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PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
TWELFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

PRIVATE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES  
AND THE  
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Sheraton International Conference Center  
Reston, Virginia  
February 20-22, 1985

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## Introduction

Each year since 1972, the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has sponsored a conference to bring together members of the OFDA staff, representatives of U.S. voluntary agencies active in providing disaster relief around the world, and members of the international disaster relief community. The purpose of these conferences is twofold: to provide a forum for the exchange of experiences and ideas on disaster-related issues; and to advance the goal of cooperation and coordination within the disaster assistance community.

The year 1984 saw the unfolding of a catastrophe in Africa. The drought that has stricken much of sub-Saharan Africa has left unparalleled suffering in its wake. This tragedy has brought the donor community closer together both in trying to provide adequate emergency relief and in looking for new approaches to providing long-term development aid.

The 1985 conference marked the twelfth year of interchange and cooperative efforts. Over fifty people representing U.S. Government agencies, international organizations, academic institutions, and twenty-seven voluntary agencies participated. The theme of this year's conference, held February 20-22, 1985, was "Drought in Africa -- New Approaches to an Old Problem." This document presents a summary of the presentations and discussions that took place at the Twelfth Annual OFDA/Volag Conference.

Twelfth Annual OFDA/VOLAG Conference  
Theme: Drought in Africa: New Approaches to an Old Problem

February 20-22, 1985

Sheraton International Conference Center  
Reston, Virginia

AGENDA

Wednesday February 20, 1985

- 4:00 - 6:30 p.m.      Arrival/Registration
- 6:30 - 7:00 p.m.      Reception
- 7:00 - 7:30 p.m.      Speaker - M. Peter McPherson, Administrator  
Agency for International Development
- 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.      Dinner
- 8:45 p.m.              Renewal of Acquaintances

Thursday February 21, 1985

- 7:45 - 8:45 a.m.      Breakfast
- 9:00 - 9:15 a.m.      Welcome of Participants and Opening Remarks -  
Julius W. Becton, Jr., Director, OFDA
- Dr. Mary B. Anderson, Facilitator  
Cambridge, Mass.

Setting the Stage

- 9:15 - 10:00 a.m.      Speech: "Famine in Africa - Environmental Aspects"  
Brian Walker, President  
International Institute for Environment and  
Development
- 10:00 - 10:15 a.m.      Speech: "Climate Monitoring: Africa Impact  
Assessment" What does current technology have to  
offer? How can we use it?  
Doug LeCompte, Meteorologist, National  
Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration/AISC
- 10:15 - 10:30 a.m.      Coffee Break

9:00 - 10:15 a.m. Panel - "Grant Activity/Funding and Proposals"  
Moderator: Oliver Davidson, OFDA  
Tom McKay, FVA/PVC  
Brian Kline, AID/Africa Bureau

10:15 - 10:30 a.m. Coffee Break

10:30 - 12:00 General Discussion and Wrap-Up

12:00 Noon Adjourn  
Lunch

Twelfth Annual OFDA/Volag Conference

The Honorable M. Peter McPherson, Administrator, A.I.D.

Mr. McPherson opened the conference on February 20 with an overview of the current disaster in Africa. The drought, now in its third year, has seriously affected 20 million people throughout the continent. Twenty African nations are suffering to some degree with eight or nine in serious crisis; this drought has proven to be the worst in human terms in history.

Ethiopia, particularly in the north, is in the most desperate straits. Some of the starving have trekked to camps in Sudan, some have sought refuge in government camps in Ethiopia, and still others have remained in their villages. However, this area where the need is the greatest is also the most difficult to reach with relief supplies due to the armed conflict in Eritrea and Tigray provinces. Although some food is getting to this region from across the border in Sudan, it is not enough to save the hundreds of thousands of drought victims. International donors must be allowed to transport food through Ethiopian government-controlled areas. To this end, the U.S. government has called for the safe passage of relief vehicles, but so far without success.

The U.S. Government has responded to the emergency in Africa by committing one and a half million tons of food aid - about 50% of the total need - and \$1 billion in food and other relief supplies. The Administration has asked Congress for \$235 million in supplemental aid this year; the most important part of this request is for more P.L. 480 Title II enriched food.

The United Nations Secretary General has appointed a special coordinator who is holding a pledging committee meeting on March 11 in Geneva at which donors will be asked to report their planned emergency assistance for Africa and approximately when their aid will arrive. Vice President Bush is planning to attend this meeting after a trip to Niger, Mali, and Sudan.

In sum, Mr. McPherson said that the terrible dimensions of the food crisis in Africa have led to a very generous response from the American public and government.

Lt. Gen. Julius W. Becton, Jr. (Ret.) - Director, OFDA

In welcoming the conference participants on the morning of February 21, General Becton highlighted the cooperative relationship between OFDA and the private voluntary agencies. His remarks focused on U.S. Government non-food assistance to Africa and the activities of the inter-agency Task Force on Africa Famine, which he heads.

The Africa Task Force, which comprises twelve U.S. Government agencies, was formed by the Administrator of A.I.D. on October 9, 1984 - well before the B&C telecast credited with mobilizing the U.S. effort. The three main objectives of the Task Force are to identify persons and countries at risk,

Colonialism destroyed the balance: absurd national boundaries were drawn and western political and economic institutions artificially imposed on cultures that had long since adapted to the harsh African environment.

The result is that today Africa is environmentally bankrupt and politically unstable. At least 29 of the 36 poorest countries in the world are in Africa; there have been at least 70 coups in black Africa since independence and innumerable bread riots. Such political and social collapse has inevitably generated migration and today one in every 200 Africans is a refugee. Another very worrisome factor is that the population growth rate in Africa has reached an astounding 2.9% per year, a situation that will lead to a doubling of the population in just 20 years. Soil erosion and deforestation have consequently reached alarming levels as the pressure on available arable land has increased.

What can be done to stop famines from reoccurring? A small British research group, the Food Emergency Research Unit (F.E.R.U.), has observed that indigenous peoples have developed survival patterns which have allowed them to live in areas where there is no rain for up to ten years. How? In the first year of drought, the family lives off its surplus. In the second, the men and boys move to where they can sell their labor. The families sell off their livestock in the third and fourth years. In the fifth and sixth years, the family parts with household goods, while in the seventh and eighth years, jewelry and other valuables are sold. Finally, in the ninth, if the rains still haven't come, the men sell their weapons.

Only when everything is gone does the community migrate to the closest larger settlement. Subsequently, the presence of these destitute migrants drives up the price of food, the labor supply exceeds demand, and wages fall. Thus, food shortages inexorably follow the migrating groups to larger communities and in many ways, a famine is transmitted in much the same way as an infectious disease, as people walk from one community to the next.

However, if remedial action is taken in the third or fourth year of a drought, the risk of famine can be dramatically reduced, asserted Mr. Walker. Such aid might involve little more than providing seeds or agricultural implements. The question is how to know when a food shortage is developing before it is too late. Early warning systems based on satellites and other sophisticated equipment have not proven to be very useful in predicting a long-term drought. A more reliable method is to systematically watch the marketplace and monitor food prices. The small farmer "plays the market" much like a stockbroker. The Independent Commission on Humanitarian Issues has decided to underwrite extensive field testing of this model in the Sahel and southern Africa, which will be carried out by F.E.R.U.

A problem related to the timing of aid given to Africa is its appropriateness. Today, 20% less food per African is produced than in 1960. Most of the emphasis in agriculture has been on cash crops. This has not proved to be the boon to Africa's economy it was supposed to be; world prices have been unstable and more than half of Africa's foreign

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to participating countries throughout the developing world. A "yield-moisture index", expressed in percentiles, is prepared from an analysis of monthly rainfall data and is used in forecasting crop production.

Mr. LeCompte emphasized that the satellite is only one tool among many in the early warning system and its effectiveness is limited in some areas. Information obtained from A.I.D. Missions and voluntary agencies in the field is extremely useful in making assessments and corroborating satellite data.

Mr. LeCompte expressed the hope that assessments might be more detailed and accurate in the future. Assisting this goal would be an increase in the use of satellite data to cover additional areas (e.g., forage estimates) as well as greater cooperation among U.S. Government agencies. During the current Africa emergency he has already seen evidence of increased interaction and cooperation.

A current NOAA proposal recently submitted to A.I.D. would make better use of satellite imagery and data to provide monthly detailed reports on Sahelian countries. This would involve instructing host country meteorologists in how to use existing technology so that the countries themselves can help make assessments. The ability to predict drought would thus be enhanced and the response time shortened.

Mr. LeCompte concluded his presentation with a look at climatic trends and current conditions in Africa. The dry climate on the continent is moving south, as evidenced by the significantly lower rainfall in the Sahel during the past ten years. However, there are no clear trends for eastern or southern Africa. Even Ethiopia does not appear to be getting drier. The current growing season is looking better across southern Africa, with good rainfall since January. The exception is South Africa. The rainy season is anxiously awaited in Kenya, Tanzania, and Ethiopia.

Panel Discussion - "Innovative Approaches to Food Aid -- Monetization, Cash Versus Food Aid"

Panelists: Paul Russell - Consultant, Moderator  
Robert Latta - World Vision Relief  
Organization (WVRO)  
John McHale - Catholic Relief Services (CRS)  
Gudrun Huden - AID/OFDA

Paul Russell introduced the panel's topic by listing what he believes to be the four ingredients necessary for a successful food program: an institutional capability, an infrastructural capability, adequate financial resources, and adequate storage. The third factor - the financial means to handle a food program - was the subject of the panel discussion.

Gudrun Huden (OFDA) began her presentation by cautioning that if opportunities for monetization are overlooked in a food emergency, there is danger of upsetting whatever economic balance exists within the country. Some groups in the population have the means to pay; they simply have nothing to buy. If food resources are to be stretched the farthest and reach those most in need, it is critically important to identify that part of the population that is able to pay.

Ms. Huden suggested that while monetization funds are usually used to finance transport costs of free food distribution, there are other creative ways in which reflow funds can be used. She cited a successful monetization program in Madagascar as illustration. After last year's cyclone, 8,000 MT of rice were monetized and over \$3.5 million generated for a housing repair and risk reduction program. The project provided employment opportunities which gave an economic boost to the community and started it toward a true recovery.

Why, Ms. Huden asked, is there not more monetization going on, if such positive results are possible? She pointed out that there are a number of factors at work. Free distribution makes for quicker and better public relations. The biggest problem, however, is the length of time it takes to generate money from the sales. Another source of money must be found to get the free food distribution underway. In some cases, also, the local currency generated may not be enough to cover transportation costs. Ms. Huden stated that with the current urgent need to move food, future monetization programs are likely to include the stipulation that the proceeds be used for transport rather than for disaster mitigation activities.

Several issues were raised during the discussion period. Oscar Ratti (CRS) asked if A.I.D. is planning to issue guidelines for monetization -- a relatively new concept to PVOs. Forest Duncan, of the Office of Food for Peace, assured the conference participants that his office is aware of the constraints but hopes for the eventual formal authorization of a monetization program. FFP works in a multi-agency group, however, and some members of the group believe it is important to maintain the purity of the Title II Program. Decisions are therefore made on a case by case basis; where a good case can be made for monetization of Title II, a compromise is the usual outcome -- e.g., 20% of the commodities are sold to support transport costs. The PVO community is ready to utilize monetization, another participant commented, but opportunities will be limited if only Title I program are allowed.

In response to a question on auditing responsibility, Paul Russell explained that while the voluntary agency can negotiate a "release of responsibility" clause concerning food commodities, the agency is accountable for funds generated through sales.

There has been some monetization for many years, Mr. Russell replied in answer to a question on the history of the process. Requests were once routinely approved by A.I.D., but once the U.S. began programming dollars, monetization became more difficult. Asked if all P.L. 480 Title II foods should be monetized, Mr. Russell offered the opinion that only enough

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Forest Duncan began by noting that several excellent studies had been done on Africa (including one by the World Bank), even before the current emergency, which pointed out some new directions for aid. These include: convincing host governments to change policies which serve as disincentives to food production; promoting more active participation by the private sector; encouraging self-help; improving the use of appropriate technology; and giving more priority to human resources.

The volume of food aid has significantly increased in the last few years: food represented 63% of total aid in 1981 and 84% in 1985. A.I.D. Missions have also become much more involved in food programs. Another change which has taken place is the integration of food with other forms of aid.

As for future possibilities, a new program might be started - "Food for Progress" - to target food for countries which are willing to make policy reforms. Missions are being encouraged to discuss policy changes during Title II and Title III negotiations, and guidelines have been issued on how to efficiently program local currencies generated by the sale of Title I and III commodities.

Panel Discussion - "Transportation of Contributions In Kind from the U.S. to the Stricken Country"

Panelists: Oliver Davidson - AID/OFDA, Moderator  
Luke Hingson - Brother's Brother Foundation  
Rudolph von Bernuth - CARE  
Julius Weeks - InterAction  
Regina Coleman - AID/FVA, Office of Ocean Freight Reimbursement

Luke Hingson began by describing some of the activities undertaken by Brother's Brother Foundation. Each year the organization handles the collection and distribution of about \$200 million worth of contributions in kind (CIK), most of which are medicines and medical supplies. This involves assessing the applicability of donated goods and obtaining the proper licenses for each country.

Rudolph von Bernuth explained that CARE had proposed a CARE-USG funded program to identify the kinds of items CARE field offices can use and where these can be found in the U.S. As part of the program CARE also proposed to ask corporations to fund transportation costs. However, the program was not funded.

Julius Weeks explained InterAction's role in providing transport for relief goods. Recently, InterAction arranged an airlift of donated goods destined for Ethiopia. The Flying Tigers provided a Boeing 747 free of charge to fly 235,000 lbs. of supplies to Ethiopia where they were offloaded in under five hours. The only snag in the arrangement came at the last moment when the PVOs were asked to pay the cost of the fuel. Another similar airlift would cost the PVOs about \$250,000 for fuel and operating costs.

Panel Discussion - "Transportation In-Country: Problems, Lessons Learned (Landlocked, Contested Zones, Costs)"

Panelists: Frederick Cole - OFDA, Moderator  
Robert Gordon - Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF)  
Paul Russell - Consultant  
Frank Garcia - Africa Task Force (from the U.S. Department of Transportation)

Fred Cole introduced the panel's theme with the observation that famine is more a product of faulty distribution than of supply.

Internal logistics problems may occur because of topography, seasonal climate conditions, security problems due to civil unrest, or in landlocked countries whose neighbors are not sympathetic. Ethiopia suffers from all these problems, Mr. Cole pointed out. Yet, the need of famine victims can be met, he asserted, even in countries with such problems. What is needed is a humanitarian commitment to a relief program, and the political will and financial resources to carry it out.

Mr. Cole noted that a dramatic shift has occurred in relief assistance to Africa since the crisis of ten years ago, with a much larger proportion of A.I.D. funds being spent today on airlifts and internal transport.

Robert Gordon explained that the Mission Aviation Fellowship was formed in 1944 as a religious organization in support of Protestant Missions. Using 130 aircraft, MAF now serves 25 developing countries, of which ten are in Africa. Its foreign staff numbers 55. The non-sectarian Air-Serv International (ASI), a parallel organization to MAF, recently became operational and coordinates with A.I.D. and private voluntary agencies. MAF accounts for about 75% of the total volag effort in air shipments, Mr. Gordon stated, with its program having broadened significantly through the years.

Mr. Gordon described his organization's activities in Ethiopia. Through its involvement in a flying doctor program in the interior of the country, MAF was able to report early on of the impending disaster. MAF/ASI currently operates two Twin Otter aircraft for WVRO in Ethiopia and is trying to get a third plane.

Why a program using aircraft? Mr. Gordon asked. There seems to be some ambivalence on the part of the U.S. Government where airlifts are concerned, he suggested. And volags are reluctant to budget for air transportation. He defended the appropriateness of air transport in Africa, however, by pointing out the long distances involved and the poor road systems. Air transport allows wider access and moves time-sensitive items quickly. Also the service does not compete with commercial air carriers, Mr. Gordon maintained, because commercial airlines are not usually involved in disaster relief.

grain on ships rather than pre-positioning in country in order to facilitate delivery to where food is needed. David Miller (Save the Children) commented on the success of a program, assisted by his organization, to build grain storage facilities at the local level in Burkina Faso. As a result, he said, there was less disruption and less migration when the drought started.

Mr. Harris, commenting on food storage problems in Sudan and the need for suitable low-cost structures, received suggestions from other conference participants on some of the storage solutions they had heard about. Finally, the problems raised by the shortage of grain sacks in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and other countries was briefly discussed. Volags are wary about putting their names on bags of donated goods because the bags will likely appear later on the commercial market.

#### Panel Discussion - "Health Strategy"

Dr. Jake van der Vlugt - AID/Africa Task Force  
Alan C. Alemian - Africare

Jake van der Vlugt is a member of the health, water, and sanitation subcommittee of the Task Force. The purpose of the subcommittee is to respond to and facilitate Mission and field needs in these areas. The Task Force has initiated a strategy whereby the Missions have been asked to identify the at-risk populations and assess their health needs. He stressed the need for the Missions to work with the PVOs in the field to gather the information.

The Missions also need to identify areas where temporary medical personnel should be assigned. Centers for Disease Control teams have already conducted some assessments and the Task Force is negotiating with the Department of Health and Human Services to help locate trained personnel.

On a long-term basis, the Task Force would like to strengthen PVO capabilities to respond to medical needs. The Task Force has received one proposal from Africare in this area and would like to receive more. One way to facilitate medical programs might be to set up a PVO health intervention committee with InterAction.

Alan Alemian of Africare explained that his organization works through host governments at their request. Africare has also worked with the U.S. Public Health Service on the type of program which Dr. van der Vlugt outlined above.

During the discussion period, Paul Russell asked how a physician who wants to donate his services is received. Dr. van der Vlugt said that this was a bit troublesome, somewhat like CIK. What is needed are people with experience in a disaster or refugee camp situation. Julius Weeks said that InterAction gets lots of calls from people who wish to donate their time and services. InterAction sometimes refers these people to other PVOs and also maintains a bank of names.

to him also. Congressman Wolf stated, in reply to another question, that he favors moving food across borders, and he believes most members of Congress would agree. He expressed the hope that the President will appoint an Ambassador to Ethiopia to serve as a spokesperson for our government. He also recommended that General Vernon Walters, or someone of his stature, be sent as special emissary to talk with Ethiopian officials.

Panel: Grant Activity/Funding and Proposals

Oliver Davidson - OFDA

Brian Kline - Africa Bureau

Tom McKay - FVA, Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation

Ollie Davidson began the discussion on grant activity by explaining how OFDA's funding process operates. Providing rapid relief in the field is always the priority activity, he stated. Relief proposals are thus handled differently than preparedness proposals. OFDA prefers to deal with relief proposals in the field through the A.I.D. Mission. Larger grants, representing an expansion of an activity and requiring a higher level of scrutiny, are often executed in Washington. Each disaster situation is unique, he emphasized, and must be considered on an individual basis.

The second type of OFDA grant, dealing with preparedness activities, may involve providing model or demonstration equipment or training. Some volags have worked with such grants - e.g., the Red Cross and Partners of the Americas; however, Mr. Davidson stressed that he would like to see more volags involved in preparedness, particularly in the training of local personnel. Disaster preparedness activities should be integrated with regular programs.

OFDA responds mostly to urgency and need, and the response is slowed down when there is a lack of information or a poor or inadequate assessment. Volags were advised to consider the following points in order to expedite OFDA action on proposals.

- ° Equipment should be made in the United States to facilitate procurement and repair.
- ° Present a "persuasive case" by obtaining A.I.D. Mission endorsement and approval.
- ° Get to know the OFDA action officer, who will be an advocate for the proposal.
- ° Propose joint funding (with the PVO, other groups, or other A.I.D. bureaus). OFDA seldom funds an entire activity.

being restored, continues through 90 days. Normally, activity beyond that is considered reconstruction, although the rehabilitation period can sometimes be extended if there is good cause.

Rudolph von Bernuth (CARE) asked for an explanation of the role of the volag in the grant process, particularly as it pertains to the use of volag resources. Mr. McKay stated that his office is interested in long-term joint planning. To assure a fair distribution of funds, voluntary agencies seeking matching grants must provide information on other available resources. A.I.D. believes that relief and/or development is most effective when A.I.D. and the voluntary agency community work together, particularly as volags continue to raise so much money for relief programs. Martin Perret (American National Red Cross) expressed appreciation on behalf of his organization for OFDA's assistance during the Ethiopian crisis. He explained that the ANRC traditionally turns money over to the League of Red Cross Societies or to the International Committee of the Red Cross. In the case of Ethiopia, the ANRC has already contributed nearly \$4 million toward LORCS' international appeal for \$70 million and will be sending funds to ICRC for use in Tigray and Eritrea.

In response to a question on available funds, General Becton clarified that the \$200 million of the Africa Supplemental being provided to Food for Peace for inland transport and the \$137 million recommended for the International Disaster Assistance account will not necessarily be used for the same thing. IDA funds will be used for transport costs only after all funds designated specifically for that purpose have been obligated.

In concluding the discussion, Mr. Davidson repeated his appeal to volags to become more involved in preparedness activities. OFDA is very much interested in this, despite its failure, on some occasions to follow up quickly on volag initiatives. OFDA is especially willing to help volags train and equip local groups in early warning and disaster assessment techniques.

#### Group Discussion

For the final activity of the PVO Conference, Dr. Anderson, the conference facilitator, opened the floor to discussion of topics of particular concern to the PVOs. The two subjects which generated the most interest were how to better share information and U.S. food policy.

Several delegates indicated that a directory of PVOs active in various countries, periodically updated, would be very useful. Julius Weeks said that InterAction has proposed to A.I.D. that it provide such an information system. Tom Edwards, also of InterAction, pointed out that the American Council for Voluntary Action used to publish what was known as the TAICH Directory. The problem, however, was that it was very expensive to produce and difficult to update. InterAction is currently developing a system that may prove to be a prototype and that will concentrate on projects in Africa.

attempts to alleviate material vulnerability through the provision of relief supplies, it must be careful not to reinforce vulnerability; instead, it should seek to support indigenous coping mechanisms.

General Becton, in his closing remarks, reiterated the importance of disaster preparedness and mitigation activities. Because there is no constituency for these activities and no press, television, or other media coverage, it is difficult to convince people of their importance. He urged the PVOs to help OFDA demonstrate the need for such activities and to submit proposals in these areas.

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Other Attendees:

The Hon. M. Peter McPherson  
Administrator, AID

The Hon. Frank R. Wolf  
R-Va.  
House of Representatives

Julius W. Becton, Jr.  
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Christine Babcock  
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