

## **Food Security and Nutrition Symposium held in Maputo, Mozambique, 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> of June, 2008**

A 3-day Food Security and Nutrition Symposium was held in Maputo, on 18<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> of June, at the Joaquim Chissano Conference Centre, attracting international participation along with the presence of government institutions, Members of the Mozambican Parliament, and representatives of Civil Society Organisations, the diplomatic corps and the private sector.

The Symposium, with the main goal to launch the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy II (ESAN II), was opened by H.E. Armando Guebuza, the President of the Republic of Mozambique, and was chaired by the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Soares Nhaca, and the Deputy Minister of Health, Mrs. Aida Libombo.

In its opening speech, the President stated that Food Security and Nutrition (FS&N) is a key goal of the government and is a multi-sector task in nature. He recognised that hunger is a major problem in Mozambique, and that it results not only from production deficit but also from the lack of nutritional education.

He referred to natural disasters as a major cause of temporary food insecurity, prompting to transform the risk into opportunity to advance the decentralisation of prevention capacity and activities.

He also referred to low production levels, high raises in food prices and transport costs as a cause of food insecurity, prompting to convert this into an opportunity to increase production.

In all case, the Districts need to be strengthened to become the priority stage to overcome the present situation.

Also during the opening session, the Deputy Minister of Health pointed out that the reduction in poverty was not accompanied by a reduction in malnutrition. This requires a five pronged approach, (1) increase production (2) improve access, (3) improve use, (4) adequate food and (5) stable access through time. She also referred to the challenges of ESAN II, as compared to ESAN I, namely with respect to targeting, multi-sector coordination, announcing the creation of an Inter-ministerial Commission, monitoring and evaluation and socio-cultural research to inform the both the strategy follow-up and implementation design.

The FAO Representative mentioned the constant reduction of world donor support to agriculture, from more than U\$8 billion to less U\$4 billion a year. She provided striking figures of the Mozambican situation. On the one hand, malnutrition increased from 36% in 1997 to 46% in 2007, contrasting with the reduction of poverty from 69% in 1997 to 56% in 2003, and 39% of the households are very vulnerable. On the other hand, the reduction of work capacity represents some 3-4% of the GDP, stressing working for food security and nutrition is an investment rather than a never-ending expenditure.



**Figure 1 - The Symposium plenary session**



**Figure 2 - Working Groups - Decentralisation**

The symposium included panels and working groups where several topics were discussed, including those highlighting the links between PARPA and FS&N, the partnership between the Government and Civil Society, the importance of FS&N in preventing and mitigating HIV/AIDS, Agrarian Reform and FS&N and the Inclusion of FS&N in the PEDDs (District Strategic development Plans).

The papers and topics were presented by academics, Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, leaders of CSO, participants from Angola, Brazil and São Tomé e Príncipe.

A presentation on role of Cash Transfers was also made. This presentation was prepared with the assistance of RHVP and SC-UK as was made by SETSAN itself.

Along with the presentations, a fair was also held in the Symposium venue, presenting evidence and work in progress by various participants. RHVP posters and briefs attracted great attention of the participants, and none of the briefs were left.

A declaration was approved, including the commitments by all the stakeholders.

In the closing session of the Symposium, which benefited also from the presence of the Dr. Ndolamb Kgokwei, Resident Coordinator of the U.N System in Mozambique, the Minister of Agriculture stated:

*“We want to fight poverty through eliminating one of its manifestations, namely, the lack of staple food and both chronic and temporary food insecurity.*

*Employment and income generation are key for the creation of conditions necessary to develop human dignity within the communities. Thus, **we have to promote and ensure cash transfers as a tool to complement social protection and to support Food Security and Nutrition, as they provide more respect, self-esteem, including the possibility of choice and wider flexibility for the beneficiaries.**”*

The Symposium was organised by SETSAN, which is being co-chaired by the Ministries of Agriculture and Health – Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition, and was sponsored by U.N agencies and donors, namely FAO, DFID and UNICEF. SETSAN is a partner of RHVP particularly in reference to the Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC) training and methods.



**Figure 3 - The RHVP stand - no briefs or handouts were left!**