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1 INTRODUCTION

Botswana has been held up as a success story for the performance of its drought relief programme during the 1980s¹. Whilst famine swept through so many other African countries during the widespread drought of the mid 1980s, Botswana stood out for its achievement in preventing famine. The country suffered from a prolonged and severe drought from 1981/82 to 1987/88. But there was no significant evidence of starvation deaths nor distress migration. Nutritional status deteriorated, but was contained. This is widely attributed to the timely and adequate provision of drought relief. All the more remarkable in Botswana's case was its ability to respond to the drought using domestic resources. Although it did receive food aid, most of the relief programme was nationally funded. In the categorization of emergencies, Botswana has suffered from slow onset drought emergencies, but unlike a number of other African countries it has not been affected by war.

Much of what has been written, complimenting Botswana's drought relief programme, has focused on the first half of the 1980s, when the human relief components were most significant, before the agricultural recovery programme got underway. In 1990, a detailed evaluation was carried out of the full stretch of eight years of drought relief and recovery programmes (DRP), from 1982 to 1990. This article draws extensively on the results of that evaluation (FSG *et al.* 1990).

According to the most important criterion, of preventing famine, Botswana's record is impressive. But how has it fared in achieving the more difficult challenge of linking relief and development? For example in terms of:

- a integrating the institutional arrangements for running a large-scale and prolonged relief operation into existing government institutions and structures;
- b implementing a relief programme which is compatible with long term development objectives; and

c implementing development plans and programmes which:

- i) take the likelihood of a drought shock into account; and
- ii) help to 'drought-proof' the rural economy.

These are the issues addressed in this article. It is argued that in some respects Botswana has been successful in linking relief and development, for instance in the way that the DRP was managed at national level by existing government departments, and in the way that some parts of the relief programme were expanded from the basics of a social security system. Other aspects have been more problematic. There are examples of how relief interventions displaced on-going development work. And the prolonged life of the DRP has tended to mask underlying structural problems of poverty and unemployment in the rural economy. Dealing with these are the challenges now facing Botswana in the 1990s.

Are there lessons that can be transferred from Botswana to other African countries, or is it a special case? Botswana is unusual in the African context, because of its wealth and rapid economic growth over the last 25 years, its small population of less than 2 million, and its democratic system of government since Independence. The DRP is also unusual compared with most other African relief operations, because it has not been heavily dependent on donor aid, because of the range of different relief and recovery interventions beyond straightforward food distribution, and because the programme has been running for 11 out of the last 14 years. It is a unique case, but there are still some transferable points of interest for other countries.

The article begins with some background information about the state of the economy, poverty and national food security in Botswana. The DRP is reviewed briefly, mainly focusing on the 1980s. The following three sections address the issues raised above.

¹ For example, Holm and Morgan 1985; Quinn *et al.*, 1988; Drèze and Sen 1989.

2 THE ECONOMY, POVERTY AND FOOD SECURITY IN BOTSWANA

2.1 The 'economic miracle'²

Since it gained Independence in 1966, Botswana has achieved one of the fastest economic growth rates in the world. From being one of the poorest countries in the mid 1960s, it now has one of the highest per capita incomes in Africa, of \$2,590 in 1991. Botswana's boom is based on minerals, mainly diamonds. To be blessed with mineral wealth is fortunate, but not so unusual. What is exceptional in Botswana's case is the way that mineral revenues have been managed. It has built up substantial reserves and avoided large foreign debt. Improved physical and social infrastructure was an early priority for public investment. As a result, the rural infrastructure in Botswana, in terms of roads, schools and clinics, is vastly superior to most other African countries.

The country has so far successfully weathered one set-back in its economic growth, when diamond exports temporarily collapsed in 1981 and 1982. In the 1990s, it is facing more profound economic change. As diamond prices fall and no new mines are being developed, the growth in government revenue has begun to taper off. Yet public expenditure continues to rise. For the first time for many years, the government budget has gone into deficit. The pressure is mounting for greater fiscal austerity, which will certainly have an impact on drought relief expenditure. At the same time, levels of donor support for drought relief in the 1980s have not been sustained into the 1990s.

2.2 Poverty

Despite Botswana's economic success, poverty, especially rural poverty, continues to be a serious problem. The latest National Development Plan (NDP 7) estimates that about 55 per cent of the population falls below the poverty line (MFDP 1991). Development in rural areas has not kept pace with the rapid growth in other parts of the economy. There is structural rural unemployment despite the rapid growth of formal sector employment over the last 20 years. A Labour Force Survey in 1984/85 showed average unemployment rates in rural areas of 23.5 per cent, and 27.4 per cent for women (CSO 1985).

The characteristics of the rural poor are:

- i little or no involvement in formal wage employment;
- ii a weak asset base, with very few livestock; and
- iii dependence on small-scale arable agriculture.

These people are most vulnerable to drought. A significant proportion are female headed households.

The drought in the 1980s did not seem to increase income disparities very much between rich and poor. This has been attributed to the income diversification of rural households, and to significant private and public transfers during drought, including the DRP (Valentine 1993). Income distribution was already quite highly skewed (CSO 1988). But drought did exacerbate the inequitable distribution of cattle, which is the main determinant of wealth in Botswana. The percentage of farmers without cattle rose from 28 per cent in 1980 to 39 per cent in 1987 (Ministry of Agriculture 1980 and 1987).

The problem of structural poverty is most extreme in the case of the Remote Area Dwellers. Their traditional source of livelihood, hunting and gathering, has been continuously eroded as population and especially livestock densities have increased, encroaching on their traditional hunting lands. They have been forced slowly to seek alternatives, of which there are currently very few, and they have gradually been drifting into specially established settlements, dependent on welfare.

2.3 National Food Security

Botswana is a very dry country³, and has never been able to grow all its food needs. It has been heavily reliant on food imports, mostly from neighbouring countries like South Africa and Zimbabwe. Since the early 1980s, it has regularly imported about 90 per cent of its cereal requirements (of about 200,000t per year). With a well-developed private sector and no shortage of foreign exchange, Botswana has usually been well able to meet national food needs through trade. Nevertheless, it pursued a policy of cereal self-sufficiency until 1990, when it was recognized that this would be both difficult and costly to achieve in a country of marginal arable potential. The policy has now been modified to food security through domestic production and imports. Drought obviously has a very disruptive effect on food production. Between 1968 and 1984, the coefficient of variation for cereal production was as high as 59 per cent.

² This section is mainly based on Harvey 1992.

³ Rainfall varies from 650 mm in the extreme north-east to less than 250 mm in the south east.

Table 1: Estimated Total Value to Beneficiaries of Drought Relief Programme in Botswana (Pula).(1)

COMPONENT	YEAR					
	1986/87 Value ('000 Pula)		1987/88 Value ('000 Pula)		1988/89 Value ('000 Pula)	
		%		%		%
A 'Human relief' programmes						
1. Supplementary feeding programme	60,848	65	55,787	56	12,697	18
2. LBRP	8,448	9	12,044	12	10,559	15
3. Handstamping	846	1	838	8	n/a	—
Sub-total	(70,142	75)	(68,669	69)	(23,256	33)
B 'Agricultural relief' programmes						
4. ARAP(2)	21,287	23	28,291	29	25,939	37
5. Livestock feed subsidy	1,836	2	1,455	1	0	—
6. Livestock vaccines(3)	220	<1	200	<1	0	—
7. Borehole subsidy(3)	467	<1	423	<1	n/a	—
8. NDB loan write-offs(4)					20,404	29
Sub-total	(23,810	25)	(30,369	31)	(46,343	67)
TOTAL	93,952	100	99,038	100	69,599	100
		(5)		(5)		(5)

(1) Constant 1986 prices. Average exchange rate in 1986: \$1=Pula 1.87.

(2) ARAP comprised eight components. All are included in these calculations except the fertilizer component.

(3) Refers to amount allocated, due to lack of data on amount disbursed.

(4) Loans held by other commercial banks and Botswana Cooperative Bank were also written off, but have not been included here.

(5) Totals may not add due to rounding.

Sources: Food Resources Dept. of Ministry of Local Government and Lands, ARAP Annual Reports, Livestock Advisory Centre, miscellaneous drought relief papers, NDB.

3 OVERVIEW OF THE DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAMME

At least 20 of the last 30 years have been 'drought years' in Botswana. It is clearly an endemic problem; Botswana is a very dry country, prone to sequences of even drier years. On this basis, the

case for integrating drought relief into longer term development programmes is irrefutable. Drought is not a one-off event.

Many survival strategies from the past are no longer viable. The mobility of hunter gatherers has been

restricted, as mentioned above. Pastoralist migrations with cattle are also limited, by the construction of disease control fences. As the effectiveness of these kinds of coping strategies has been eroded, the government has stepped in with a large-scale administered relief programme. There have been four phases of relief since the severe drought of the 1960s:

i 1979/80: a short-lived relief programme, which encountered many problems, but the evaluation of which informed the design of the subsequent relief programme of the 1980s;

ii 1981/82-1987: a large-scale relief programme, with many different components;

iii 1988/89-1990: a drought recovery programme which focused on arable agriculture and livestock; and

iv 1991/92-1993/94: the drought relief programme was reinstated, taking on board some of the lessons learned from the 1980s.

This article is mainly concerned with the period from 1981/82 to 1990. There were eight different components to the DRP: a supplementary feeding programme, labour based relief programme (LBRP, or public works), 'handstamping',⁴ accelerated rainfed arable production programme (ARAP), livestock feed subsidy, provision of livestock vaccines, a borehole subsidy and loan write-offs by the National Development Bank (NDB).

Tables 1 and 2 show the estimated value to beneficiaries of each different component during the peak years of the relief operation in 1986/87 and 1987/88, and during the first year of the drought recovery programme in 1988/89. The human relief programmes, which were mostly progressive in nature providing most assistance to the neediest households, were more important in the first half of the 1980s. As Table 1 shows, there was a major shift from the human to the agricultural programmes in the second half of the 1980s, from 1985 onwards. The DRP gradually became more regressive as time went by. Table 2 shows that the arable agricultural and livestock programmes were more valuable per beneficiary than the human relief programmes,⁵ yet

the benefits were not so widespread, and did not always reach the poorest, the NDB loan write-off being the most extreme case where almost 30 per cent of relief assistance went to less than 1 per cent of the population, most of whom were commercial farmers.

The success of the DRP has rightly been attributed to the political will of government to make it work. Indeed, it has gathered political momentum throughout the 1980s. It was described as a 'persuasive vote-winner' for the Botswana Democratic Party in the 1984 national elections (Morgan 1986: 33). The annual declaration about whether the DRP is going to continue each year, delivered by the President,⁶ has had a high profile.

The DRP has also been a very expensive programme to run. Between 1984 and 1987, it accounted for 14 to 18 per cent of total government development expenditure, costing over \$50 million at its peak in 1987/88. This level of expenditure is probably unaffordable in the 1990s. After the evaluation of the DRP, government policy has started to shift towards a more targeted approach to drought relief, with the aim of abandoning some of the least successful components identified in the evaluation, such as the livestock feed subsidy (FSG *et al.* 1990). But the policy debate about drought response was overtaken by events in 1991/92, when the rains failed again. The government unexpectedly had to re-launch the DRP which was still in the process of being modified. However, Botswana's long experience of relief and well-developed institutional structures for dealing with drought, meant that it was much better placed than most other countries in Southern Africa to launch a quick and effective response.

4 INTEGRATING RELIEF ADMINISTRATION INTO EXISTING GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS: AVOIDING PARALLEL RELIEF STRUCTURES

The institutional distinction between relief and development is usually sharpest within the bureaucracies of overseas aid agencies, in terms of budgets, procedures and political eligibility. Because Botswana has been able to respond to drought independently, minimizing its reliance on foreign aid, it has been free to develop its own institutional

⁴ This refers to the manual grinding of grain for school feeding.

⁵ Data on the borehole subsidies in 1985/86 show that the average grant per farmer was P794. For the following years data on the number of individual farmers who benefited are unavailable. Only

the number of syndicates benefiting has been monitored.

⁶ The Rural Development Council and the Inter-Ministerial Drought Committee are responsible for making recommendations each year to Cabinet about the need for drought relief.

Table 2: Estimated Number of Beneficiaries of DRP and Average Value Received per Beneficiary in Botswana (Pula)

COMPONENT	YEAR					
	1986/87		1987/88		1988/89	
	No of Beneficiaries	Average Value*	No of Beneficiaries	Average Value*	No of Beneficiaries	Average Value*
Supplementary feeding programme	611,216	99.55	587,406	94.97	133,108	95.39
LBRP	75,000	112.64	90,000	133.82	n/a	n/a
Handstamping	7,500	112.74	8,000	104.77	n/a	n/a
ARAP (1)	92,265	230.72	160,560	176.21	160,970	161.14
Borehole subsidy (2)	47	9,936.00	48	8,806.00	n/a	n/a
NDB loan write offs(3)					1,593	12,813.00

* Average value per beneficiary or group, at 1986 constant prices.

(1) Number of beneficiaries overestimated because farmers can benefit from more than one of the eight components of ARAP.

(2) Borehole subsidies allocated to syndicates of farmers. Therefore number of beneficiaries refers to number of syndicates.

(3) 1,593 refers to number of loans written off by NDB in 1988/89, but one farmer could hold more than one loan.

See also notes for Table 1. Data is not available for number of beneficiaries of the livestock feed subsidy and livestock vaccination programmes.

Sources: Food Resources Dept. of Ministry of Local Government and Lands, ARAP Annual Reports, Livestock Advisory Centre, miscellaneous drought relief papers, NDB.

system for planning and administering relief, without being heavily influenced by foreign donors. It has succeeded remarkably well in integrating the administration of the DRP into existing institutional systems, and as far as possible has avoided setting up temporary structures which, Holm and Morgan note, 'provide excellent opportunities for corruption and foreign manipulation' (1985: 469). On the contrary, the government in Botswana has benefited from a high level of accountability, high civil service morale, and low levels of corruption (Wallis 1990).

Overall control of the DRP lies with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP). The central role of the MFDP ensures that drought relief

is not marginalized, and helps to ensure the timely release of funds (Cogill 1990). Other ministries have expanded their existing functions to accommodate the DRP. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture administers its relief and recovery programmes through its network of extension and veterinary staff; the Ministry of Health administers most of the feeding programmes through its staff in the rural health clinics. On the early warning side, Botswana has mostly developed and refined existing monitoring systems and has avoided the temptation of setting up parallel systems (ibid.).

The key to coordinating the DRP is a number of sub-committees to the long established Rural Development Council. These include the Inter-Ministerial

Drought Committee (IMDC), which is the forum for bringing the concerned ministries together, and the Early Warning Technical Committee (EWTC). Once again, parallel structures have been avoided. At national level responsibility for relief and development is well integrated.

At district level, the Drought Relief Committees (DDRC) have similarly been integrated under the existing District Development Committees. Chaired by the District Commissioner, the DDRC has the status to be taken seriously. But it is at this level that the down side of loading extra work onto existing institutions becomes apparent. District officers are ultimately responsible for implementing the DRP on the ground. In a number of cases, the huge administrative demands of the DRP have simply displaced ongoing development work. This was most acute in the case of agricultural extension staff, who more or less became clerks for the ARAP programme, administering drought relief subsidies at the expense of their regular extension work.

In some cases, expatriates provided the necessary technical manpower. During the 1980s, foreign volunteers provided technical management for the LBRP. This was a temporary solution, with the long term cost that their experience was lost when they left the country. During the recent relief operation, district administrations have again been struggling with a shortage of skilled technical manpower to run the now much expanded public works programme.

Thus, despite its successes in integrating relief and development on the institutional front, Botswana is still grappling with the problem of how to scale up and scale down on the staffing side, especially on public works, whilst applying the principle that existing institutions should be used.

5 WAS THE DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAMME COMPATIBLE WITH LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES?

The approach to drought relief during the 1980s was to provide temporary food, water and income support. These objectives were achieved. At its peak, the feeding programme provided food rations to 60 per cent of the population. The direct welfare objectives of the DRP were most successfully met: entitlements were protected, there was no famine, and malnutrition was contained. This is an impressive record. But to what extent did the programmes contribute to development in the longer term? This

section selects three components of the DRP which are most relevant to this issue: the public works programme, the livestock feed subsidy, and ARAP, which was part of the recovery phase. The modified approach to drought relief in the 1990s, as a result of lessons learned during the 1980s, is also briefly reviewed.

5.1 Public works programme

The LBRP is one of the clearest examples of an attempt to link relief and development objectives. The primary objective was welfare related, to supplement the incomes of those most affected by drought. The secondary objective was to create socially useful or productive enterprises, such as schools and housing for teachers, and community gardens. At its peak in 1987/88, the LBRP employed around 90,000 employees, just over 20 per cent of the rural working population. By far the majority were women.

The benefits of LBRP were widespread. It successfully addressed the problem of drought induced loss of income and employment. Most of the infrastructure created was deemed socially useful to rural communities and, especially in remote rural areas, contributed to improved services being made available in the longer term (although the productive enterprises were less successful, because of subsequent managerial problems) (Buchanan-Smith 1990). The conflict arose when welfare objectives were not compatible with productivity objectives. Not surprisingly, the welfare objectives were overriding. Large amounts of money were disbursed, but there was no commercial incentive to employ the most productive applicants. Priority was given to those temporarily destitute because of drought. Productivity suffered, sometimes severely, as a result, and projects were rarely subjected to more than a rudimentary economic analysis (Rockliffe-King 1990).

The programme is perceived to have been a success. But there are aspects of the impact which are still unknown: for example, the impact on women's workload; and the impact of paying a low wage rate, for self-targeting reasons, but which is regarded as lower than the 'subsistence wage rate' (Manamela 1993). These issues demand urgent investigation.

Government policy has now moved towards an even closer integration of relief and development objectives, by adopting a permanent programme of Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPW), to help address structural unemployment, and to be scaled up

in times of drought. This was attempted during the most recent relief operation, when the LIPW became the central component of the whole programme, creating a record 100,000 jobs⁷. The logistics of scaling up were not so easy, because of a shortage of skilled technical and managerial staff at district level, as mentioned above. Once again there was a conflict between employing as many people as possible, and achieving acceptable productivity levels. The former objective dominated. A number of ministries were encouraged to accelerate development programmes planned under NDP 7 in order to increase rural employment. This seems to have worked, except that some ministries, including Agriculture, were not always prepared to go for maximum employment at the expense of the quality of construction.

5.2 Livestock feed subsidy

This was the most valuable of the different forms of assistance provided to the livestock sector. It ran from 1982/83 until 1988, during which time the level of subsidy gradually increased, to its peak in 1986/87. Large herd-owners were the main beneficiaries, partly because they could afford to pay for transportation of the feed from the depots of the Livestock Advisory Centre where it was made available to their farms, and because there was no ceiling on the amount of feed that could be bought by any one herd owner.

Cattle ownership in Botswana is already very unequal. This programme did nothing to redress the balance; in fact it probably worsened it. During the drought years of the 1980s, mortality rates increased marginally for the large herds, but substantially for the small herds.

In terms of compatibility with long term development objectives, the programme was flawed. It encouraged the maintenance of cattle numbers throughout the drought, increasing pressure on declining grazing resources. Recognizing the inappropriateness of this subsidy, the government dropped this component of the DRP in the recent relief programme of the 1990s. This was achieved in spite of pressure from the powerful agricultural lobby.

Instead, taxes at the abattoir were reduced and the benefits passed onto farmers in the form of higher prices, thus encouraging higher offtake during

drought, which is a more reasonable economic and environmental response. The full impact of this new approach is yet to be analysed, but the abattoirs did attract increased numbers of cattle, although it is not yet known to what extent communal or commercial farmers benefited.

5.3 ARAP

This was the most expensive component of the DRP for the Government of Botswana (Amis 1990).⁸ It was part of the recovery programme from 1985 to 1990. ARAP was supposed to be non-discriminatory, so that all farmers could benefit. It involved the subsidization of a number of different agricultural activities, of which a subsidy on ploughing was the largest and most important. This programme was specifically designed to provide a link from relief to development by increasing arable production and thereby enhancing rural development and welfare through increased incomes. It was supposed to optimize rural income distribution by concentrating on all farming households and reducing rural urban migration.

In practice, there were many problems associated with ARAP. It effectively reduced the risk of cultivation for arable farmers, but there was no direct link between the subsidies and final output. Thus, ploughing became an end in itself in order to benefit from the generous subsidy, with negative environmental consequences if large areas were ploughed up but not cultivated (Rockliffe-King 1990). A small number of tractor owners were the main beneficiaries, as well as unintended beneficiaries because of some misappropriation of funds (Buchanan-Smith 1990). Also, as mentioned above, Ministry of Agriculture staff were overwhelmed by administration of ARAP towards the end of the 1980s. A potentially important rural development programme, the Arable Lands Development Programme (ALDEP), which is one of the few targeted at small-scale arable farmers, who are amongst the poorest in rural Botswana, was virtually paralysed. This was one of the long term costs of the ARAP programme (Rockliffe-King 1990).

Recognizing the weaknesses of ARAP, a government White Paper on drought response in 1991 (Government of Botswana 1991) proposed that it should be abandoned. But in 1992, it was reinstated

⁷ Because of job rotation, the number of people employed is even higher.

⁸ Most of the food distributed through the Supplementary Feeding Programme was donated food aid.

under political pressure, and has once again absorbed large amounts of money.

6 PLANNING FOR DROUGHT

To a considerable extent, endemic drought has been incorporated into development planning in Botswana. Even during the plentiful years of rain in the 1970s, the government commissioned work on a drought strategy for the livestock sector, with a certain amount of foresight. The Botswana Society held a national conference on drought in 1978. One year later, the country was in the grip of its first serious drought since the 1960s.

Of course, the most difficult part is the planning stage at the beginning of a relief operation, when it is not known for how long the drought will continue. At the beginning of the 1980s, a series of short term relief measures were put together, with no notion that most of them would continue for eight years and would therefore dominate the workload of some civil servants for so long, displacing regular development activities. However, the government of Botswana does have a strong record of evaluating its past attempts at drought relief, and taking the lessons on board in planning and implementing future relief operations. This was the case after the 1979/80 relief operation, and after the DRP of the 1980s. There has been a high level of debate within government about drought relief, and a strong commitment to learning lessons.

The extent to which the government has planned for post drought recovery as well as drought relief is unusual. This was a prominent feature of the 6th National Development Plan for the period 1985-1991, with specific budgetary commitments for recovery (Morgan 1986). Drought in Botswana has tended to follow a cyclical pattern. NDP 7 was based on the assumption that drought would not recur before 1997. This assumption has already been proved wrong, although the plan did calculate the effect on government expenditure if relief programmes were re-instated, that it would increase by 3 to 4 per cent. The unexpected effect of the current relief programme on plans and targets remains to be seen.

7 'DROUGHT-PROOFING' IN THE LONG TERM

As drought is such a regular feature of life in Botswana, the real challenge is how to bring about

'more rural development with less rain' (Food Studies Group *et al.* 1990). The evaluation of the 1980s DRP claimed that 'the conceptual distinction between relief...and development...is blurred exactly because 'normal' times are not satisfactory for many rural dwellers' (Rockliffe-King 1990: 35). This is not what linking relief and development should be about. But the DRP did end up financing both poverty alleviation and poverty avoidance, under the banner of drought relief. For a while, it masked underlying structural problems and inequalities, and therefore delayed difficult policy decisions about how to tackle the problems of rural development to 'drought-proof' the rural economy in the long term.

The poorest rural households are often most dependent on arable agriculture, having few other resources at their disposal. Yet it is traditional arable agriculture which has been most neglected in agricultural policy, and specifically research. The rural poor, including small-scale arable farmers, have tended to be marginalized from the main sources of growth in the economy, in the livestock sector and more recently in urban areas. The DRP effectively protected them from drought, but rather little has been done to 'drought-proof' their livelihoods in the longer term.

Some of these issues are now being addressed under NDP 7, which acknowledges 'problems of structural poverty, lack of employment opportunities and income and asset ownership disparities' (MFDP 1991: 17). Despite the successes of the DRP, rural poverty has worsened during the 1980s leaving more families vulnerable to drought in the future. NDP 7 emphasizes the need to create income earning opportunities in rural areas, give greater priority to water conservation and management efficiency, and develop a rural works programme for non-drought as well as drought years.

A positive move since the 1980s has been to delink some welfare programmes which address structural poverty from the DRP, for example for Remote Area Dwellers. The DRP evaluation concluded that 'the acceptance and institution of welfare provision as a regular feature of government practice in Botswana has been matched by very few countries in Africa' (Rockliffe-King 1990: 8). Since the 1970s, Botswana has had the basis of a social security system. The National Policy on Destitutes, formulated in 1980, is a key component, whereby an individual may be registered as 'destitute' according to carefully

defined criteria, and may receive a monthly food coupon. A positive feature of linking relief and development is the expansion of existing welfare policies during drought years. For example, the National Policy on Destitutes was expanded to make temporary provision for 'drought destitutes', and the supplementary feeding programme was a much expanded version of a regular feeding programme for medically selected beneficiaries. The welfare systems are in place, but what is lacking is policy to eradicate poverty.

8 CONCLUSIONS

Botswana's record in preventing famine has been impressive. Its performance in linking relief and development, according to the criteria set out at the beginning of this article, is mixed and more complex. Because drought recurs with such frequency, there is an imperative to get this right.

On the institutional side, the government of Botswana has successfully integrated the administration of drought relief into existing structures. It has avoided the undesirable alternative of creating separate new institutions, which can become costly 'white elephants', redundant in non-drought years, and which can encourage the treatment of short term shocks as something entirely separate from the development process. Some of the direct welfare components of the DRP were most successful where they involved scaling up from existing social welfare programmes, such as the National Destitutes Policy.

The DRP of the 1980s was unusual in going for the twin objectives of protecting incomes from the effects of drought, and maintaining the productive capacity of rural areas. Thus, it tried to bridge the gap between welfare needs and longer term development goals. In practice, the second objective was hardest to achieve. ARAP and the livestock feed subsidy are testimony to this. Both were regressive in terms of who benefited, and ended up being at odds with longer term development interests. In recognition of this, the government subsequently tried to abandon both programmes, but only succeeded in the case of the livestock feed subsidy.

The prolonged DRP, stretching over eight years, also tended to mask the underlying structural problems of development in rural areas. One of the reasons for the success of Botswana's DRP has often been attributed to the political will to make it work. It is important to recognize that there is a down side to this as well. There are political interests in perpetuating the DRP, not only because of the direct benefits to certain powerful political lobbies including rural elites, (which is one reason why ARAP was not abandoned), but also because it is a convenient temporary solution for dealing with rural poverty.

NDP 7, however, shows a commitment to move on from this state of affairs, address some of the underlying causes of poverty, and try and 'drought-proof' the rural economy in a number of different ways. As the amount of public sector resources available for drought relief in the 1990s is unlikely to be as large as it was in the 1980s, the need for 'drought-proofing' is all the more urgent. It is not easy to achieve.

Botswana's conditions are unique, and it is therefore inappropriate to attempt a wholesale transfer of its experience to other African countries. But there are areas where lessons can be learned. Public works are in vogue as a form of relief in many other African countries, popular because they are seen to fulfil both relief and development objectives. As Botswana has found, these objectives can conflict. Notice should be taken of Botswana's logistical difficulties in managing a large-scale public works programme, despite the fact that it has a much better resourced civil service and local administration than most other African countries and a very small population. There are also still a number of unknowns about the impact of the LBRP/LIPW in Botswana, especially on women and their workload. More generally, Botswana is better placed than most other countries in Africa to experiment with different approaches to relief, for example maintaining livestock herds with subsidized feed programmes versus finding ways of increasing offtake of cattle. These experiments should be closely monitored and the results disseminated widely as they can make a valuable contribution to relief planning elsewhere.

See following page for References.

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