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**“HUMANITARIANISM AND DEVELOPMENTAL ASSISTANCE:  
PROGRAMMING AND FUNDING ISSUES FOR SLOW ONSET  
EMERGENCIES”**

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## Introduction

This paper examines some of the funding and programmatic issues underlying drought-related work. This small piece of research has its origin in working as programme co-ordinator for Oxfam in Brazil 1996-9, where from 1997 onwards, the Northeast region has experienced a prolonged and severe drought. This experience confirmed what other case studies have shown: “how unresponsive the international relief system is to a low profile, small scale food crisis, which does not display the classic signs of famine in terms of population displacement and excess mortality ...” (*Buchanan-Smith & Davies, p137*)<sup>1</sup> It is a hypothesis of this paper that that classic drought situations<sup>2</sup> are being and will continue increasingly to be marginalised in funding terms within emergency or humanitarian relief budgets. Hence, the concern underlying this brief paper is to hope to offer some ideas that could be of use to those working on droughts.

*Section one looks at trends in international aid* – including the patterns of natural and man made disasters, with a view to establishing what the trends have been and what the near future holds for drought related emergency work. This analysis is partial – it looks at overall trends. While a full analysis of overseas development aid is well beyond the scope of this paper<sup>3</sup>, the context of overall aid trends is essential for an understanding of the drought context. This is so for two reasons, one that vulnerability is increased as aid is reduced, and second because trends in emergency assistance are part of the overall trends in aid. It concludes that it is extremely unlikely that the international relief system will respond adequately to slow onset droughts.

*Section two looks at droughts* – concepts and advances achieved in drought preparedness and mitigation. Early Warning Systems are examined. It points to the need to both deepen the work at community level, as well as to adopt new ways of working to engage with the subjective, cultural aspect, the lived experience of beneficiaries.

*The third section looks at the institutional framework within which drought activities occur.* The role of NGOs is examined, with special reference to the donor-NGO relationship. It also looks at the division between emergency and development work, and the recognition of the problems this division creates in many situations.

*The fourth section presents two Oxfam experiences with droughts:* in Kenya and Brazil. This shows significant differences in the way drought work was managed in the two countries, particularly in integrating development and relief work. It also looks at resource allocations decision-making processes for emergencies within Oxfam, and makes some suggestions. Some recommendations for the Brazil programme are included.

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<sup>1</sup> The Brazilian drought was not “small scale”, although it remains “low profile” internationally, see section four below.

<sup>2</sup> I deliberately avoid referring to these situations here as “emergencies” or “even “crises””.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix on methodology for comments on the lack of this.

*The fifth section draws out the implications of the analysis.* A brief recap of each of the preceding sections is presented. The implications for the following are considered: donor-NGO relationships, a possible new funding framework, organisational capacity for relief work, the challenge to integrate development and emergency work, and on the role of northern NGOs.

*The appendix includes* brief notes on: Methodology, Sources for data on disasters, Numbers of Natural Disaster Related Victims, 1971-1996, [List of the National Drought Monitoring Centre \(NDMC\) USA web sites for “Global Climate and Drought Monitoring”](#), and Coping Strategies

## **Section 1: The International Aid Context**

By the early 1990s, total official development assistance (ODA) <sup>4</sup> was at a thirty year low. There has been a further significant reduction in the 1990s: it has fallen from US\$61 bn in 1992 to \$47.6 bn in 1997. As a percentage of GNP of donor countries, it has fallen from 0.36% in 1984 to 0.22% in 1997; it's lowest level since statistics began in 1950.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the funds allocated for emergency relief have increased dramatically:

“Disaster response went from zero to boom in 20 years. In 1971, 200 million US dollars of government aid – always more than public donations – went on disasters; by 1994, Rwanda cost £1.4 billion as crisis spending reached \$8bn, but total official development aid had already peaked at \$60bn in 1993.” *World Disasters Report, 1997*, p11

I argue below that: the trend for the reduction in overall ODA is most likely to continue; that the category of “emergency and humanitarian assistance” needs disaggregating, and that the prospects for “emergency funding” for slow onset droughts are bleak. I conclude by looking at some policy changes that are being urged to remove the funding and programming division between “development” and “emergency” in specific situations, of which slow onset droughts is one.

### **1.1 Development Aid**

The total volume of ODA has fallen as budget deficits have been progressively cut in the OECD countries - from 4.3% in 1993 to 1.3% in 1997. Various factors are cited for this fall in aid – including the end of the cold war and the disappearance of the geopolitical stimulus to combat the Soviet bloc, as well as the emergence of

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<sup>4</sup> The OECD gives over 90% of total ODA, through its Development assistance Committee, DAC; in 1996 OECD gave 93% of total ODA *World Disasters Report, 1997*. Total ODA includes emergency assistance.

<sup>5</sup> The current 0.22% stands against the commitment of 19 of 21 donors to give 0.7% of GNP. Total ODA at 1992 prices: from \$52bn in 1984, \$56.6bn in 1988, \$60.8bn in 1992, \$57.3 bn in 1993, to \$47.6bn in 1997. Between 1996 & 1997 alone, there was a 7% cut in real terms.. *Reality of Aid, 1995/6. 1997/8, and 1998/9.*

numerous new areas of conflict and need that have emerged since the end of the cold war. This fall in overall ODA has occurred in the context of trade liberalisation, market de-regulation, privatisation, the adoption of Structural Adjustment plans in many developing countries. It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse the vast question of ODA, but it seems clear that there is no likelihood in the near future of this trend being reversed.

On the contrary, the likelihood is that the trend will deepen. In 1995, a survey of ODA reported that significant further reductions were to be implemented in the leading OECD countries. The USA was reported to be cutting back drastically; Germany cut aid by 1.4% in 1995; Italy's aid allocation was already 60% less in 1995

than in 1992; Canada planned to cut aid by 21% from 1995 to 1998; Australia had cut back; and an expected increase in aid from Japan was threatened by the recession there. (*Reality of Aid 1995/6*) Currently, while there are some positive signs from UK and Canada<sup>6</sup>, the overall prospect remains bleak.

It is not clear whether and how much poverty and vulnerability to disasters this reduction in aid will additionally create. The biggest part of ODA goes to infrastructure, transport and industry, and the 'social sectors' receive a very small proportion of the total.<sup>7</sup> Twelve of the twenty-one OECD donors reported in 1997 reported that only 1.8% and 1.2% was spent on basic health and basic education respectively. The evidence of commercial interests heavily influencing the type of aid given is very strong: OECD aid was overwhelmingly bilateral - in 1997, 70.5% was bilateral, 8.3% went through the EU, and 21.2% was multilateral; further, 25.4% is tied to purchases from donors. Technical co-operation represented 25% of all ODA; and 80% of all aid receipts in 1997 went to debt servicing. (*Reality of Aid, 1998/9*)

Concurrently, there is a recognition of the increasing scale of absolute poverty world wide: the estimates of people living on less than US\$1 per day range from one billion to 1.4 billion. Poverty reduction has thus been identified as a key objective. Most OECD countries have signed up voluntarily to achieve the International Development Targets<sup>8</sup> by 2015. To this end, initiatives have been taken to make aid more targeted on poverty reduction: the 20:20 compact between donors and host governments has been agreed, whereby 20% of aid and 20% of governmental expenditure is to go into basic services. Increasingly, governmental agencies, multilateral organisations and NGOs now have as their mission direct poverty reduction measures. However, it is proving difficult to make progress towards the 20:20 objective. The EU experience is instructive: there is a notable gap between *policies* (for example, the 20:20 objectives) and the actual *programmes*, that is to

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<sup>6</sup> Canada has had seven successive years in aid cuts but might now increase its aid budget and prospects in UK are now possibly brighter than in two decades.

<sup>7</sup> In 1997, it was distributed thus: transport & industry 24.8%, education, health and population 15.6%, agriculture 7.4%, Debt relief 7.3%, water supply and sanitation 5.6%, emergency aid 5.2%, basic education 1.2%.

<sup>8</sup> To reduce the proportion of the world's population in poverty by half, to have universal primary education in all countries, and to reduce the 1990 under 5 mortality rate by two thirds.

say that actual aid is still being driven mainly by a mixture of commercial and political interests.<sup>9</sup>

Summing up, the prospective is for reduced aid flows with uncertainty about how much progress will be made in making ODA more poverty focused. Since poverty is widely recognised as increasing vulnerability to disasters, reduced aid flows are likely to result in more people becoming vulnerable to natural and man made disasters over the next decade.

## 1.2 Private Sector Financial Flows to Developing Countries

Private financial flows to developing countries have meanwhile increased fourfold from \$55bn in 1991 to \$234bn in 1996 and at \$206 bn in 1997. They are now four times as large as aid flows. These financial flows are often cited implicitly as compensatory flows to development aid. Thus, a 1998 report states that “substantially increased private flows in 1993 resulted in a significant rise in total flow of resources to all developing countries” (*Reality of Aid 1997/8, p. vi*). This is however neither logically nor empirically grounded, there being no analysis of the type of flows involved – speculative currency, in privatisation, productive investment, etc. While a proportion of these flows can be taken to contribute to economic growth, one can not assume that these flows as a whole are contributing to poverty reduction. And while the private sector is beginning to play some role in emergency assistance, these increased aggregate flows bear no direct relation to the humanitarian problematic. In any case, 70% of these flows go to a handful of countries. The increased importance of private financial flows does however obviously have implications for anti-poverty work in developing countries, of which more in section four.

## 1.3 Emergency and Humanitarian Assistance

### 1.3.1 Trends

The “boom” in disaster response has occurred concurrently with the decline of development aid. The simple inverse relation between the two justifies asking as a hypothesis if humanitarian assistance is being substituted for development aid. “The increasing share of aid being allocated to emergencies and the growing allocations of aid to debt reduction are both substantially reducing the availability for long-term aid” (*Reality of Aid, 1995*). The 1998 report states that “... the humanitarian and emergency budget is disproportionately large”. “Government and donor aid budgets have seen an ever greater proportion of scarce resources absorbed by emergency needs” (*Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell, IDS 1994, pii*). Duffield informs us that “in many parts of Africa, development budgets have collapsed and humanitarian assistance is the only substantial aid being received” (*IDS 1994, p40*). Seaman gives a graphic example of Angola, where after the civil war and a relief operation, while

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<sup>9</sup> The DFID White Paper (1997) identifies this as the central challenge. In the EU budget lines, there is further a big problem of under-disbursement: in 1997, 50% of the budget lines were not disbursed.; the figure for the Lome budget allocations was 35% (*Reality of Aid, 1997/8 section on EU*)

structural adjustment policy was being implemented. “By early 1994, malnutrition was on the decline and all but set to disappear in areas receiving relief; while in the vast urban slums ... well outside the war zone, an already severe level of poverty grew worse, with a steady increase in rates of severe malnutrition”, (*IDS 1994 p34*).

Total non-food emergency aid has risen from \$600 million in 1985 to a high of £3.47 bn in 1994 and falling to \$3.06bn in 1995. Between 1988 and 1993 emergency aid more than trebled to reach approximately 10% of total flows of total ODA. (*Lewis, 1995*). In 1993, humanitarian relief was 17% of all EU aid disbursements, having risen from ECU 114 million in 1990 to ECU 600 million in 1993. It should be noted that food aid is excluded from these figures, so that the real proportion of ODA that is for emergency aid is higher.

The amount for famine relief alone is reported to have gone from under 2% of total ODA in 1988 to over 6% in 1991 (*Buchanan-Smith & Davies, p.*) Food aid deliveries were a total of 14.4 million tonnes in 1987, 15.2 million tonnes in 1992, and 9.9 million tonnes in 1995. The tonnage for emergency purposes was almost two millions in 1987, 5 million in 1992 and 3.5 million in 1995, emergency food aid thus representing a greater proportion of total food aid – from about 14% to about 30%. Donors use food aid differently: the proportion of food aid destined for relief is 8% for USA, 40% for EU, and 54% for WFP (*Buchanan-Smith & Davies, p.*)

The WFP is reported to allocate over half of its resources to emergencies and refugees operations, with 80% of these being for man made emergencies.<sup>10</sup> Rising peacekeeping costs are not included under ODA figures, and represent yet another claim on dwindling aid budgets.

While annual emergency expenditure obviously varies with events, there is unanimity in seeing increasing emergency expenditure as a trend. “The volume and proportion for humanitarian assistance increased dramatically in the 1990s” states a 1998 report. Within the EU, from 1990 it has grown with ECHO being formed in 1992 and having exponential growth since then – increased from 368 million ECU in 1992 to a high of 764 million ECU in 1994, falling to 695 million ECU in 1995 (*World Disasters Report 1997*). Within UK, the then ODA created a new Emergency Aid department in 1991 following a ministerial initiative. More recently, UK’s foreign minister has called for the setting up of an international rapid deployment force to respond to emergencies (*Guardian July 21, 1999*). What explains this phenomenal growth in relief expenditure and the priority given to humanitarianism?

### 1.3.2 Factors underlying Increasing Relief Expenditure

Two inter-related but distinct factors would seem to be the explanation: first, there has been a clear and demonstrable growth in the numbers of people affected by natural events like floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts, etc. Second, there has

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<sup>10</sup> One assumes that they mean by man made emergencies wars and civil conflicts, and are excluding natural disasters. The degree to which natural events result in human, animal and social disasters made obviously depends on a wide range of economic and social factors, as well as environmental, ecological and geographical factors.

been a huge increase in the number of wars and internal conflicts since the ending of the cold war.

### **‘Natural Trigger’ Disasters**

The rise in the numbers of people affected by natural events would appear to be due to two factors: (a) a rise in the number and severity of natural occurrences, and (b) an increase in the number of people vulnerable to such natural events.

- (a) *Natural disasters*: A paper in 1993 informs us that extreme weather events have increased since 1990, and especially since 1950. “The evidence of perturbations in the environment and ecosystems is strong”(Anderson). Compared to the 1960s, the annual number of great natural disasters is said to have trebled, and the economic cost to have increased nine-fold. Over the last decade, a UN estimate puts annual deaths from natural disasters at 128,000 and the number affected at 136 million. Of these “natural” disasters, two have the greatest impact: droughts and famine, and floods. Of the 139 million people affected annually between 1971-95 by natural disasters, 124 million (almost 90%) were affected by these two hazards.

The full figures are thus:

#### Number of people affected, annual average between 1971-1995

	Drought & famine	Floods
Deaths	73,600	12,700
Numbers affected	60,700	60,000
Homeless	60,800	63,300

In 1996, 74,000 deaths were directly attributed to the impact of drought. In 1998, disasters are said to have “radically altered” the lives of 126 million people, causing over \$90bn worth of damage. In 1998, floods alone affected over 300 million people. “For the sheer number of natural disasters, 1998 was the worst year on record” (all figures from the 1997 and 1999 World Disasters Reports)<sup>11</sup>.

The number of natural trigger disasters thus does seem to have increased. El Nino is a case in point: its frequency is commonly agreed to have increased, expected now every two to three instead of 6-7 years, and the four strongest have struck since 1980 “Human-driven climate change, environmental degradation and population pressures are putting millions more at risk” (1999 Disasters Report).

<sup>11</sup> The 1999 report states that the Federation of International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies response profile gives a good picture of the actual occurrence of major disasters around the world, and in 1998, more victims of natural disaster were assisted than in any other category. The value of appeals doubled between 1988-93, and the number of beneficiaries had multiplied seven fold, p107.

(b) *Vulnerability*: It is widely understood that the degree to which natural events become disasters is a function of social variables. Namely, that it is the degree of vulnerability and numbers that are vulnerable that affects who, how many and in what way people are affected. While poverty is not the only determinant of vulnerability, it is certainly the most important. Thus, developing countries suffer 96% of all deaths from natural disasters (*World Disasters Report, 1997*), and there is little reason to doubt that “the developing world will pay the highest price of global warming” (*World Disasters Report, 1999*). This link between long term trends and vulnerability to disasters is a critical one, and increasingly recognised as such.

It is important to recognise that the existence of greater numbers who are vulnerable is not contradictory to progress that has been made since the 1960s. Just to cite two examples: “In 30 years, malnutrition rate has fallen 30%, infant mortality has halved, the rural poor with safe water rose from 10 to 60%.” (*World Disasters Report 1997*). However, the very process of development creates new types of vulnerability – Anderson lists ten types of vulnerability associated with development (*Anderson, p.*).

Of these many dimensions of vulnerability, occupation of unsafe areas in cities is a big one: there are estimated to be almost a billion people living in shantytowns. Another major dimension is the precarious state of millions of small farmers who are virtually excluded from markets and eke out a subsistence living. There is a consensus that over the last decade, a combination of policies has increased the absolute number of vulnerable people. These policies include structural adjustment programmes and trade liberalisation. Internationally, there are said to be between 1.0 to 1.4 billion people living on less \$one dollar/day. Diarrhoea is said to kill 4 million children annually, and infectious diseases 3 million. In Africa, more people are vulnerable than twenty years ago, due both to deteriorating underlying conditions as well as the “severity of short-term shocks”:

“Nearly half the pop of sub-Sahara Africa - an estimated 235 million people – face conditions of chronic food insecurity. A third of all children under 5 are chronically undernourished ... the number of hungry children (has risen) from 18 million in 1975 to 30 million in 1990” (*Buchanan-Smith & Davies, p.*)

In summary: the combination of extreme weather events and increasing vulnerability to disasters leads the 1999 Disasters Report to this dramatic but not inaccurate prognosis:

From tsunamis and earthquakes to floods and famines, humankind is increasingly threatened by the forces of nature. With almost a billion people living in unplanned urban shanty towns, deforestation wrecking ecological defences against catastrophic natural events, and global warming making the forces of wind, rain and sun ever harder to predict and counter, the world is at risk as never before.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> As is evident, the Report tends towards the dramatic – and it also conflates strictly climatic events with vulnerability. Further, it would appear that prediction of natural events is more reliable, not less. However the dangers to which it alerts are, unfortunately, real enough.



## Wars and Internal Conflicts

However, there is a second and perhaps even more important factor that has led to rising humanitarian assistance: it is the increasing number and scale of local and international conflicts in the world, giving rise to huge numbers of refugees and internally displaced people. The post cold war has unleashed conflicts in many new places. In 1998, there were said to be 13.5 million internally displaced and 12.4 million refugees, totalling 26 million people needing assistance (*Word Disasters Report, 1999*)<sup>13</sup>. “Complex emergencies” involving conflict, displacement, hunger and diseases are increasing. “Complex emergencies having both political and natural dimensions are on the rise, such that 59 million people have been directly affected”(Frankenberger 1996). Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, Sudan, these are only some of the really big crises that have attracted humanitarian intervention. Currently, writes a commentator that in Sudan “For the last nine years of that war, the international relief community has run the largest relief operation in history, Operation Lifeline Sudan. It has cost \$2-3 bn.” (*Toolis, 1999*). The relief operation in Rwanda is said to have cost \$1.4 bn.

In this context, emergencies have been divided into four categories: sudden onset (earthquakes, floods, etc.), slow onset (typically droughts), “permanent emergencies” (areas with prolonged conflict and economic and social breakdown), and complex emergencies (*Buchanan-Smith & Maxwell, IDA 1994*). I do not have figures here breaking down Emergency and Humanitarian Relief allocations into these four categories, but I would argue that increasingly it is the complex emergencies that are driving the humanitarian agenda.

There is evidence of a direct kind that conflict related emergencies are dominating the thinking and budgets of governments and agencies. Of ECHO’s humanitarian assistance in 1993, itself 17% of total EU aid, almost two thirds went to the former Yugoslavia. Austria gives 20.5% of bilateral aid for emergencies, and conflict prevent has been raised to one of three major objectives for development co-operation. In the 1997 budget, two new financing lines were created specifically for this. Canada – where 11.9% of bilateral aid is for relief, launched the Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative in 1996 with US \$10million. Through CIDA, under the Humanitarian Assistance Window, the Department of National Defence has created a Disaster Assistance Response Team of 180 people. In Germany (where 9.1% of bilateral aid went for relief, increasing importance is given to conflict prevention. In 1996, a new budget line was created for integrated emergency, food relief and refugee aid. Ireland – with 9.1% of its aid budget dedicated to relief, also stresses conflict prevention – announcing a substantial increase to its Emergency and Humanitarian Fund, with a specific rehabilitation budget of £4million in 1997. In Holland, where 15.6% goes for relief, conflict prevention is prioritised, humanitarian aid having a separate budget.

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<sup>13</sup> Anderson writes that “.. environmental degradation has produced a group of environmental refugees who comprise the single largest class of displaced persons in the world”. Cushing notes that “75% of the world’s refugee population is Islamic and made up mostly of women and children”, p.9

In the UK where 10.9% is for relief, defusing conflict is stressed, and a Conflict Policy Unit has been set up. The USA too emphasises conflict prevention, with 14.1% of aid for relief.

Currently, there is a “growing dispute over funding for Kosovo between the EU Council – which brings together the national governments ... and the commission and parliament”. The council earmarked £340 million for Kosovo reconstruction by cutting other international and development budgets by 10%, and by cutting the EU’s humanitarian budget by 19%” British Foreign Minister Robin Cook is pushing for the setting up of a Rapid Deployment Force for emergencies. (Guardian July 21, 1999).

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It is evident that the problems that are occupying policy makers in the donor countries are very much those raised by those of such complex emergencies, where questions of national sovereignty and the question of intervention by the Western powers is at stake. The phenomenon of post cold war “failed states” – has led to greater social vulnerability and conflicts. It is said that western intervention or “imperialism” are imperative since human rights are the “organising principle of the new world order” (David Rieff, Prospect July 1999,).<sup>14</sup> Currently, the debate has been addressed in the August issue of the Economist where it is argued that Western intervention is necessary. (*Economist, August 5, 1999*). Tellingly, the Dutch minister recently identified emergency aid with conflict situations: “It should not make any difference if aid provided for basic social services is spent in a country in conflict or not”, arguing that such expenditures should be included as going towards meeting targets for basic social services in aid (*Reality of Aid, 1999*). Furthermore, the trend for aid to go to strategically important trading and political areas (CIS, Eastern Europe, etc.) has also been noted.

At the same time, a recent study found: “This case study demonstrates how unresponsive the international relief system is to a low profile, small scale food crisis, which does not display the classic signs of famine in terms of population displacement and excess mortality ...” (*Buchanan-Smith & Davies, p.137*)

## 1.4 Conclusion

We are arguing thus that whether we agree that “There is no reason that the upward trend in emergency aid will change in the near future” (*Buchanan-Smith & Davies, p 33*), or take the view that “Official aid is falling, even cash for high profile disasters may have peaked and the collecting tin of public giving faces more competition and recession. Big cuts have begun”, (*Reality of Aid, 1997*) the tendency is for slow

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<sup>14</sup> Cushing noted in 1995 that “The open violation of “unjust” national sovereignty in pursuit of humanitarian objectives has become acceptable and endorsed by the UN Security Council and leading humanitarian actors”.

onset crisis, whether of a small or large scale, to receive less and less relief assistance.

In sections two and three, we examine the specific problematic of droughts as well as the institutional and policy changes associated with the evidence presented in this first section.

## Section Two: Droughts

### 2.1 Drought and Famine

“Drought and famine” are, as we saw in section one, given as one the two biggest natural causes of disasters. Severe hunger and famine associated with drought lead to epidemics and to increased mortality rates. Drought is, of all the natural disasters, the biggest single killer, said to have caused in 1996 alone 74,000 deaths. Huge economic and social costs of droughts are reported - for example in the Southern African 1982/3 drought, it was put at US\$ 1 billion for the whole region (Birch, 1998). We saw earlier that developing countries suffer a staggering 96% of all deaths from natural disasters. The highest number of droughts between 1971 and 1995 was registered in Africa<sup>15</sup>. In South America, northeast Brazil is a huge semi-arid region that regularly experiences droughts. In Asia, from India and Sri Lanka to Thailand and Indonesia, droughts are a common and regular feature of life. In the developed countries, areas within USA, Canada and Australia too are prone to periodic droughts<sup>16</sup>. However, in these countries, monitoring and assistance, in addition to insurance systems ensure that the impact of drought is very significantly mitigated. It is in the developing countries that drought continues unfortunately to wreak its havoc.<sup>17</sup>

A great deal of work has been done since the terrible famines in Africa in the early 1970s, and there are adequate EWSs in place in many regions. Recent experience shows that the international relief system is still geared to saving lives and not livelihoods, and generally responds too late, and then only in response to reports of famine and widespread death. This was the finding of a study based on four African countries (*Buchanan-Smith, 1995*). Currently, Brazil is experiencing a prolonged, intense drought that has gone on for almost two years, and despite serious efforts by two NGOs to mobilise international resources to implement relief programmes, no

<sup>15</sup> Mortimer (1989 p xvii) writes of “the recurring waves of misfortune that have affected communities throughout the semi-arid zones of sub-Saharan Africa during the past two decades”.

<sup>16</sup> The federal government in USA has just announced a \$10bn package to assist drought stricken farmers in Eastern USA. There was an “extreme drought that affected the United States and Canada during 1988” (NDMC, November 16, 1995). In New Zealand, the government has put the army on standby to help farmers suffering from prolonged drought.

<sup>17</sup> “The solutions of the past are not good enough. Slavery, pauperisation and emigration are bastard sons of drought” (Mortimer, p230). In the developing countries, “The weakness of disaster insurance systems – or the inadequacies of the food entitlement system – bestows far reaching .. repercussions .. on (a drought), including the possibility of a regional famine” p4

funding to date from donors has been secured. In northern and Eastern Kenya, 2.5 million people were said in March 1999 to be facing hunger and starvation due to a severe drought.

By contrast, an international drought relief programme to the tune of US\$ 720,000 has been implemented since early 1998 in Jayawijaya District in Irian Jaya Indonesia. funded by Norway, UK, Australia, NZ, Ireland, UNDHA/OCHA. Cuba was granted one billion yen of emergency assistance by Japan in November 1998, in addition to US\$ 770,000 food aid in response to a request from WFP. The drought is said to be the worst in 35 years.

Despite these exceptions, the situation generally appears to be that droughts are off the donors' agenda. And it is remarkable fact that the even 1999 World Disasters Report states in relation to El Nino that Southern and Eastern Africa did not suffer predicted droughts. It fails even to mention the Brazilian, Cuban and Indonesian droughts.

In places where the host government response is inadequate and there is no donor aid forthcoming, serious effects on health, mortality, livestock and asset loss, land ownership concentration, harm to the eco-system, and reduced productivity occur. In this section, we look at the drought problematic; in section three we look at institutional aspects, policies and practices, and in section four, we summarise the main findings.

## 2.2 Definitions

Drought and famine are grouped together in disaster statistics, but they are not identical – clearly, a multitude of factors (or failures) other than a drought contribute to the occurrence of a famine. Mortimer (p.12) writes that there is “no simple relationship between drought and hunger .. since food production is governed by other factors besides rainfall, and the efficacy of insurance, storage and distribution systems ... It is the continuing importance of subsistence production to the great majority of farming families that maintains the link between hunger and drought”. Keen stresses in the same vein the lack of identity between drought and famine.

“Famine” is defined as “a crisis in which starvation from insufficient intake of food is associated with sharply increased death rates”, distinguished from “chronic under-nutrition” and “long term condition of chronic hunger”, which “is rarely given international focus but it may kill more people globally than the acute crisis of famine does”, (*Allen 19, p 15*). The health crisis model of famine attributes death to epidemiological diseases rather than hunger.

Definitions of drought are enormously complicated, not least because of the huge variety of climatic, geographical, socio-economic and cultural contexts within which it occurs. The National Drought Monitoring Centre in the USA thus says that in most areas that experience drought “drought is a normal, recurrent feature of climate”, that is to say, it is not a rare and random event. They also say that “Drought is a temporary aberration and differs from aridity since the latter is

restricted to low rainfall regions and is a permanent feature of climate”. What constitutes a temporary aberration is vastly different for example in areas with a seasonal rainfall pattern (central USA, Northeast Brazil, West Africa, northern Australia, as compared to areas which have extended period without rainfall – Omaha Nebraska USA, Fortaleza Ceara, Darwin NWT, Australia).<sup>18</sup>

The NDMC distinguishes between different types of definitions of drought: conceptual, operational and disciplinary. The conceptual one they offer is “Drought is a protracted period of deficient precipitation resulting in extensive damage to crops, resulting in loss of yield”. Such definitions assist in policy making, as in Australia where “exceptional drought” is defined as beyond those conditions that could be considered normal risk management”. The operational definitions that help identify the beginning, end and severity of a drought. (*NDMC, 1995*). The disciplinary ones incorporate impacts of deficient rainfall: meteorological, hydrological, agricultural and socio-economic (or ecological). Simplifying, they refer respectively to rainfall, water levels (in dams, soils, etc.) effects on crop harvest, and finally effect on communities and the eco-system. The point is that one stage need not necessarily lead by itself to the next stage: a host of factors come into play.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly the impact of drought can vary according to which ‘sector’ is looked at. “Drought impacts may diminish rapidly in the agricultural sector because of its reliance on soil water, but linger for months or even years in other sectors dependent on stored surface or subsurface supplies. Ground water users, often the last to be affected by drought during its onset, may be the last to experience a return to normal water levels.” (*NDMC, 1995*)

Such concepts and definitions obviously provide a very useful framework in analysing droughts and building up to a stock of knowledge. However, employed on their own in specific situations, they are of very limited use in terms of helping assess impacts on communities and requirements for effective intervention. This is because they are divorced from the way that populations in drought prone regions experience, conceptualise and respond to droughts. Furthermore, there tends to be a wide gulf between policy makers employing the “objective” methodologies and the reality on the ground. This difference goes to the heart of the issues involved in drought preparedness and mitigation work that has been done, as part of EWSs. We examine this to draw out key issues about drought work, before relating it to the funding and institutional context.

### **2.3 Work on droughts: Early Warning Systems**

The famines in Africa in the early 1970s were a watershed in that subsequent to that, much work was done on Early Warning Systems (EWSs). In those horrifying events, large-scale deaths occurred, and the EWS were initially set up to alert

<sup>18</sup> The NDMC site on the web has a wealth of information, which is listed in the Appendix below.

<sup>19</sup> An example to illustrate the point is: “Bangladesh has shown an increased frequency of water shortages in recent years because land use changes have occurred within the country and in neighbouring countries. Land use change is one of the ways human actions alter the frequency of water shortage even when no change in the frequency of meteorological drought has been observed” NDMC 1995

authorities to large-scale famine threats. FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) USAID's Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) are such systems. These rely on national level harvest and food supply data to assess food scarcity. As such, they are global supply side indicators. Sen in his work on hunger however has argued for an entitlements approach to food access, rather than that of food supply. This is based on an appreciation that severe food scarcity can occur in national food abundant situations (as in Bangladesh in 1974), and that people have differential access to food supplies. This has led to an examination of distributional and other issues, and focused attention also to local level factors affecting food supply and availability.

“Huge amounts of resources have been invested in formal EWSs over the last decade, and they now play a very significant role in informing and warning decision makers about impending food crisis or disasters” (*Buchanan-Smith, 1998 Action Aid p1*). “Much of the most successful work has happened within small-scale, local-level information systems. Although most formal EWS operate at a national and international level, after the mid-1980s a number of pioneering local-level systems were set up, often by NGOs” (*see Buchanan & Davies, 1995*). Furthermore, these EWSs use wide socio-economic multidimensional indicators rather than just food indicators “which enable them to be sensitive to less dramatic changes in food situations than famine” (*Buchanan-Smith*).<sup>20</sup>

In a study of these systems, Buchanan-Smith concludes that these systems are now effective in predicting the onset of food scarcity and other drought related impacts, such as on health and livelihoods. Food security is a major element in these EWSs.

The reasons she gives for the international system continuing to be unresponsive to what we might term low intensity or low profile droughts are located more within the international institutional framework within which the EWS operate, as well as the macro political context. She also goes on to say that “Nevertheless, the original rationale for EWS, to service food aid donor agencies, has changed very little during the last 20 years. Their reference point, particularly for the recommendations they make, continues to be large-scale famine catastrophes” (*Buchanan-Smith, p5*).

This means thus that the EWS are a necessary but not a sufficient condition for appropriate intervention to be implemented to avoid crop failure, hunger, disease, environmental degradation, and livestock loss. Such EWSs obviously need to be extremely location specific. It is not fruitful thus to try and define universal drought indicators, nor universal EWSs, but rather, EWS that are defined at local level, and that are based on participation of communities for which they are meant to be used.

Another critical consideration of EWS is where these systems are situated in relation to existing or concurrent systems for monitoring harvests, food supplies, etc. In Ethiopia and some other African countries, they are closely integrated with or are in

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<sup>20</sup> Christian Aid has done extensive work on EWS in Ethiopia and Sudan, including a programme of “Training for Trainers” in Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness, as well as on coping strategies of farmers. SCF has a Food Security unit in Nairobi. MSF ...

effect national governmental systems, while in others, they are district based and not so integrated with national monitoring systems. In Mozambique (*Concern, n.d.*) the two EWSs were being operated – the MSF-CIS national one paralleling the localised monitoring systems. This location of EWSs is a critical for effectiveness, and the most appropriate or effective arrangement clearly differs from country to country.

EWS data is, further, highly temporally specific and rapidly loses its value to decision-makers (Buchanan-Smith, p16). There is a danger of much EWS work done but not utilised (*Buchanan-Smith, 1998, Birch 1998,p4*). This raises the question of the cost of EWSs. As Anderson says “If the elimination of vulnerability were “free” then societies would reduce all risks to zero”. Clearly, however, in cases where EWS contribute to an effective response, they are hugely cost effective. However, if in many situations they are not being acted upon, then their cost effectiveness is obviously doubtful. The combination of all these factors leads to the conclusion that EWSs need to be part of preparedness and mitigation work.

#### **2.4 Work on Drought: Prevention, Capacity Building, Preparedness, Mitigation, Food Security**

Davies (*IDS 1994*) identifies four stages of the relief cycle:

- *Preparedness* (collection of information, diagnosis, contingency planning),
- *Mitigation*(insurance strategies/intervention, accumulation and diversification before a shock)
- *Relief*, implementation of relief programme
- *Rehabilitation* measures, following end of relief programme)

It is admitted that these stages often overlap, and that there are elements of each in the others. EWS would evidently be part of preparedness. Food security programmes would be part of mitigation in the above scheme. Much like the definitions of drought, this stage by stage conception of emergency work is related to an “interventionist problematic”, i.e. the viewpoint is that of an outside agency with a defined point of entry and exit. Clearly, such conceptualisation is necessary in cases where the international relief system comes into operation.

However, as with the drought definitions, it does not have much relevance to those who live in drought prone areas. For as the same author points out, “The great difference between the response of poor people to the risk of famine and that of formal institutions is the tendency for the latter to separate relief from development” (*Davies, p1*). And since droughts are typically a feature of the lives of inhabitants of the region, rather than a rare and totally strange occurrence, adaptive and coping strategies are normally employed by households and communities as a drought progresses.

These coping strategies have similar elements in different parts of the world – one element for example is “widely recognised (that) households threatened by famine often choose to go without food rather than sell productive assets (*Buchanan-Smith, p3*). The variations in coping strategies are significant and certainly operationally

any intervention needs to take the specificity into account<sup>21</sup>. However, what the authors of a study of drought in Sri Lanka say is equally true of other areas that live with drought: “the response of resource poor farming families is carefully structured” (*Twigg & Bhatt, 1998, p*) as drought intensifies. EWSs and other preparedness or capacity building work obviously needs to be thoroughly and intimately familiar with these coping strategies and work to build on and where appropriate modify such behaviour. However, there is a large amount of evidence from all over the globe that “the relief polices appear to ignore the sequence of farmers adjustment mechanisms” (*Twigg & Bhatt, p44*). A 1997 symposium on Rainwater Catchment Technologies also registered a conflict between farmers and project technicians. (Gnadlinger 1997).

This aspect of local adaptive and coping strategies is a critical area that merits further attention.

## 2.5 Limits to coping capacity and emergency situations

Mortimer has written of “the basic rationality of land use systems (which) emerges unfailingly from almost every field investigation” and “the intrinsic resilience of ecosystems”(Mortimer, p207)<sup>22</sup>. The survival of the system was however at the cost of huge human suffering. Regarding ‘coping’ strategies: firstly, “adaptation is understood as a sequential process in which solutions to problems become in turn a part of the next problem.” Secondly, coping strategies can and do include reduced food consumption, malnutrition and disease<sup>23</sup>; and thirdly, the existence of such mechanisms does not help us in the problem of saying *when* these mechanisms are no longer sufficient.

When analysts define emergency, we see that it is in terms of an inability of a community, or region, or nation, to cope with a temporary situation. Another element in these definitions is that the situation is different from the norm, that it is short term, - this is most evident in the definitions of nutrition deficiency: chronic is a persistent prolonged state of malnutrition, as distinct from a self defining “transitory” state of malnutrition. A typical definition of a disaster or an emergency is “a crisis event that surpasses the ability (sic) of an individual, community, or society to control or survive the consequences”, or again “where the potential for damage to health, life and or resources and property is significant – i.e. it is so large that losses cannot be handled by those who experience them .. .” (*Anderson, p*). Or, further “Policy concern should be directed at the point where people are unable to adapt to climate change either because it happens too fast, or because they are constrained by poverty” (*Eele, quoted in Birch, 1998*)

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<sup>21</sup> For coping strategies, see especially Mortimer (Nigeria), Twigg and Bhatt (Sri Lanka), Eshete (Ethiopia) and IDS 19 for a range of country studies on “How the Vulnerable Cope”.

<sup>22</sup> In his study of the Hausa in West Africa, he was impressed that “instead of the sytenm cracking, it survived” p xvi

<sup>23</sup> Showing the intrinsic resilience of ecosystems systems, Mortimer says “In the past, system ersilience was achieved at the price of peiodic and intense humans sufering. The elimination ofsuch suffeing shold be well within the reach of modern technicala nd aadminsitarative capabilities”, p. 219. See Below for more on the last part.



While the emphasis on the exceptional nature<sup>24</sup> of emergencies is important, the inclusion of ability to cope is not helpful. It raises fundamental questions – for example, what of the millions and millions of people who suffer “chronic undernutrition” and “long term condition of chronic hunger”, which “is rarely given international focus but (kills) more people globally than the acute crisis of famine does”, (*Allen p 15*). Do we want to say that they cope? Equally, do slum dwellers suffering extremely high rates of disease and mortality “cope”, although this is their long-term situation? SCF methodology of risk mapping, according to Birch, “is based upon the premise that we needed to try and understand how communities survive most of the time, rather than trying to understand why these survival systems occasionally fail” (*Birch, 1998 p4*)

While they might or might not “cope”, we see that departure from the norm is thus a key component of the definition of emergency. While the norm kills many more, these are not so concentrated, either in time or space. This is important because an emergency situation is defined as one where something can be done to make a significant impact to reduce suffering brought on by a sudden, or extraordinary set of circumstances. The extraordinariness of emergency situations needs to be retained: this involves being clear that the many millions who die from malnutrition and disease as a “norm” do not represent an emergency. One is not saying that that is acceptable, but one is recognising that their condition is not susceptible to short term and immediate improvement. In contrast, the emergency situation is by definition one where a short-term intervention can hope to revert a sudden or not so sudden worsening in homelessness, nutrition, disease and/or mortality. While a knowledge and understanding of local coping mechanism to droughts is absolutely essential, it should not, in classic drought situations, be used in distinguishing emergency from normal times.

## 2.6 Indigenous Experience, Concepts and Practices

There is indeed a wealth of economic and sociological studies of the poor in developing countries: of slum dwellers, those who live off rubbish dumps, of migrants, etc. However, less exists (or at least less is accessed and/or used by development practitioners of anthropological and cultural research. These latter types of research relate to the subjective dimension of the ways that people experience and conceptualise their situations, and some of this research has aroused controversy in showing how very differently basic human experiences are lived. Schaeper-Hughes in a well-known study of the slum dwellers of Brazil has shown the way mothers respond to the death of their infants<sup>25</sup>. Survival strategies in Zambia (*Ngechwa*) include forced marriages for bride price and prostitution. And evidence from India, Africa, Sri Lanka and Brazil shows the importance of religious and/or supernatural belief and response to drought. There is evidence of seeing drought as a supernatural or divine thing, and appealing to rituals and practices for the drought to end. “Sertanejos” typically are extremely hardy and stoic and independent and underplay the extent of hardship, saying that God willing, things will right

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<sup>24</sup> This term is specifically used by the Australian government in relation to eligibility for emergency assistance.

<sup>25</sup> Schaeper-Hughes “Death Without Weeping”

themselves. And commonly “lets see”. While in other places, agency staff find themselves dealing with what appears to be an exaggeration of the hunger and suffering, when direct appeals to assistance are made. The point being made here is that to engage with beneficiaries, it is necessary to deal with the cultural or subjective ways that communities experience and conceptualise their lives. The relevance of this for gender work should be obvious. Gender is one area that continues to be difficult to work on, especially on emergency programmes. It is intimately related to questions of culture and participation.

While a great deal is written of partnership, participation, the need for people centred, bottom up approaches, it is also recognised how difficult it is in practice to achieve participation, ownership and sustainability. The very real difficulties experienced by programmers in achieving participation and ownership cannot be over come until more attention is paid to the ways that local populations experience their environment. This cannot be overemphasised – what Chambers wrote in 1989 is as relevant today: “how ignorant, and sometimes how wrong, we in the development profession have been”(Chambers, *IDS*)<sup>26</sup>. In 1987, at a Rainwater Catchment Systems symposium in Brazil, the existence of a conflict between farmers and technicians was noted. (*Gnadlinger 1997*). It should be noted that in the relationship between technicians (or agency staff) and farmers, conflict is under expressed, due to the unequal relationship of power and dependence. In section 4, we draw out the implications of this.

It is more than a question of finding the “right mechanisms” for participation. Rather it is a question of the way that work with communities is done: basically without engaging in the cultural practices within which local knowledge is deeply embedded, and which consequently remains untapped and excluded from the programmes that agencies implement.

Work that has been done on participatory indicators of impact and of poverty is in this vein. This involves investigating beneficiaries’ valuation of wealth or well being ranking, preference (for change) ranking, trend analysis, through participatory methodologies. A set of qualitative indicators with the acronym SPICED (different from SMART indicators) reflects some of its characteristics: subjective participatory, interpreted and communicable, empowering, diverse and aggregated<sup>27</sup>.

If we start then from the way that populations in drought prone regions conceptualise drought, and the way that they respond, it leads us to see slow onset crises situations as very much a continuum. At the local level, the very concepts of drought and emergency are location specific<sup>28</sup>. It is more appropriate to view it in

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<sup>26</sup> This is from a symposium on Vulnerability, Coping and Policy IDS. He goes on “Through local study ... (we see) how varied is that universe of vulnerability and poverty ... the lesson for the future is.. learning from and with those who are vulnerable and poor .. and to do this, not once, not in one locality, but again and again, in each place ...” p.7.

<sup>27</sup> See Roche 1998a, 1998b, Neefjes 1998

<sup>28</sup> To the charge of relativism, we say that this can only be perceived as a problem if there is pre-supposition that the donors viewpoint somehow embodies an objective, universal view, rather than as one way of viewing the world. In calling for the local view to be taken on board fully, one is arguing for a fuller dialogue between all actors.

terms of different degrees of drought stress, rather than seek definitions of drought. “Analysis of rainfall patterns shows that in about one of two years there has been some kind of drought stress during the normal growing season ... in other words, drought stress is “normal” despite an average rainfall of about 1,000 mm/year.” (*Neefjes*). In Sri Lanka, farmers perceptions of drought is as follows: inability to cultivate paddy or other seasonal crops considered normal by all, but water shortage for drinking, for animals, and food shortage considered extreme drought. 73% said drought occurred every three years. (*Twig & Bhatt*).<sup>29</sup> We see that the very name or concept for drought varies: In Turkana in Kenya, “Nakwaakoyo”, meaning massive death of livestock that resulted in “white bones everywhere” (*Oxfam, 1994.p8*); “the year in which people died” distinguished from less severe years; in Darfur in Sudan, they say “famine that kills”; in Hausaland “the great hunger”; elsewhere, “death of cattle”, “when people go away”. In Brazil, the lives and culture of the “*sertanejos*” (inhabitants of the huge semi-arid area in the Northeast, the size of France, the *sertao*), is fundamentally and intricately woven with the perennial experience of “as secas”<sup>30</sup>.

This handful of examples illustrates that these indigenous ways of conceptualising drought in their own area has the advantage not only of being revealing of climatic, geographic and agricultural realities, but in addition they refer to the coping mechanisms, and not least to local socio-political realities. In an attempt to deal with the very great heterogeneity of context within which drought occurs, a typology (“Horses for Courses”, IDS 1994) has been attempted (more on this in section four). However, one of the inadequacies of such approaches is that conscious as they are of the political factors involved, their formulation remains politically naïve, with the political aspect to be grafted on. Thus for example “The elimination of (drought related) suffering should be well within the reach of modern technical and administrative capabilities” (*Mortimer, p219*), and “Our understanding of famine as ‘outsiders’ has improved in leaps and bounds ... this should improve our ability to prevent it” (*Buchanan-Smith*). The question of ‘modern technical and administrative capabilities’, and of ‘our understanding of famine’ is thus posited separately from the question of participation and the political factors that are so often at the heart of the problem. A commentator has spoken of the “uses of famine” and analysed how in many situations it is to the advantage of certain groups to have food shortages and famine (*Keen*). In Brazil, “A industria da seca” (“The Drought Industry”) has long identified the social groups that profit enormously from droughts.

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<sup>29</sup> There can be a great degree of differentiation within communities: in Mozambique for example, food production is highly differentiated between households within communities. About 25% run out of food 3-4 months after harvest, about 65% 3 months before next harvest, and about 10% maintain surpluses across harvests. I have not come across research which looks at how these different social strata conceptualise and respond to drought.

<sup>30</sup> There is currently a full length study being completed in Brazil on the cultural expression of drought in Brazil – looking at literature, music, ritual, etc. (Santa Cruz, M “A Seca: “)Interestingly, this research has been financed by a Brazilian company that has a history of supporting social research.

## 2.7 Conclusion

It might be asked what such cultural work can mean to emergency situations. In section three, we examine institutional dynamics, and the full implications of this will be drawn out in section four. Here, suffice it to say that unless there has been work beforehand, there is only so much one can do to try and ensure that an emergency intervention – when it does become necessary - is “development friendly”. Essentially, we are inverting the injunction: not that emergency intervention needs to be so (which is undoubtedly and self evidently the case) but rather that the development programmes must be “emergency friendly”. Or put another way, the importance of community based monitoring, EWS systems and mitigation is widely recognised. “Baseline information is usually collected during an initial phase of one or two years. The interpretation of information for early warning purposes therefore becomes effective only for after a significant period of time after baseline information has become available” (*Concern*).

In sum, then: culturally embedded knowledge will remain difficult to access fully until a different approach is used, one that engages with the subjectivity of those involved. Such cultural approaches could form the basis for a thoroughly informed approach to preparedness, mitigation and the design of appropriate EWS. Such work holds out a greater possibility of real participation and ownership by those affected – and thus holds out the possibility of turning them into subjects instead of being beneficiaries.<sup>31</sup> As such, the cost of EWSs could be significantly reduced, but this would be possible in a specific set of relationships between donors, NGOs and beneficiaries, which we address in section four.

To end this section, a comment that reinforces the points made above: “In reality, most famine early warning systems are of little use for those closest to the problem. Those people already know something is wrong and are probably already doing something about it” (*Kelly, quoted in Birch 1998*)

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<sup>31</sup> See Cabral (1973) for the importance and potential of cultural work. Kenya’s most famous writer Ngugi wa Thiongo was imprisoned in the 1970s when he began to produce participatory plays with peasants – mainly because the government at the time was alarmed at the degree to which communities were being mobilised.

### Section 3: Institutional Framework

When we consider the international relief system, we include the following at a minimum:

- Beneficiaries and their representative organisations, i.e. grassroots organisations
- Developing country NGOs
- Governments – at local, regional and national level
- NNGOs
- Donors – multilateral and bilateral

Davies (IDS 1994) differentiates between micro, meso and macro level. How one chooses to differentiate depends very much on what is analysing. This is a disparate set of people and organisations. Within each of the above five categories, one could usefully make further distinctions. Thus under bilateral donors, one could group countries together either by geographical emphasis, or by sector, or by general aid policy similarities and differences. Similarly for multilateral organisations, etc.

When we speak of the way the international system responds, we are speaking of the effects of decisions taken independently by some actors, of others taken in consultation/collaboration, yet others which are in opposition to other actors' wishes, etc. While there are some overall trends, as seen in section one, it is important to avoid attributing any real systemic logic to this system. There are many sub-systems that are not necessarily related to each other – their concerns, policies, institutional dynamics and procedures are not integrally related. There is a degree of communication, collaboration, co-ordination, exchange, but the sub-systems are basically autonomous organisational systems.

Thus, the EU, UN WFP, USAID, AUSAID, Japan, World Bank, the NGOs, all are separate entities. The signing up to common humanitarian (or developmental) principles is an important factor that enters into their relationships, but does not represent any organic unity. Even within the EU, for example, the differences between the Commission and the Parliament, and between the member states can be great. While the trends in aid noted in section one demonstrate some commonalities arising from changing international relations, there are differences in policy and approach which affect the response of any of these actors to specific situations and crises, to specific regions and countries, etc.

Buchanan-Smith and Davies (1995) look at critical area – that of how EWS feeds into the international relief system and the reasons for the "... persistent failure to translate EWS into timely response ..." (p2). This is indeed a critical area because EWS are the main means for avoiding famines. Their analyses led them to identify the institutional context within which EWS sit, and the institutional links to decision makers (institutional structures and practices within the donor organisations), as well as the broader political environment factors that impede timely effective response. They make recommendations as to how the international relief system can be more responsive in time: "... famine policy cannot be limited to preventing large-scale excess mortality due to starvation, but ....as halting the

progress of a downward spiral ... (where) death from one of a number of causes, of which the outbreak and transmission of communicable disease is particularly serious” (p).

The perspective in this paper is somewhat different, in that we make an assumption (as argued in section one) that the international relief system will continue in the main to be “geared to saving lives, not livelihoods” (p). This implies that it will not be responsive to slow onset emergencies, even when they are on a large scale. We thus focus attention also on NGOs – on the role they play, and what steps can be taken to try and ensure that damaging droughts are not ignored.

Analysis of the different actors within the international relief system is well beyond the scope of the paper. In this section, we look first at the changing roles of NGOs; a case study of Oxfam’s experience in Kenya and Brazil forms part of this analysis; we then look at certain policy changes that are being argued for in relation to the division between emergency and development work.

### **3.1 The Role of NGOs**

There has been phenomenal growth in the activities of Northern NGOs (NNGOs) – from 1600 registered in OECD countries in 1980 to 3,000 in 1993, with their annual expenditure rising from \$2.8bn to 5.7bn. “Studies show that over the last 10 to 15 years, NGOs have increasingly been chosen as a major channel of humanitarian resources ...” (*Cushing, p 6*). It is estimated that currently \$5bn of emergency assistance is channelled through NGOs each year. (*Lewis*). The funds being channelled through NGOs have rocketed: ODA (now DFID) from 0.5% to 28% between 1978 and 1991, and EU from 0 to 37% 1976-1990 (*Buchanan-Smith & Davies, p*). 35% of total UK aid agencies funds come from government, while USAID, which gave 28% of its funds to NGOs in 1995, aims to channel 40% of total funds through NGOs by 2000. The 1997 World Disasters Report (p12) reports: “So much official (emergency) aid has been available that purists among agencies have had to set limits for how much they will accept from governments or any one donor”. There is a very real danger that NNGOs may lose their relative independence as development organisations and become merely ‘ladles for the global soup kitchen’. This trend also potentially raises questions about the viability of their longer term development work”. “NNGOs may profess long-term development principles but may be under pressure from government and their own supporters to undertake humanitarian relief”. (*Lewis*)

The table below shows NGO funding by country.

**AID FROM DAC Real terms 1992 prices US\$ millions**  
**NGO volume of income and government support (US\$millions)**

	Government grant to NGOs	NGO total Income	Ratio
UK	50	596	
USA	1512	4373	
France	60	320	
Germany	475	885	
Japan	131.9	159.08	
Holland	419	335	
Aus	51.2	129.5	
Canada	357.7	283.9	
Denmark	164	19	
Norway	89	-	
Sweden	110	97	
Portugal	0.35	-	
Spain	24.4	90.0	
Belgium	91.1	86	

This changing role has however created a new set of problems for NNGOs. Those NGOs that had come to depend on official emergency funding experienced a financial crisis in 1996. Donors cut back after the high point of 1994. Examples are: Oxfam implemented cutbacks of 20% reduction of staff over 3 years, SCF cut £9.5 million over three years, Goal of Ireland was £2million short. Some Canadian agencies closed. (*1997 World Disaster Report, 1997*).

For NNGOs in turn, emergency funds can be seen as ‘easy money’ – emergency project funding often far outstrips development budgets and contributes to maintaining staffing and overheads (see below for evidence of this). However, donor inflexibility on what can be covered in emergencies means that NGOs are circumscribed by the donors decisions.

If we are concerned, as this paper is, to make emergency response more responsive to needs, what can be done? Is the dialogue between NGOs and donors a healthy one – with NGOs pleading their specific needs cases and donors selectively responding, or is it that NGOs as much as donors are in a relationship which works against the allocation of resources based on needs. Jaap Timmer (Dutch Red Cross Director for International Activities) “concedes that government or ECHO concern for certain regions and problems influences humanitarian direction, but argues that partnership is a two way street”(World Disasters Report 1997).

Analysts of the international relief agencies have found however that “it is not the severity of the crisis, but relations between international donors and national governments which tends to be the single most important determinant of the timing

and scale of the international response”, and, “It is political interests rather than humanitarian motives which are most influential in determining the timing and nature of the relief response” (*Buchanan-Smith & Davies*, p2, 23). Another commentator says “budget allocations are entirely driven by ulterior political motives” (*Reality of Aid, 19997/8, p169*). The example of southern Africa is one illustration of the political concerns that drive donors: “... in the case of the Southern African drought in 1992-3, as well as national capacity to respond, the desire of the donors to keep structural adjustment programmes on track and a determination to avoid further political unrest in the region combined to initiate a timely response by the international relief system” (*Buchanan-Smith & Davies*, p2). There is also evidence from Indonesia where funding for drought relief operations was forthcoming, when it was considered unnecessary by some NGOs in the area, and where negative effects on developmental processes. Given this, the view of the Dutch minister would seem complacent.

However, it is not only donors who are influenced by political agendas: In Indonesia in 1998, while Oxfam judged that relief was not necessary a major relief operation has been mounted - again it would seem that political considerations do come into it. *Mortimer* cites the case of Nigeria, which had millions affected by drought in the 1980s, more he says than the Sahel, but got no international attention. We should remember the concern about what is driving resource allocation: “NGOs may also be subject to conflicting pressures, such as the desire to attract relief resources into those areas where they are already working” (*Buchanan-Smith & Davies*, p23). *World Disasters Report 1997* talks in a similar vein that in 1996 “NGOs were relocating to Bosnia, ...money and politics were the driving forces, not the welfare of the victims”.

NGOs cannot be complacent about the logic that drives their own resource allocation decisions. Below we look at some of Oxfam’s structures, policies and processes to examine this aspect.

It would be naïve to hold up as an objective a politics free humanitarianism in resource allocation terms. Donors have and will continue to have multiple goals, for example, pressurising on human rights, ensuring stability in a region, etc. The question is to what extent NGOs can or do challenge donors to respond on grounds of need? And also, what are the implications for the other four sets of actors in the international relief system (e.g. programme managers, Southern NGOs) of the fact that a politicised, human rights driven agenda is likely to dominate humanitarianism? In section four, we bring together the various components of our analysis, and partly address this question. Below, to end this sub-section, we wend with some considerations on the relationship between donors and NGOs.

Can NGOs be more challenging to donors – refusing funds when not needs priority in their view and campaigning for funds for other neglected areas? Can pressure be brought on donors like ECHO to have detailed humanitarian policy statements with indicative budgets for different regions and sectors? After all, most disasters are now predictable and occur with a deal of regularity. NGOs are no longer incidental actors on the international aid stage. They are essential players, and the donor-NGO relationship is one of mutual dependence. Could NGOs act jointly in forums vis a vis donors?



Perhaps the procedure adopted by AUSAID could serve as a model? Australia gives only 3.88% of bilateral ODA to emergencies. All funds managed by Humanitarian Relief section (HUR) of Ausaid. “The basis for decisions on the allocations of emergency aid is set out in a statement of guiding principles which were agreed and adopted in 1994. Each year, notional allocations for NGOs are set for each region/country and negotiated with NGOs, which may then make submissions for funds. Allocations are made through the WFP as the government feels it has more influence within the MLOs and a greater degree of accountability”. (*World Disaster Report, 1997*)

### 3.2 Policy Trends

With the reduction in ODA, a falling proportion going for development programmes, and expenditure on relief having increased exponentially, there has been much thinking about the relationship between emergency and development programmes. This review has been reinforced by the EWS and drought mitigation work that has been put in place. By its nature, such work is long-term, and tends to focus attention on the division that exists within budgets and organisations between emergency and development programmes.

There is increasing awareness that the division between “development” and “relief” is unsuitable in many situations: *Singer in 1985* had already said that “the old division, whether conceptual, administrative or resource allocative, between emergency, and non-emergency or development .. simply collapses in light of the present African experience”; “donors should recognise that in many situations it is not a question of either emergency aid, or rehabilitation, or long term development aid. An integrated approach, made to measure, for what is required in the country concerned, is essential” (*Novib & Trocaire*). “Old distinctions between relief, development and rehabilitation do not hold up in the field, and here (we) document the extent to which systems and funding are adapting to recognise that”. (*Reality of Aid, 1995*). “Definitions used to disaggregate expenditure types are increasingly inadequate ... The relatively simplistic categories of “relief” and “development” should be abandoned for categories of expenditure which reflect more accurately the persistent nature of crisis for people suffering the effects of war and structural economic decline” (*Disasters report 1997*). “The (new humanitarian) operational context also includes more partnerships with complementary agencies and greater competition for increasingly scarce aid funds, ... and the grey area between relief and development becomes much greater” (*Cushing*).

In the context of famine relief, the distinction made between chronic undernutrition and transitional undernutrition is less useful, given the figures quoted above about the huge numbers of long term malnourished people. So “work is under way to integrate food aid with the long-term food needs of poor communities”. In the UK, the ODA wrote in 1995 “it is in this context of diminishing bilateral development resources that the need to incorporate developmental objectives into relief and humanitarian aid planning takes on a new dimension of importance” (*IDS 1994, p105*). Another commentator has written of how for many poor people, the reality is

“emergency as norm” (*Maxwell, p3*). “The central focus of (CARE’s) vision is livelihood security as an organising principle or integrating framework for CARE’s work across the relief-development continuum”. CARE for example use “ a cross-sectoral rapid livelihood security assessment” in emergency situations. “The days of the quick-in, quick-out assistance programmes is over. The life of assistance programmes can now be measured in years rather than months” (*Disasters 1999,p107*)

However, while the exhortations for this kind of re-orientation are there, an analysis of the trends within emergency assistance reveal opposing tendencies. For example, the preparatory conference for Oslo stated that emergency relief is temporary by nature and therefore should not be seen as providing support to the achievement of universal access to basic social services in a sustainable way”. Although a number of donor agencies have recently become interested in the notion of linking relief and development ... Western aid policy is evolving in ways that that create new obstacles to the idea.” And she adds that to understand the factors making for slow progress , we “need to address the underlying obstacles and analytical issues which beset the topic”. (53) Linking relief and development is normally understood to mean making relief interventions more inline with development processes. As such, “there are some circumstances where efforts to link relief and development are not justified; but that in others it makes sense” (*Buchanan-Smith & Maxwell 1994, pii*). The blurring of the lines between relief and development, however, involves a more fundamental rethink than that normally associated with linking relief and development

Given the development/emergency blurring, could work be done to create separate non-fungible budgets from these “humanitarian” agencies? Could this be done by building on the concept of the minimum standards zone as in SPHERE? [‘Sphere provides the basis from which to push for more humanitarian resources and changes to system-wide problems. It could even help define a 'humanitarian zone' encompassing people whose lives fall below Minimum Standards because of economic forces plunging them into poverty’](#) (*World Disasters Report, 1999*). Would this cover two of the four types of emergencies as classified by Buchanan-Smith & Maxwell: permanent emergency and slow onset zones? Of the standards advocated, The SPHERE document states: “They do not describe the absolute minimum necessary for short term survival, and are not expected to be achieved immediately. (These) ... should be seen as steps on the way to achieving minimum standards which are acceptable over the longer term”. This gives them virtually development status standards. And yet they are *not* longer term developmental goals: “The minimum standards equally may not be appropriate for situations which last for a number of years, and so should not be seen as maximum standards”. Could this be the basis for defining a ['humanitarian zone', as is suggested, which would then have allocated budgets which were neither development nor emergency?](#)

#### **Section Four: Oxfam’s Experience with Emergency Work in Kenya and Brazil**

In the 1990s, Brazil experienced prolonged droughts in 1992/3 and 1997-9. We examine the experience of two droughts: Roraima in the Northern Amazon, 1998 and the Northeast November 1997 to present (August 1999)

#### 4.1 Roraima in the Northern Amazon, 1998

In late December of 1997, forest fires broke out in the state of Roraima. By March of 1998, the blaze spread over a large part of the cerrado (savannah type grasslands) and huge tracts of forest. Oxfam has two counterparts in the state, *CIR, the Indigenous Council of Roraima*, whose members are mostly Macuxi and occupy the cerrado, and *CCPY*, a group working with the Yanomami, who live in the forest. An initial visit by Recife staff member found that the areas of both communities were affected. Harvest had been lost already due to the drought, and the fires caused livestock and small animal losses. Food was scarce. The Yanomami were suffering a malaria epidemic. Subsequently, it was discovered that six indigenous groups, including several hundred dispersed communities had been affected by the drought and fires.

An assessment visit took place in March. The Oxfam team included a health ESP, a water engineer and a member of Recife team. During this visit, much protracted negotiations took place in reformulating the initial assistance relief proposal that had been initially put together by CIR. The overall budget was reduced by about a third (from about US\$ 2.0 millions to US\$ 1.2 million). Gender work was absent from the emergency programme, although some initiatives on this had previously been taken in CIR's ongoing development programme. The food aid component was reduced significantly by reducing the rations per basket. There was also much negotiation about inclusion and exclusion of certain foods. The other components of the programme were seeds and a water programme, comprising the drilling of wells, and putting in gravity water systems. For the Yanomami, there was a small food element – only for hospitalised Yanomami, most of the relief aid being in the form of anti malarials. It also included tools and fishing equipment.

An initial Oxfam grant to CIR was critical in establishing an information and communications unit. This played to the campaigning strengths of CIR, who did effective communications work. Oxfam Brazil also put out three early influential information reports – the programme team was heavily involved together with a volunteer substituting for the ex communications officer. This was a critical early contribution by Oxfam.

The UN system sent an assessment mission in April. Their report was not very widely read, and virtually no immediate actions came out of it. One area of concern it highlighted was the need to build up capacity to fight forest fires. The fires had in fact been extinguished when heavy rains fell for a few days. Earlier efforts to put out the fire had failed. The Brazilian government had rejected UN and other offers of help to put out the fires. The report also warned of an arc of danger from northern down to central Amazon, as a high-risk zone for forest fires.

The programme received ECHO funding of a million ECUs. Oxfam Brazil staff had no involvement in the *process* that led to ECHO's decision to fund this relief programme. The early communications sent out by Oxfam and CIR's own (Oxfam-funded) communications efforts clearly could have contributed to ECHO funding.

The *process* however whereby ECHO made the decision to allocate one million ECUs remains unclear.

The contact was between Oxfam's International Funding Unit (IFU) in Oxford and ECHO. The programme proposal was sent from Oxfam Brazil to Oxfam IFU, who then sent it on to oxfam ECHO. Communications and negotiations about the programme were conducted between Oxfam IFU staff and ECHO. Most of these communications however took place *after* ECHO's initial (and provisional?) decision to allocate funds for Roraima. Without being able to be certain about this, it would seem that these communications perhaps served to define and specify the *form* in which the assistance would be given, and not whether or not it would be given.

Initially it appeared that the whole of the one million ECUs would be channelled through Oxfam. After weeks of waiting, it turned out that the million ECUs was to be divided between four organisations, of which Oxfam was one, and another was MSF working with the medicines for the Yanomami. The other two were an Italian NGO and a French one that did not, to our knowledge, have a field presence in Brazil. With the ECHO funding, Oxfam was asked to continue to take the lead and co-ordinate the four NGOs. A joint visit to the other areas with the local EU representative was arranged, and co-ordination between the four agencies was set up. Oxfam contracted a field programme co-ordinator and a water engineer. The other two NGOs contracted field co-ordinators as well.

The programme was implemented with close co-ordination between the agencies, within budget, and reporting to ECHO completed within the given time. Oxfam co-ordinated sectors of food and water relief, while France Liberte handled medical relief. To date, no evaluation of the programme has been done.

The main issues that emerged were:

- What was the degree of need? The assessment visit report did not report serious malnutrition. However, with a failed harvest and no food stocks, food aid was seen as necessary to avoid hunger and possible disease. An increase in respiratory and intestinal diseases had been noted.
- It was known that the capacity of the implementing counterpart was deficient in relation to the programme and would need bolstering. Extra staff were contracted to help with this. However, due to the emergency programme being implemented by a more or less self contained unit of temporary staff, there was little capacity building achieved.
- The programme that was eventually implemented was different in many aspects from the original much bigger one proposed by CIR, but also from the one that had been formulated after the assessment visit and approved by ECHO. The main reason for this was the reformulation of the water component, whose cost appeared to have been underestimated. It was also due to revisions necessitated

by the non fruition of attempted collaboration with the governmental agency that planned to implement the digging of wells in the region.

- The very high cost per beneficiary, especially of the water component, but also of the distribution costs of food and seeds.
- A caterpillar infestation, caused apparently by the drought, was shown to have destroyed a large part of the crop after the first planting of seeds.

#### 4.1.1 Analysis

The reasons for ECHO funding would seem to be that it was the Amazon, indigenous peoples were involved, and not least, that photographs of the forest fires were in all international newspapers for weeks. As stated above, it is not clear what role Oxfam's early communications played in the ECHO decision to make funds available for Roraima.

Contracting additional staff worked well in the sense of timely implementation and good financial and administrative control. However, staff contracted by Oxfam for the emergency programme (the field co-ordinator and the water engineer) had little input from Recife programme staff, and weak line management or support. Some key decisions about programme reformulation and implementation were thus taken by short-term contracted staff (working with CIR and through a management committee), who did not previously know the region.

Total Oxfam annual grants to the two CPUs were about US\$55,000. An influx of about US \$1 million represented a great challenge but also an opportunity for capacity building. While the implementation went well, it was felt that little was achieved in capacity building, since the contracted-in staff operated as a self-contained unit. Community involvement in distribution, and in working on water component was good. The counterpart's management and staff had limited capacity, and effectively left the implementation and management of the emergency programme to short term contracted personnel from outside the local agencies. The situation was also aggravated by generalised funding problems for CIR, resulting from independent decisions taken by some of the other donors giving development support to CIR.

Oxfam's ongoing "development" support to CIR is US\$15k, for institutional support. CIR's main activities have been its very effective campaigning for the area to be demarcated and declared as a protected reserve for the Macuxi indians, as provided for in Brazil's 1988 constitution. In that context, it is interesting to assess the relationship of the emergency programme to CIR's ongoing work. The identification of CIR with the resources that flowed in to Roraima strengthened CIR's reputation as an effective organisation. CIR however already has a very strong organisational base and wide support in the communities throughout the area. The relief programme undoubtedly further strengthened this support.

However, indigenous issues in the Amazon are highly charged and politicised. Basically, these areas are under extreme pressure from local landowners, and extractive, pharmaceutical and ranching companies, both Brazilian and foreign. The state government has a history of working against the interest of the Indians and in the interest of the various groups seeking access to Macuxi land for economic exploitation. In the case of the Yanomami, the state governor some years ago opened up the Yanomami area to prospectors and settlers – some 2,000 Yanomami died as a result of killings and diseases. The situation is polarised historically, very tense and conflictual, as the Indians struggle for survival<sup>32</sup>. Safe access to their lands is a fundamental pre-condition for them. Safety in this case means exclusive access. A small part of the Macuxi community is alienated from CIR and collaborates with the state government.

Distribution of relief rations was politicised to the extent that the recipients were almost exclusively those majority Macuxi in CIR. However, to the extent that the government discriminates against CIR and the communities in CIR, these communities represent a disadvantaged, vulnerable group. Targeting these communities is firstly the only practical way to reach a majority of the affected people, and secondly, one is to the extent possible, reaching those most in need. Relief aid is equally politicised in the Northeast of Brazil, though for different reasons.

Secondly, CIR has implemented a broad, low-density settlement of the Macuxi across the reserve, as a key means to protect the area against incursion and invasion. The relief effort strengthened the economic base of these settler communities (in some cases comprising only a few households), especially through the provision of wells and water gravity systems. In so doing, the relief effort contributed to the main development programme of CIR.

There are issues also about the programme's continuity and its sustainability. The water component of the programme could, and should make lasting impact – although the cost per beneficiary is very high. Famine and epidemics were avoided, but as usual, this is hard to attribute directly to the programme. While the programme would seem to have contributed to medium term food and water security, attention needs to be given to questions of maintenance of new systems by the communities themselves. After the immediate closure of the relief operation, it was not clear that the counterpart had the capacity to give continuity to the programme.

The Emergency programme is assessed then not simply in narrow terms of nutritional deficiency, but in wider food and livelihood security issues, which in this case include access and defence of land in a highly politicised environment. There is no way of avoiding the politicisation of relief operations in a context like this. It should also be said that the role of foreign NGOs in indigenous areas is particularly sensitive in Brazil.

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<sup>32</sup> Security of Oxfam staff was an issue during some phases of the relief programme

## **4.2 The Drought in the Sertao of Northeast Brazil, November 1997 to present (August 1999)**

### 4.2.1 The Context

The current drought in Northeast Brazil is now (August 1999) into its twentieth month, with serious concern about a worsening of the situation over the next few months. The current drought is by general consent one of the two worst droughts this century.

Drought periodically afflicts this huge semi-arid area (larger than the size of France), home to some 40 million people. Recurrent droughts and their effects are deeply rooted in the economy, social structure and indeed the culture of this region. When droughts are prolonged, the effects on people are hunger, malnutrition, increased incidence of diseases, a rise in infant mortality, and psychological and physical disorders (the latter mainly recorded amongst pregnant women). There is also out migration of men. Other effects are widespread loss of livestock, sale of livestock (and also of land), degradation of land for pasture, decrease and sometimes extinction of plant vegetation. A prolonged drought thus damages the agro-ecology of the region, worsens the concentration of land ownership, pushes thousands of small farmers into acute poverty as savings are depleted and production capacity of small farms is reduced. Accumulated effects of successive droughts over decades have in large part influenced the current pattern of land-holding and population densities. In May 1998, some 9 million people were reportedly affected, with 5 million of these said to be suffering acute food shortage and imminent famine.

Overall annual rainfall in non-crisis years is said to be relatively high for a semi-arid area, and it is claimed that given appropriate policies and technologies, crises could be averted. One of Oxfam GB's three main programmes in Brazil is support for small farmers in this semi-arid area. The term "Living with the Drought" is the Brazilian NGOs expression of their attempts to have the appropriate policies implemented whereby the periodic prolonged lack of rainfall does not have such damaging consequences. The Oxfam programme provides support for the development and implementation of appropriate water-harvesting and agricultural technologies, accessing credit, and advocacy for policy change. After Oxfam's intervention in the 1992/3 drought, Oxfam supported a "Drought Forum" bringing together a range of relevant organisations, in an attempt to maintain the networks created during 1992/3. This proved difficult however; the Forum did not function effectively, and was disbanded in 1996.

### 4.2.2 Government Response to the Drought

1998 was election year in Brazil. The media covered the drought very well up to the elections in October. There was considerable unrest with famished farmers raiding governmental and other stores and shops. Leading members of the Brazilian political establishment defended their actions. The army was deployed to escort food-carrying convoys.

The federal government's relief programme suffered from the following problems:

- The amount of rations were reduced significantly (to an inadequate ration), in order to reach more people. Rotting and damaged food was also commonly delivered.
- The work fronts were organised by municipality. They functioned very badly in the vast majority of municipalities, since the mayor in practice controlled who was enlisted, and who thus received food rations and/or cash payments. Municipal committees were in most case the prerogative of the mayor. The result was that those belonging to the mayor's power base were enlisted, while others in greater need were excluded. Typically, the rural farmers' organisations (in Brazil referred to as Rural Workers trade unions) were excluded.
- The work done by the enlisted groups was more often than not inappropriate and ineffective in relation to the drought – examples include road construction on public highways, and/or works done on private land.
- Given that it depended very much on the local political configuration, the fronts and the relief functioned quite well in some localities.
- There was the problem of federally allocated resources not reaching the intended beneficiaries.

Drought relief is very politicised historically in the Northeast, politicians and landowners exploiting the situation to build up their base by manipulating the large volume of resources that are available. In 1998, election year, this was all the more so<sup>33</sup>. As in Roraima, any resources that are brought in are associated with one political faction or another. It is probably the case that any foreign resources that are delivered enter into this, and are seen as by and large contributing to strengthening grass roots groups and those factions that support them.

The federal organ for the development of the Northeast SUDENE has been slowly downsized and was unable to lay an effective role. The *Defesa Civil* has a role in some states in the North of the country in responding to emergencies, but does not appear to function in the Northeast.

After the elections in October, the drought fell off the political agenda, and in many states there was the immediate cessation of whatever relief programmes were in operation.

#### 4.2.3 Oxfam's Role

Oxfam monitored its development closely from September 1997 on, when initial forecasts were made of an El Nino related drought. Two seminars in Recife (in

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<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, in Kenyan drought in 1982, the elections are also posited as a factor that made the political context less conducive to effective governmental action. (Birch). In Brazil's case, however, the elections meant that the issue was high on the political agenda, which might not otherwise have been the case.



October 1997 and March 1998) were held, bringing together a wide range of civil society organisations; US\$10k was allocated to a key counterpart for advocacy; jointly with UNICEF, a study into the region wide effects was commissioned and produced in May 1998. However, the first of two assessment visits was only done in September/October 1998, with a follow up visit in November/December 1998, which produced a proposed programme of intervention of over US\$ one million.

Oxfam Recife was under considerable pressure from counterparts, as well as others to play a role in the drought effort. This was so especially from March 1998 on. Some counterparts subsequently informed us that they were not aware that Oxfam did “this type” (i.e. emergency) of work. Others that they had in the early part of 1998 requested assistance from Oxfam, but had not received a favourable response.

An initial allocation from Oxfam’s Catastrophe budget of about US\$ 120k was made in December 1998 for urgent seed distribution. Two specially contracted staff worked exclusively in January 1999 for five weeks on fund-raising for the programme. However, to date (August 1999), no external funds have been raised. About US\$ 90k was further released from Oxfam’s Catastrophe budget in January 1999 for more seeds and water related activities.

We noted in section two how *timely early interventions* in droughts are considered essential by all commentators. Oxfam did not do an assessment until about 12 months into drought, and a relief programme ready by the end of 1998, some 15 months from when the start of the drought can be dated. This delay was due in the earlier period to a general consensus in the two seminars that the drought needed close monitoring, as El Nino’s effect was uncertain. By the March seminar, however, the critical period for the rains had passed, and the full scale of the drought was evident.

Oxfam commissioned, together with UNICEF, a region wide survey of the impact of the drought. This publication launched in May received wide attention, and contributed to raising awareness of the drought amongst key Brazilian politicians and other relevant actors.

Up to about this point, the main strategy had been to support counterparts and others in their advocacy efforts and in their campaign to have full and equal participation in the government’s relief programme. However, by April/May, it became clear that this strategy could not be relied on to produce significant results – for reasons already mentioned. The need for Oxfam to make its own intervention became increasingly obvious. In this context, there was a crucial delay between April and September, when the first assessment visit took place. Furthermore, in April 1998, following the second seminar, a state-wide advocacy network was set up. Oxfam did not participate in this forum, due to lack of staff capacity.

The issues raised by this experience are:

- The delay in doing the assessment – the first one was done some 12 months after the onset of the drought; the lapse between April and September: critical

window of opportunity lost after advocacy grant and survey publication and distribution

- The methodology of the assessment: absence of baseline data and indicators
- Lack of EWS, no baseline with which to compare changes.
- The failure to date to raise external funds, and the future of the programme
- The general lack of contingency planning and emergency preparedness in Brazil by Oxfam

#### 4.2.4 Team Issues

The period was one of huge changes within the Brazil programme team. There was a new country representative settling in, as well as a new communications officer. Of the three project officers, one also was new and another was suffering from prolonged illness (no one was contracted temporarily to add to capacity). The programme co-ordinator was approaching the end of his contract (the post was to be extinguished). In sum, it was virtually a new programme team, which seriously impaired capacity in that period. This was a key factor in causing the delay from March to September for the first assessment visit to take place.

The Brazil management opted to separate the ongoing development work from the emergency work. The programme co-ordinator managed the emergency work, working with Oxford based and contracted-in staff, while the country representative managed the development programme. There was very little participation of programme staff in the emergency work – including when the assessment visits took place. Project officers' input into the relief programme was also minimal. Very few adjustments were made to the ongoing development programme to prioritise drought related emergency work. This reflected in part the lack of contingency planning.

This experience of not integrating the development programme team with the emergency programme and personnel goes against what is considered good practice, of course. Management adopted this approach due basically to a severe lack of capacity. There was tremendous pressure on Brazil and South American regional management, not least as a result of regionalisation processes<sup>34</sup>. In the context, the dedication of the programme co-ordinator full time to the emergency programme represented one way to manage the parallel demands of the development and the emergency programme. A fuller evaluation of this experience would need to focus on the need to bolster management resources and capacity at times of great change.

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<sup>34</sup> Since 1997, Oxfam has been changing its global structure from one based on country level management units to seven world wide Regional Management Centres. This is an enormous change, and has required huge time and resources from management. Regionalisation represents a centralisation from local, country level management and programming to regional level programming. At the same time, it is decentralisation from the global management centre in Oxford to regional management centres.

#### 4.2.5 Oxfam and coverage of affected area

The identification of areas where there is clear and urgent unmet need, and the provision of relief for these areas, can be relatively unproblematic – but intervention raises fundamental questions about the coherence of this type of relief. In the Brazilian case for example, Oxfam identified four areas of severe unmet urgent need (unmet in spite of a multi million dollar governmental relief programme), and elaborated a programme for provision of seeds, construction of wells, food and water relief, and food for work. The reasons that this programme to date remains largely on paper are complex and varied. Certainly no donors were willing to finance this programme, which was also the experience of another drought related relief programme.<sup>35</sup>

But NGOs interventions can lack coherence at a national level, or even at a regional level. For one, while NGOs seek to work in the most deprived areas, the very presence of an agency with a development programme can mean that those beneficiaries are not the worst off. Thus even in Ouricuri in Pernambuco, there is evidence that those clients of a counterpart, CAATINGA, were withstanding the drought better than were non-clients. And there was difficulty in reaching these others. Is it the case then that in that region the most needy were in fact not reached? In Pernambuco, during 1998, the state government approved the digging and construction of more CAATINGA wells than ever before; this has been one of the successes of the drought work that the counterpart has been involved in. It is not clear whether these new wells and cisterns were in the most deprived areas.

However, looking at the north-eastern region as a whole, in the state of Ceara too it might be said that in the counterparts' area of work, the farmers were not the worst off. There is evidence that in other parts of the state, there was worse suffering. And in 1999, the evidence for the worst crisis came from Paraiba – again Oxfam did not intervene mainly because of a lack of partners doing drought work there.

This does raise the question of resource allocation at a global level, and in the case of the Northeast of Brazil, of the rationale of making interventions in four selected areas of need. How to respond to such a huge area? The Oxfam development programme in Brazil is an advocacy programme: the aim is to strengthen the advocacy capacity of Oxfam counterparts to influence government policy. Grassroots work and exemplary innovations are part of the elements for strengthening counterparts' advocacy capacity.

#### 4.2.6. The Role of Advocacy in the Relief Programme

The key area of advocacy to influence governmental relief policy and implementation had been consistently emphasised in the various forums organised since 1997.

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<sup>35</sup> Elaborated by CESE, a Brazilian ecumenical NGO that represents churches and ACT. Similarly to the Oxfam programme it brought together several counterparts in a region wide programme.

The governments' drought relief programme reflected one of the fundamental problems of Brazil: the system of governance. It is believed that the problem was not a lack of resources, but that the resources were not delivered (i.e. misappropriated), and then that in the implementation, the deeply entrenched local elite manipulated the relief to their own ends. The setting up of bodies with parity civil society representation to formulate and implement the government relief effort had been identified in late 1997.

That this did not effectively happen was due to several factors – but certainly the inability of the various state-wide and regional civil society organisations to agree and form an articulated, unified and coherent representational structure was a key shortcoming. Time and again in the seminars, there was experienced the difficulty of reactivating of older, dormant networks, and/or of creating new ones, compounded by the difficulties of agreeing co-ordination between the varied actors. The relationships between the organised trade union movements (CUT, CONTAG, the state wide trade union federations, e.g. Fetape, Fetraece, etc.), the MST, NGOs and other grassroots movements, the role of ABONG (the confederation of Brazilian NGOs), Comunidade Solidaria (the movement chosen by the federal government for anti-poverty and relief work) are fraught with differences. The difficulties experienced in forming a coherent civil society forum for participating in the governments relief programme reflect deeply rooted differences. There would seem little that Oxfam can contribute to reducing these divisions at a national level.

Co-ordination with the governmental organs was also extremely difficult.

The Oxfam relief programme that was produced in December 1998 was very much part of this strategy: that through exemplary localised interventions in four key areas, effective advocacy would be done for the north-east as whole. The programme was developed with a very high degree of counterpart and other participation, and the absolute necessity of advocacy as part of the relief programme was agreed by all (Oxfam 1998). Co-ordination on advocacy with the other under funded drought programme in the southern part of the north-east was to form an essential part of the advocacy strategy.

#### 4.2.7 Current State of the Drought

Early in 1999, Brazil was hit by a huge financial crisis. Social spending was slashed. Any drought related work that was still going on was hit. Measures for example to combat an expected epidemic of dengue were dropped. In August 1999, the drought continues. Rain has been falling sporadically. The governmental assistance programme was ended in 1998. Oxfam is still seeking funding for its relief programme. That of CESE was restricted to a few months in 1998.

Postscript: In late 1999, while rain has fallen in many areas, the situation is still critical for huge parts of the northeast. In September 1999, the federation of municipalities in Pernambuco called a one day strike bringing out a reported 100,000 people in 166 municipalities. Among the demands are: partial restoration

of income for those enlisted in work fronts, the inclusion of training programmes to combat the effects of the drought, and the continuation of the drought relief programme for five years.

### 4.3 Oxfam in Kenya

Oxfam has implemented several relief operations in Kenya: Wajir in 1991/2, Samburu in 1992/3. During 1992-4 and 1996, in Turkana District, and then in Wajir District from September 1996 to October 1998. Prior to the Turkana project, Oxfam had implemented projects in Uganda in the late 1980s and Samburu in early 1992 in Kenya, and the approach used in those projects was employed in Turkana. It should be noted that Oxfam is operational in Kenya, and was so before implementing the relief programmes. Both programmes have been evaluated – in Turkana, an assessment it looked at the socio-economic impact, and in Wajir a more comprehensive overall evaluation (done jointly with members of the Kenya government and of WFP) was done. Both the programmes were evaluated positively

#### 4.3.1 Turkana

Food aid was evaluated to have contributed to reducing hunger and malnutrition, and also to strengthening the resource/asset base of the pastoralists. Food aid was used by recipients in a variety of ways, including bartering for livestock and brewing for sale, and thus contributing to cash income. Women were registered as beneficiaries.

The district level monitoring system in Turkana had provided the information that triggered the relief response. The drought had started in 1990. In the second phase, which is given as July 1991 to October 1992, “economic collapse became evident on a widespread basis”. Relief operations began in October 1992, but till May 1993, “relief supplies were far below the districts needs”. From June 1993 to October 1994, “relief supplies more or less matched the district’s affected population”.

It is interesting to note that a UNICEF survey in August 1992 had revealed a 35% district wide malnutrition rate (less than 80% weight for height). UNICEF began supplementary feeding in September 1992, and in October Oxfam and World Vision began distribution in October.

Coverage was comprehensive, i.e. not targeted: all except wage earners were registered. This was because “the aim was to save livelihoods as well as lives”, and “when a drought is severe enough on a broad regional basis, food aid should be given to all households as a support to the general (and depleted) economic resource base”. The programme had as a goal that it should incorporate a developmental approach, and included food security as a goal. This it was seen meant that “the success of a relief op cannot only be defined in terms of declining malnutrition, but in particular should be measured in terms of the buoyancy of the economy .... During a drought, all those pastoralists who are at risk of depleting their core productive assets should be considered vulnerable.”

Several things are of note: first that, the importance of early intervention is stressed – “relief operations can make their greatest contribution to drought affected economies through early interventions”. However, the “economic collapse” in the district is dated as starting from July 1991, and relief began in October 1992, and up to May 1993, relief supplies were insufficient. Why was there this long delay in starting relief operations – was it something to do with EWSs, or institutional factors within Oxfam, or with donors? What were the effects of this period – almost two years – on the population and on the resource base. It would be instructive to know this, and to see how assistance reversed, or did not reverse, the impact of this period.

Second, the report states that it is risky to scale down food aid on the basis of nutritional data alone”, since livestock productivity takes longer to improve. One recommendation of the assessment was to continue relief efforts through the recovery period, till the next rainy season.

#### 4.3.2 Wajir

This district experiences droughts frequently with significant events in 1991/2 and 1996/7. In 1998, there was “El Nino flooding” to compound the problems. A large relief operation worth £4.6 million was implemented. This was over five times the value of Oxfam’s planned development programme in Wajir.

Rains failed first at the end of October 1995. Oxfam started food distribution in September 1996 and wound down by October 1997. In response to flooding, relief supplies were delivered from December 1997 through to August 1998. And finally, the recovery programme lasted from October to December 1998. As part of the recovery phase, seeds and livestock were distributed. Cash for work activities were included in this phase.

The Wajir programme was evaluated very positively. “The drought relief operation had a significant and positive impact in protecting lives and livelihoods .... The response was timely. Although livestock mortality rates were high, undoubtedly pastoralists would have had to deplete their herds even further, to finance food purchases, without the relief intervention”. (p2). There was a “dramatic fall in malnutrition rates during 1997”, due “probably (to) the combined result of the relief operation and the good rains in April/May 1997”. Food prices were stabilised. 90% of households were covered, an “exceptional” rate of coverage.

The floods in 1998 came suddenly, and created crisis conditions. The prevention of an outbreak of cholera was an achievement. But there was a malaria epidemic, response was slow and there “extremely high rates of mortality in Wajir town”.

The restocking intervention was not considered very successful – “this intervention ... became an expensive means of transferring assets to poor households”. Provision of seeds did not apparently achieve full results either – the authors recommend “careful targeting, planning and management ... to ensure the best results” (p3). Overall, the response was evaluated as “timely” and “entirely

appropriate”. The cash for work scheme was not only said to be the most cost effective, but was said to have had the most impact.

While the importance of local level EWSs is recognised, the report goes on to say that “the effectiveness of the overall institutional response to these two emergencies depends as much upon political will as it does upon good information and rapid response procedures”. The EWS in Wajir district worked effectively, but its replication in ten other districts has not been equally successful (p45). At the national level, there are several systems in operation: FEWS, ALRMP, DPIRP, WFP’s Vulnerability Assessment Mapping. Hence, “there appears to be a real danger of parallel and overlapping activity”, which leads to a lack of co-ordination, resulting in “a marked absence of national early warning bulletin ...” (4). The question of the scale of the EWS and its duplication in other areas was noted also by Buchanan-Smith and Davies, and it relates to a critical point about the role of NGOs and resource allocation: “It is clear that Wajir was particularly well served by the emergency, as a result of Oxfam’s sounding the alarm, , DFID’s willingness to fund the relief operation, ...and Oxfam’s lobbying for an adequate food response from WFP. Less clear is the extent to which the government and relevant UN agencies retained a strategic overview, allocating relief resources according to need rather than NGO presence and lobbying” (p4).

This point is reinforced by the fact that early in 1999, an appeal for over a million Kenyans facing famine from drought was launched – it would seem that in the rest of Kenya, there is severe unmet need. The report also notes that “the effect of other large-scale emergencies in the region ... on the availability of relief resources for Kenya ....is quite likely to have reduced the amount of relief available for Kenya”. (p50)

#### 4.3.3 Funders

By April 1997, 11 countries (including USAID), the EU, World Bank, and five UN agencies had contributed to the drought appeal. MSF, Merlin, CARE, Rural Focus were some of the other NGOs involved. However, while it was WFP that provided most of the food aid, “the success of (Oxfam’s) response was highly dependent on funding provided by one bilateral donor - DFID”, due especially to the long delays in the arrival of WFP food. However, the programme was planned and implemented in three monthly periods. The only difficulty this apparently caused was reporting for so many different projects.

The positive aspects were that response was based on indicators at each phase. Programming was flexible and adequately adapted to the needs of different areas and at different stages – for example, the district was divided into five zones during the recovery period, and each zone appropriately provided for according to its specific needs.

#### 4.3.4 EWSs and Assessments

The flexibility and adaptiveness of the programme however would seem to have been the result on enormous resource commitment: during the two years, Oxfam carried out one “drought assessment”, three “nutritional and household surveys”, a “rapid assessment”, a “district wide food security and nutritional survey”, and one “flood assessment”. It is not clear whether these were necessary due to the three monthly programming cycle, or necessitated by other events. The flexibility and adaptiveness of the response would also seem to have been dependent on these assessments and surveys. The evaluation does not comment on the strain this put on staff and resources – certainly in other regions, it is difficult to imagine such an effort being possible.

It also raises the question about the relationship of EWSs to different kinds of assessments? In Wajir, “by the mid 1990s the provision of regular, systematic and reliable early warning information had greatly improved, with the establishment of ALRMP’s drought monitoring programme” (p4). Clearly, there continues to be a need for detailed assessments as situations change rapidly. It would be interesting however to know more about how the EWS systems operated in tandem with these various assessments.

#### 4.3.5 Development Team and the Emergency Programme

Finally, the Kenya team handled this scaling up in an admirable way, in line with “Oxfam’s stated One Programme approach – combining emergency, development and advocacy work – informed the design and management of the Wajir emergency programme. There was close integration between the development and emergency components of Oxfam’s work in the district, and evidence of learning from past experience. ... The emergency programme benefited from the high calibre and commitment of Oxfam’s development in Wajir, and the fact that they were locally recruited”.

“During the emergency period, development activities almost ceased, which was an entirely appropriate response from Oxfam staff in Wajir” (p44), due to the “degree of stress created by the emergency”. The Wajir development staff “were redeployed to run the emergency programme” (aided by 40 additional locally recruited food monitors). “The commitment of the Wajir staff to the relief effort was ... impressive” (p43). “Line management for both development and the emergency programme was integrated, at Wajir level under the Programme Manager, at Nairobi level under the Country Representative, and subsequently Deputy Country Representative”

Among the recommendations are the need to include the elderly among the especially vulnerable, the advisability of hiring of a full time Information Officer in large-scale emergency programmes, and continuance of Oxfam’s work in “influencing the institutional structure and procedures for responding to disasters in Kenya”(p55). One aspect that functioned less well was that the monitoring of the relief programme was not as good as it could have been. This is so although



monitoring works quite well in the development programme. Why these skills were not effectively transferred would need to be analysed.

#### 4.3.6 Other African Drought Experience

Angola, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe

A notable difference from the Kenyan case was that in the Zambia 1991/2 drought, the assessment showed up considerable differentiation and greater vulnerability amongst some households. Different forms of support were developed including food for work, subsidised food in markets, and free distributions. Food aid was not given to the entire population, but was differentially targeted. Two rapid initial assessments were done, workshops at community and district level were held, and a person contracted to do communications work and help with fund-raising. Pushnpath ((*Oxfam 199*) stresses the importance of long-term community based work for EWSs to be effective.

In Mozambique, too, there was evidence of differentiation – 25% of households were found to run out of food 3-4 months after harvest, about 65% about 3 months before the next harvest, and about 10% maintain surpluses across harvests. (*Neefjes*).

In each of these countries, Food security has subsequently been incorporated into the development programme – in Zimbabwe after the 1992 drought, in Mozambique after 1993 when the emergency effort ended; food security is currently the main development al effort, in Angola after the 1990 drought, in Botswana during the 1982-7 years of drought.

However, in the Great Lakes Region, from 1984 to 1992, “The desk analysis shows that too few attempts have been made to link Oxfam’s Emergency programme with its ongoing development programmes and that there is on the whole inadequate focus in capacity building” (*Neefjes, 1997*).

#### 4.4 Comparison between the Kenya and Brazil Experience

The outstanding contrasts between the Kenya and the Brazil experiences with emergency operations would appear to be the following:

1. Oxfam is partly operational in Kenya, while working through counterparts in the urban and agricultural areas. Oxfam is not at all operational in Brazil.
2. Kenya integrated emergency and development work, and the Kenya team worked on the emergency programme. The development programme was suspended during the emergency programme. In Brazil, the Roraima emergency work fitted in and strengthened ongoing work, and there was partial Brazil team involvement with the emergency programme. In the Northeast case, emergency and development programmes were kept separate, and there was little adjustment to the development work in the Brazil programme.

3. Funding for Kenya was forthcoming, but not for the Brazil drought in the Northeast. We cannot be entirely sure of the reasons for this, but the following could be possible:

a. Was the degree of need greater in Kenya than in Brazil? In Brazil, there were, by the federal governments' own admission, about 5 million people in May 1999 facing famine. There was also evidence of higher mortality rates, especially among children. Also, there was widespread social unrest, in a highly politically charged atmosphere. There were reports too of localised outbreaks of cholera and dengue and intestinal and respiratory infections. In short, it would appear that the need was perhaps not any less than in Kenya.

b. However, there was no effective EWS, and no effective indicators in the Brazil case. The evidence was patchy, and from localised areas in what was overall a very large area, covering ten states or more, an area the size of France. By contrast, in Kenya the relief was district level for which there were solid EWS indicators.

If however the lack of overall indicators for the whole of Northeast Brazil was a factor donors not responding, this applies equally to the Kenyan case, as the report itself recognises: "Less clear is the extent to which the government and relevant UN agencies retained a strategic overview, allocating relief resources according to need rather than NGO presence and lobbying" (p4). In the Brazil case, however, there was an absence of systematic data at even state or sub state level. The assessment visit was also unable to provide relevant data, given the lack of baseline data to compare with.

c. Did these factors come into it? Clear decisions were taken apparently by ECHO and DFID not to fund the north-eastern drought. A supposed reason was the lack of reliable channels through which to channel the aid, given the high degree of politicisation. This presumably related to assistance through the government. In Kenya, while Oxfam works closely with government, in Brazil, there is a different dynamic in general between government and NGOs, and collaboration is not straightforward.

d. Another factor that could have come into it is Brazil's economy and the gross indicators that put Brazil as a middle income country. Also the federal government had its own programme, although as we have seen this was riddled with problems and inefficiency.

e. As it happened, in the Kenyan case, the close pre-existing involvement of DFID with the dry lands programme in northern Kenya provided the backdrop to at least a partially shared understanding of and commitment to the problems of the region. Naturally, this was a positive factor when it came to DFID responding. There is also the case that there is a good relationship between DFID and the local Kenya Oxfam. DFID is reasonably decentralised, with a development division in Nairobi to which all applications are placed. This is not the case in Brazil, where DFID has to date been active mainly in the Amazon region, and relations between the local DFID personnel and the Recife Oxfam team are not well established.

#### 4.4.1 Staff and the Development/Emergency Divide

Another remarkable difference is the degree to which the emergency and development programmes were integrated in Kenya, with almost all development work ceasing, and the development team working fully on the emergency programme, whereas in Brazil, the experience was varied. In the case of Roraima, there was full involvement of the programme team in the relief programme – in the preliminary work, the assessment visit and the completion of the programme proposal. In the case of the northeastern drought, there was very little involvement of the programme team, and neither was management integrated. They were run as two separate programmes, implemented and managed by different sets of people.

The Brazil team had undergone a period of very high turnover – in effect being a virtually new team in 1998 – while the Kenya team was long-standing. In Brazil, almost no adjustment was made to the development programme either for Roraima or the Northeast. This resulted, amongst other things, in creating excess workload for staff. There is a real need to make adjustments when emergency is taken on, in order to avoid staff exhaustion and burn out<sup>36</sup>. As stated above, particular attention is needed when there is high staff turnover, but equally also when there are changes globally within Oxfam, currently namely those associated with regionalisation. There is evidence from other regions of too of programming loss being suffered as a consequence of regionalisation related changes.

For the Kenyan team, the virtual suspension of the development programme in Wajir is reported as being without problems. This is reportedly because in places like northern Kenya, longer-term development programming has to cease temporarily, as the stress levels are too high. Ongoing work however needs continuity and resources. How is it that this is not addressed in more detail in the evaluation? What were the effects? This would need considering.

The Kenya team feels that the most effective assessments are those done by staff employed in the area on a longer term basis – project officers. “They are able to give a much more subtle and nuanced assessment of the situation than any “outsider” could, and are able to assess the impact of the emergency, and of any response, on the long-term situation. This requires project officers to broaden their skills base.

There is also the question about capacity of the field office. In the case of Tanzania, it was decided by the desk and emergencies in Oxford not to proceed after an assessment recommended relief support. One factor that contributed to this decision was limited capacity in the Tanzania office. The other was that a convincing case had not been made.

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<sup>36</sup> There is increasing evidence of this from many regions. The Wajir evaluation also warns specifically against this.

#### 4.4.2 Fund-raising and Role of IFU

##### *Basic priorities*

Judgements about relative needs are enormously difficult. They in effect put different values on lives of different peoples and a different value on the suffering of different peoples. But such decisions have to be made, and they are inherently tied to how much impact can be made. Judgements about relative need are thus conditioned by judgements about potential impact. Decisions by NGOs about where to allocate their own emergency funds, as well as decisions about which regions to seek funds for, need to be formally taken in regular forums where the basis for such decisions is clear, registered and communicated to all stakeholders, within and outside the organisation.

How are the extremely complex decisions being made within Oxfam (and other NGOs) as to which emergency to respond to, and for which to seek funding? There is regular and close communications in Oxford between the Emergencies Department and IFU and the regional desks, and the people involved feel satisfied that this is working properly. In 1998, however, the desk was virtually absent from this process – a cost of regionalisation and the virtual disappearance of desks in Oxford.

Serious as it is, that is however, a contingent one. The real problem is the process of decision making as to what to prioritise for fund-raising work. It would seem that a mixture of factors determines priorities:

- Judgements of need are being made on the basis of field reports, assessment visit reports. Who calls, e mails everyday, etc. comes into it, i.e. who lobbies harder.
- A judgement (or sometimes a definite knowledge) that the donors are or not likely to approve a particular programme.
- Judgements about the field office's capacity to implement and report on earmarked funds.

The first two are inherently enormously problematic. It might be advisable to have much more formalised decision making than is currently the case. This would ensure not only that decisions are being made on an objective a basis as possible, but also that this would be transparent to field office and other Oxfam personnel, as well as outside of Oxfam.

##### *Institutional Processes*

The nature of the International Funding Unit inevitably means that certain regions are better served than others – this is due to the inherent difficulties of judging needs and possibilities of financing. Regions like Brazil and Colombia, for example, are difficult to raise funds for. The distance between a centrally based unit (albeit structured geographically) and regional offices in such cases is bound to make for a

difficult relationship. In Kenya (though not so for other countries in the region), relationships with the IFU would seem to have functioned better than in Brazil. Oxfam has an IFU person based in Nairobi, which means that in-country relationship is strong. By contrast for Brazil, IFU is in Oxford, very much a global Oxfam resource.

It would be fair to say that both from the IFU point of view and from that of diverse regions, the relationship has not been the easiest. For field offices, there is a feeling of being somewhat in the dark – about methods of working, criteria within IFU for prioritisation, and about donor policies and practices. For IFU, field offices often show an inadequate appreciation of donor requirements, especially in terms of reporting on projects, and time limits.

There is also a need to clarify lines of responsibility. As a project proposal is being developed, who is primarily responsible for designing and implementing a fund raising strategy? The Brazil northeast drought experience shows the need for a funding strategy to be integral to programme elaboration right from the initial stages. While programme managers may be the best fund raisers because they know their programmes, they lack the knowledge and skills that IFU personnel have about donor policies, practices and bureaucratic structures. Clearly, close collaboration is essential; however, this leaves open the question of who should assume lead responsibility for fundraising.

#### *Fundraising in Regional Management Centres*

The above suggests strongly the need to bring IFU and regional programme staff into a closer relationship. This would perhaps imply the desirability of decentralising many of the current IFU functions to the RMCs. It would thus seem advisable to have fund-raising personnel located in the regional management centres, the principle being that they should be as close to the programmes as possible. The fund-raising personnel need to work closely with the programme teams. For each of the main donor agencies, an appropriate staffing and process strategy needs to be adopted, by region. Since the donor agencies have themselves decentralised to differing degrees, each RMC would need to work out its own strategy accordingly. IFU's role in Oxford would thus form part of this overall structure.

#### **4.5 Specific Recommendations For Oxfam GB In Brazil**

1. To identify key counterparts with the potential to play role of relief co-ordinators in their states.
2. To create a forum for these counterparts (to learn from experience of FORUM Seca, set up after 1992/3 drought, and which was not effectively operational once the 1993 drought was over.)
3. To specifically examine how to maintain such a FORUM active.

4. To develop a training programme for these counterparts.
5. To explore what EWSs exist within and outside government structures, and to systematise EWSs with regional coverage.
6. To review the Brazil north-east development programme to implement above, and to do contingency planning, as per “The Programming Challenge” above. This review to draw in Oxfam staff from other regions.
7. To fund work on the cultural manifestations of the way communities respond to drought and to include this specifically on preparedness work. To liaise with ongoing work, within policy department, on quality (subjective) indicators for impact and on change preference indicators.
8. To provide training for programme staff in emergencies.
9. To co-ordinate within Oxfam family on emergency preparedness in the north-east.
10. To co-ordinate with other relevant NGOs and international agencies (UNICEF, etc.) on emergency preparedness in the north-east.
11. At donor level, to build on work done on fund-raising in January 1999 to identify potential funders for the preparedness strategy as in 1- 9 above. This would be ongoing developmental work, as for example in Wajir in Kenya, where DFID was involved in long-term drought work.
12. At corporate level, to argue for the creation of anew category of funding as per SPHERE project, of a “humanitarian” zone. In impoverished areas prone to recurrent drought, to review existing programme and seek funding for programme from this budget line, if successful.
13. To tap into Oxfam drought work globally. To push for a drought specialist within RMC in Lima, but perhaps based in Brazil. This person to ensure communication with and learning from other regions, especailly Africa. Also to network internationally on arid lands, desertification, water issues, etc. To consider a SAM equivalent of the SADC – monitoring units in 10 countries plus a regional co-ordination unit in Harare. Initially this was donor funded but is now entirely funded by member states.
14. To communicate within the international division and more widely corporately in Oxfam on contribution of drought related work to Oxfam’s Global Strategic Change Objectives.

### **Section Five: Implications and Possible Recommendations**

We have argued in this paper for the actors in the international relief system to take into account the implications of:

1. The changing funding environment (section one)
2. The advances made in drought mitigation work, and the importance new ways of working to access and incorporate culturally embedded knowledge and practice. (section two)
3. The initiatives to blur the emergency/development line, and possibilities of a new funding framework, (section three) and
4. The need for development and emergency programmes to be integrated within teams, and for more formal, systematised and transparent and decision making within NGOs – in resource allocation and in prioritisation for fund-raising. (section four)

To recap on the main points made:

#### Section One

- Official Development Assistance for developmental purposes is at an all time low, and there is no reason to believe it will recover in the near future. On the contrary, the trend is for it to decrease even further. Private investment flows have tripled and while we have not analysed the nature of these flows, and neither can we project trends, and in any case they go to a small range of select countries, this would suggest that their contribution to development can not be guessed at. Their role in emergency operations is beginning to increase.
- While funds for emergency relief have grown, absolutely and as a percentage of total ODA, there are signs that overall resources for this are also under threat. And within relief, there is a marked and increasing redirection toward conflict related humanitarianism, within a context where emergency relief is being used strategically and protectively (refugees, Europe).
- For situation like slow onset droughts then, the scenario is of worsening vulnerability as aid is reduced and as governmental safety nets (SSA policies) are also withdrawn.

#### Section Two

- Drought related work has moved away from national supply side indicators, to community based EWSs.
- EWSs can be quite effective, but are not sufficient on their own for triggering an effective relief response.
- EWSs are geared more to policy makers than to beneficiaries.
- Strengthening indigenous capacity is an oft stated but rarely implemented goal. There is a need to engage with beneficiaries at the subjective, cultural level. This is essential to strengthening indigenous coping strategies. the need to strengthen the human resilience systems, which necessitates ground level cultural work

#### Section Three

- Resource allocation is too often driven by donors' multiple agendas, not by need. NGOs occupy a central and indispensable role in relief operations. They need to ensure that dialogue with donors is on a more equal basis, so as to make resource

allocation more needs driven. However, NGOs themselves need to institute more formal decision making to ensure an objective allocation of resources, and a greater transparency both within the organisation and more generally.

- Increasingly, the inappropriateness in many situations of the analytic, allocative and bureaucratic separation of development and emergency is recognised. The trend towards collapsing the development – relief distinction suggests the need for a different funding framework. Is the SPHERE suggestion of a third category of a “humanitarian zone” feasible?

#### Section Four

- Case studies from Oxfam’s work in Kenya and Brazil show the enormous difference in the way the two country offices handled emergency work. The analysis points to a need to systematise emergency preparedness institutionally within the strategic planning process, to review development programmes in drought prone areas to implement essential preparedness measures, and to identify potential donors for revised programmes.
- The failure to raise funds for the Brazil drought relief programme is found to be due both to a lack of systematised indicators, as well as a lack of an established relationship with a donor that is committed to working on the drought and semi arid lands problematic in Brazil and South America.

#### 5.1 Institutional Relationships (Donor-NGO)

We have argued for a greater degree of systematisation and transparency of resource allocation decisions within Emergencies and of IFU decision-making within NGOs, so that for example field offices and IFU have fuller and clearer communications. The basis for all decisions needs to be communicated and intelligible to all stakeholders. This includes of course those outside of NGOs.

If this is so, then surely this applies equally strongly to governmental bodies. The decisions taken by multilateral and bilateral donors, need to be documented and communicated to all stakeholders. The current system, whereby no formal communication apparently takes place between donors and NGOs, and nothing is recorded as to the decision made, the basis for the decision, etc. is unsatisfactory. It is extremely opaque. NGOs could perhaps argue for this?

#### 5.2 Donors: a new category of “Humanitarian Zone” funding?

There would appear to be a general recognition, even amongst donors, of the structural causes of vulnerability to emergencies, and the need for long-term work. Yet, although “poverty reduction” is undoubtedly “an essential strategy in drought mitigation” (*Birch, 1998*), it seems to collapse the distinction between emergency and development. Equally, it is not clear where the evidence cited in section three, on an increasing awareness of the artificiality of the distinction in many cases, leads in terms of administrative and allocative categories. Certainly, the emergency category needs maintaining, and the development one too. Leaving aside for the



moment the necessity for relief interventions to be development friendly<sup>37</sup>, The questions boil down to two.

*1 Is it feasible to argue for a third fundamental category of a “humanitarian zone”, as the SPHERE project seems to argue?*

The inappropriateness of the development-emergency division implicitly suggests the desirability of a different funding framework, which could perhaps include a budgeting line for the increasing number of ‘intermediate’ situations. Clearly, such a budgeting line would require its own protocols and regulations. There is potential for utilising the work done on quality indicators for impact, as well as deepening community level work, to set time bound programming and monitoring guidelines.

In such a new humanitarian zone budget line, remembering the four-fold division of emergencies, how would each of the three categories of permanent, complex and slow onset emergencies sit within a funding framework of development, emergency and humanitarian zone?

At first sight, given that permanent and complex both have conflict as a basic component, and since conflict introduces highly specific factors, these two may be said to form a sub-group. The slow onset drought problematic, in areas of perennial periodically occurring droughts, with impoverished populations eking out a living in poor conditions, has much in common with those populations suffering from extreme poverty, malnutrition and disease. The former is really a part of the latter, which includes an increasingly large impoverished *urban* population. Needless to say, the specifics of the two sectors as such are quite different. However, given our analysis in section one on the dominance of conflict related complex emergencies in the humanitarian agenda, it would be advisable to argue for separate budget lines for slow onset emergencies<sup>38</sup>.

In drought prone areas, development programmes could be reviewed to include more preparedness, and could perhaps in some cases be shifted from the development line to the humanitarian line. This is would be what NGOs could offer to donors.

Buchanan-Smith & Davies has noted that “Many of the apparently obvious solutions to making response more timely and appropriate (for example, pre-positioning of resources) are inconsistent with the bureaucratic procedures and political objectives of donor agencies and recipient governments” (1995, p). And, further, that to achieve such changes, implies “a restructuring of bureaucratic procedures which

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<sup>37</sup> We leave it aside here since this critical aspect is the one that is most discussed when linking relief and development, and because what can be done in an emergency is heavily circumscribed by what has gone on beforehand.

<sup>38</sup> Another smaller issue is the case for an emergency international service funded up front, as the World Disasters Report suggests. It is difficult however to imagine what shape such a service could take. Robin Cooks’ recent suggestion of a crack emergency service ready to respond within 24 hours would seem equally geared to conflict or sudden onset situations. It would be interesting to know how the Canadian 180 strong disasters unit has been operating.

tend to separate famine and related emergency from more general developmental activities”(p 5). Although a number of donor agencies have recently become interested in the notion of linking relief and development... Western aid policy is evolving in ways that that create new obstacles to the idea.” (53).

Clearly, then, if any such changes are to come about, a considerable effort by NGOs and others will be required.

2 How do development programmes need to change so there is greater preparedness and livelihood security?

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The necessity is to think at two levels: on the one hand, that of the continuity of social processes, and on the other hand, the necessary discontinuity and separation of development and emergency funding.

Everything we have analysed so far reinforces the continuum between relief and development. This is reflected on the need for anti-poverty policies to reduce vulnerability – part of mitigation (*Birch*), on the need for early intervention (by means of EWSs - preparedness) as droughts intensify (protecting livelihoods as well as lives), on ensuring relief interventions are not inimical to and undermining of ongoing developmental processes, and for appropriate rehabilitation measures as situations begin to improve. The importance of food security in development programmes in particular has been noted to increase livelihood security. In drought prone areas where such a review has not taken place, a review of the development programme is necessary to see how such aims can be made integral to the development programme.

What is necessary to strengthen capacity for implementing timely, appropriate and effective relief programmes?

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However much, realistically, we can expect to be done in “disaster proofing” developing countries, there is, and will continue to be, the need to be “prepared” when emergencies nonetheless occur, and there is the question of *implementing* of emergency relief projects. We saw earlier that EWSs, especially participatory, community based ones, can themselves provide the most appropriate elements of a relief intervention. To the extent that EWSs are tied into local adaptive and coping processes, they give both the surest indicators of *when* it is that local coping mechanisms begin to move into phases that require reinforcing, as well as *what* it is that needs reinforcing. EWSs are normally geared however towards policy makers, and not towards the communities for whom they are employed. “In reality, most famine early warning messages are of little use for those closest to the problem. These people already know something is wrong and are probably already doing something about it.” (*Charles Kelly, quoted in Birch, 1998*). Thus, we stressed the need to deepen work at local community level by an engagement with the subjective, cultural aspect, as well as by being innovative about new ways of working at this level.

### 5.3 Organisational Capacity for Relief Work

One aspect of the capacity to implement relief programmes is, however, not adequately emphasised: it is the *internal organisational capacity of development counterparts*. Oxfam, Christian Aid and SCF all report this as being a problem: the difficulty counterparts have of responding to emergency situations. Christian Aid ran a Training of Trainers Programme in Africa in Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness (DMT). The final workshop was held in January 1999 in Ethiopia (the previous ones were in Ghana 1997, Tanzania 1997, and Sudan 1998). Each was preceded by a training-needs assessment. The aim was “To increase the ability of NGOs to develop, manage and sustain their own DMP programmes”, “to assist participants in developing local community disaster preparedness initiatives”. Food security training was a key area, but it included organisational capacity and other aspects<sup>39</sup>.

This organisational capacity has various aspects: to have contingency plans – in terms of switching resources to the emergency, identifying and bringing in the extra resources necessary, having amongst the management and staff the necessary skills. In an emergency situation, the increased importance of specialised personnel means that the capacity to integrate such personnel with the development team is urgent, since typically, it is only such an integration that ensures that relief measures are appropriate for the beneficiary communities. Another key capacity during relief operations is that of working jointly in high-pressure situations with governmental and other agencies. Yet another aspect is the kind of links the counterpart has with affected communities – often even grassroots groups can find that the contacts and roots they have in the community are not sufficiently broad enough in times of emergency.

### 5.4 The Programming Challenge

We saw in our case studies of Kenya and Brazil how the two programmes handled relief programmes differently. These differences reflected the different the socio-economic and political realities, the differences of the two development programmes, as well as different management and staff practices, competences and choices. While Oxfam’s development programme in Wajir was almost entirely suspended, almost the opposite was the case in Brazil, i.e. no adjustments were made to the development programme. These two examples highlight an underlying tension that any organisation must deal with in times of emergency. The “answer” will in each case depend on the specific situation. However, what would seem necessary is planning. In the case of the drought problematic, and of programmes like that in Wajir and in the Brazilian north-east, planning is necessary for what adjustments will be made to the ongoing development work in case of emergency. More specifically, what parts of the development programme will be slowed down,

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<sup>39</sup> The Training of Trainers Programme was funded by DFID and hosted by Christian Aid and the Christian Relief & Development Association (CRDA). Other aspects include seasonal dynamics of rural households, for example, the recognition that preparedness actions require households to allocate their labour to these rather than other actions - at critical times, this is not viable.

temporary suspended, and what measures will be taken to minimise the effects on this for the relevant counterparts and communities. This should be part of the strategic and operational planning processes, so as to avoid *ad hoc* practices occurring in times of emergency, with unforeseen and potentially damaging consequences for the country programme in question.

### 5.5 Role of Northern NGOs

The role of northern NGOs in development is changing – Lewis writes of the three pronged challenge to their role, and sees less rationale for NNGOs in developing countries as SNGOs develop stronger capacities. More generally, there is a move by NNGOs themselves to build up the capacity of SNGOs in resource mobilisation. Within emergency programmes, we have seen that NNGOs have played a fundamental and increasingly important role, both in terms of receiving larger amounts of money for humanitarian relief, but also as being an essential part of any humanitarian operation. We have suggested above that NNGOs could perhaps relate to donors as equals and attempt to influence policy in a more equal dialogue. Given all this, what implications might this have for NNGO role – at the micro, meso and macro levels?

This again would vary according to the political situation – for example in Kenya, Oxfam considered that its most useful contribution was at building up capacity at the *national* level to monitor food scarcity and co-ordinate a national response. And we saw that this is still considered a critical area of work.

In the Brazil case, we saw that there appeared to be a lack of adequate EWSs that could provide a systematic set of indicators as against baseline data. Furthermore, a critical weakness of the response in Brazil was in the field of governance: it was in the implementation of the federal relief programme – through regional, state and municipal levels – that acute problems occurred. The weaknesses in civil society groupings in relation to the control exercised by established local elites meant that a big part, perhaps the main part, of the official relief programme was inefficient, misappropriated and did not reach the neediest. Strengthening the capacity of civil society for participation in the relief programme was thus identified as a fundamental aim. Given the difficulty at regional and national level, it might be more effective to support advocacy and participation in this municipalities where there is room for this, and perhaps to attempt at state level where there is felt to room for civil society participation<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Davies' general conclusion that : “indigenous coping strategies have a reasonably good tack record (for famine mitigation). Research into the characteristics and needs of drought prone people is paying off ... given .. the institutional barriers which impede the effective implementation (of policies) at national level, scope for merging micro and macro level initiatives at the meso level needs to be explored. It is in this middle ground that local constraints and opportunities stand the greatest chance of being systematically addressed ...” (p21) is surely not applicable generally. The Brazil case shows that there is more potential for impact at some municipal levels, and then perhaps at federal level. In Brazil, it is the meso level that tends to be more rigid.

In each region therefore, an analysis of the key areas of challenge in relation to drought work needs to be made, as part of the planning process. Two fundamental categories that we have identified however have implications for the role of NNGOs, especially in regions where NNGOs are operational.

It will be evident that community level work, on the cultural manifestations of drought coping strategies, can only be done by grassroots groups and SNGOs. NNGOs should certainly fund more work of this type, but where NNGOs are operational, they need to find SNGOs to do this work. In relation to advocacy, it would appear that NNGOs can themselves focus on international advocacy but also on formal contact with their own governments. Buchanan-Smith writes “formal political channels (in donor countries) can exert a great deal of influence on emergency aid programmes” (*Buchanan-Smith & Davies, p44*)

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## Appendix

### Sources for paper

#### Methodology

#### Sources for data on disasters

#### Natural Disaster Related Victims, Numbers

#### [List of the National Drought Monitoring Centre \(NDMC\) USA “Global Climate and Drought Monitoring” sites](#)

#### Coping Strategies

### Sources

This paper is based on the following:

- Papers produced by two NGOs – Oxfam and Christian Aid.
- Interviews with staff from Oxfam, Christian Aid and Save the Children Fund.
- Secondary published literature.

It draws also on my experience as Oxfam Programme Co-ordinator, Brazil 1996-9.

### Methodology

The nature of much of the thinking in development work – the concepts used, the way they are employed – reflect an empiricist methodology, whereby concepts are elaborated in response to situations and events - in an apparently random, inconsistent and endlessly proliferating manner. In fact, they are not random. They reflect more the organisational logic of organisations involved in development work, rather than a critical reflection on the development process itself, which is a different exercise.

In each of the first four sections, an analysis is made of certain trends and of some specific experiences. None of these is argued out in a convincingly rigorous way. For example, in section one, the trends in ODA are analysed at an aggregate level for the last few decades, and the likelihood of future trends deduced. The

conclusion, that of the trend being of further cuts in ODA, etc. is commonly recognised, and may indeed be obvious to many. However, the analysis in section one does not provide good grounds for making this projection – that would require a full analysis of ODA. That is a vast topic, and would require analyses of the trends in donor countries, analysis of the factors that affect these trends, etc. Also necessary would be an institutional analysis of the multilateral donors, e.g. ECHO. The paper does not analyse these, and thus the projected trend is not adequately based in an informed analysis. This applies obviously to section three, which presents trends in the changing role of NGOs and some thinking of possible changes in the funding framework.

Section two is different, as it covers broad issues of drought work. Here, a different type of methodological inadequacy is apparent. The analysis follows through the logic of work on community based EWSs, and points to the need to both deepen the work at this level, as well as to adopt new ways of working to engage with the subjective, cultural aspect, the lived experience of beneficiaries. While the analysis in this section is (to me at least!) fairly convincing in its own terms, it remains, I would say, frustratingly difficult to assess what this would really mean for drought mitigation programmes. The cost effectiveness of doing this type of work is not analysed. It is implicit that it would be cost effective, but this is not argued out of course. Such an exercise would first require a cost estimation exercise for some specific situation, and a comparison with some alternative policy options. I would say that this lack of cost-benefit analyses dogs a large part of NGO analyses and recommendations

Underlying this aspect of cost-benefit analysis is the question of the perspective that any analysis adopts. It is too easy to adopt the perspective of the ‘development practitioner’ – be they in NGOs, donor agencies, governments, universities and research institutes, etc. The current ideological hegemony of a certain kind of thinking has created a consensus in social questions and in development, and this is reflected in the approximation in approach, concepts and priorities between official and non-official organisations. This should not blind us however to the different positions and interests of the different actors in this ‘community’ of ‘development practitioners’. The costs and benefits of any specific policy are unequally distributed.

Finally, in section five, another characteristic of the empiricist methodology is evident. The question of the organisational capacity of counterparts to implement relief programmes makes its appearance. This is actually an acute problem. However, its place in the paper is problematic – it suddenly appears at the end. This is, I would say, one of the effects of the translation of practical programme management into a-theoretical reflection. Practitioners on the “front line” come across certain problems, and these are then written of as problems and recommendations made. It leaves out questions like what the type of organisation is involved, how it relates to beneficiaries, what kind of relationship exists between the counterpart and the funding organisation, and not least, what are the areas of congruence and difference between the two. We might say an absence of critical self conceptualisation means that analytical reflection tends not to be very illuminating to outsiders, while it may be of interest to those who are experiencing

similar problems. Similarly, in this paper, there is a complete absence of theoretical analysis. The analysis is empirical.

Summing up, these methodological aspects are reflected in some of the obvious weaknesses of the paper. However, the great advantage of the practitioners thinking is that it is not removed from the reality 'on the ground'. This richness of experience needs however to be reflected upon in a more rigorous conceptual and theoretical framework. It needs to be more self conscious, less self referential, and to take a more critical upon itself.

Data on disasters

From the World Disasters Report, 1999:

“Data on disasters, their impacts on people and their cost to countries remain, at best, patchy. Despite increasing international involvement in disaster response, the global humanitarian community has been slow to recognize the need for objective, consistent and authoritative data on disaster occurrence. The World Disasters Report draws on five main sources of information for the data used in the Report: the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED); the US Committee for Refugees (USCR); the PIOOM Foundation, based at Leiden University in the Netherlands; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC); and INTERFAIS, a World Food Programme (WFP) information system - as well as the International Federation's own operational data”.

Natural Disaster Related Victims, Numbers

Between 1971 & 1996, there are said to have been 469 droughts, with 296 in Africa, 88 in Asia, 53 in the Americas, while there were 1508 floods, mostly In Asia and Americas.

In terms of overall deaths and people affected from disasters triggered by natural events by continent, the picture is:

*Average Annual Numbers Killed and Affected 1971-96 from Disasters with Natural Trigger*

	<b>Killed</b>	<b>Affected</b>
Africa	62,000	10.6million
Ethiopia	48,400	2.7million
Americas	9,600	3.8million

Brazil	418	1.5million
Asia	54,000	119.8million
Bangladesh	31,900	10.9million
China	12,800	29.4million
India	4,700	63.7million

NB: Brazil has the highest number affected in Americas by far (next is Argentina at 500,000); deaths however are higher in seven countries including USA. This is presumably due to the lower incidence of serious floods, earthquakes, etc. in Brazil

The National Drought Monitoring Centre (NDMC) in the USA list of “Global Climate and drought Monitoring” sites:

- [The Drought Monitoring Center for Eastern and Southern Africa](#)
- **The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) has Food Security Programme**
- [Sahel Weather and Crop situation reports from FAO](#)
- [FAO’s Global Information and Early Warning System \(GIEWS\)](#)
- [CPC’s Global Precipitation Monitoring Information](#)
- [Earth Week](#)
- [Latest CPC ENSO advisory](#)
- [Global Climate Monitoring Tool](#)
- [CPC’s Africa Climate desk](#)
- [The Greater Horn Information Exchange \(GHIE\)](#)
- [USAID’s Famine Early Warning System \(FEWS\)](#)
- [A Current Drought –related Impacts and Humanitarian Issues sites](#)
- [El Nino analyses site](#)
- [Complex systems of Drought Indices](#)

### Coping Strategies

In Sri Lanka, On coping strategies, note drought is a common occurrence so First there is turning towards s natural powers (cultural cf Brazil); then “sharing and suffering”; folowed by

- Food rations, relief payment and assistance
- Use of previous food reserves
- Borrowing
- Income from non-agricultural employment
- Reduction of expenditure
- Food gathering
- Mortgage and sale

Source: Twigg & Bhatt



In Ethiopia: Coping mechanisms/strategies ,1984/5, 87/8 & 90/91 (Hseholds, n = 522)

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Change crop pattern	45%
Reduce consumption	82%
Buy food & reduce consumption	90%
Intensify secondary occupation	60%
Kinship help	20%
Borrow grain/money	30%
Sale of small animals	19%
Temporary migration	7%
Rationing consumption	62%
Wild food	39%
Sale of wood grass, crafts	33%
Depend on relief food	54%
Sell productive assets	36%
Begging	4%
Sale of household goods	8%
Distress migration/separation of family	10%
Others	4%

The author then differentiates between different areas (settled and pastoralist) and between income groups.

Source: D. Eshete (1999)

See also IDS 1994 Vulnerability: How the Poor Cope, where evidence from several countries is presented and analysed, and Mortimer.

Of particular interest is the evidence from Sri Lanka, West Africa and Brazil about the attribution of drought to divine and supernatural causes, and early responses being of ritualised appeals, offerings, prayers and other practices.

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 Koos Neefjes  
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 Omar Rocha  
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