



Community-based coping mechanisms

Welcome to wahenga.news #4. The focus for this newsletter is on community-based coping mechanisms. There is a growing recognition that social protection delivered by the state in a consistent way is one of the necessary responses to reduce and eliminate vulnerability to food insecurity. However in the absence of such interventions, individuals and communities have been forced to find their own ways to cope with increasing impoverishment and vulnerability. Sometimes these are based on traditional systems, such as the *indlunkhulu* fields in Swaziland. But it is apparent that the ability of communities to maintain or resuscitate many of these traditional systems is declining in the face of social disintegration, economic marginalisation and the destructive effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In other places, groups and communities are building on traditional notions of social responsibility and communalism to assist one another to survive, but in innovative ways. Understanding how communities are coping with growing vulnerability to stresses and shocks is important because these mechanisms highlight community priorities. Social protection should not seek to replace these mechanisms, but to support, build on, learn from and expand them. Social protection programming has to be sensitive to what communities are doing so that it enhances rather than hinders community efforts to reduce vulnerability.

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Community-based social protection: status and prospects in southern Africa

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Considering the wide spectrum of livelihood challenges facing the poor across southern Africa, it is appropriate to adopt a broad definition of social protection that includes both formal and 'informal' initiatives. This allows us to incorporate the many ways in which people and their local social groupings or communities act to promote the general welfare or the livelihood security of specific vulnerable individuals or households. We can call such initiatives community-based social protection, although we should remain wary of the inaccuracies and assumptions inherent in the word 'community'. The main point of distinguishing this type of social protection is to emphasise the measures that people take for themselves, rather than those taken on their behalf by the state or other external agencies. There are many points where the two types of initiative intersect, and it is important to consider how such interaction can have positive rather than negative consequences for the livelihoods of the poor and disadvantaged.

Brief and anecdotal as they are, the country case studies in this newsletter illustrate some of the range of community-based social protection initiatives taking place across southern Africa. Although conditions are rudimentary in the extreme, they show communities taking their own action to provide a social service to those who would otherwise have no access to it.

In Swaziland the state, still dominated by royalty and its subordinate chiefs, has linked up with the traditional institution of care for orphans and the destitute with produce from special fields managed by the chiefs and worked by their subjects. Such practices are well known in other southern African traditions, such as Lesotho's *tsimo ea lira*, also managed by chiefs, to feed visitors and help those

in trouble. But they are history in most parts of the region now. In Swaziland, an indigenous, community-based social protection mechanism appears to be linked successfully to external support from the state – perhaps because traditional concepts of the community are more closely linked to the modern Swazi state than they are in other countries.

In understanding the status and prospects of community-based social protection it is important to consider the condition of local governance, as effected through local institutions (traditional or modern) as well as the agencies of the state. Customary or indigenous governance institutions have traditionally been both proactive and supportive with regard to social protection. As in the chiefs' fields of Lesotho and (to this day) Swaziland, they actively sought to help those in need. As in their governance of other indigenous practices like sharecropping, they also provided a supportive legal framework for households to make their own arrangements to share resources and cover for each other's inadequacies.

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Robert Maass, IFAD Photos

Where such indigenous institutions have dwindled or disappeared, the prospects for community-based social protection are weakened too. But it is usually very difficult for external interventions to strengthen social protection that is based on customary institutions. Such attempts at social re-engineering - strengthening or rebuilding waning indigenous systems - are almost certain to fail. The chiefs' fields in Swaziland are an exception because customary institutions remain so strong there. In Lesotho, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security is promoting the *neheletse* concept of 'passing on' the progeny of improved livestock: a poor household is given an animal but required to pass on the progeny to others. However, such initiatives remain vulnerable because, despite their multiplier effect, they continue to depend on further injections of outside support. In many parts of the region there are complaints that the traditional community spirit is waning, that people are becoming more individualistic and that they have little respect for traditional leaders any more. It is unrealistic to expect the modern state to recreate such social values, although it may sometimes be able to refer to them.

Where the interaction between external efforts and community-based concerns may be more fruitful is when outsiders seek to support the spirit of self-help that so often persists in times of hardship and is often expressed in less traditional ways. The concept of the state and donors meeting self-help initiatives half way is well established, of course. If a community-based organisation springs up to start a school, care for orphans or help local AIDS patients, there is ample scope for external agencies to help sustain these modes of social protection. Again in Swaziland, government and international agencies are working across the country with volunteers who care for AIDS orphans during the day and give them a nourishing meal.

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“...the state is often conspicuous by its absence in zones of rural poverty...”

However, as the regional examples in this newsletter from Malawi and Zambia show, the state is often conspicuous by its absence in zones of rural poverty. And when it or its development partners do try to promote community-based social protection, the old disease of driving to the village, creating an institution and leaving again remains rife. Ideologically sound notions of participatory planning and self-help are often twisted in social protection programmes to mean brief public meetings at which a new local structure is announced, office bearers elected and perhaps perfunctorily trained, and...not much more. Months and years later the local structure is demoralised or defunct. Lesotho faces this challenge now. A number of agencies have seized on community-based initiatives to help orphans and households affected by AIDS. Community Support Groups are now widespread, at least in name. The challenge now is to maintain consistent interaction with these groups. So far, the ones that work best are those that include individuals with special skills, resources or commitment – a civil servant with a job in town, perhaps or a school teacher or a priest.

There is no easy way for the state and its partners to support community-based social protection. The hard but necessary way forward is to provide consistent, proactive support to evolving general systems of local governance, so that local rural and urban society can rebuild their communal fibre. A second strategy is to offer realistic, long-term support to community initiatives as they arise, rather than to attempt programmes of institution building across society that the state can rarely sustain.

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ZAMBIA: Zitandize Community School, Mafuta village

by Chozi Nkhata, Zambia Country Co-ordinator

The people of Mafuta Village in eastern Zambia are living in deep poverty. The majority of men in the village, which is situated about 78km away from Chipata town, earn their living through selling timber. Women mainly grow tobacco and cotton.

Mrs Fides Mbewe, a resident of the village, feels life is not easy. The little money earned from timber and farming is insufficient to meet basic needs such as food security and taking children to school. "Ever since I was born, I have never been to school. Worse still, out of my eight children I have only managed to take one child to school," said Mrs Mbewe. She believes that education is the surest license to social mobility.

Mrs Mbewe's children represent a growing army of young people lacking the opportunity to get education. Parents cannot afford to send children to school because costs are high and there are no schools nearby. The nearest school - Lukalo basic school - is about 29km away from the village, making it difficult for children to walk. The situation in Mafuta village is even harsher for orphans because they have to fend for themselves, leaving them with no time to go to school.

In 2004 some men and women came together to try and assist the vulnerable children in the community. A community school called Zitandize (help yourselves) was set up in September that year, attended by 11 girls aged between 10 and 21 years old. Today Zitandize has over 80 boys and girls enrolled.

But the school faces many problems. There are no learning materials such as black boards, books, chalk, pencils or pens. Members of the community were urged to make financial contributions for the smooth running of the school. But this has not worked well because of scarcity of money in the village. The teachers are 12 school leavers who have not received adequate training. Nevertheless a great number of pupils and parents appreciate this initiative and wish government or NGOs could assist financially to keep the program running. Zitandize community school chairperson Yottam Daliso Phiri explained that the school has good ideas such as inviting qualified teachers from the nearest basic schools to teach on a part-time basis so that the children can learn the correct Zambian syllabus. But funds prevent this from being realised.

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Edwin Huffman / World Bank Photos



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SWAZILAND: The formal building onto the informal: The *indlunkhulu* (chiefs') fields

By Patricia Musi, Swaziland Country Co-ordinator

In the past year, the *Indlunkhulu* Programme has provided food to about 10,000 orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) in Swaziland. With technical assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives, and financial support mainly from the National Emergency Response Council on HIV and AIDS (NERCHA), chiefs and their communities have revived a traditional community-based safety net that enables communities to take care of the food needs of the vulnerable. The revival started in 2002, and by last cropping season (2005) 320 out of the 360 chiefdoms were producing food for their OVC using the system. The initiative has national coverage because it is building on to an existing cultural practice.

The Swazi adage "there is no orphan in Swazi culture" has its origin in the cultural practice of extended family giving support to orphaned children. The chief is regarded as a father to orphaned children in the community who are usually referred to as *bantwana bendlunkhulu* (the chief's children). Traditionally, the chief would allocate a communal field where the community would work together to produce food crops for the needy members of the community. It was common practice for the destitute and needy to seek food and shelter from the chief's place. This informal safety net worked effectively when the caring capacity of the community could cope with number of OVC. But over time the practice declined.

In 2005, there were an estimated 69,000 OVC in Swaziland and this is expected to reach 120,000 by 2010. Swazi society in general is against institutional care for OVC. The increasing number of orphans challenged communities to strengthen their responses for providing for the livelihoods of the OVC. But this comes at a time when the caring capacity of the extended family is overstretched by increasing vulnerability due to HIV

and AIDS and rising poverty levels. The need to provide for the increasing number of OVC led to the revival of the *indlunkhulu* concept.

At the beginning of every cropping season, chiefs and their communities are provided with seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and tractor hire to produce crops such as maize, sorghum, beans, cowpeas, groundnuts and sweet potatoes. The quantity of seed provided depends on the size of the allocated field. In some communities, silos have been provided to store the harvest. The community has always provided the labour for tending the chief's fields as an expression of allegiance. At the chiefdom level, the Programme is co-ordinated by a committee of local stakeholders who identify the beneficiaries and oversee the distribution of the food. In some communities, the OVC participate in the farming activities, which is regarded as an opportunity to acquire farming skills that are normally passed on from parents to children.

Some communities have faced challenges such as crop failure due to drought, hail, crop disease, and lack of technical support. Other challenges include inability to respond to other livelihood needs of OVC. The increasing numbers of OVC and other vulnerable people overwhelms the communities. The success of the initiative also tends to depend on the leadership qualities of the chief.

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Curt Carnemark / World Bank Photo Collection

Regional workshop on cash transfers in southern Africa

Johannesburg, South Africa, October 2006

In October, RHVP co-hosted a regional workshop with Oxfam-GB and SARPN on the role of cash transfers in tackling chronic poverty and hunger in southern Africa. The workshop was held in Johannesburg and attracted over 110 participants from as far afield as Brazil and the United Kingdom, with the primary target audience being policy makers and practitioners from within southern Africa. The workshop examined evidence from existing implementation experiences with cash transfer programmes to help synthesise lessons and to identify opportunities for broadening access to cash transfers within more comprehensive social protection programmes.

Case study evidence was presented from within southern Africa and beyond. Participants showed an especially keen interest in the experience of the Brazilian *Bolsa Familia* (family grant) programme which was launched in 2003 when a number of pre-existing social transfer schemes were consolidated. *Bolsa Familia* reaches 11.1 million people (27.9% of the population) although the cost is equivalent to just 0.3% of GDP. Closer to home, other presentations included experiences from Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

Participants agreed that cash transfers have positive potential as a tool to reduce vulnerability to hunger in southern Africa. The case studies revealed that most transfers (50-70%) were spent on food, with some non-food essential spending (eg health). Cash transfers had a positive impact on dietary diversity and on asset protection.

There was general agreement that social protection is a right of citizens and an obligation of governments. Social protection should be empowering and not stigmatising and therefore beneficiaries need to be consulted on what forms of transfers are appropriate to their needs. Donors – who are advocating social protection as a means of addressing chronic poverty in Africa - need to commit to provide sustained and predictable resources to complement governments' own on-budget initiatives.

There was consensus that donors and NGOs should work with governments rather than parallel to them.

The only way to ensure that cash transfers are provided on a predictable and sustainable basis is to establish on-budget resources for government-run programmes.

Participants considered the available evidence that could be used to support advocacy. While much of this evidence – especially from southern Africa - remains unconsolidated, it clearly provides a consensus of evidence to support simple key advocacy messages on the effectiveness, efficiency, affordability and popularity of cash transfers. Political will is a major stumbling block and evidence needs to be packaged correctly to support advocacy for the use of cash transfers, and the quality of the analytical depth of the evidence needs to be improved.

Delivery remains a challenge although innovative mechanisms, such as smart card technology, are being developed and used in the region. As a direct result of the workshop, RHVP has been active in: a) establishing/consolidating a regional coalition of international NGOs; b) forming advocacy links with existing coalitions (eg Grow Up Free From Poverty Campaign) and institutions (eg Centre for Social Protection) sharing common objectives; and c) developing a series of advocacy briefs for general endorsement (see p.14 & p.16 for more information).

For a more detailed brief on the workshop, see <http://www.wahenga.net/publications/briefs.php> For presentations made at the workshop go to <http://www.wahenga.net/news/workshop.php>



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Rhadhika Chalasani / IFAD Photos

Radio series on social protection

by Brett Davidson, RHVP Media Consultant

RHVP will be launching a radio series on social protection in Lesotho, starting the first week of March 2007. Each programme in the series will include interviews with people on the ground who are involved with, or benefit from, one or another social protection initiative. A live panel discussion with local and international experts will then field calls from the public. The series will begin with four hour-long programmes on Moafrika FM, focusing on the following topics:

- Defining social protection, discussing how the concept translates into Sesotho, and looking at how it connects to traditional practices;
- Exploring the role of traditional leaders and institutions in implementing or promoting social protection. Traditional practices in areas such as capital transfers and communal land use will be explored;
- Exploring the role of civil society, and looking at examples where people and communities have organised mutual support programmes, such as burial societies;
- Exploring the role of government, with initiatives such as old age pensions and other social welfare programmes.

Experts on the in-studio panels will include those involved in implementing key programmes, as well as researchers involved in RHVP's evidence building activities. In addition to the initial four programmes on Moafrika FM, RHVP will work with additional stations to broadcast two to three similar programmes. The programmes will aim to stimulate informed and serious deliberation about the question of social protection, and will cover the issues in an impartial manner. The purpose is not to convince listeners to adopt a particular standpoint, but to provide information and debate about the key issues and challenges regarding social protection. The pre-recorded inserts will ensure that in addition to the opinions of experts and listeners who call in, the voices and experiences of people in rural areas, and without access to phones, will also be included in the discussion.

RHVP will follow up the Lesotho series with a similar one in other countries, learning from the experience to improve the process.

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New working partners

A core tenet of RHVP's approach is building and working in partnership. With the implementation of the REBA case studies, RHVP has entered into partnership agreements with a number of national research-based institutions in each of the six countries covered by the Programme. These national partnership arrangements will not only facilitate the implementation of the case studies but will also help to build national capacities to undertake future social protection oriented research and evidence building. At the regional level, RHVP has entered into partnerships with:

- Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI), a leader in social transfer policy analysis and training;
- University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN), which has been selected as the regional centre of excellence for vulnerability assessment and analysis in support of social protection;
- Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), which is supporting RHVP's media initiatives at national and regional levels.

RHVP is also engaging with the NGO community. At a regional level, the Programme has established an informal alliance of leading international NGOs working in the area of social protection. At an international level, RHVP is engaged in awareness and advocacy building with the Grow Up Free From Poverty (GUFFP) coalition.

RHVP encourages and welcomes engagement with other like-minded bodies. In the near future, the Programme will be focusing on building partnerships at national level to build awareness and understanding of social protection issues.

Regional Evidence Building Agenda case study reviews under way

by Philip White, Regional Evidence Building Task Manager

RHVP's Regional Evidence Building Agenda (REBA) (described in *wahenga.news* 2 and 3) is now well established, with twenty case studies and eighteen thematic studies on aspects of social protection underway or about to begin across RHVP's six priority countries. Locally commissioned researchers are carrying out the studies. Almost all the researchers are working through national research and consultancy institutions whose capacity to contribute to national social protection efforts will be enhanced by the research process.

All the case studies (see Table 1) involve close collaboration with agencies – government departments and government-appointed bodies, local and international NGOs, UN agencies and communities – which are implementing the social protection projects under review. Their level of interest and willingness to open up their projects to RHVP scrutiny has exceeded all expectations, and bodes well for the prospects of findings being incorporated into thinking, policy and practice on social protection.

These case studies span a wide cross-section of social protection initiatives. Most involve unconditional transfers of cash, food or farm inputs/assets, including one labour-based public works programme and three which make use of vouchers or coupons. Four include educational objectives, six are targeted at HIV/AIDS affected and vulnerable children, two are based on community organisation around savings and lending and burial societies, one centres on access to land and another on access to livestock. All will reflect the views of beneficiaries as well as of other stakeholders.

Some innovative approaches to cash transfers are being examined. For example:

- In Lesotho the government's Old Age Pension Scheme, initiated in late 2004 without external assistance, is being assessed in a remoter

mountain area to compare with the very favourable findings of a now completed pilot study in the central foothills.

- In Malawi, Concern Worldwide is applying lessons learned from its influential piloting of a combined food and cash transfer during last year's food emergency, in providing a 'lean season' cash transfer for vulnerable households in Dowa District. Teaming up with Opportunity International Bank (Malawi), Concern will test the use of smart card technology which avoids the security problems that beset physical cash distribution, while giving beneficiaries choice over where and when they collect the transfer.
- In Zambia, two of CARE International's three cash transfer pilots are being explored. In the wake of the well-known Kalomo cash transfer pilot, these are testing the feasibility of larger cash transfers - one in a remote, sparsely populated and agriculturally marginal rural area in Kazengula District, the other in a heavily HIV/AIDS-impacted urban setting in Chipata, where transfers to destitute urban households will be linked to improving access to education.
- In Zimbabwe, the drawbacks associated with cash transfers in a context of hyperinflation and a grossly overvalued exchange rate necessitates a different approach. Two case studies under review involve the distribution of vouchers, which beneficiaries can exchange with traders for pre-determined quantities of small livestock and food respectively, and which the traders can then redeem with the implementing agencies (Catholic Relief Services and ActionAid) according to a pre-negotiated price and time limit. The agencies rather than beneficiaries absorb the cost of inflation, but are able to negotiate a realistic exchange rate with the Reserve Bank in funding the programme.

Alongside these case studies, three thematic studies were designed for each of the six countries. Two of these correspond to a broader national exploration of two of the six REBA 'modules' covering key aspects of social protection (see *wahenga.news* 2). The third concerns the institutional and policy context for social protection initiatives. It covers, at a depth that varies between countries, an analysis of the changing institutional architecture, policy processes and political influences within and between

government, parastatal, aid and civil society structures that have a bearing on trends in hunger and vulnerability and on the feasibility of social protection and food security interventions.

These REBA studies are expected to be finalised by May 2007. RHVP then aims to support researchers in upgrading selected studies to publication standard in book or journal form, and in finding a suitable publisher. At the same time, a process of regional-level synthesis and integration will extract evidence on lessons and best practices in a form that can be fed into training programmes implemented by

RHVP-supported regional centres of excellence, and into specific dissemination 'packages' – materials, events including media forums, exchange visits etc - for national- and regional-level awareness building and advocacy. This process will include a major international conference, co-organised with regional partners, in early 2008 to bring researchers, policymakers and civil society representatives together to debate the way forward in institutionalising effective social protection and food security measures for fighting hunger and vulnerability in southern Africa.

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Table 1: REBA case studies and partners

	Research partner	Implementing partners
Lesotho		
School Feeding Schemes	ISAS, Nat University of Lesotho	Min of Education & Training/ WFP
Burial Societies	ISAS, Nat University of Lesotho	Local communities
Old Age Pension Scheme	ISAS, Nat University of Lesotho	Min of Finance & Development Planning
Malawi		
MASAF 3 public works programme	Wadonda Consult, Malawi	Malawi Social Action Fund
Dowa cash transfers programme	Wadonda Consult, Malawi	Concern Worldwide/Opp Int Bank Malawi
Fertiliser subsidy	Centre for Soc Res, Univ of Malawi	Min of Agriculture & Food Security
Mozambique		
Food Subsidy Programme	Rachel Waterhouse, SD Direct	Nat Institute for Social Welfare
HIV/AIDS home-based care	Rachel Waterhouse, SD Direct	INAS/Min of Health/WFP/NGOs
Input trade fairs	Paulo Mole, Univ Eduardo Mondlane	Ministry of Agriculture/FAO
Education trade fairs	Paulo Mole, Univ Eduardo Mondlane	SC-UK
Swaziland		
Neighbourhood Care Points	Coordinating Assembly of NGOs	UNICEF/ECHO/WFP/NGOs
Public Assistance Programme	Coordinating Assembly of NGOs	Department of Social Welfare
Indlunkhulu (Chief's fields)	Coordinating Assembly of NGOs	Min of Agriculture/NERCHA
Food and inputs for OVC	Coordinating Assembly of NGOs	JICA/EU
School fees waiver for OVC	Coordinating Assembly of NGOs	Ministry of Education
Zambia		
Pilot cash transfer schemes	RuralNet Associates, Zambia	CARE/MCDSS
Targeted food security packs	RuralNet Associates, Zambia	Programme against Malnutrition
Zimbabwe		
Food Voucher Scheme	CASS, Univ of Zimbabwe	ActionAid
Livestock fairs	CASS, Univ of Zimbabwe	Catholic Relief Services
Saving & lending clubs	CASS, Univ of Zimbabwe	CARE Zimbabwe

SADC Vulnerability Assessment Committee's annual organizational meeting

December 2006

The SADC Vulnerability Assessment Committee's (VAC's) annual organisational meeting took place in December 2006 with RHVP support. Participants included SADC, RVAC, national VACs, UN representatives, national and regional NGOs, and Permanent Secretaries from four SADC countries.

Working groups identified lack of VAC institutionalization in government structures, capacity constraints, uncertain and untimely funding and limited budgets, and lack of livelihoods baselines and food security monitoring systems as key constraints.

Presentations emphasised the need for improvements in baselines, market analysis and government ownership and accountability of VAC products, and their affordability.

RHVP's Predictive Performance Review was well received by several of the VACs and interest was raised in incorporating such exercises in VAA activities. However, a common issue was raised on the 'independence' of such work. In order to avoid bias, most agreed that such work should be carried by an external agency.

Arising from the meeting, RHVP's Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (VAA) component will focus on working with Zimbabwe on improving VAA, potential pilots in Mozambique on linking the recent household survey to chronic poverty and social protection, and on developing a sub-national VAA monitoring system. In Lesotho RHVP will continue discussions with CARE and Lesotho VAC regarding use of VAC information for the design of social protection programmes in Lesotho. The Centre of Excellence (see next article) could potentially be used as a vehicle for skills exchanges in Malawi and Mozambique.

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Centre of Excellence

Together with SADC and the VACs, RHVP is working to improve the quality, relevance and affordability of VAA, particularly in the design and evaluation of social protection and other policies and instruments to address hunger and vulnerability. The establishment of a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for the provision of training and research in VAA is a focal point of RHVP support to SADC's five-year initiative to strengthen VAA in the region.

During the first half of 2006 RHVP commissioned a scoping study on behalf of SADC to identify regional institutions with potential to host the CoE. On 20 November the short-listed institutions presented their bids to a selection panel in Gaborone comprising representatives from SADC, the RVAC, Oxfam GB, RHVP and its Programme Advisory Committee (EU) and DFID (also representing AusAID). Presentations were made by:

- The African Centre for Food Security (ACFS), University of KwaZulu-Natal;
- The Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, University of Zimbabwe;
- The Centre for Agricultural Research and Development at Bunda College, University of Malawi;
- Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme and Southern Africa Labour Development Research Unit of the University of Cape Town and Re Vulnerability, Adaptation, and Mitigation Planning of the University of the Witwatersrand, with the Economic Policy Research Institute.

Without exception, all presentations were of a high standard. On the basis of its regional approach, its pre-existing network of partners, and its proven capacity to develop and deliver relevant training courses to policy-makers and practitioners, the ACFS was identified as the preferred host for the CoE. The ACFS will now work closely with key stakeholders including SADC, the RVAC, RHVP, NVACs and other institutes to develop a strategic plan and curriculum for the CoE.

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MOZAMBIQUE: The Scalabrini Project in Ressano Garcia

by Anabela Mabota, Mozambique Country Co-ordinator and Ana Tajú, HIV/AIDS Counseling

Ressano Garcia, a town on the border of South Africa and Mozambique in Moamba District of Maputo Province, about 100km from Maputo, is a thoroughfare for emigrants from Mozambique and repatriates from South Africa. In 2000, more than 2,000 people a day were crossing the border between Mozambique and South Africa at Ressano Garcia. These people travelled from Mozambique to South Africa illegally to search for jobs and better living conditions. They only returned after many years or if they were caught by the police and deported. Ressano Garcia has about 10,000 inhabitants. Agriculture is not very profitable in the area because of lack of water and poor soils, and petty cross-border trade is the main economic activity.

In 1994 the local community decided to launch a project, called the Scalabrini Project, to assist the emigrants and their families. The name comes from Joao Baptista Scalabrini, leader of a congregational initiative called *Congregacao dos Missionarios de S. Carlos (1887)*, who was moved by the poor conditions in which the emigrants were living. The missionary sisters of Sao Carlos Barromeo Scalabrinianas run the project. There are two teams, a principal technical team and a support team. The technical team is composed mainly of the Scalabrinianas sisters who are not paid. Staff members from the *Medicos do Mundo* Portugal constitute the support team and their salary is paid by their organisation.

The project provides basic needs mainly food and medical assistance to repatriated emigrants. The project also provides counseling and spiritual support and reunites emigrants with their families. Although the main objective focuses on emigration, the project has diversified. It now also involves education, health and micro-projects. Initially it targeted emigrants but later opened new areas to accommodate and serve orphans and vulnerable children of repatriated emigrant mothers. Some of these women were infected with HIV/AIDS. In 1998 the project conducted a household survey

to identify school-age children that were not going to school, finding a high number. This prompted them to build the Joao Baptista Scalabrini Centre with an orphanage and a school. Currently the centre supports forty orphans and the school holds 465 students. In order to make all these activities sustainable the project also started income-generating micro-projects (bakery, carpentry, women's handcrafts and sewing activities). The forty orphans at the centre participate in the income-generating activities. Since the project started, the number of emigrants crossing the border has decreased to about 1,000 people/week. There is a belief that there is a strong relationship between the decrease in numbers of emigrants and the work of the project.

One of the challenges facing the Social Welfare Institute (INAS) is to design programmes or schemes that may support people in need but also to help them to graduate to sustainably better conditions. Initiatives such as the Scalabriniani project may help people generate income instead of scaling up interventions that are not effective in terms of cost and impact. The cause of informal social protection schemes should be included in government support interventions because it does impact many people in Mozambique.

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Initiatives such as the Scalabrini project may help people generate income instead of scaling up interventions that are not effective in terms of cost and impact.

MALAWI: Sakata Prayer House preparatory school for orphans and vulnerable children

By Duncan Samikwa, Malawi Country Co-ordinator

Six villages in the Traditional Authority area of Nkalo in Chiradzulu district have teamed up to start a preparatory school for orphans and vulnerable children under the aegis of Sakata Prayer House of the Church of Central Africa Presbytery, Blantyre Synod. Chiradzulu district is one of the most densely populated and impoverished districts in Malawi. According to the Integrated Household Survey of 2004, the district has a poverty head count of nearly 70%, almost 6% higher than the national average. Chiradzulu also has a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, estimated at 17% of the population (national average estimated at 14%) leading to orphanhood estimated at 8-11% of the population. The six villages in the project are Wisi, Chidawati, Lihilo, Makalakala, Mnyapa and Mweneya.

Sakata Prayer House pre-school for orphans and vulnerable children started in May 2006 with the aim of preparing orphans and other vulnerable children for school as well as relieving the burden on parents and guardians of the concerned children by affording them time to attend to their gardens and to other income-generating activities while their children are in school. The pre-school runs from Monday to Friday until noon during the school year and is open for free both to orphans in the six villages and to other children with parents. Classes take place in the Sakata Prayer House building. The community funds the school by contributing some money, food and labour. Each parent sending a child to the school is asked to contribute MWK50 (US\$0.35) per month and a plate of maize meal.

Guardians of orphans are exempted from this payment. The money is used to pay the teacher an honorarium and to purchase sugar for the porridge. Parents and guardians take turns to prepare meals on a voluntary basis. Currently, 65 children are enrolled in the pre-school, including thirty orphans.

Mai Nini, a parent of a child at the pre-school says her child is more eager to go school than before. "Since I started sending my child to the school, I have noticed that every morning she is eager to go there, even on non-school days," she says. She also felt her child would not have problems when the time came for her to join primary school as she was already socialised for it. A grandmother with a grandson at the school says the school is a good idea because it frees up her time for other things and her grandson also benefits from the meal he receives at school. On the other hand, while expressing happiness with the apparent general success of the pre-school, the matron, Ellen Maleta, pointed out that they still face occasional challenges feeding the children and paying the teacher. She says while the situation is normally good soon after harvest, later the parents run out of money and food to contribute to the school because of the prevailing poverty.

For more information contact Duncan Samikwa at duncan@rhvp.org



Francis Dobbs, 1998 / World Bank Photo Collection

LESOTHO: Chieftainesses commit to initiating community-based social protection

The following Declaration emerged from a two day workshop on social protection hosted by RHVP with chieftainesses and spouses of principal chiefs in Lesotho in October 2006.

We,

Principal chieftainesses and spouses of principal chiefs, meeting at 'Melesi Lodge at the foot of Thaba-Bosiu, the Hill of Destiny, on 26 October 2006, at the behest of Her Majesty the Queen, with the support of the Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (RHVP), to deliberate on what we can do about the state of poverty and deepening vulnerability.

Noting that:

- Lesotho is infested with famine and epidemic outbreak of disease;
- High rates of HIV infections;
- Unprecedented widespread chronic hunger and pandemics such as HIV/AIDS that result from unemployment of young and adult people;
- Lack of household stability that victimises vulnerable people and has a spill-over effect that destabilises the whole country;
- Inequitable allocation of land which deepens poverty among vulnerable groups;
- Lack of security of household property that is forcefully taken away from orphans and widows as well as livestock rustling are some of the main sources of poverty;
- Lack of livelihood opportunities force girls and women to migrate to urban centres where they engage in prostitution;
- Preventive and protective measures can be initiated by us, as chieftainesses, under the guidance of Their Majesties and in collaboration with all sectors of society at all levels governance, as we consider that social protection is a national responsibility;

- We, as chieftainesses and spouses of principal chiefs, have the paramount responsibility to urge members of the public in our jurisdiction to care for and protect the vulnerable groups in villages and country wide.

Agree and pledge that:

- We shall allocate some of our arable land to be used by the public in the customary way for the benefit of the vulnerable groups in society;
- We shall collaborate with local councils in our jurisdiction to ensure that all arable land is judiciously utilised;
- We shall foster the formulation of sustainable plans to eliminate food insecurity;
- We shall enjoin members of the public in our jurisdiction to take measures towards safety and security of assets and property;
- We shall enjoin members of the public in our jurisdiction to invest in ventures that stimulate economic development and creation of employment.

We appeal to Their Majesties and the Upper House of Parliament:

- To advocate for increases in old age pensions and social assistance grants;
- To foster the restoration of dignity and honour of the nation which have been demeaned by hunger and incurable diseases, as described in the Livingstone Declaration to which the Government of Lesotho is a signatory.

Therefore agree:

- That the chieftainesses gathered here at Thaba-Bosiu will meet again on the anniversary of the Livingstone Declaration on 21 March 2007 to review progress made in our undertakings and to formulate new plans and the way forward in the implementation of this Declaration.

For more information contact Chaka Ntsane at chaka@rhvp.org

Launch of IDS Centre for Social Protection

UK, 23-24 November 2006



A workshop was organised by the Vulnerability and Poverty Reduction team of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex in November 2006. The aim of the workshop was to:

- launch the Centre for Social Protection (CSP);
- present and discuss papers on social protection from several regions;
- bring regional partners to IDS to establish a network on social protection; and
- develop an agenda and proposals for further activities.

The regional paper on sub-Saharan Africa highlighted:

- The fact that current pilots have not been extended;
- The problems of scaling up small programmes to become national programmes;
- The political contract between a state and its people is key – in most African countries this has been broken, and there is no trust in donors and their long-term commitments;
- The political agenda has a critical impact on social protection;
- There is a problem of sustainability – who will fund social protection?;
- There are an evolving set of risks but the instruments do not meet this set of needs.

The emphasis of CSP's Africa hub is to step back from pilots, programming and instruments to reflect on the 'upstream' side - ie the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of social protection in Africa which are weak. The Centre for Social Protection can be found at <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/pvty/socialprotection>.

National Civil Society Conference on Social Protection, Lilongwe

Malawi, 29 November 2006

ActionAid Malawi and PLAN Malawi organised this workshop to build awareness amongst CSOs of the

role and potential of social protection measures in addressing poverty. The workshop was updated on the Malawi Social Protection Stock Taking initiative and a range of presentations, including one by RHVP, were delivered. Workshop discussions focused particularly on the merits and shortcomings of adopting a rights-based approach to the promotion of social protection. While social protection is a right and governments are ultimately responsible for securing access to this right, it was cautioned that an advocacy strategy based on rights alone may be more of a deterrent than an inducement to sceptical and cash-strapped governments. Any advocacy approach would also need to convince governments that social protection - in particular social transfers – do work, can be delivered, are popular and can be afforded. RHVP has offered to host workshop material and is liaising with ActionAid and PLAN regarding the uploading of workshop presentation and other documents.

Grow Up Free from Poverty Coalition conference on social protection

UK, 12 December 2006



RHVP was invited to make a presentation at this conference in London in December 2006. The conference attracted a wide audience ranging from parliamentarians and academics to NGO and civil society campaigners. A series of speakers made forceful arguments for the widespread adoption of social cash transfers as a means of reducing poverty. The UK Deputy Minister for International Development, Garth Thomas, in particular, expressed support for the concept of universal social transfers. The RHVP presentation provided a practical dimension to the theoretical debate and considered the advantages and disadvantages of adopting a universal family income grant scheme in a country such as Malawi. A universal approach offers a wide range of advantages over more restricted and targeted approaches and while the costs associated with such a scheme are significant, there are a number of practical steps that can be made to make it affordable even in low income countries. RHVP offered to host conference material on www.wahenga.net.

Concern Worldwide Conference on Hunger in southern Africa - the need for innovative responses to the ongoing crisis

Dublin, 29 November 2006

Concern Worldwide organised this one-day conference in Dublin where around seventy participants from NGOs, donors, academics and the media attended. Presentations included two from affected individuals from Concern programmes in Zambia - one an AIDS victim, the other a poor farmer - both of whom movingly attested to the benefits and support they had received from Concern. The other two presentations were made by sometime RHVP consultants:

Scott Drimie's presentation, based on extensive interviews with NGO field-staff in Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique, looked at the 'triple threat' to Africa posed by food insecurity, weak governance and HIV/AIDS. He proposed the need for NGOs to revert to playing a more dynamic advocacy and educational role with governments in the region, rather than continuing to run discrete 'boutique' projects; and to take a more holistic approach to integrated development.

Stephen Devereux presented the evaluation of Concern's innovative Food and Cash Transfer (FACT) programme in Malawi. While positive about the management and the impact of the programme, he too pointed out that many aspects of the programme were not suitable for scaling up or even for replication on a significant scale. It will be interesting to see the results from Concern's follow-on programme in Malawi, Dowa Emergency Cash Transfers (DECT), which is using smartcards to deliver cash. This is one of RHVP's case studies under the Regional Evidence-Building Agenda (see pp.8-9).

Moving towards evidence for livelihood based social protection for OVC Regional conference

Johannesburg, 17-18 April 2007

The UN and Partners' Alliance for Social Protection, OVC and Livelihoods (see [wahenga.news #3](#)) is a strategic and operational partnership between the UN, governments and NGOs. Its purpose is to strengthen and scale up the implementation of livelihood opportunities and outcomes for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) through the National Plans of Action for OVC and other key policy instruments.

Work has moved forward, with the development of a common methodology and case study assessments of the promising initiatives identified in Swaziland, Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Official findings of these assessments will be presented at the next regional Alliance meeting.

Country-level Alliances are in the process of finalising statements of intent. The purpose of these is to lay out a comprehensive partnership approach to support one national process to scale up the response to meet the livelihood needs and opportunities for OVC. The different statements of intent, together with a regional statement and a synthesis will be presented in the forthcoming Alliance meeting.

A conference will be held on 17-18 April to focus on the evidence base that the Alliance is creating in partnership with RHVP and IFPRI-Renewal. The country Alliances will present their long-term statements of intent and plan a way forward. Participants will include key people from government, civil society and the UN from the seven Alliance countries, combined with regional and global colleagues from international NGOs, SADC, the UN and donors.

For more information please contact Josee.Koch@fao.org or Margaret.McEwan@fao.org.

Forthcoming events

RHVP/Grow Up Free From Poverty Coalition civil society meeting on social protection South Africa, 22-23 March 2007

As part of our efforts to build a coalition around social protection, RHVP will collaborate with the Grow Up Free From Poverty Coalition (GUFFP) to host a meeting of civil society groups in South Africa to build awareness of 'upstream' social protection advocacy issues and identifying practical means to get civil society more engaged in the nation social protection agenda. Participants will include civil society representatives from at least nine African countries plus representatives from various member organisations of the GUFFP coalition (mainly UK based). The meeting will provide an opportunity to introduce a series of advocacy fact sheets to members of the GUFFP coalition and to civil society. The advocacy sheets will be drafted by RHVP, the Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI) based in Cape Town, the IDS-based Centre for Social Protection and the GUFFP coalition. For more information on the workshop and its outcomes visit www.wahenga.net or contact john@rhvp.org

International Conference on Vulnerability and Social Exclusion, Cape Town, 26-28 March 2007

An international conference, co-hosted by the Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies, Chronic Poverty Research Centre and Isandla Institute, is planned for March 2007. The conference aims to bring together current knowledge and cutting edge research on the dynamics of economic marginalization and its implications. The conference will create a forum for critical debate and creative

discussions between researchers and practitioners engaged in poverty reduction, pro-poor policymaking and implementation. For more information, visit <http://www.livingonthemargins.org>.

International Virtual Workshop 5-31 March 2007

The ILO/STEP Programme and the TECFA Unit of the University of Geneva, with the support of the RUIG Foundation, are currently organizing an International Virtual Workshop that builds on the "World Conference on Social Protection and Inclusion: Converging efforts from a global perspective" held in Lisbon on 2-3 October 2006. The workshop will take place online and will be held in English and Portuguese.

The workshop provides a space for the continuation of discussions that began during the Conference. The invitation of special guests will bring new perspectives to enrich this debate with experiences from other regions and new approaches. This will be achieved through moderated thematic discussions, open forums, exchanges and through sharing of documents and files.

Participants will be policy makers and practitioners in charge of the design and implementation of policies, strategies and instruments of social protection and social inclusion, and members of the research community.

For more information go to <http://tecfaseed.unige.ch/users/frete/onlineworkshop/workshop-enf.html> or contact step@ilo.org.

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