principle 7 – Beneficiary involvement.....	114

A5.08 CoC Principle 8 – reducing future vulnerabilities	115
A5.09 CoC Principle 9– Accountability	117
A5.10 CoC Principle 10 – Dignity in images	117
A5.11 Recommendations made by community members	117
Appendix 6: Financial Management Report	120
A6.01 Executive Summary.....	120
A6.02 Introduction.....	120
A6.03 Financial overview of the response	121
A6.04 Financial systems	124
A6.05 Staffing.....	127
A6.06 Working with partners	129
A6.07 Resource allocation and cost effectiveness	132
A6.08 Resource allocation	134
Appendix 7: Findings on Agencies’ Financial Systems and Staffing	139
A7.01 Introduction.....	139
A7.02 Methodology	139
A7.03 Key Findings: Working with partners and beneficiaries	140
A7.04 Key Findings: Financial control	140
A7.05 Examples of possible best practice	142
A7.06 Responses: Partners and Beneficiaries Questionnaire.....	143
A7.07 Responses: Financial Control Questionnaire	151
A7.08 Questionnaires	164
Appendix 8: Humanitarian Space in Zimbabwe	168
A8.01 Introduction.....	168
A8.02 Communal farming sector	168
A8.03 Urban areas	169
A8.04 Commercial farming sector	169
A8.05 Conclusion	170
Appendix 9: The issue of HIV/AIDS in the 2002/3 relief response in southern Africa: a background discussion paper for the DEC evaluation.....	172
A9.01 Introduction.....	172
A9.02 The contribution of HIV/AIDS to the crisis and the role of humanitarian relief	172
A9.03 Aid agencies conceptualisation of HIV/AIDS and the crisis.....	174
A9.04 Conclusion	180
A9.05 Recommendations	181
Appendix 10: Synthesis of Alnap Proformas applied to DEC agency evaluations	183
A10.01 Summary of findings	183
A10.02 Introduction.....	183
A10.03 Findings	184
Appendix 11: Differences between Relief and Development.....	187
Appendix 12: IASC Principles	190

Appendix 13: Declaration of potential conflicts of interest.....	191
A13.01 Core Team.....	192
A13.02 Advisors	192
Appendix 14: Evaluation Core Team Itinerary	194
Appendix 15: Bibliography	197
Appendix 16: Index	200

Acronyms

ADP	Area Development Programme (World Vision)
BA	Beneficiary Assessment
CBTD	Community Based Targeting and Distribution
CEO	Camp Extension Officer
CF	Conservation Farming
CFW	Cash For Work
CHW	Community Health Worker
DACO	District Agriculture Co-ordinating Officer
DEC	Disaster Emergency Committee
EMOP	Emergency Operation – a WFP term for emergency food aid operations
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition
GFD	General Food Distribution
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
HFA	Height for Age
HEPS	High Energy Protein Supplement
HHZ	Harvest Help Zambia
ITN	Insecticide-Treated Net
IGA	Income Generating Activity
MACO	Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives
MP	Member of Parliament
OPV	Open Pollinated Variety
ORS	Oral Rehydration Salts
PAM	Programme Against Malnutrition (NNGO)
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SC	Satellite Committee (for food relief distribution)
SFD	Supplementary Food Distribution
TTBA	Trained Traditional Birth Attendant
WFA	Weight For Age
WFH	Weight For Height
WFP	World Food Programme
WVI	World Vision International

Map of Region



1 Humanitarian imperative

This chapter addresses the principle of the Disaster Relief Code of Conduct as well as issues of timeliness, appropriateness, and impact.

Principle 1: The humanitarian imperative comes first

The right to receive humanitarian assistance, and to offer it, is a fundamental humanitarian principle which should be enjoyed by all citizens of all countries. As members of the international community, we recognise our obligation to provide humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed. Hence the need for unimpeded access to affected populations, is of fundamental importance in exercising that responsibility. The prime motivation of our response to disaster is to alleviate human suffering amongst those least able to withstand the stress caused by disaster. When we give humanitarian aid it is not a partisan or political act and should not be viewed as such.

1.1 The extent of the crisis

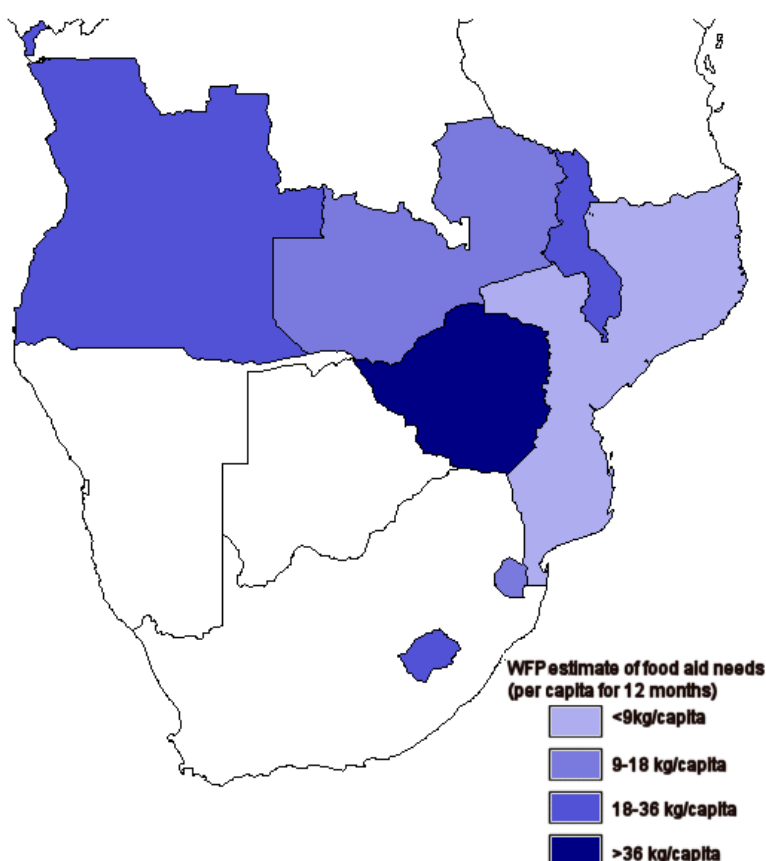
The crisis was represented as a regional crisis driven by drought. The presentation of the crisis is dealt with in Chapter 10.

WFP data is presented here since its' estimates were extensively quoted by the DEC Secretariat in the appeal and by the DEC agencies in their public statements. The WFP appeal on July 1, 2002 estimated that 12.8 million people would be in need of food aid in the six countries¹. The DEC appeal used this figure, together with an additional 1.16 million estimated as needing WFP food assistance in Angola, (included in the DEC but not the WFP regional appeal) to give an appeal total of 14 million people for seven countries.

Analysis of WFP's estimation of the food aid needs per head shows that Zimbabwe had the biggest problem, followed closely by Malawi and Angola.

WFP had emergency food operations running in all the countries of the region that were included in the regional appeal. Some of these emergency operations had only been approved a month before the regional appeal was launched.

All of the existing WFP emergency operations (some of which were well supported) were folded into the regional appeal. Having a regional response made sense for WFP because of the shared logistics system to deliver imported food aid².



¹ WFP (2002) *EMOP 10200/Southern Africa Crisis Response project proposal*

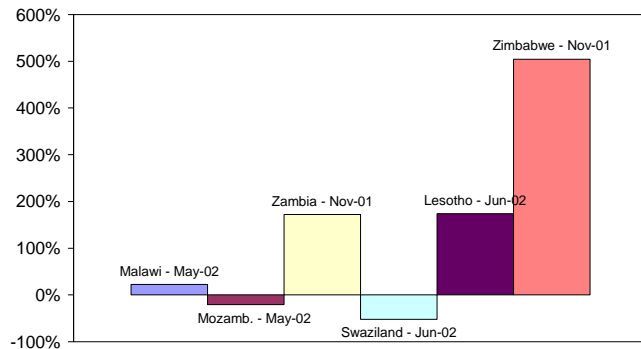
² WFP also managed to fold in the logistics of the separate food pipeline for the USAID-funded Consortium for Southern Africa's Food Emergency (C-SAFE), by undertaking these on a cost recovery basis.

Eighty percent of the increased monthly requirement in the regional WFP plan was for Zimbabwe. Without a regional appeal, it might have been difficult for WFP to have found donors willing to provide so much more assistance for Zimbabwe when the problems there were perceived as being due to ill-governance.

The DEC did not face the same problem. The DEC agencies that were most active in Zimbabwe already had good levels of funding for their activities, and the DEC agencies used less DEC funds in Zimbabwe than in Malawi or Zambia.

Change in monthly food requirements from existing WFP country operations to regional operation

Source: WFP EMOP 10200 - dates for each country show the approval date of the original WFP Operation



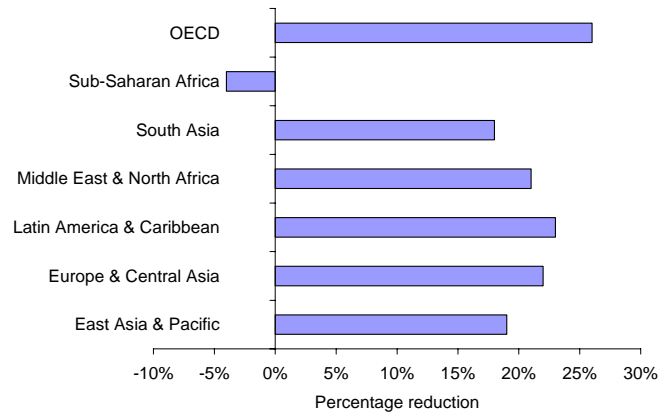
1.1.1 THE ROOTS OF THE CRISIS

The roots of the crisis are complex and vary both between countries and between different parts of countries. The first factor that needs to be taken into account is that many of the seven countries are not so much *developing* countries as *non-developing* countries. Like many countries in sub-Saharan Africa several of these countries have seen a worsening in some social indicators over the last decade.

Gross national income per capita has fallen in the last five years for four of the countries with only Angola showing a marked increase (probably due to the oil industry).

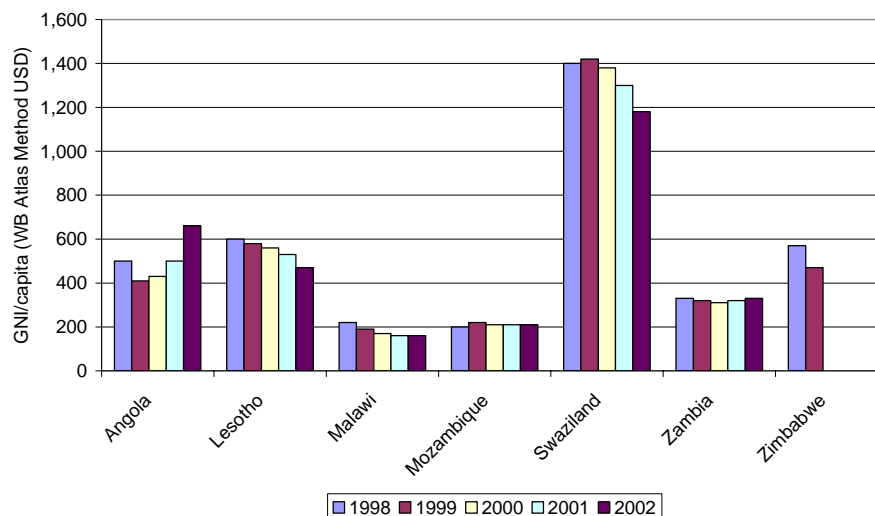
Reduction in under five mortality from 1990 to 1999

Source: Mworld Development Indicators 2001



Gross National Income per Capita

Source: World Bank World Development Indicators Database



The food crisis has therefore occurred against a background of chronic and increasing poverty related to a wide range of factors. This lack of development is reflected across the whole economy. One of the best summaries of the roots of the crisis is probably that found in the *AIDS Epidemic Update* of 2002.

The food-related crisis in southern Africa is not simply a ‘natural’ disaster caused by unfavourable weather patterns. It stems from a complex web of mishaps and policy mistakes that vary from country to country. Drought or floods; mismanagement and poor governance; misguided market reforms; a lack of extension and other support services for stricken farmers; the removal of consumer protection (allowing food prices to rocket as an emergency worsens); and political instability are among the factors involved. So is the HIV/AIDS epidemic—in every country now facing a food emergency³.

The proportion of causes varies between countries, but few of those interviewed gave the drought as the principle reason.

Causes for the food crisis in southern Africa⁴

Zimbabwe	Malawi	Zambia
Three years with low rainfall	Floods in 2001	Three years with low rainfall in the south
No access to agricultural inputs like seeds or fertilizer	Dry spell in early 2002	Effective closure of extension service
Impact of the land reform programme	Government pricing policy	Impact of corridor disease
Economic decline as a result of government mismanagement	Steep rise in the price of maize	Government policy towards maize
Tight control of maize marketing	Unaffordable inputs	Promotion of maize even in unsuitable areas
High prevalence of HIV/AIDS	Chronic poverty	Chronic poverty
	Sale of the strategic grain reserve	Impact of HIV/AIDS
	Impact of HIV/AIDS	Promotion of cotton.

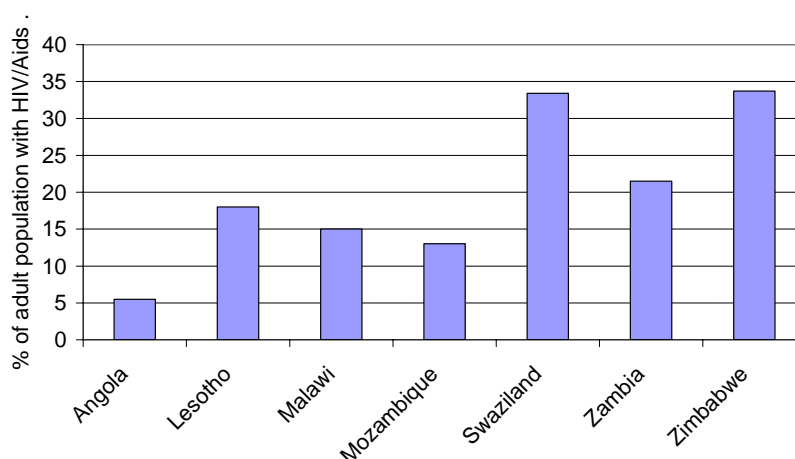
Angola is in a different situation with humanitarian need there being linked more to the consequences of the long-running civil war and the rapidly expanding humanitarian space following the unexpected ceasefire than to other factors.

1.1.2 HIV/AIDS

Readers are referred to Paul Harvey’s paper in Appendix 9: on page 172 which covers this issue in more depth. A small extract from the paper appears in a box on the page 17.

Adult Prevalence of HIV/Aids

Data for the end 2001 from <http://www.avert.org/subadults.htm>. Methodologies for the estimates vary. Zimbabwe reduced its estimated prevalence to 25% in 2003 after improving methodology.



³ UNAIDS/WHO (2002) *AIDS Epidemic Update*. UNAIDS/WHO, Geneva.

⁴ These causes were proposed by different key informants. Only causes for the three countries visited are presented here. There were other causes in, for example, Angola and Mozambique.

All of the countries in the DEC appeal (with the exception of Angola) have rates of prevalence among the adult population of 13% or more. All of the countries (except for Angola where all statistics are of very low quality⁵ due to the then civil war) show a marked decline in life expectancy in recent years.

HIV/AIDS and the agency response – an extract from Appendix 9:

The crisis in southern Africa during 2002 and 2003 highlighted the complex interactions between HIV/AIDS, food insecurity and humanitarian action. A series of visits by James Morris, the UN Special Envoy for southern Africa and Stephen Lewis the UN Special Representative for HIV/AIDS in Africa, highlighted the impact of the epidemic and argued that, 'HIV/AIDS is challenging the paradigm of humanitarian assistance' and that there could no longer be 'business as usual.'

At the same time Alex De Waal published a series of articles arguing that the HIV/AIDS epidemic raised the possibility of a new kind of famine which he labelled 'new variant famine'. In the midst of this aid agencies involved in a massive relief response in southern Africa largely focused on food aid, grappled with what, if anything, the HIV/AIDS epidemic meant that they should do differently in terms of the practicalities of humanitarian programming.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic reinforces the need for humanitarian systems to interact more effectively with long-term development assistance. There is clearly a need to engage with development actors about long-term responses to food insecurity and HIV/AIDS. The possibility that the impact of HIV/AIDS will exacerbate vulnerability to the extent that crises are triggered more easily also reinforces the existing need for more investment in disaster preparedness and mitigation. However, the core business of humanitarian relief should remain focused on saving lives and alleviating suffering in response to acute crises. In doing this in the context of an HIV/AIDS epidemic it is important to apply an HIV/AIDS lens to humanitarian programming across the different sectors of response and across the programme cycle.

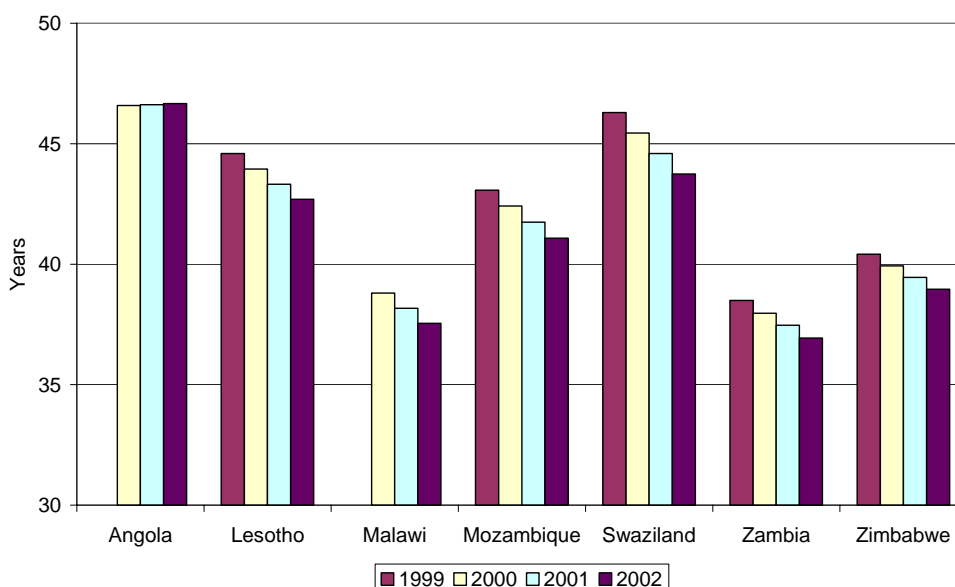
During the fieldwork it was found that aid agencies followed a similar trajectory in how the issue of HIV/AIDS hit their agendas. Initially HIV/AIDS was rarely seen as an issue within the emergency response. The focus was on the need to massively scale up capacity to deliver huge amounts of food aid. HIV/AIDS was largely dealt with in separate departments within the development side of aid agencies and seen as a long-term issue with little immediate relevance for the emergency response. The impetus for considering HIV/AIDS came largely from the top down prompted by the Lewis report in September 2002 and the Lewis and Morris report in early 2003 as well as pressure from donors and headquarters.

This meant that initially HIV/AIDS as an issue remained largely at the level of rhetoric. It was increasingly used to partly explain the crisis; to this end its relative contribution was debated. What this meant for the practicalities of humanitarian programming only started to be addressed in 2002/3 when it began to be considered in much greater detail in planning ongoing relief responses in Zimbabwe, and recovery, development and long-term welfare programmes in Malawi and Zambia. This, of course, is a broad generalisation which may not fairly represent all of the aid agencies involved in the relief response in the six countries.

An exception to this was where agencies or their partners had ongoing long-term HIV/AIDS programmes and used these to build an emergency response. For example, ActionAid in Zimbabwe worked through AIDS service organisations to provide seeds and tools. CAFOD in Zambia based its response on working with partners that had established long-term HIV/AIDS programmes. The Red Cross based its response throughout the region on providing support through existing home-based care networks. Focusing support specifically through long-term HIV/AIDS programmes, however, raises its own set of difficult issues. For example, when and whether it is possible to cease or scale back support given the long-term vulnerabilities associated with HIV/AIDS. Also, whether it is possible to target only families affected by HIV/AIDS in a situation where people may be equally vulnerable for other reasons – although the existence of parallel general food aid distributions meant that this question did not always arise.

⁵ Public health statistics are of very low quality in the region generally, hence the difficulty identifying the number of deaths caused by the crisis.

Life Expectancy at Birth



Together with direct observation and information supplied by key informants, this led the evaluation team to conclude that AIDS is having a real impact on communities in southern Africa. However, the evaluation team formed the view that HIV/AIDS was only one factor in a complex web of causation and that there was no evidence for claims that the emergency was driven by HIV/AIDS. Further research is needed on the linkages between HIV/AIDS, coping strategies and food security. Several DEC agencies noted that they had amassed large data sets around such issues but have not yet been able to analyse them.

1.1.3 THE ROOTS OF THE DEC APPEAL

The deaths and hunger that most drove the DEC appeal were from Malawi in the 2001–2002 hungry season. From October to February farm families wait for their harvest and go hungry even in normal years. Unlike the situation in some other countries, smallholders in Malawi rely on a mixture of their own production and the purchase of food to meet their nutritional needs.

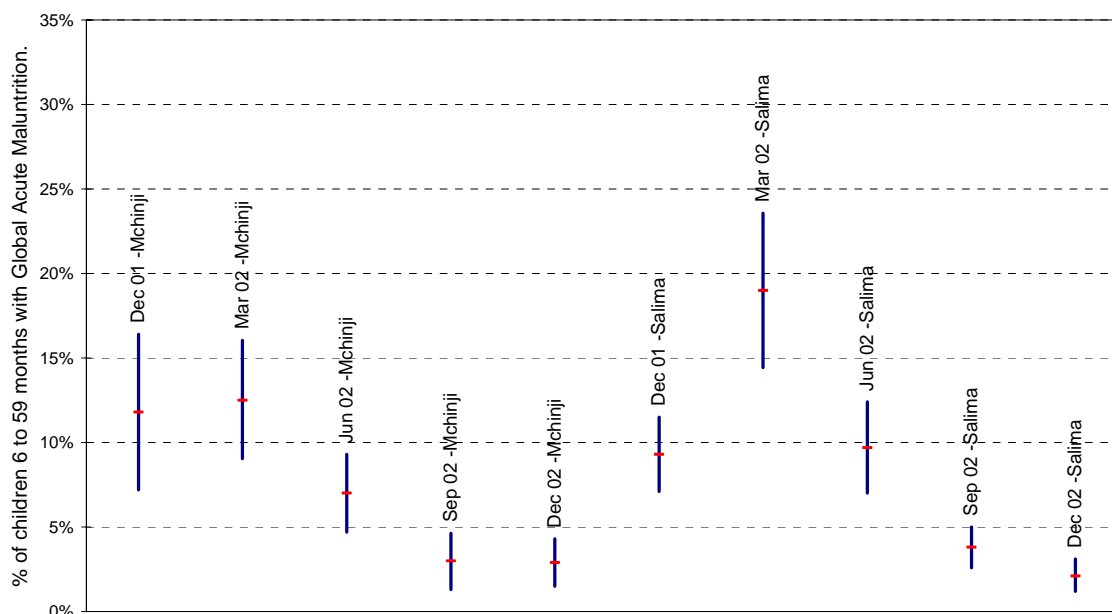
In the 2001–2002 season hunger was particularly bad due to abnormal rains, localised flooding and water logging. This led to a fall in maize production from a record high of 2.5 million tonnes in the previous season to 1.7 million tonnes in the 2001–2002 season (Devereux, 2002). Rural interviewees also commented that the lack of inputs led to lower production in that season.

The bumper harvest the previous season had led to low prices for producers, which saw their maize sell for only 4.40MWK (Malawi Kwacha) per kilogramme, (equivalent to about 4 pence/kg at the then exchange rate). Small holders in Malawi are net purchasers of maize (Barahone and Levy, 2002). They have limited capacity to store maize and so sell their surplus after harvest and rely on selling their labour to buy maize later in the year. In 2002 the price of maize had risen to 17.40MWK/kg by October and 40MWK/kg by January 2002. The casual labour rate was then only 20MWK/day – just enough for half a kilogram of maize or one fifth of the average family’s needs. The end result was severe hunger and elevated mortality in the 2001–2002 hungry season.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Declaration of emergency by government</i>
Malawi	27 February 2002
Zimbabwe	26 April 2002
Lesotho	April 2002
Zambia	May 2002

Nutrition surveys for two districts of Malawi

95% confidence intervals and mean levels for sample shown. Data from Walsh A and Taifour H (2003)
Nutrition Survey Report: Salima District and Mchinji District - December 2002. Save the Children, Lilongwe.



Nutritional surveys from Malawi from December 2001 to December 2002 show initially high⁶ levels of malnutrition. These later returned to background levels.

The number of excess deaths in Malawi has been estimated as between 300 and 3,000 (Devereux, 2002)⁷. This estimate may be overtaken by soon to be published research does suggest significant excess mortality of the order of 50,000 deaths in the region, and WHO mortality surveys also suggest increased levels of mortality in the worst affected areas⁸. The lack of any reliable numbers of deaths reflects a global problem noted by the recent ODI study⁹.

It was this crisis in the hungry season of 2001–2002 in Malawi that was reflected in the BBC reports of February 4, and that formed a background to the Daily Mirror's *Shock Report* of May 21. There was no corresponding mortality reported in Zimbabwe or Zambia.

At the same time the collapse of the commercial farming sector in Zimbabwe following the sequestration of commercial farms for redistribution to black Zimbabweans provoked a huge food crisis there. However, the government imported large quantities of maize and distributed three times as much maize as the WFP and NGOs (ZimVAC, 2003). This prevented large-scale problems in Zimbabwe though there was a very real threat of widespread suffering there.

1.1.4 WAS THE CRISIS OVERSTATED?

There has been some criticism the crisis was overstated¹⁰. Only about half the estimated food requirement was distributed in Zambia¹¹. However malnutrition levels¹² there did not indicate a food crisis.

⁶ It should be pointed out that the levels of malnutrition in Malawi, while of concern, are not indicative of famine conditions.

⁷ The evaluation team noticed a difference between urban informants who thought that even this relatively low number was exaggerated, and rural informants who gave examples of excess mortality that they had experienced.

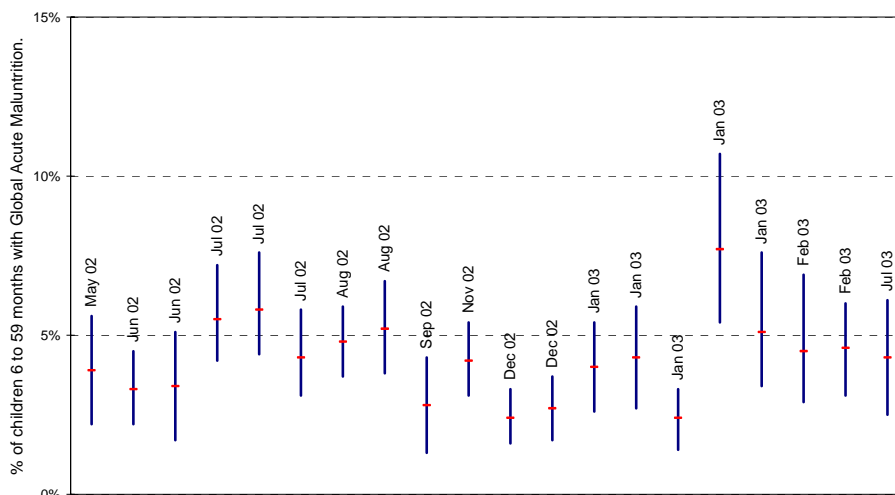
⁸ Paul Harvey, Personal Communication.

⁹ This study noted that *"In many of the most serious humanitarian situations, the study found a dramatic lack of crucial information available to decision-makers, in particular relating to mortality, morbidity and malnutrition – and the risk factors contributing to these."* Darcey J and Hofmann CA (2003).

¹⁰ e.g. The Times of January 22 2003: *Southern Africa famine threat is 'exaggerated'* by Dynes, M. Some donor staff interviewed took the view that the crisis had been overstated by NGOs and others.

Summary of Zambia Nutrition surveys

95% confidence intervals and mean levels for sample shown. Data from multiple agencies collected by CARE Zambia in *Nutrition Surveys: 2002-2003*.



Several international staff interviewed by the evaluation team commented that they had been surprised on their arrival to find that the crisis was not as severe as that portrayed by media coverage in the West. In almost all the countries of the region WFP fell behind food delivery targets.

There was a clear distinction between how agencies presented the crisis internally and externally. The internal presentation dealt with the chronic nature of the crisis, but the external presentation was far more dramatic and simplistic. Chapter 10 deals with the presentation of the crisis.

% of WFP planned food aid flow by November '02 (WFP 2003b)

Country	%
Malawi	~100%
Swaziland	75%
Zambia	45%
Mozambique	40%
Lesotho	35%
Zimbabwe ¹³	30%

The evaluation team's view is that while the food crisis did have the potential to affect millions and cause many deaths, it was unlikely to result in a crisis like Ethiopia in the mid 1980's or even early 1990's¹⁴. Not only were the presumed causes different (complete crop failures compared with partial crop failures), but the economy of the affected southern African countries was very different from that of countries in the Horn of Africa.

The crisis was not so much a regional crisis with a single unified cause, but a complex chronic crisis occurring simultaneously in a number of different countries in the region.

Agencies acknowledged that they had underestimated the role of remittances in Zimbabwe¹⁵, or of wild food and milk in Zambia. The crisis in Malawi was "discovered" accidentally through a Save the Children Household Economy Approach¹⁶ training exercise.

The current debate about whether the crisis was overstated or not seems to reflect an underlying lack of knowledge about the communities with whom the DEC (and other) agencies have been

¹¹ This was due in part to the government's rejection of genetically modified maize. Mosseau (2003) presents detailed calculations that show that only 51% of the estimated food aid need for cereals was met.

¹² A prevalence of global (which combines both moderate and severe) acute malnutrition of 5% is regarded as a typical background level for rural Africa in normal times. The trigger level of corrective action is when survey mean for global malnutrition exceeds 10%, but levels of 6-9% may indicate action is needed when there are aggravating factors (UNHCR/WFP, 1999).

¹³ In Zimbabwe the shortfall did not result in a crisis because the Zimbabwe government imported an estimated 800,000 tonnes, more than WFP's planned 750,000 tonne.

¹⁴ Up to a million people died in the Ethiopian famine in the mid 1980's. Several DEC agencies and key informants referred to this famine as an example of a severe famine.

¹⁵ The role of remittances is a recurring theme in emergencies.

¹⁶ The Household Economy Approach has been developed by Save the Children as a method of assessing and monitoring food security. It is widely regarded as one of the better attempts to understand how communities withstand shocks. For a full description see Save the Children (2000).

working. There seems to be a real lack of underlying data and understanding about what is going on in areas where agencies may have had ongoing development programmes for years.

This not only raises doubts about the appropriateness of some of these long-term programmes, but also means that agencies find it difficult to objectively assess the impact of shocks on the communities involved. They are, therefore, at risk of over (or under-) stating the impact of events on people's ability to cope. Both under and over-stating crises are dangerous – the latter because there is a danger of donors and the public regarding the agencies as 'crying wolf', which could lead to less support in the future.

Examples of what results from the apparent lack of understanding are Care's programmes to promote new crops in Zambia which failed to take into account marketing constraints. Concern had repeated the same mistake in Malawi. Save the Children UK decided to close their programme in Malawi against the background of the chronic poverty and the increasing stress that rising levels of HIV/AIDS place on children¹⁷.

1.2 Timeliness

The DEC appeal was in July 2002¹⁸. However, the largest hunger-related mortality was in Malawi in the preceding December to February. The appeal was far too late to help these. It was also too late to allow proper planning for seed distribution for the following agricultural season.

It would have been more appropriate to have launched the appeal earlier in 2002. The evaluation team recognises, however, that the DEC agencies were constrained by the willingness of the broadcasters to launch such an appeal.

In Zimbabwe BRCS made the point that although their start-up was slow, this was appropriate since this was not an acute emergency. They took a deliberate decision to have a slow ramp up in order to allow time to develop capacity within the Zimbabwe Red Cross Society.

The appeal was intended to be preventive. This was to allow the DEC agencies to undertake work that would prevent death following on from the poor harvest in the 2001–2002 season, where an unseasonably dry spell led to low yields in some areas. The DEC agencies were slow off the mark in many respects, particularly with seeds, but the rains began late after a false start, so the need for seed matched the late supply by the DEC agencies.

1.3 Scaling up

Scaling up proved a major headache for many of the DEC agencies. The last significant emergency in Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Zambia had been the 1991–1992 drought when the governments of each of the affected countries played a large role in the response with only limited NGO intervention.

Oxfam encountered serious human resources problems in both Zimbabwe and Zambia with varying levels of conflict between the existing small development programmes and the much larger emergency response programme. These issues were compounded in Zimbabwe by the threat to expel prominent UK agencies.

National NGOs have significant scaling up challenges. An analysis of their available budgets showed that they had not only changed their type of intervention but had increased their programme size by an average of two and a half times. Unlike international NGOs, national NGOs cannot deal with scaling up by bringing in experienced international staff, but DEC agencies sometimes assigned staff specifically to support activities by their national NGO partners. National NGOs were generally very positive about the support that they had received from such project "accompaniers".

Concern, which had just started in Malawi, seemed to have a better understanding of the context and a very appropriate programme. This partly stemmed from a deliberate policy to recruit key staff with a good understanding of the context in the country.

¹⁷ Save the Children note that this decision was taken before the food crisis developed and is part of a global effort to develop the Save the Children Alliance. Save the Children US will take the leading role in Malawi in future. However Save the Children UK is the most experienced member of the Save the Children alliance and has the most developed food security analysis capacity.

¹⁸ Even though the appeal was only in July, the DEC agencies had been trying to encourage media interest in the region from Spring 2000.

Contrasting Concern’s and Oxfam’s experience demonstrates that the assumption that a prior programme presence gives an agency an advantage in scaling up for an emergency response is not necessarily true.

1.4 Appropriateness

The largest single area of expenditure for the DEC agencies was agricultural recovery¹⁹. Almost all the DEC agencies participated in this activity. The quality of the DEC agency reporting (discussed in depth in Appendix 6: on 120) meant that almost one third of the DEC expenditure could not be allocated to an activity class.

This emphasis was relatively appropriate as it dealt with the longer term food security problems facing the rural communities. Particularly appropriate were programmes, such as that of Concern, which sought to improve longer term food security together with immediate food aid and winter cropping. The promotion of winter cropping²⁰ was appropriate in the areas where this allowed families to meet their food needs during the year to avoid the worst of the “hungry season”.

The majority of the international assistance for Malawi was in food aid. The use of DEC funds for food security partially reflected this as food needs were already well funded.

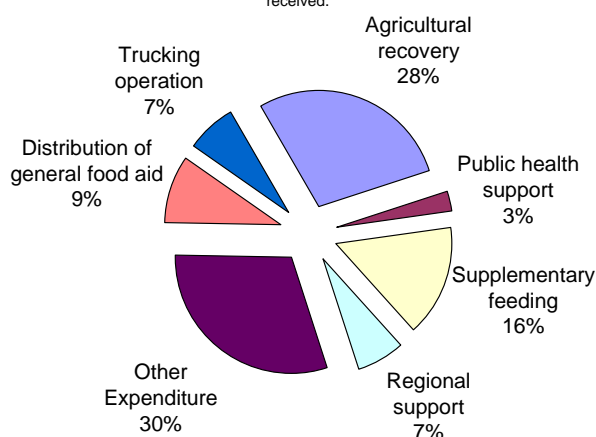
Relatively few agencies engaged in advocacy²¹ on the longer term issues relating to the crisis. Suitable areas for advocacy included government agricultural policy, food security policies, maize reserves and pricing policy, and the provision of extension services to small holders. While there were restrictions on advocacy in some countries²² it was possible in others. Advocacy is probably the chief tool that agencies have for influencing

government policies. Some of the roots of the crisis were due to government policy. The evaluation team considered that more effort should have gone into advocacy.

ActionAid, which combined advocacy with practical programmes to assist communities, probably undertook the most appropriate basket of interventions by dealing with immediate needs while also addressing longer term issues.

There were a number of activities of questionable appropriateness. These included World Vision’s supplementary feeding programme in Zambia, where not only was the programme run outside the

Distribution of DEC funds by activity
Based on reports to the DEC: Other expenditure includes both smaller categories and expenditure that cannot be allocated to a single category on the basis of the financial reports received.



Agency activity matrix for the Southern Africa Crisis Appeal (Source: Agency reports to the DEC)

	ActionAid	BRCS	CAFOD	CARE	Christian Aid	Concern	Everychild	Help Age Intl	Oxfam	SC UK	Tearfund	World Vision
Agricultural recovery	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Distribution of general food aid	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Public health support	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Regional support	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Supplementary feeding	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Trucking operation	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Other expenditure	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

¹⁹ It was not possible to allocate 31% of the DEC expenditure to one of the major activity classes. This is partly due to the range and variety of activities that some agencies carried out and partly due to the quality of some of the DEC agencies' reports (discussed in depth in Appendix 6: on page 120).

²⁰ In southern Africa, winter cropping refers to crops grown between the end of the rains in March or April and the start of the following seasons rains in October or November. Winter cropping can only be done in low-lying areas with high water tables or with irrigation.

²¹ Advocacy is discussed in more detail on page 35.

²² Advocacy was very difficult in Zimbabwe because of government suspicion of the aid agencies. One agency reported that it had conducted “quiet diplomacy” in Zimbabwe. However a senior staff member characterised this “quiet diplomacy” as being so quiet that one could have heard a pin drop.

normal hungry season but the criteria was changed inappropriately to feed the ex-ante planned number of beneficiaries. Save the Children's supplementary feeding programme in Malawi was also of questionable appropriateness, as it too operated in the non-hungry season and ended in 2003 just as the hungry season was about to start. Together with many key informants, the evaluation team questioned the appropriateness of the Oxfam trucking project in Zambia²³.

1.5 Impact

The impact of the DEC funds was to some extent buried in the other funding for the DEC agencies. The DEC pooled funding only represented about 4%²⁴ of the total funding for the DEC agencies, and the DEC agency funding represented only part of the overall response.

While some agencies undertook output monitoring, relatively few made an effort to undertake systematic monitoring of the impact of their interventions. World Vision noted that *"a sample of under-5 children taken from the programme screening data shows an average weight gain of 1.9kg and an average height gain of 4.6cm from February to May 2003"* At first glance this sounds good but without further data on mortality, ages, the sample size, sample selection basis²⁵ etc. it is not possible to know if this has any meaning or not²⁶.

Agencies noted that the main advantage of the DEC funding was its flexibility, with CARE in Zambia using DEC funds initially to buy GMO-free maize, but later transferring the cost of the maize to another donor when their funds became available, allowing the DEC funds to then buy beans. DEC funds were described by those who were familiar with the mechanism as being the most flexible funding after unrestricted own funds.

The evaluation team were satisfied that, from comments by beneficiaries and interviews with key informants, the availability of DEC funding led to a reduction in suffering and to the deferment of deaths, particularly among the HIV/AIDS sufferers assisted by agencies such as the BRCS in Zimbabwe and CAFOD in Zambia. The overall humanitarian programme contributed to a reduction in deaths in Zimbabwe and Malawi particularly and probably prevented a slide into more extreme coping strategies in Zambia.

1.6 Was the appeal justified?

This was an unusual DEC appeal in that it was in response to a threatened humanitarian emergency rather than to a humanitarian emergency in course.

The evaluation team concluded that the appeal was justified because it did contribute to the prevention of death and the reduction of suffering for the beneficiaries of the DEC agencies.

While the appeal was too late for those who died in the hungry season in Malawi in 2001 to 2002, the overall humanitarian programme did help to prevent further deaths in the 2002-2003 hungry season. The preventive nature of the appeal was therefore justified.

The evaluation team note that preventive action is more cost effective than emergency response as it harnesses the capacities of communities to help solve their own problems rather than simply wait for assistance.

However, the evaluation team noted that interventions designed to prevent crises have more in common with development or rehabilitation than traditional emergency relief. The DEC funding mechanisms, with a relatively short period of expenditure, are not well suited to this role. A study of needs assessment in the southern Africa crisis found:

²³ However, WFP Zambia, whose food Oxfam had moved, thought that the trucking operation was appropriate. Oxfam also make the point that the trucking operation gave Oxfam a "seat at the table" in discussions with WFP.

²⁴ The total funding referred to here refers to all the funding available to the DEC agencies partners in the field. Several DEC agencies (e.g. Care and World Vision) have very large sister organisations in the US or are parts of large networks (e.g. the Red Cross) that provide the bulk of funding for their field operations. If the evaluation team had compared the DEC funding with UK sourced funding only the DEC funding would have been very much larger than 4%.

²⁵ It is normal practice to take the whole group rather than a sample when assessing the impact of supplementary feeding programmes as it is good practice to monitor the progress of each individual child and the data should be readily to hand.

²⁶ The evaluation team noted quite strong contradictions between information supplied to the DEC by World Vision and information obtained in the field.

The majority of agencies and donors agree that the crisis is long term in nature, and that the need for sustained welfare support is likely to continue into the medium term. Yet the short, medium and long-term planning for the impacts of the crisis seems poorly informed by any broad strategic analysis. Few respondents were able to outline solutions that went beyond the normal six to nine month 'risk horizon' for humanitarian response.²⁷ (Darcey *et al.*, 2003)

1.7 Examples of Better Practice

The evaluation team were happy to note a number of examples of better practice that fall under the ambit of this chapter.

- The DEC agencies generally made wide use of the Code of Conduct and the Sphere handbook and there were many instances of training in these within the agencies. There was also evidence of agencies using these as standards against which they measured project proposals. The use of the Code and Sphere are likely to lead to more focus on the humanitarian imperative.
- ActionAid had an integrated approach to advocacy with a large number of strands. This included action research in Malawi (Devereaux, 2003) and the promotion of better practice at a national level (seed fairs with the Mozambique government, a media strategy for international, national and regional media, and policy advocacy at national, regional, and international level). This integrated advocacy appeared to be particularly appropriate.
- Save the Children²⁸ played a key role in bringing international attention to the crisis in Malawi through their nutritional surveys, and then through its advocacy with donors. This intervention helped to ensure that there was a faster response by the international community²⁹.
- TearFund's partner Emmanuel International initiated an "inputs for assets" programme. In this programme beneficiaries received agricultural inputs like seed and fertilizer, which they would not otherwise have been able to afford, for repairing a dirt road that improved their access to market, a doubly appropriate intervention.
- In Zambia, both TearFund's partner the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia and CARE International had goat distribution programmes. These were particularly appropriate as cattle herds in the area had been ravaged by corridor disease³⁰.

1.8 Conclusions and Recommendations

The links between HIV, coping strategies, and food security are poorly known³¹.

1. *DEC member agencies should devote some resources to jointly investigating the links between HIV, coping strategies and food security, at both the micro and macro level.*

The slow detection of the crisis in Malawi and the overstatement of the crisis were due in part to poor understanding of the context in which the agencies were working.

2. *DEC members should review how they can improve their understanding of the contexts in which they work.*

²⁷ The evaluation team also notes that the chronic nature of the crisis meant that the use of the Code of Conduct as an evaluation framework for analysing the response was less appropriate. One team member observed "what does it mean to say 'the humanitarian imperative comes first' when dealing with chronic poverty?"

²⁸ There are many national members within the Save the Children Alliance, but references to Save the Children within the report, unless qualified, refer to Save the Children UK.

²⁹ Christian Aid's Partner, the Livingstonia Synod Development Department also published a "Food Security Situation Assessment" in December 2001 which may have been instrumental in raising the alarm within Malawian institutions.

³⁰ Also known as East Coast Fever, this is a cattle disease that is transmitted by ticks and causes high rates of death in susceptible herds. It is confined to eastern, central, and parts of southern Africa. (CFAD-USAH, 1999)

³¹ The evaluation team note that several DEC agencies are already starting investigations along the lines of this recommendation.

Much of the problems with the timeliness of the response stemmed from issues with scaling up. Scaling up has proved to be a problem area in other emergencies, but there is very little literature on better practice in this area.

3. *The DEC Secretariat should approach a research institution to encourage the institution to undertake a review of better practice in scaling up operations for humanitarian response.*

Research by an academic institution would be more rigorous and comprehensive than reviews by individual agencies and would allow wide dissemination³².

4. *The DEC Secretariat should include a specific review of scaling up mechanisms in the evaluation of the next DEC appeal that yields more than 5 million pounds.*

Because DEC appeals are occasional and average careers duration for humanitarian workers is relatively short, many agency staff have no previous experience of the DEC mechanism. This is a particular problem for agencies with local partners or with a devolved structure without a central emergency department familiar with the DEC. This can lead to sub-optimal use of the DEC funding when its flexibility³³ is not understood. The DEC developed a new guide³⁴ in January 2003 (too late for this appeal), which should help to educate agency staff. While sending a DEC facilitator to the field was considered by the DEC it was decided that the complexity (with seven countries participating) and the setting up of the Learning Support Office made it less appropriate in this instance.

5. *In the next DEC emergency response, the DEC should send a facilitator to the field at the start of a response to ensure that those responsible for managing the response fully understand the flexibility that the DEC funding offers as well as the DEC's requirements for reporting.*

The DEC appeal was justified as it helped to save lives and reduce suffering in the face of real humanitarian need. However, interventions to prevent food crises have more in common with development and rehabilitation than with traditional acute emergency response. The DEC Secretariat note that extending the expenditure period might dilute the DEC's special position as an emergency funder and that the same effect can be achieved within the present 18 month overall expenditure period by changing the balance between the disaster response period and the extended response period funding.

6. *In any future appeal intended to have a preventive effect the DEC Secretariat should allocate a higher proportion of funding to the extended response period to provide a more even funding pattern.*

³² The Good Practice Guides of the Humanitarian Policy Network are one example of the way in which such research can be disseminated.

³³ Flexibility increases the relative utility of funding in the field indirectly as well as directly as inflexible funding implies higher costs to ensure compliance with the funding conditions. One of the reasons World Vision continued to use DEC funds for an inappropriate supplementary feeding programme was because the field staff did not understand how flexible the DEC funds were and thought they had to implement the original plan.

³⁴ The *DEC Operations Manual*.

2 Non-discrimination

Principle 2: Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind.

Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone. Wherever possible, we will base the provision of relief aid upon a thorough assessment of the needs of the disaster victims and the local capacities already in place to meet those needs. Within the entirety of our programmes, we will reflect considerations of proportionality. Human suffering must be alleviated whenever it is found; life is as precious in one part of a country as another. Thus, our provision of aid will reflect the degree of suffering it seeks to alleviate. In implementing this approach, we recognise the crucial role played by women in disaster prone communities and will ensure that this role is supported, not diminished, by our aid programmes. The implementation of such a universal, impartial and independent policy, can only be effective if we and our partners have access to the necessary resources to provide for such equitable relief, and have equal access to all disaster victims.

2.1 Assessment

Beneficiaries generally reported that agencies did not ask them what they wanted but merely made assumptions. (Appendix 4: and Appendix 5: have details of how beneficiaries perceived assessments). While communities needed and were happy to get food, they also had other priorities. The lack of assessments cannot be ascribed to the need for urgent action, as agencies were generally slow to respond, judging by the time lags to the first distributions³⁵.

Where there were assessments the ODI study of needs assessment in the Southern Africa Crisis (Darcy et al: 2003) noted:

The study team found that decisions to launch assessments were not always based on clear or consistent criteria, and that the objectives of assessments may be as much about justifying an agency's request for funding (the decision to intervene having already been taken) as about establishing an objective picture to inform an appropriate response³⁶.

In contrast to the general lack of assessments are the detailed household economy assessments undertaken by Save the Children. One of these led to the initial identification of the problem by the international community in Malawi. Although DEC agencies participated in the national vulnerability assessments³⁷, these are no substitute for detailed local assessments.

The most common type of assessment seems to have been the nutritional survey, carried out by many of the DEC agencies³⁸. However, even where the nutritional surveys showed relatively low levels of malnutrition, the agencies continued with supplementary feeding. Not only this, but in some cases supplementary feeding programmes ran into the post harvest season when malnutrition rates are usually much lower than the rest of the year.

Mousseau (2003) criticised the misuse of nutritional data by the humanitarian community (including DEC agencies) in Zambia.

Misinterpretation of nutrition data undermines the ability of the humanitarian community to fix adequate objectives and plan appropriate interventions as for

³⁵ The first Red Cross food distributions in Zimbabwe and Zambia took place in November 2002, Concern also had their first distribution (of food and seed) in the same month. CAFOD was faster with their first distribution in Zambia in October 2002, as were ActionAid with their October distribution in Malawi. World Vision only started their supplementary food distribution in February 2003, some seven months after the appeal.

³⁶ This study also notes: *There was an evident lack of conceptual models adequate for analysing the multiplicity of factors involved (political, socio-economic, climatic and environmental, demographic and epidemiological) at micro and macro levels, and establishing the links between them.*

³⁷ Save the Children and the Red Cross sat on the regional vulnerability assessment committee. Oxfam, World Vision, and CARE participated in country specific missions.

³⁸ Save the Children, Oxfam, the Red Cross, World Vision and Concern all conducted nutritional surveys in some of the seven countries covered by the appeal. Some other types of assessment were also carried out.

instance tackling malnutrition and helping recovery may not require the same type of food intervention and ration. In that case, it has also affected the credibility of organisations, with potentially critical effects for future interventions.

Even Save the Children, one of the most professional agencies in terms of their nutritional reports, was not above misinterpreting its own data:

Global acute malnutrition was found to be within the range 2.4% to 6.0%, a level below the emergency threshold. The rate increased slightly from the April 2002 level of between 1.8% and 5.2% . (Save the Children, 2003b)

The ranges quoted here are the ranges for the probable values of malnutrition in the population at the 95% confidence level. Where there is overlap between the ranges, no one can say whether the level has risen or fallen. Save the Children were not the only agency making this error.

In Malawi, Save the Children was supporting both supplementary and therapeutic feeding by health structures in the country even though the health structures initially used chronic malnutrition criteria. Chronic criteria are technically inappropriate for humanitarian assistance. However, Save the Children together with other DEC members did support the promotion of new technically appropriate protocols for malnutrition in Malawi.

Chronic and Acute Malnutrition

Children with *chronic* malnutrition may be adequately nourished at present, but have suffered malnutrition in the past. Children with *acute* malnutrition face illness and death if their nutritional situation does not improve.

The treatment for malnutrition is normally *supplementary feeding*, with additional dry rations on an out-patient basis for children with *moderate acute malnutrition*. *Therapeutic feeding* on an in-patient basis takes place for children with *severe acute malnutrition*.

2.2 Basis of need

One issue seen throughout the region was the use of standard food packages regardless of family size. At the same time as agencies were doing this they were trying to persuade communities to target the most vulnerable members. Beneficiaries resented the fact that a single person got the same amount of food assistance as a family of fifteen. The one-size-fits-all-approach contradicts targeting according to need.

Agencies argue that distributing non-standard packages increases the complexity and cost of distribution. Cost increases are very small, however, in the low wage environment of most developing countries and strategies such as banding (having a limited number of pack sizes for different ranges of family sizes) can reduce the complexity. Other agencies considered that the WFP required the use of a standard ration regardless of family size when this is not the case. WFP's own field handbook recommends that for general distribution "A standard ration is given for each man, woman and child. Food is normally distributed to the ration card holder for each household - e.g. 5 rations are given to a 5-person household" (WFP 2002, page 104).

Issuing a standard packet of assistance can be justified when aid has to be distributed in the heat of the moment in a sudden onset acute emergency, but a distribution on the basis of need would have been more appropriate in a slow onset emergency like this.

2.3 Constraints on Humanitarian space

There were significant constraints on humanitarian space in Zimbabwe. Margie Buchanan Smith discusses this issue in detail in Appendix 8: on page 168. All the key informants agreed that the two of the most vulnerable groups in the population in Zimbabwe were former commercial farm workers and the people who had been allocated the land.

Those resettled on the land do not always have the financial resources or the skills to practice the type of high-input agriculture that was practiced on the former commercial farms. Both groups need food aid. The Government does not want agencies to discriminate against those who have been resettled on the seized commercial farms, and will not allow distribution of food to the ex-farm workers without distributions also to those who have been resettled.

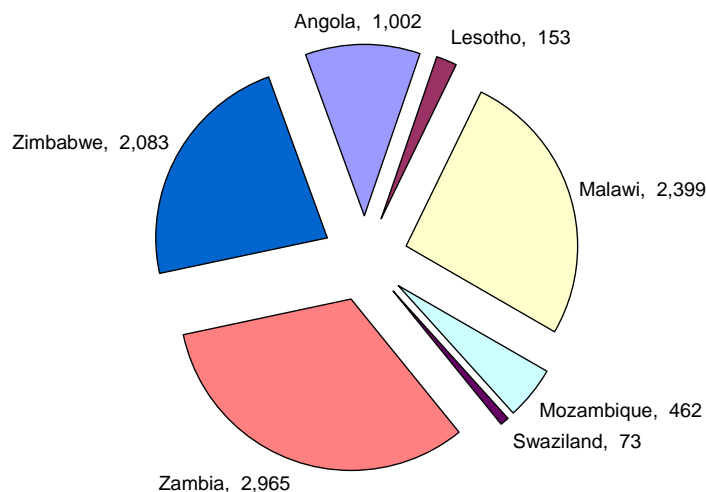
malnutrition and mortality rates. While needs in Angola may have been greater than those in the rest of the region in mid 2002, the most recent nutritional surveys are only slightly worse than for the other countries in the region.

The situation in Angola is very different and more akin to a traditional humanitarian emergency. This is because there is every hope that the end of the war will allow the rural population to become self-sufficient, provided that government policies do not obstruct this. While there are still significant needs in Angola⁴¹, these are unlikely to be recurring problems as in poverty stricken Malawi.

The DEC agencies spent the DEC funds in all seven countries covered by the appeal.

Expenditure of DEC DRP plus ERP allocations ('000 GBP)

Sources: Agency final reports and DEC evaluation terms of reference.



The chart above shows all the sums spent on regional offices distributed among the country programmes pro-rata. The DEC had two expenditure periods, the initial nine-month disaster response period (DRP) and the subsequent nine month extended response period (ERP).

Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Angola attracted 92% of the DEC funding. What was surprising was that Zambia, which was probably the least affected of these four countries, attracted more DEC funding than the other three. Forty percent of the DEC expenditure in Zambia was by Oxfam.

Reasons given by some agencies for the way in which they spent the DEC funding included:

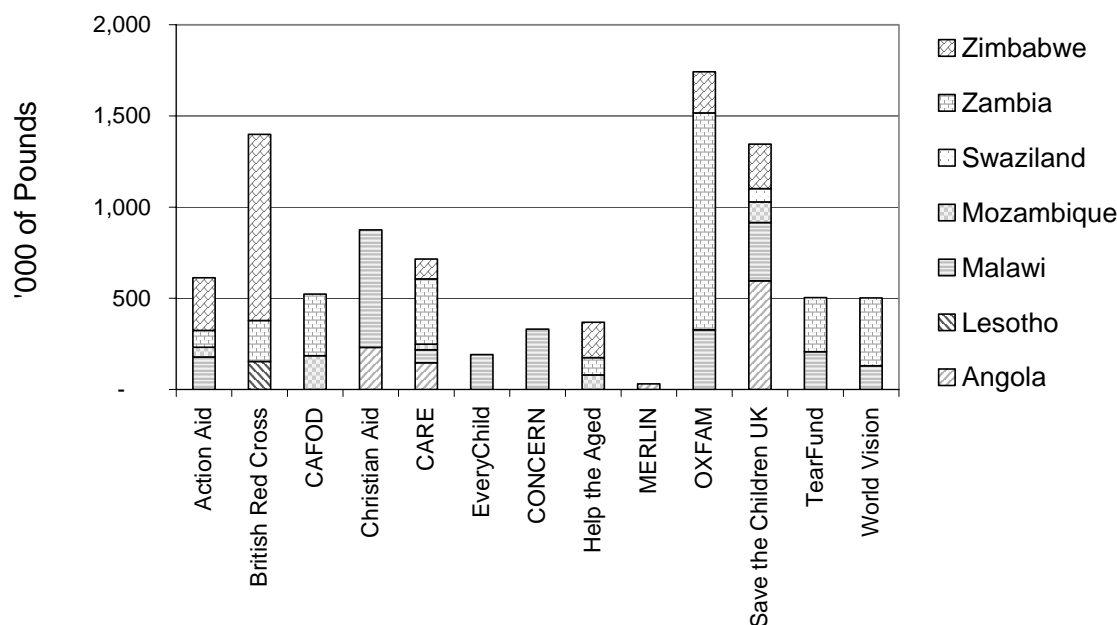
- The refusal by the Zambian government to accept food containing genetically modified material meant that needs increased there.
- DFID was very willing to fund well-established DEC agencies in Zimbabwe.
- There had been a big donor response in Malawi, so needs for DEC funding were less there.

These reasons underline how the usefulness of DEC funds is increased by their flexibility.

⁴¹ The evaluation team leader spent four weeks in Angola in June and July 2003 on a separate evaluation.

DEC Agency Spend by Country

Based agency reports to the DEC. Regional and overhead expenditure distributed proportionately



2.5 Coverage

Beneficiaries widely regarded coverage as inadequate⁴², but agreed that assistance had gone to those who needed it most. Targeting criteria for food were relatively uniform in Malawi, under the influence of the CARE-led JEFAP NGO consortium. The consortium not only established a standard set of criteria, but also established a procedures manual for carrying out food aid.

Targeting criteria were very much more varied in Zambia, reflecting the smaller effort here that went into the training and formation of village committees used for food distribution.

Some difficult to reach groups were left out. TearFund's partner, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, carried out school feeding at 36 schools in Gwembe District (a district with poor road access) in Southern Province, Zambia. However, they also said that these schools were selected because they were the easiest to reach, and that there were other schools which were harder to reach and where they expected there were bigger problems.

Although the DEC agencies largely worked in the areas where they or their partners had existing programmes, the beneficiaries of their programmes were in many cases not previous clients⁴³ of the agencies.

Previous DEC evaluations have shown that agencies, by working in areas where they already have a presence, can add value to their response through the knowledge they already have of an area and the established infrastructure there. The counter argument to this is that agencies should be seeking out the areas of greatest need rather than simply providing assistance where it is most convenient for them.

The evaluation team found that many of the DEC agency development programmes were already focused in the poorer parts of the affected countries. It was therefore appropriate for the agencies to deliver relief assistance in those areas. The relatively effective national co-ordination by WFP meant that areas not served by the DEC agencies were served by others. The beneficiary focus of the DEC agencies was as appropriate as it could be given the general lack of broader assessments.

⁴² Coverage was regarded as inadequate not because the crisis was severe but because only part of the community was served by targeted assistance. Beneficiaries would have preferred if the majority of the community had been assisted.

⁴³ The distinction of the *clients* of development programmes and the *beneficiaries* of relief projects is one of the differences between relief and development noted in Appendix 11: on page 187.

2.6 Gender

There was some awareness of gender issues among the DEC agencies as well as a number of initiatives to increase the participation of women in relief processes. WFP in Zambia insisted initially that women were represented on the village relief committees, and later insisted that ten out of the fifteen members should be women. However, in parts of Zambia, as long as there was one man on the committee the women would defer to him, in accordance with the social norms in those areas.

Gender analysis was weak. This reflected a pattern of weak analysis generally, with little detailed analysis of the overall context. With some exceptions, as with gender, there was little analysis of the impact of age, or disability.

Women are disproportionately poor and households in Africa are complex units where men and women have different and often sharply defined gender roles. There was little analysis by the agencies of the impact of the assistance provided on the balance of labour and responsibility within the household. This is a particular issue with the promotion of new crops⁴⁴. It would have been useful to have had some analysis of what impact new crops (or the introduction of goats) had on household dynamics.

There were a large number of gender assumptions. It was assumed that female-headed households were more likely to be poor and these were widely included as a target group. However, in Malawi Concern found that while female-headed households comprised about 30% of households where they were working, less than 20% of the targeted vulnerable households were female headed. This meant that either:

- Female-headed households were less likely to be poor OR
- Female-headed households were being discriminated against.

Concern undertook no research to determine the cause, but suggested that the first of these might be true because some of the female-headed households might be receiving remittances from absent male household members.

In southern Africa, a child who has lost one parent is regarded as an orphan. The loss of a mother can be particularly difficult in groups with a matrilineal culture, as the surviving parent may have no responsibility for the child. Even where fathers have some responsibility, the loss of a mother is much more prejudicial to child survival than the death of the father. DEC agencies were registering orphans who had lost one parent in some cases without distinguishing whether they had lost a mother or father.

The lack of gender analysis was not accompanied by a similar lack of rhetoric. The word "gender" was mentioned 22 times in the disaster response plans and 37 times in the final reports on the first nine month's expenditure. However, almost no-one who was interviewed from the agencies could identify any real differences in the impact of their projects on men and women. One would expect that gender analysis would identify real differences.

2.7 Examples of better practice

The evaluation team saw only a few interventions that they regarded as possible better practice in terms of appropriately meeting needs:

- Save the Children's household economy assessments represent current better practice. These were supported by professional nutritional surveys carried out by Save the Children. These surveys represent better practice because of the depth of analysis and range of factors that they consider.
- HODI in Zambia, an ActionAid partner, which insisted on carrying out cash for work rather than food for work. Cash was far more appropriate than food for the families assisted, as it more closely matched the needs of the community.

⁴⁴ A further issue with crops is that sorghum, which a number of agencies were promoting as being more drought resistant, requires a lot of labour for bird-scaring when the grain is ripening. This is normally done by children, so the successful re-introduction of sorghum might have a large impact on school attendance.

2.8 Recommendations

The presentation of nutritional data leads to misunderstandings, especially when the level of malnutrition in the sample is given prominence, rather than the probable prevalence in the overall population:

7. *The DEC agencies should, for nutritional surveys, present the 95% confidence limits for prevalence first rather than the sample prevalence.*
8. *DEC agencies should, when comparing two nutritional surveys taken for the same population at different times, indicate the probability that surveys reflect a change.*

DEC Agencies in general have been supplying standard food packages regardless of family size. This is not appropriate where assistance is being targeted on the basis of need.

9. *DEC agencies should introduce the general principle that food assistance packages are proportionate to family size.*

Gender is being referred to in documents, but there is very little evidence of gender, generation, or disability analysis on the ground.

10. *DEC agencies should undertake a joint study of why gender and generation analyses are still so weak.*
11. *The DEC Secretariat should make gender analysis one of the central themes of the next DEC evaluation.*
12. *The DEC Secretariat should consider introducing a requirement for the disaster response period quarterly reports to identify what differential impact DEC-funded projects have had on men and women.*

3 Religion and politics

Principle 3: Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint

Humanitarian aid will be given according to the need of individuals, families and communities. Notwithstanding the right of Non Governmental Humanitarian Agencies to espouse particular political or religious opinions, we affirm that assistance will not be dependent on the adherence of the recipients to those opinions. We will not tie the promise, delivery or distribution of assistance to the embracing or acceptance of a particular political or religious creed.

3.1 Differences between relief and development

Principle three highlighted one of the central differences between good development practice and the standards set by the Code of Conduct. In many development programmes assistance is linked to membership of particular groups or the adoption of a particular philosophy⁴⁵, such as self-help.

The evaluation team noted that pastoral care was an element of the home based care programmes for both the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, supported by Tearfund, and the Livingstone St Francis home based care programme, supported by CAFOD in Zambia.

The home based care volunteers at the Evangelical Fellowship said that they always started home visits by bringing the *Good News* (i.e. the Christian Gospel) to families affected by AIDs. The evaluation team noted that Bible study was taking place in the background of the static clinics being run by the St Francis project in Livingstone.

However, in neither of these programmes was church membership a prerequisite for assistance. While all the Evangelical Fellowship volunteers were members of evangelical churches, only about one quarter of the St Francis volunteers were Catholic and one was believed to be Muslim. The evaluation team noted that faith-based agencies often made a considerable effort to ensure that church non-members were included in their assistance⁴⁶.

The evaluation team concluded that, given the psychological load that HIV/AIDS places on those affected, pastoral care is indeed a fitting part of long-term support to the affected. However, agencies need to be careful to segregate this from humanitarian relief.

Membership as a prerequisite for assistance is not only a faith-based phenomena. In development programmes, agencies often seek to promote a policy of co-operative action as a cure for many ills. This makes a great deal of sense in development projects as agencies seek to work with particular groups over a long period.

ActionAid's partner HODI in Zambia had set up cattle clubs (cooperative groups of cattle owners) in one area visited by the beneficiary assessment team. HODI initially targeted its cash for work project at the cattle clubs and their members. It was only when members and local leaders argued that all community members should be allowed to participate that the programme was broadened. However, even then non-members were discriminated against in that they could only work for two weeks on the project.

3.2 Recommendations

Where DEC agencies have existing development programmes, assistance is often delivered through membership of groups established around a particular philosophy.

13. *DEC agencies should formally adopt the policy that emergency assistance, while it may be facilitated by existing social structures set up by the agencies or supported by them, should not be directed exclusively at the members of such groups.*

⁴⁵ The evaluation team is taking a very broad view of *religion* and *politics* to include all belief systems, including philosophies about development. Development philosophies can be profoundly subversive to the existing order.

⁴⁶ The Livingstonia Synod Development Department in Malawi, a Christian Aid partner, was a good example of this.

4 Foreign policy

Principle 4: We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy

Non Governmental Humanitarian Agencies are agencies which act independently from governments. We therefore formulate our own policies and implementation strategies and do not seek to implement the policy of any government, except in so far as it coincides with our own independent policy. We will never knowingly – or through negligence – allow ourselves, or our employees, to be used to gather information of a political, military or economically sensitive nature for governments or other bodies that may serve purposes other than those which are strictly humanitarian, nor will we act as instruments of foreign policy of donor governments. We will use the assistance we receive to respond to needs and this assistance should not be driven by the need to dispose of donor commodity surpluses, nor by the political interest of any particular donor. We value and promote the voluntary giving of labour and finances by concerned individuals to support our work and recognise the independence of action promoted by such voluntary motivation. In order to protect our independence we will seek to avoid dependence upon a single funding source.

4.1 Donor policy

The ways in which donor policy affected humanitarian space in Zimbabwe is discussed in the Appendix on humanitarian space. Other donor policies also affected the DEC agencies. Decisions about humanitarian aid were made for reasons other than the basis of need. Devereux notes that concern about governance, including alleged corruption around the sale of the strategic grain reserve “caused donors to vacillate for several months before responding to signals of distress with food assistance”.

In Malawi, USAID informed agencies that they would only fund through a consortium approach rather than through individual agencies. The Joint Emergency Food Aid Project (JEFAP) consortium was the result. This led to a very co-ordinated approach to assistance in Malawi. The evaluation team considered that this added value to the assistance provided by the DEC agencies and led to better quality assistance. However, national NGOs felt that they were excluded from the JEFAP consortium. The only two national NGOs that had access (the Malawian Red Cross and the Evangelical Association of Malawi) do so through support by international partners.

4.2 Subcontracting approach

Agencies in Malawi acknowledged that they had not been proactive enough with donors. NGOs were, in some cases, acting like subcontractors to WFP rather than like independent NGOs. Some local NGOs complained that they were treated more like subcontractors than partners by DEC agencies.

In Malawi, the USAID-funded C-SAFE⁴⁷ project was so late that they only supplied food for Save the Children’s supplementary feeding programme from April to September 2003. This is the time of year in Malawi when the need for supplementary feeding is least appropriate since there is more food in the home.

Save the Children’s own nutrition surveys in Malawi in December 2002 indicated global malnutrition levels in the range of 1.2% to 3.1% and 1.5% to 4.3%. It would normally be considered inappropriate to undertake a supplementary feeding programme in these circumstances, and the evaluation team can only assume that Save the Children did so because they wished to avoid upsetting USAID, the back donor for the C-SAFE consortium.

By contrast Concern in Malawi withdrew from CoGuard, another USAID-funded consortium, because they believed that membership would compromise their ability to deliver appropriate assistance. This decision meant that Concern could not then access USAID funding for that area of activity.

⁴⁷ The USAID-funded consortium – Southern African Food Emergency (C-SAFE) had three lead members: World Vision, CARE, and Catholic Relief Service.

4.3 Advocacy

Although DEC agencies in Zimbabwe were engaged in informal advocacy with donor representatives in Harare, there was almost no advocacy with DFID in London. There were many areas where agencies could have advocated with the Zimbabwean government including:

- Access to the commercial farming areas for aid distributions on the basis of vulnerability.
- Permission to carry out urban assessments.
- The way in which the grain marketing board operated.

However, all the DEC agencies interviewed on this point took the view that advocacy on these issues would lead to expulsion from Zimbabwe. The evaluation team regard this view as justified.

There were other potential targets for advocacy by DEC agencies in Zimbabwe, including the UK government and the media. Zimbabwe gets a very bad press in the UK and the media fail to distinguish between the political use of food by the government and the political use of food aid. All of the BBC stories in the box on the right refer to government food rather than food aid, but this is not made clear in the stories. All of the agency key informants interviewed denied that internationally provided food aid was used by the government as a political tool⁴⁸, while the food supplied through the grain-marketing board clearly was.

There were other areas for advocacy by DEC agencies in Malawi and Zambia. Here advocacy could have included the agricultural policies of government and the policies of the WFP.

The DEC includes a budget line for policy work (which includes advocacy) in the budget format for DEC appeals. Only four agencies⁴⁹ indicated that they planned to spend DEC funds on policy work in their initial response plans.

Many of the DEC agencies carried out advocacy work⁵⁰, but agencies representative in all three countries acknowledged that opportunities for advocacy had been missed. The reason may have been because of the lack of analysis or because of the workload of responding to the crisis. Another factor may have been a lack of confidence in identifying clear advocacy messages in a complex environment. This is an area where co-ordination between the DEC agencies may add value.

Stories on Zimbabwe from the BBC following the DEC appeal (source <http://news.bbc.co.uk>)

All areas of Zimbabwe have been hit by a severe drought but opposition supporters are prevented from getting food except on the black market. – 30/07/2002

The BBC uncovers evidence in famine-hit Zimbabwe that President Mugabe's allies are stopping food aid reaching his political opponents. – 30/07/2002

Grant Ferrett defies a ban and travels to Zimbabwe to find police confiscating scanty supplies of food that have left rural areas desperate. – 29/07/2002

4.4 Examples of better practice

The evaluation team noted that most of the attempted political interference with aid delivery came from local politicians rather than from foreign governments. The evaluation team found two examples of better practice here:

- Oxfam in Malawi encountered political interference in one area of its activities, but successfully dealt with this by working through local structures.
- CARE in Zambia had looting at one distribution after a local MP said that the food CARE was distributing had been provided by the government and was for everyone. CARE brought the

⁴⁸ This may be somewhat naïve of the agencies. While there was practically no political interference with food distributions by the DEC agencies, many of those interviewed regarded the restrictions on food distribution or subsidised sale in the urban areas as being largely politically motivated.

⁴⁹ ActionAid, Christian Aid, Help the Aged, and Save the Children.

⁵⁰ Save the Children carried out advocacy in Malawi, Zimbabwe, London, and Rome. Oxfam hired a regional humanitarian advocacy officer. ActionAid had an integrated regional advocacy strategy. Concern engaged in advocacy with the Irish public and government. Tearfund set up a position to support advocacy by partners. Christian Aid prepared a report for the parliamentary select committee on the crisis.

issue to the attention of the district disaster management committee (DDMC), who took effective action against the ringleaders and chastised the MP.

International agencies sometimes run to donors to put pressure on government when they encounter local political interference, but both of these cases highlight that local structures may be more effective than escalating disputes by getting donors involved.

4.5 Recommendations

The DEC agencies missed opportunities for advocacy in the region. Advocacy that is founded in experience on the ground and careful analysis can leverage the impact of agencies. The possibilities of advocacy need to be highlighted more in the initial response planning.

14. *The DEC Secretariat should consider amending the format of the Disaster Response Programme document to specifically include a reference to advocacy under the programme proposal. A suitable wording under the programme proposal section might be: "Indicate what advocacy initiatives you intend to undertake to achieve the objectives of your response programme".*
15. *The DEC Secretariat should consider including the promotion of joint advocacy by the DEC agencies in the job description of any DEC facilitator sent to the field for any future DEC emergency response.*

5 Culture and custom

Principle 5: We shall respect culture and custom

We will endeavour to respect the culture, structures and customs of the communities and countries we are working in.

Cultural issues are well covered in the two beneficiary assessments (Appendix 4: on page 93 and Appendix 5: on page 106).

5.1 No culturally inappropriate assistance

The evaluation team are happy to report that they found no examples of assistance that was grossly culturally inappropriate. This was presumably due to the slow onset nature of the emergency and the awareness of the cultural context by the agencies that had been working for many years in the environment.

5.2 Targeting and culture

A great deal of work went into targeting food assistance to vulnerable beneficiaries. However, assistance was often shared by target households, largely along kinship lines. This was an issue throughout the region.

The Malawi targeting study (Westen, 2003) found that sharing of food by recipients was an issue raised in 63% of the discussions held by that evaluation team⁵¹.

There were a number of issues here:

- Some observers note that agencies share a world view centred around individuals as the basic unit of society⁵². This is enshrined in the rights based approach but is not a world view shared by most rural communities in southern Africa, for whom a collective unit comes first.
- The agencies generally used a definition of household based around eating from a single pot⁵³, but these households see themselves as part of a cluster of households linked by kinship. The WFP targeting review found that such clusters of “pot” households shared the rations received by one of the “pot” households.
- Save the Children found that increasing severity of hunger led to a decrease in sharing, even among relatives (Machias Kasailika, 2003).
- While the poorest 10% to 15% of households could be identified relatively easily as the poorest of the poor, there were very few tangible wealth differences between the poor 60% to 70% of households.
- Both Malawi and Zambia have intact local authority structures and it was difficult to prevent these taking advantage of the distributions to give priority to themselves, especially as communities sometimes regarded it as appropriate to do so⁵⁴.
- Concern’s review of food distribution (Davey, 2003) found that almost 80% of households had eaten all the food they received. Just over 20% of the households interviewed had

⁵¹ This was misunderstood by many to mean that 63% of recipients shared food. This was not the finding of the study.

⁵² There are some examples of agency approaches, such as Oxfam’s Community Based Targeting and Distribution, that focus on a group rather than an individual view, but this does not change the fact that the general world view is an individualist one.

⁵³ JEFAP (2003) used “*People staying or eating with the beneficiary head of household on a normal basis*” as a household definition. WFP (2002) defines a household as: *A social unit composed of individuals, with genetic or social relations among themselves, under one head or leader, living under the same roof, eating from the same pot and sharing a common resource base.*

⁵⁴ The WFP targeting study found that 63% of interviews reported that “*targeted beneficiaries also represent the most privileged*” and typically expressed the views that “*chiefs should not exploit their privileges*”.

shared food. However, only 6% of food was traded or shared outside the household⁵⁵. Beneficiaries who reported sharing food (in Zambia) also reported sharing quite small amounts.

- CAFOD home based care beneficiaries in Livingstone were strongly opposed to any targeting of food assistance within the home based care group, but were equally unhappy with the suggestion that assistance could have been shared among the whole community rather than targeted on the home based care group⁵⁶.

The evaluators concluded that sharing of food attenuated household targeting by NGOs. However, the degree of attenuation depended on a range of factors including:

- The effort that agencies put into understanding the community's structures and into developing a common model of vulnerability and targeting with them.
- The level of coverage in terms of percentage of households receiving food.
- The level of food stress on households.
- Group membership and the extent of association with different groups.

The evaluators note Concern's conclusion that:

"Communities are able to target the most vulnerable households objectively with the right facilitation services in place. However, community-led targeting is in reality based on an understanding that resources, especially food, could be redistributed within communities. This response is a result of the fact that there are few tangible wealth differences between the vast majority of households." (Concern, 2003)

On the basis of the beneficiary assessments in (Appendix 4: on page 93 and Appendix 5: on page 106), beneficiaries in Malawi appeared to be happier with the targeting of assistance than beneficiaries in Zambia. This reflected what appeared to be a greater investment in training village committees in Malawi. The evaluation team concluded that while all the DEC agencies reached the poorest, the DEC agencies that invested most in developing community capacity to target the needy within their communities had the most effective targeting.

5.3 Example of better practice

The evaluation team considered that the following might be an example of better practice in this area:

- Concern in Malawi arranged beneficiary selection by the community by splitting the community into three groups. One group contained all the chiefs, village elders and advisers; the other two consisted of the non-leaders split into two. All three drew up lists of the most needy. These were then compared.

This was a refinement of the process used by most agencies. This approach ensured that the leaders did not dominate the process of selection, but also ensured they were part of it.

⁵⁵ It is not clear what definition of a household Concern used. However, it is also clear that Concern went to a great deal of effort to identify community households. Concern also adopted the principle of targeting at least 30% of the community to ensure the community mechanisms could redistribute assistance to the most needy.

⁵⁶ This is not unusual. A well defined group like the CAFOD beneficiaries may often favour equal distribution within the group to avoid group tensions, while rejecting that idea that the group's resources should be shared with others.

6 Build on local capacity

Principle 6: We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities

All people and communities – even in disaster – possess capacities as well as vulnerabilities. Where possible, we will strengthen these capacities by employing local staff, purchasing local materials and trading with local companies. Where possible, we will work through local non governmental humanitarian agencies as partners in planning and implementation, and co-operate with local government structures where appropriate. We will place a high priority on the proper co-ordination of our emergency responses. This is best done within the countries concerned by those most directly involved in the relief operations, and should include representatives of the relevant UN bodies.

Note: The two beneficiary assessments (Appendix 4: on page 93 and Appendix 5: on page 106) deal with many of the issues discussed here in far more detail, and with many more examples.

6.1 Low initial capacity

The last major emergency for many countries in the region was the drought in 1991–1992. Although Mozambique had the floods in 2000, and there was an ongoing complex emergency in Angola, the other countries had experienced a decade in which agencies had almost no local exposure to humanitarian emergencies. This meant that the agencies generally did not have staff or procedures in place for dealing with a humanitarian emergency.

The lack of emergency response experience on the ground slowed the initial responses of some agencies. This applied not only to the national NGO partners of the DEC agencies but also to the DEC agencies themselves and to the UN system. The possible role of disaster management training is discussed in Chapter 8, on reducing future vulnerability.

The way in which agencies reacted to this lack of capacity varied. Oxfam put in teams of international staff with emergency experience throughout. Sometimes this led to conflict between the existing development programme and the new humanitarian one⁵⁷. Oxfam had eighteen extra international staff in Zambia to manage the emergency, whereas Care, which was able to rely much more on the staff of its existing projects (including a project that was terminating just at the start of the crisis), only had two extra international staff.

6.2 Relationships with partners

This issue is covered in some detail in the appendix on financial management. The financial analysis shows that at least 52% of DEC funds or DEC-purchased resources were passed to local partners or other partner agencies.

The range of relationships varied greatly, from well-established long-term partnerships to an arrangement that was more akin to contracting. On average partners' global funding grew by 250% during the emergency – a growth spurt that could strain even the best managed organisations. The biggest scale up was the Elderly People's Association (EPA) in Malawi, a HelpAge International partner, whose annual budget increased nearly four fold during the emergency.

The financial management report (Appendix 6: on page 120) found that only World Vision was directly aware of the size of its partner's programme⁵⁸. This issue is discussed further in the financial management report. However, it was clear the partnership arrangements were not always

⁵⁷ In Zambia there was even a separate Oxfam office for the humanitarian programme with *Oxfam Humanitarian* painted on the gate. Having separate offices does not contribute to integrated programming and limits opportunities for learning between development and humanitarian arms.

⁵⁸ World Vision is different from many of the other large NGOs in that its programmes are often fully independent, whereas other large NGOs stick to a colonial model with programmes being managed from the centre. World Vision Zambia has its own local board of trustees and so operates as a national NGO rather than as the local office of an international one.

formalised. Only two agencies⁵⁹ carried out an assessment of their partner's financial management capacity before substantially increasing funding⁶⁰.

Partnership agencies provided support for their partners. Christian Aid invested in the financial training of its partners in Malawi. CAFOD invested in the financial training of partners in all three countries visited and provided programme accompaniers in all the countries where they were supporting the response. TearFund provided programme accompaniers to support its partner's programmes in Malawi and Zambia. These accompaniers were tasked with supporting networking, good practice, proposal writing, and programme delivery.

Not all relationships were rosy. Oxfam fell out with its partner Harvest Help Zambia and appeared to have terminated funding without giving specific reasons for this⁶¹. The evaluation team noted that there was no specific procedure for resolving disputes, as one would expect in a partnership agreement. Oxfam resolved the dispute by cutting off funding for Harvest Help.

6.3 Connectedness

Virtually all of the DEC agency responses were built onto existing development programmes⁶². As a result long-term issues were generally taken into consideration. However, in some cases there was a lack of consideration of exit strategies from relief to longer-term support. Relief addressed at chronic needs was delivered for a short period without any apparent consideration as to what the exit or transition strategy would be. The TearFund-funded Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia's school feeding programme⁶³ was one example of this, but there were many others in the areas of supplementary feeding, school feeding, and one time assistance to conservation farming⁶⁴. The lack of exit strategies may have been due to a failure to recognise the chronic nature of the problems, and the assumption that only short-term assistance was needed.

The evaluators had similar concerns about some of the home based care programmes for HIV/AIDS-affected and afflicted⁶⁵ households. These were provided with food for a time, but this was scaled back when the funding ended. The food problems of this group were not related to a short-term crisis, but to HIV/AIDS. Both the Red Cross in Zimbabwe⁶⁶ and CAFOD's partner in Zambia saw increases in mortality from HIV/AIDS-related conditions when food assistance was reduced.

6.4 Impact on community capacity

One clear benefit identified by the Zambia beneficiary assessment was the improvement in community cohesion and co-ordination as a result of working in groups. However this was not the case in all communities. Some communities in Zambia had multiple community committees to liaise

⁵⁹ ActionAid and CAFOD.

⁶⁰ By contrast one agency revealed that they had checked financial systems in their own field offices before the funding rate increased.

⁶¹ Both Oxfam and Harvest Help made allegations against each other, but the evaluation team were not in a position to determine the truth or otherwise of these. In August Oxfam (2002b) described Harvest Help thus : "*Harvest help are a very credible, reliable NGO...*"

⁶² Concern started new programmes in Zimbabwe and Zambia which were intended to develop into long-term programmes. Neither of these were DEC-funded. Concern's programme in Malawi started shortly before the crisis but was in response to a decision in 2000 to start operations there.

⁶³ There are a number of ethical issues around school feeding. Is it right just to feed school-going children when the whole family is food insecure? The school feeding may help one child during school, but does nothing for the long-term food security of the family.

⁶⁴ Conservation farming is a complex approach to farming in fragile environments. It seeks to conserve moisture and nutrients and to spread the land preparation workload. Like any innovation it needs technical support over a number of years to be successful. While some agencies were only providing short-term support for conservation farming, others like CARE were providing longer term support.

⁶⁵ Afflicted households had a member suffering from HIV/AIDS. Affected households were indirectly affected through, for example, supporting a child orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

⁶⁶ In Zimbabwe one Red Cross staff member said that "*Our clients dropped dead around us*" after a re-targeting exercise excluded some from further food distributions. In Zambia volunteers said that death rates increased after widespread food distribution ended. The deaths were believed to be due to complications of HIV/AIDS.

with the different agencies. There was far greater uniformity in Malawi, with many agencies interfacing with the village relief committees for a variety of tasks.

For communities, dealing with NGOs is clearly an acquired skill. NGO priorities may seem strange from a community perspective. CARE in Zambia faced far fewer problems in communities in which they had previously established committees for their development programme. The village relief committees were not the same as the previous village development committees but the community knew how to interact with NGOs.

6.5 Impact on government capacity

In Malawi, Save the Children led the effort to improve the protocol for dealing with malnourished children. Interaction with higher levels of government was constrained in Zimbabwe⁶⁷, but good relations were reported at local level. Some agencies had long established links with government⁶⁸ and preserved them through the emergency response.

What was very marked in Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Zambia, was the reduced role of governments in responding to the crisis when compared with the 1991–1992 drought. NGOs played a far more important role in this response. In Zimbabwe donors channelled resources through NGOs because of concerns about politicisation of food by the government, while in Malawi donor unhappiness over the non-transparency of the sale of the strategic grain reserve dominated the donor agenda initially.

In Zambia, agencies – with some exceptions such as CARE – tended to work with governments only at the local level, turning to the district level when there were problems. This approach not only undermined the government structure, but also had a tendency to limit an agency's exit strategies. Explicit partnership with government departments can contribute to a viable exit strategy.

In Zambia also the effectiveness of the district disaster management committees, the government structures responsible for managing the crisis, tended to vary with the effort that the lead NGO in the district put into supporting them. This was partly because these committees were often established without any additional resources. The disaster management committees had virtually the same composition as the development management committees and agencies like CARE, that had long relations with these, were able to work successfully with the disaster management committee.

CARE saw a real return on its investment in supporting one district disaster management committee when this committee was able to deal successfully with the problems caused by one MP.

6.6 Training

DEC agencies also invested in training local partners in the Sphere Standards and the Code of Conduct. Several local partners said this training was very useful as they had had no prior exposure to emergencies.

One of the largest training initiatives was the training in sexual exploitation provided on a regional basis by Save the Children, together with UNICEF and the WFP. This programme reached over 5,000 trainees in seven southern African countries⁶⁹. This training was based around the principles developed by the Inter Agency Standing Committee of the UN⁷⁰.

Save the Children asked why the DEC evaluation criteria contained no reference to these principles. While the principles appear to reflect good practice they have not been uniformly welcomed. During the training, a small number of national staff members rejected the principles as a kind of cultural

⁶⁷ This depended to some extent on the provincial governor, with some agencies enjoying good relations with the provincial governors in their areas of operation.

⁶⁸ Oxfam in the Shire Highlands in Malawi was an example of this.

⁶⁹ These were the six countries covered by the UN appeal (Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Mozambique) plus South Africa. Angola was not included even though it seemed sensible to do so after Portuguese language training material had been developed for Mozambique. Presumably this reflects the UN policy of not including Angola in the crisis appeal.

⁷⁰ The principles can be found in Appendix 12: on page 190.

imperialism, trying to project European cultural norms on an African context. Even the IASC Task Force's own report notes that:

Different considerations will arise regarding the enforcement of some of these principles for humanitarian workers hired from the beneficiary community. While sexual exploitation and abuse and the misuse of humanitarian assistance will always be prohibited, discretion may need to be used in the application of the principles⁷¹ regarding sexual relationships for this category of humanitarian worker.

The evaluation team came across just one example of an allegation of sexual exploitation. This was in Zambia where the beneficiary assessment was told that a member of a village committee apparently used his control over the maize to get sex. The evaluation team did not come across any accusations levelled at agency staff.

6.7 DEC co-ordination

There was effectively no specific DEC co-ordination in the countries visited⁷². Agencies pointed out that they had a range of other co-ordination mechanisms open to them, such as international NGO fora and the different consortia (eg CoGuard), as well as ad-hoc working groups. While the main consortium⁷³ in Malawi added value through standard approaches, it was not clear that other consortia added enough value to justify their cost⁷⁴. The evaluation team concluded that in this crisis a separate DEC co-ordination mechanism would not have added enough value to justify its cost.

A flaw in these co-ordination mechanisms was the lack of space for national NGOs. This was a complaint in both Malawi and Zambia. Local NGOs in Zambia complained that, unlike the 1991–1992 drought when international NGOs partnered with local ones, international ones just went it alone in this crisis. The situation in Zimbabwe was very different with the constraints on international NGOs giving more space for national NGOs.

Another flaw in the existing co-ordination mechanisms was the lack of opportunities for learning. Malawi was an exception with the Learning Support Office, an initiative by Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP). The evaluation team noted that while there was scope for in-country learning, there was also scope for learning between agencies⁷⁵. This issue will be referred to further in Chapter 9: Accountability to Donors.

6.8 Example of better practice

The evaluation team found examples of what it considered to be possible better practice.

- In Malawi, Care took on a key leadership role by chairing the NGO consortium. This led to better quality of implementation through higher standards. Save the Children had played a leadership role among NGOs in Zimbabwe, until UK NGOs were apparently targeted by the authorities.
- In Zimbabwe, Oxfam drew on national staff from the Horn of Africa to implement the community based food distribution network. This is a well-tested food distribution model.

⁷¹ It is a bit difficult to see how a principle "a fundamental truth or law as the basis of reasoning or action." –Pocket Oxford Dictionary, can be applied with discretion.

⁷² The evaluation team did not visit Mozambique, but are aware that the DEC forum that set up the agencies there after the 2000 floods is still functioning. This would suggest that in at least the Mozambique context, having a DEC forum is both useful and can add value.

⁷³ The Joint Emergency Food Aid Programme in Malawi (led by CARE).

⁷⁴ One donor interviewee defined a consortium as "a group of NGOs all looking for funds from a single donor". This reflected the attempts by donors to simplify their administration by channelling everything through a single partner. Somewhat ironically, donors are under some pressure themselves to increase aid effectiveness by harmonising their aid programmes with other donors.

⁷⁵ This promotion of learning may be a more appropriate role for the DEC than the co-ordination of activities.

Using national staff from other programmes gave them a chance for learning which can subsequently be applied in their home programmes⁷⁶.

- Oxfam in Malawi restricted programme size so that it fitted better with their implementation capacity. It is rare for NGOs to take less than the available funding.
- Christian Aid built a consortium of its partners in Malawi, allowing more partner-to-partner learning than might otherwise be the case.
- Christian Aid's partners in Malawi displayed notable cost effectiveness and local knowledge.
- The Red Cross volunteer network in Zimbabwe, where thousands of volunteers gave their time to assist their communities, was particularly impressive.
- ActionAid's relationship with HODI in Zambia was a model for partnership between funders and partners.
- CAFOD's use of properly qualified staff to interface with technical HIV/AIDS programmes throughout the region was a model that other agencies could follow.

Finally, the evaluators noted that seed fairs (used by ActionAid in Mozambique and Malawi, but also by Oxfam in Zimbabwe) may be an example of better practice. Seed fairs encourage farmers to sell seed to each other instead of distributing seed that may have been imported by an agency. However, more evaluation is needed to determine if the extra costs are matched by the apparent benefits.

6.9 Recommendations

Relations with partners appeared to be ad-hoc. Funding increases were not always accompanied by formal assessments of the partner's capacity. Neither were formal agreements giving a right to audit always used.

- 16. DEC agencies should review their arrangements for partnership in emergencies, including providing support where partners are being asked to scale up, and formal agreements on areas like audit.*

Oxfam and Harvest Help Zambia fell out. Their agreement appears to have had no provision for arbitration. Whatever the origins of the dispute, it is not appropriate to have partnership agreements without any provision for dispute resolution. This can lead to a single dispute dissolving a relationship built up over years.

- 17. DEC agencies should incorporate dispute resolution procedures into their partnership agreement. Such dispute procedures might include referral to a mutually trusted third party for arbitration.*

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee principles on the sexual exploitation of beneficiaries appear to constitute a statement of good practice to avoid the sexual exploitation of aid recipients.

- 18. The DEC should consider whether to adopt the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) principles on the sexual exploitation of aid recipients.*

⁷⁶ However, the model was let down in Zimbabwe by the difficulties Oxfam had contracting transport. Other agencies had no major problems in this area.

7 Involve beneficiaries⁷⁷

Principle 7: Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid

Disaster response assistance should never be imposed upon the beneficiaries. Effective relief and lasting rehabilitation can best be achieved where the intended beneficiaries are involved in the design, management and implementation of the assistance programme. We will strive to achieve full community participation in our relief and rehabilitation programmes.

The topic of the involvement of beneficiaries is discussed in particular depth in the Malawi beneficiary assessment (Appendix 4: on page 93). Beneficiary involvement is also discussed in the Zambia beneficiary assessment (Appendix 5: on page 106).

7.1 Beneficiary participation

Beneficiary participation varied throughout the process. Beneficiary participation in implementation was good but there was relatively little beneficiary involvement in the design or management of projects⁷⁸. This was partly the result of a lack of prior consultation with beneficiaries.

A particular problem area was the criteria being used for the identification of beneficiaries. Some agencies imposed a set of criteria on the communities, but others, such as Concern in Malawi, worked together with communities to develop community-based criteria.

ActionAid in Malawi, and Hodi, with ActionAid funding in Zambia, both had beneficiary involvement in the management of projects and direct controlling of financial resources, but such examples were rare. There were very few examples of changes in planned project activities in response to beneficiary input.

Agencies in Zimbabwe were very anxious to avoid accusations of political bias, so were very careful to have transparent community control of distributions. CARE in Zimbabwe held meetings with beneficiaries both before and after distributions to ensure that nothing was amiss.

Participation was biased towards agency concerns rather than beneficiary concerns. Agencies were concerned to get food distributed according to the "criteria of need" set by WFP or donors. As a result a great deal of effort went into that and far less effort went into consulting beneficiaries about what their needs were.

7.2 Costs of participation

Participation had very real costs for the beneficiaries. In Zimbabwe beneficiaries had to attend all the CARE meetings, amounting to three days a month. The time taken to travel to and from distributions and the waiting time once there were a real cost. Some beneficiaries had to pay for the transport of the relief from the distribution point to their homes. Others, like one 65-year-old grandmother in Zimbabwe, used wheelbarrows to take their goods home.

The calculated cost per tonne kilometre is just over one USD at the official exchange rate. Agencies are paying their transporters less than 10% of this rate, so a small transport saving for the agency may result in disproportionate cost for the beneficiary.

CARE and the Red Cross in Zimbabwe made an effort to balance the logistics complexity with the need to reduce walking distance. Save the Children in Zimbabwe held discussions with the community to decide how many distribution points there should be. They ended up with 50 distribution points as a result⁷⁹.

Apart from CARE in Zimbabwe, no agency used existing commercial outlets for distribution. Using existing outlets with a voucher system enables beneficiaries to collect relief items at their own

⁷⁷ The element of Principle Nine that deals with accountability to beneficiaries is also covered in this chapter.

⁷⁸ Oxfam Community Based Targeting and Distribution in Zimbabwe was one of the exceptions here.

⁷⁹ There is a fixed cost for each distribution site. The cost to an agency of a large number of distribution sites involves not just the extra transport, but the organising and overseeing of these additional sites.

convenience rather than having to attend on a particular day⁸⁰. Arranging everything on a single day is to the advantage of the agency as it reduces the management effort for them, but this makes things more complicated for the community, for whom relief aid is only one of a basket of strategies.

Relief maize is often distributed as whole grain. This puts the beneficiaries to the trouble and expense of milling or pounding the grain in order to get flour to eat. Much of the assistance in this case was distributed as flour, but only because both the Malawian and Zimbabwean governments were concerned that people might plant grain that contained genetically modified material.

Agencies in Malawi surveyed beneficiaries to find out how far they had walked and how long they had waited for distributions. Concern⁸¹ found that more than half of their beneficiaries lived within one hour of the site, but that more than half had to wait four hours or more for their food⁸².

Some village relief committee members were not beneficiaries themselves and received no direct recompense for their work. Committees not only had the job of selecting beneficiaries, but in some cases guarded relief items overnight.

7.3 Accountability to beneficiaries

Unfortunately the ActionAid example of providing communities with information about project costs and accounts was unique among the agencies. Although ActionAid did not provide communities with information about indirect costs, it did provide them with information about direct costs. In Zimbabwe, under the Oxfam community based food distribution model, beneficiaries have a large role in managing distribution, down to signing the waybills.

The lack of accountability to beneficiaries led to situations like that of EveryChild Malawi, where one distribution centre served eleven villages, resulting in long walks for many beneficiaries. In Zambia World Vision, on one occasion, called women in to have their weight monitored when distribution was to take place the following day..

Agencies shared shorter range plans with beneficiaries, but not longer range ones. Beneficiaries often did not know how long programmes were going to run for. Agencies were not open about the reasons for changing from whole grain to flour distributions. Beneficiaries in Malawi were told that this was to lessen the time and cost burden of milling rather than the truth, which was that it was being milled because it contained genetically modified (GM) material. By contrast, beneficiaries in Zambia were told about the GM issue.

7.4 Feedback mechanisms

Feedback mechanisms are a useful way for agencies to gather information about their performance. Feedback mechanisms that convey negative information, i.e. complaints, are vitally important as they can indicate where agencies may be able to improve their performance.

Agencies used a wide variety of feedback mechanisms. These were mostly of the informal kind, whereby feedback came via channels designed for project implementation rather than primarily for beneficiary feedback. In Zimbabwe, it was only through feedback from the home based care volunteers that the Red Cross discovered that the re-targeting of urban home based care clients had probably been too strict and lead to deaths (from conditions related to HIV/AIDS) among those dropped from the relief roll.

In Zimbabwe agencies used a wide variety of mechanisms to capture and deal with beneficiary complaints. CARE had community-based complaint committees, as well as a toll-free number and freepost address. The Red Cross had a help desk operating at each distribution point to resolve issues that came up and to capture beneficiary complaints. Its audit department also captured beneficiary complaints. Zimbabwe was the exception in that complaint mechanisms were provided

⁸⁰ However, CARE rather spoiled this by distributing the vouchers on a single day, and then keeping beneficiaries waiting hours before starting, apparently because some of the key people were travelling with the evaluation team.

⁸¹ Concern was the only DEC agency that included this data in the information provided to the DEC.

⁸² With such waiting times the decision by the Zambian government to give five tonnes of maize to each village chief in the southern province "*because they should not need to stand in a queue for relief maize, like everyone else*" (McEwan, 2003) no longer appears so completely outrageous.

not to improve the level of service to beneficiaries, but to protect the agencies from accusations of political favouritism in their aid distribution in a very politicised environment.

Beneficiaries were afraid to raise complaints as they feared that the aid, which they needed, would stop⁸³. Agencies need to proactively seek negative feedback from beneficiaries to overcome this barrier.

The beneficiary assessment team in Malawi felt that they were capturing issues that the agencies themselves could have captured if they had actively sought them out. Concern stood out in Malawi for making an effort to understand what communities wanted and for trying to change their programme to accommodate this⁸⁴. Also impressive was Concern's monitoring of distributions, which even went as far as to ask non-beneficiaries whether they thought the beneficiary selection process was fair⁸⁵.

7.5 Examples of better practice

The evaluation team was very happy to see relatively high levels of beneficiary participation in the implementation of aid programmes.

- In Malawi, all of the agencies demonstrated good engagement with communities.
- All agencies involved communities in the selection of beneficiaries. This was appropriate as communities were far better placed to identify need than external actors.
- In Zambia, community representatives were signatories to the project bank account for Hodi's ActionAid-funded project. This gave the community full knowledge of the direct costs of the project. ActionAid acted in a similar way in Malawi.
- Oxfam's community based distribution model allowed a high level of beneficiary participation and management of the distribution process.
- In Zimbabwe, CARE established a thorough range of complaint mechanisms including a toll-free telephone number and a freepost address. CARE in Zambia printed their telephone number on their ration card with a suggestion that any problems be reported there. Providing rapid means for beneficiaries to raise concerns and complaints helps to make programmes accountable to beneficiaries.

7.6 Recommendations

Receiving aid has very real costs for beneficiaries. Agencies tend to ignore these in their planning, which may result in excessive cost transfers from agencies to beneficiaries.

19. *DEC agencies should consider introducing the practice of estimating the cost to beneficiaries of participation in relief projects, and including these costs in project proposals.*

Providing channels for feedback can provide agencies with the information they need to make their projects more cost-effective in terms of their impact on beneficiaries.

20. *The DEC agencies should jointly review their policies for actively gathering feedback on their performance from beneficiaries and disseminate whatever best practice is identified.*

⁸³ The Malawi beneficiary study noted that people who got bitter maize flower with rotten lumps from an Oxfam distribution did not complain as "you don't make demands when you are poor".

⁸⁴ While other agencies stated that they did this, only Concern was singled out for doing this by the groups interviewed in the beneficiary assessment in Malawi.

⁸⁵ Two thirds said that the process used by Concern was fair, with only one fifth saying that it was not fair. This is a remarkable statistic, given that non-beneficiaries have a strong vested interest in contesting the allocation of relief.

8 Reduce future vulnerability

Principle 8: Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs

All relief actions affect the prospects for long-term development, either in a positive or a negative fashion. Recognising this, we will strive to implement relief programmes which actively reduce the beneficiaries' vulnerability to future disasters and help create sustainable lifestyles. We will pay particular attention to environmental concerns in the design and management of relief programmes. We will also endeavour to minimise the negative impact of humanitarian assistance, seeking to avoid long-term beneficiary dependence upon external aid.

8.1 Coherence

Coherence is the integration of relief activities to policy and practice changes needed to address root causes. All the DEC agencies, apart from Concern, which had just started up in Malawi, had long-standing development programmes in the countries of the region, and generally executed their DEC-funded programmes in the same areas.

One would expect communities who had developed their capacity with the assistance of the DEC agencies would be better able to weather the shock, when compared with adjoining communities in a similar state of poverty. They were not. The evaluation team did not find a single example where an agency could demonstrate that their development programme clients were better placed than non clients to cope with the food crisis⁸⁶.

CARE in Zambia acknowledged that this outcome of the food crisis called into question the effectiveness of the long term Livingstone food security project that came to an end at the start of the crisis⁸⁷. CARE's analysis was that they had failed to deal with the market issue, so farmers were reluctant to grow diversified crops that had no cash value⁸⁸.

Another factor was the policy background in areas like the promotion of maize and the withdrawal of agricultural extension services, and the regional market for maize. Of the DEC agencies only ActionAid seemed closer to advocacy on such issues. This advocacy was very important as the overall policy environment sets the frameworks within which development can or cannot happen.

Tourism operators in Zambia believed that the fall in high revenue tourists that they saw from May to July 2002 was due in part to the famine-stricken image of the region⁸⁹ being projected in Europe, where most of the high value tourists come from. The DEC agencies helped to promote this image. The end result may have been some short-term assistance at the cost of longer term damage to a sector of the economy seen as one of the keys to future economic development⁹⁰.

8.2 Overt preventive strategy

This DEC appeal had an overt preventive strategy. The DEC funding was only a small part of the overall humanitarian response.

⁸⁶ In response to this point, Oxfam noted that beneficiaries who had participated in their programme in the Shire highlands were better able to cope with the crisis. Some agencies presented the *descending escalator model* where the agency development programmes were compared to helping people to run up the descending escalator of a background of economic deterioration. However, this still does not answer the fact that the example given by Oxfam is the only one where the assisted were descending the more slowly than their neighbours.

⁸⁷ The staff of another DEC agency referred to similar issues within their own agency as a *failure of development*.

⁸⁸ Concern was already facing the same issues in Malawi. They had successfully promoted alternative crops, but farmers then found that there was no local market for them.

⁸⁹ The way in which the crisis was represented is discussed in Chapter 10.

⁹⁰ The fall in high revenue visitor numbers to Lusaka (while visitor numbers grew overall) may have been worth twice the DEC pooled funds allocated for Zambia. The DEC sent out a press release saying that the DEC *"do not discourage people from visiting these countries but encourage visitors to think carefully before travelling..."*

The relatively small size of the DEC’s contribution to the overall response was surprising, even for the DEC agencies. The contribution of the DEC appeal to the overall budget of the DEC agencies and their partners was only 4%.

This varied between the agencies⁹¹. For Help the Aged, the DEC funding was their only source of emergency funding for southern Africa, while for World Vision, the DEC funds were only 0.3% of their total. Despite being only a small proportion of the overall funding, agencies commented that its flexibility increased its usefulness.

While there must be some questions about the proportionality of the response, there cannot be any doubt, from key informants interviewed by the evaluation team, that the expenditure of DEC funds helped to prevent hunger, suffering, and death among the general population in Zimbabwe and Malawi, and among those living with HIV/AIDS in Zambia. So on this level the preventive appeal was successful. It has to be noted that the appeal took place too late for those who died in the 2001–2002 hungry season.

8.3 Lack of planning

There was a general lack of prior emergency planning for the emergency. Save the Children was the exception. Not only did it have an active emergency preparedness project in Zimbabwe, but it had also invested heavily in household economy analysis, training (including local partners) and scenario planning.

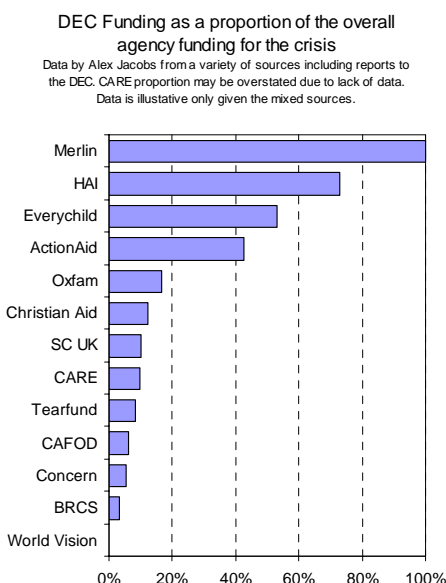
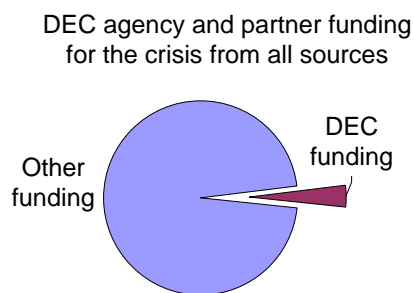
In Malawi, one of Save the Children’s responses to the realisation that there were critical food shortages was to provide logistics training for its staff, so that they would be prepared when the crisis response started.

Apart from Zimbabwe, where most of the DEC agencies were engaged in some sort of scenario planning for an uncertain future, there was a general lack of planning for future shocks, even though all of the agencies agree that shocks were now more likely than in the past.

8.4 Examples of better practice

There were several examples of DEC agency initiatives that may reduce future vulnerability:

- DEC agencies invested resources to support existing partners during the crisis. CAFOD’s support for the impressive St. Francis home based care project was probably one of the best examples of this. The support during the crisis strengthened the position of partners in the community – possibly making them better able to carry out their long-term programme.
- Concern in Malawi provided food aid together with seed to deal with both immediate problems and future vulnerability. This was a well-rounded response much appreciated by the community.
- Save the Children in Zimbabwe had an effective emergency preparedness project. Emergency preparedness would seem to be a logical follow-on from the arguments that future crises are more likely because of the impact of HIV/AIDS or because of global warming and population pressures. It is particularly appropriate in Zimbabwe.



⁹¹ The data set on which these conclusions are based is drawn from a variety of sources, including the financial systems and management questionnaires. There may be some errors in data where agencies have not responded.

- Concern decided in 2000 to establish a programme in Malawi based on their analysis that Malawi was affected by issues of chronic poverty. It is refreshing to see agencies taking a principled rather than funding-led approach to new operations.
- CARE's use of vouchers for input distributions delivered by business agents was an excellent example of coherence in that it supported its long-term policy of involving local entrepreneurs in providing services to rural agriculture. It was also an efficient way to deliver assistance.

8.5 Recommendations

The continuing lack of emergency preparedness by many of the DEC agencies is a concern, given that all agencies believe that shocks will be more common in the future.

- 21. DEC agencies should review their policies on emergency preparedness planning in southern Africa.*

9 Accountable to donors⁹²

9: We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources

We often act as an institutional link in the partnership between those who wish to assist and those who need assistance during disasters. We therefore hold ourselves accountable to both constituencies. All our dealings with donors and beneficiaries shall reflect an attitude of openness and transparency. We recognise the need to report on our activities, both from a financial perspective and the perspective of effectiveness. We recognise the obligation to ensure appropriate monitoring of aid distributions and to carry out regular assessments of the impact of disaster assistance. We will also seek to report, in an open fashion, upon the impact of our work, and the factors limiting or enhancing that impact. Our programmes will be based upon high standards of professionalism and expertise in order to minimise the wasting of valuable resources.

Note: Issues of financial accountability are covered extensively in the financial systems report (Appendix 7: on page 139) and the financial management report (Appendix 6: on page 120). Appendix 10: contains a brief assessment of some of the DEC agency evaluations that were reviewed by the evaluation team.

9.1 Cost effectiveness

The financial management report (Appendix 6: on page 120) gives details of the variability of cost effectiveness among the DEC agencies, with several examples. That report found that the following factors influenced cost effectiveness.

Factors in cost effectiveness	Associated with better cost effectiveness	Associated with worse cost effectiveness
Presence	Longer term	New
Scale up	Slow	Rapid
Expatriates	Few	Many
Implementation	Local partners	Direct
Relationships	Existing	New
Knowledge of environment	Deep	Shallow
Beneficiaries	Active partners	Recipients
Technical competence	Present	Absent

All of these factors need to be treated with caution. One of the most impressive agencies in Malawi was Concern, even though it had only recently set up there. While their cost per beneficiary was five times higher than that of Christian Aid's project, the assistance delivered was proportionately greater. Concern projects were very effective because they involved beneficiaries in deciding what the project should do for them. Another very impressive agency, ActionAid, uses the same approach.

The last factor, technical competence, is an important one that is only indirectly referred to in the financial management report. Christian Aid had an otherwise excellent project to distribute small amounts of fertilizer and seeds through local partners in Malawi. The programme reached from the

⁹² Although principle nine of the code of conduct also includes accountability to beneficiaries, that has been included here under Principle 7, the involvement of programme beneficiaries.

far north of Malawi to the far south and delivered assistance through local church networks that were embedded in the community and knew the context.

Unfortunately Christian Aid's partners did not appear to have had the technical competence to buy seeds, and ended up paying in advance for seed infested with weevils that had very poor germination. Christian Aid's partner was the worst case, but several other agencies also experienced problems buying seeds in time⁹³.

Other agencies also suffered from a lack of appropriate technical expertise as they moved into areas like irrigation. Oxfam, ActionAid, and HelpAge International all provided drip irrigation systems⁹⁴. These systems are being heavily promoted by USAID as being more water efficient, promoting higher yields, and being less likely to promote salinity⁹⁵. If the DEC agencies had technical competence in irrigation they would not be promoting these relatively expensive systems for household food security.

A lack of technical competence in irrigation was also evident in the provision of diesel pumps for trickle irrigation by Oxfam. The Zambia beneficiary assessment found that one group was using a diesel pump for two hours a day for three days a week to irrigate a quarter of a hectare. This amount of land can be irrigated with a treadle pump. Oxfam could have supplied thirty groups with treadle pumps for the cost of one diesel pump.

The expensive drip irrigation pipes were discarded or being used as planting ropes. Other agencies reported that beneficiaries said that they would prefer to have a hose and an elevated bucket rather than the drip irrigation system.

Another Oxfam project, the trucking project in Zambia, did not seem to be cost effective. The cost per tonne kilometre for the food transported was £1.37. This is extremely high⁹⁶ and suggests that Oxfam did not have the capacity to manage such an intervention. Oxfam plans to sell these trucks but it is not clear if the proceeds will be retained by the organisation or returned to the DEC pool.

9.2 Accountability to donors

9.2.1 NARRATIVE REPORTING

The quality of agency reports varied widely. This is discussed in more detail in (Appendix 6: on page 120). There was no correlation between the quality of the report, the quality of the programme, or the size of the agency.

Narrative reports varied from four to fifty pages. Only a few agencies used a logical framework. Concern produced what was probably the best final report seen by the evaluation team. Not only did it provide clear and concise details of what it had done, in a logical framework, it also provided an annex with a great deal of well-presented monitoring information.

Sometimes narrative reports stated things that the evaluation team later discovered not to be true. World Vision's report stated that supplementary feeding had been targeted at acutely malnourished children. At ground level, however, the evaluation team found that the target had been changed to a chronically malnourished criteria when World Vision found that there were too few acutely

⁹³ Christian Aid has since received an assurance from the supplier that the damaged seeds will be replaced.

⁹⁴ Drip or trickle irrigations systems have pipes laid permanently on the ground with a single water emitter providing a trickle of water to each plant. Drip irrigation systems were originally developed for high value crops in high labour cost countries with arid conditions. The systems need clean water, to prevent the drip tubes being blocked; careful management, to keep the system operating; and a secure environment to prevent the drip tubes being stolen. These conditions are rarely found in rural Africa. While drip irrigation systems may have a role in market gardening in Africa, they don't really have a role in smallholder production.

⁹⁵ The first two of these are true, but the third is much more questionable. Hansen et al. notes that for drip irrigation "*As with all types of irrigation the build-up of excess salts must be periodically flushed out of the potential root zone.*" (Hansen et al 1978).

⁹⁶ Transport costs for relief food are typically in the order of 5p to 15 pence per tonne km. Shorter distances and worse roads increase the cost. In Zimbabwe Red Cross beneficiaries were paying about 60p per tonne km to have their goods transported on an Ox cart. The figure of £1.37 is based on the assumption that Oxfam will be able to sell the trucks for £200,000 and that the average haul was 100 km.

malnourished children⁹⁷. The same report also overstated the number of children served by the programme.

9.2.2 FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The financial management report (Appendix 6: on page 120) and the financial systems report (Appendix 7: on page 139) both deal extensively with this topic. The financial management report notes that agencies demonstrated good practice in setting frameworks for a professional standard of financial control in the field, but that the financial reports did not provide a high level of financial accountability to the DEC or its donors.

The financial management study found it almost impossible to match financial reports to narrative reports. In at least one case the financial and the narrative report did not agree on the amount spent. Others reported on the whole project, without specifically identifying how DEC funds were used or what the total amount of funding from others was.

9.3 *Monitoring and evaluation*

9.3.1 MONITORING

Agency monitoring varied greatly. Operational monitoring was good, but the evaluation team found relatively little effective monitoring of the impact of the interventions. One of the consequences of the lack of impact monitoring is that the agencies will face problems convincing donors that the crisis was real and not just a blip in production.

The CAFOD-funded St Francis home based care programme had planned to monitor the weight gain of the home based care clients when food was provided, but abandoned the effort as the volunteers found it very depressing to be weighing adults who weighed no more than children⁹⁸. Similarly, many other projects put impact monitoring on the long finger.

There were exceptions. Save the Children's nutritional monitoring was of very good quality. Concern's monitoring of the impact of their food aid and food security programme was also good.

9.3.2 EVALUATION

Many of the DEC agencies commissioned evaluations or reviews of their work in this emergency. There have probably been more evaluations of this crisis than of other recent emergencies⁹⁹.

The evaluation team was particularly interested in evaluations by the DEC agencies not only because they offer a shortcut to identifying areas that the DEC evaluation team can look at¹⁰⁰ but also because of the learning that they can offer.

If DEC agencies produced good quality evaluations, this would offer an alternative means for the DEC to monitor spending of DEC funds. The DEC evaluation could work as a meta evaluation of the agency evaluations. This would be cheaper and would allow DEC funds to research key areas of concern identified by the meta evaluation.

For this to happen, the evaluations of the DEC agencies would have to be of a relatively uniform standard. The evaluation team therefore reviewed a selection of the DEC agency evaluations. This review is presented in Appendix 10: on page 183.

The review found that while reports were well written and coherent, they were poor at measuring performance against standard evaluation criteria. Recommendations were logically presented but

⁹⁷ This makes quite a big difference. The 2000/2001 demographic and health surveys in Zambia found that 5% of children were acutely malnourished (below weight for height), 27 underweight (below weight for age) and 47% stunted (below height for age) (McEwan, 2003).

⁹⁸ CAFOD's partner substituted the planned weighing with a small questionnaire administered at two weekly intervals following food distribution. CAFOD plans to collate and analyse the information gathered on these questionnaires.

⁹⁹ Some agency staff complained that there had been too many evaluations and that too much of their time had been spent being interviewed by evaluators.

¹⁰⁰ It is not possible for a single evaluation team to effectively evaluate the whole output of 12 agencies in seven countries.

were not prioritised or given a time frame. Neither were there references to any review mechanism for implementation of the recommendations.

9.3.2.1 THE ACTION AID SELF EVALUATION MODEL.

The self-evaluation model used by ActionAid appears to get over one of the big obstacles of traditional evaluation approaches, that of translating learning by the evaluation team into learning for the organisation. In the ActionAid model, partner agencies evaluate each other with some external participation and facilitation. Staff from one partner will evaluate the work of another partner, and themselves be evaluated by the partner that they evaluated.

This approach has a number of advantages:

- Partners are normally aware of the general context within which other partners are working, so they are already “experts” in the area of intervention.
- Partners have the opportunity to learn from the best and worst practices of others so that they can improve their own programmes.
- The partners themselves learn from the evaluation, as opposed to a team of external consultants doing all the learning.

The evaluation reports produced by this process were in some cases hard hitting and identified areas for improvement. The ActionAid approach has been described in some detail because it may offer a model for DEC evaluation, with DEC agencies evaluating each other's work. This could result in greater learning by the staff participating in the evaluation.

9.3.2.2 A DEC LEARNING ROLE

There is also a role for the DEC to promote learning between agencies other than through the evaluation. Initiatives might include learning workshops, advocating for studies on particular aspects of emergency response, and the wider dissemination of learning from the whole series of DEC evaluations¹⁰¹.

9.4 Examples of better practice

The evaluation team was happy to see a large number of examples of better practice around the ninth principle, including:

- DEC agencies have engaged in a good deal of evaluation of their projects. This is a very positive move generally as internal evaluations provide an excellent opportunity for agency learning.
- The establishment of an internal audit department by the Zimbabwe Red Cross. Internal audit serves a useful function in controlling losses through fraud. Fraud is always a risk in relief operations.
- Concern had a particularly impressive system for learning from their projects. This involved all project staff taking part in learning reviews each month where substantive issues were discussed. This is a model for the “*learning NGO*”.
- Both Oxfam and CARE supported a joint NGO evaluation of food aid in Zambia. Such joint initiatives save resources and contribute to inter-agency learning.
- Concern did some very effective monitoring in Malawi. As a result they got a lot of information on how successful their seeds had been, how many people had planted etc. Good monitoring leads to the early identification of problems and improved project performance.
- Help Age in Zimbabwe built their extended response period project as a result of their evaluation of the disaster response period project. Using evaluations in this way ensures that lessons identified are applied to the follow-on project.

¹⁰¹ Two separate DEC members did an analysis of past lessons learned from DEC evaluations and shared this with their field programmes so that previous pitfalls would be avoided. It would be more efficient to have this exercise done by the DEC secretariat and shared with the members. This is currently under way.

- ActionAid throughout the region employed a self-evaluation model which used partners to evaluate each other's work together with some external facilitation. This not only allows cost effective and appropriate evaluation, but also aids in lesson learning, both by the evaluated and evaluating partners.
- CARE organised a regional learning workshop that allowed for some lesson learning between different country programmes.

9.5 Recommendations

Oxfam report that they plan to sell the trucks bought with DEC funds. This will yield a significant sum of money.

22. *If DEC agencies sell assets worth more than £20,000 that were purchased with DEC funds the resulting funds should be returned to the common pot, for allocation in a future emergency.*

Reporting by the DEC agencies is not strong enough. The financial management report makes a number of recommendations on this topic, two of which are paraphrased here.

23. *The DEC should set further guidelines for agency reports to the DEC to encourage succinct and lucid reporting. One of these requirements should be the clear linking of financial and narrative reports.*

The DEC agency reports were found lacking in financial accountability to the DEC and the donors.

24. *The DEC should consider publishing agency final reports for future appeals on the DEC website, together with commentaries on the report quality by the evaluation team.*

If evaluations carried out by DEC agencies can be used in lieu of direct DEC evaluations for some agencies, this might be a more cost effective model for evaluating performance.

25. *The DEC Secretariat should propose a model to members whereby their own evaluations could be part of the DEC evaluation.*

Such a model should include a standard minimum set of evaluation criteria. The evaluation team consider that the standard DEC modified DAC criteria¹⁰² should be used. The model should also allow for the publication of the agencies' own evaluation reports.

The ActionAid self-evaluation model offers a cost effective means of evaluation and simultaneous learning by agencies. The beneficiary assessments are one of the key features of the DEC evaluations that have contributed to their overall quality.

26. *The DEC Secretariat should consider using a facilitated self-evaluation approach for evaluating the use of the DEC funds in Liberia. This could be combined with an initial beneficiary assessment.*

The DEC funds added value through their flexibility, but also through the opportunity that the DEC evaluation brings for inter-agency learning. However, evaluations are not necessarily the most effective tools for inter-agency learning.

27. *The DEC should, during 2004, consider how it can add value to inter-agency learning other than exclusively through the evaluation. Such mechanisms might include DEC fora such as that in Mozambique or other learning support systems.*

¹⁰² The DAC criteria are those developed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. The DEC modified version of these can be seen in the terms of reference in appendix 1.

10 Dignity in representation

Principle 10: In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects

Respect for the disaster victim as an equal partner in action should never be lost. In our public information we shall portray an objective image of the disaster situation where the capacities and aspirations of disaster victims are highlighted, and not just their vulnerabilities and fears. While we will co-operate with the media in order to enhance public response, we will not allow external or internal demands for publicity to take precedence over the principle of maximising overall relief assistance. We will avoid competing with other disaster response agencies for media coverage in situations where such coverage may be to the detriment of the service provided to the beneficiaries or to the security of our staff or the beneficiaries.

10.1 The image used by the DEC

Several agencies formally complained to the DEC Secretariat about the image used to launch the appeal. The DEC chief executive was called to account. Some members felt that the image used neither represent the preventive nature of the crisis nor showed the intended beneficiaries in a dignified light.

Those interviewed by the evaluation team agreed that the image did not represent the nature of the crisis. However, opinion was split between those who thought that it was justified to use this image to raise funds, and those who thought it was not.

As a general rule national staff of agencies were more likely to take the view that using such an image was acceptable due to the belief that the use of emotive images can be an effective aid to fundraising.

DEC agencies themselves used a range of images. Some are uncontroversial but others don't always seem to portray victims as dignified human beings.



10.2 The presentation of the crisis

The issue with dignity was not limited to images but also to how the crisis was portrayed. While much of the internal agency analysis reflected this complex web of needs, the same was not true of the public statements made by the agencies. Public statements talked about acute famine, starvation and death, rather than about chronic food insecurity and hunger.



World Vision Website

These two British Red Cross appeals don't use images that are shocking, but their text is misleading. BRCS knew that there were no starving millions in Zimbabwe. It was inappropriate to say "many of these people already suffer from disease" without making it clear that the disease in question was HIV/AIDS rather than some consequence of the "famine".

The image of someone by a graveside from the World Vision website is hardly dignified, and the exact nature of the death of the husband of this unfortunate woman is not clear. However, the misrepresentation of the crisis was not limited to agency advertisements.

"Southern Africa is currently facing a crisis of biblical proportions" – World Vision June 12 2002.

"14m people across southern Africa face the prospect of starvation and disease epidemics as famine threatens the region." TearFund – July 26 2003.

Some of the DEC agencies were more nuanced as in the case of this Save the Children statement.

"The southern Africa region is facing a food crisis of enormous proportions, and unless the international community increases its response immediately, there is the real possibility of a catastrophic famine, which will devastate communities and lead to the death of thousands of people, especially children." – SCUK September 2002

The DEC agencies in the UK were often more restrained than their sister agencies in other countries:

Oxfam Hong Kong launched an "Africa Starvation Emergency Appeal". – Oxfam August 4 2002.

"Children and the elderly are dying of diseases because they are weakened by malnutrition. We have no time to waste – the world must act now to avert a catastrophic famine in southern Africa." – Oxfam US October 2 2002

"Thirteen million people are at risk in southern Africa and yet the world has done little. I have been in the middle of a famine and the cries of the children still haunt my dreams." – CARE Australia August 8 2002.

Some DEC members were not above presenting a very dramatic picture of the crisis:

"In the clinical sense, starvation has not set in yet in Zimbabwe. But the signs are there: look into people's eyes, feel their arms." BRCS July 22 2002

Some agencies compared the crisis to the catastrophic Ethiopian famine of 1984–85.

"Only massive intervention now, with large-scale delivery of food aid, will prevent catastrophe on the scale of the 1984 Ethiopian famine, or Somalia 1991–92." – Concern June 4 2002.

Save the Children took a deliberate decision to compare the crisis with the Ethiopian famine.

On the day the Mirror published, on May 21 2002, we took the decision to use a line that Save the Children had been debating internally, which had been independently used by the Mirror. The line compared the potential scale of the emergency in southern Africa to the famine in Ethiopia in 1984–85. It was not suggesting that the same numbers of deaths would be seen but that many millions of people over a huge geographical area would be seriously affected and that deaths would undoubtedly occur.

Save the Children's director general was so happy with the Mirror coverage that he wrote to them to say:



“The Daily Mirror’s serious and passionate reporting on the breaking famine in southern Africa (Daily Mirror, May 21) does your paper great credit.”

The overall presentation of the crisis overstated the acute case. The risk is that the agencies may lessen credibility in future crises where the risks are not overstated. The evaluation team also considered that the public presentation of the crisis by the DEC agencies placed too little emphasis on the chronic nature of the crisis, and on the long-term work that would be needed to prevent the re-occurrence of food crises in following years.

10.3 Examples of better practice

The evaluation team were happy to note the following example of better practice:

- CAFOD had provided training for its support relations/marketing staff on the Code of Conduct. This means that such staff are much more aware of the ethical issues around the presentation of crises.

CARE was planning to provide rights-based training to its marketing staff.

10.4 Recommendations

Many agencies reported tensions between the marketing and programming department on the messages they wanted to use. The training of marketing staff in the Code of Conduct brought benefits for CAFOD in building a shared understanding.

- 28. The DEC agencies should provide training in the principles of the Code of Conduct, and possibly an introduction to Sphere for their marketing staff. Cross-training for the programme staff by the marketing department should also be considered.*