

HIV/AIDS, hunger and vulnerability in Southern Africa

BRIEF NO.1

29 May 2006

Mozambique: Space for Social Protection

Background

A number of Concern Worldwide and Oxfam-International offices and partner organisations were visited in Mozambique between the 9th and 17th of April as part of the joint project on strengthening responses to HIV/AIDS and food and nutrition security in the Southern African region. The trip consisted of a blend of policy level discussions with organisations such as Concern, UNAC, and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN with on-site interaction with field staff currently engaged in development work in Manica Province. Essentially the objective was to debate and document the experiences and understanding of practitioners engaged in supporting communities to achieve livelihood security taking account of HIV.

Livelihood insecurity in Manica

Field level staff can see that livelihood insecurity in Manica is growing both in terms of the number of people affected and in its impact, particularly in certain areas where erratic rainfall and ill health and deaths from AIDS have occurred. Growing numbers of people are taking up ever more risky livelihood strategies such as unsustainable livestock sales or the removal of children from school in order to release them for household duties requiring labour or to relieve costs associated with school attendance (fees, uniforms, stationary). The erosive nature of such a strategy is the diminishing stock of human capital for future livelihood options.

Field staff also indicated that the overall numbers of people who could be considered livelihood insecure is increasing. People's ability to get back on their feet, after a short sharp shock such as drought has decreased because of ill-health and they have used up all their reserves.

Responding to the Challenges

Programme staff from Concern Worldwide and partner organisations argue that this clearly demonstrates the need for short term safety nets such as cash, food and asset transfers to meet immediate needs, but also shows that unless the structural and long-term nature of livelihood insecurity is addressed, communities will become ever more vulnerable and ever less able to support themselves in the future.

Not surprisingly a strong emphasis was heard from a number of Concern partners that there needed to be an increasing focus on the importance of local governance and rights-based issues, particularly if a comprehensive response to food insecurity is to be developed. The Mozambique government is providing just such an opportunity within its decentralised planning process whereby government will be held more accountable to its people by bringing planning and service delivery closer to community level. This in time might focus on the role of the Mozambique government in providing social protection. This raises the importance of working strategically with government, building the capacity at district level to be both more responsible to the obligations to its citizens and for communities to be more proactive in articulating and claiming their rights.

Strengthening responses to HIV/AIDS, hunger & vulnerability in the Southern African region - learning from field experiences

Malawi

Zambia

Mozambique

Strengthening responses to HIV/AIDS, hunger and vulnerability in the Southern African region

Southern African Regional Poverty Network

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