

FOOD SECURITY IN THE SADC REGION: THE POSITION OF SARPAN

Background

Over the last decade the incidence of poverty in the Southern African region has escalated. The 2001/2002 drought and the ensuing humanitarian crisis that affected at least six countries in the region highlighted this issue. It has since become evident that while the said drought contributed to the crisis, there were longer-term underlying issues that need to be acknowledged. Among these were poor agricultural performance, in a region whose economies have traditionally depended on agricultural activity; poor economic growth, in recent years the Southern Africa region has exhibited the worst growth rates on the entire continent and the growing impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is these amongst other factors and their causes that agencies working towards enhanced food security and the reduction of poverty in the region, must consider and address. SARPAN utilises its resources in information dissemination and its extensive linkages and networks to circulate information and promote debate that are key to understanding and effectively combating poverty in the region.

SARPAN's Position

The goal of SARPAN is to contribute to the sustainable reduction of poverty through effective pro-poor policy, strategy and practice in the SADC region. SARPAN position asserts that a key factor in improving policy processes in the region is the deepening of policy debates. This is achieved through widening access to discussion platforms and facilitating stronger links between role players. As a result, SARPAN has developed its identity as an inclusive platform for dialogue on debates of policy relevance in the area of food security.

In line with its goal and objectives, SARPAN is dedicated to collaborating with and supporting the initiatives of agencies involved in poverty reduction initiatives. This includes groups involved in the monitoring of food security, and those who utilise the outputs of this monitoring work - be it for humanitarian, development, or developmental humanitarian work. SARPAN's contribution primarily revolves around identifying, compiling, disseminating and promoting the utilisation of information relating to these initiatives. In particular, material deemed supportive of SARPAN's commitment to pro-poor policy and practice. To this end, SARPAN is committed to the implementation of initiatives that will generate, promote and disseminate information relating to:-

- the identification of ongoing initiatives and promotion of 'best practice' interventions;
- strengthening the impact of initiatives implemented by civil society in order to promote food security;
- creating opportunities for and strengthening dialogue between civil society and researchers, analysts and policy makers;
- managing knowledge and its application in order to improve policy process and practice;
- identifying opportunities to influence policies relating to food security in the region and
- providing a platform for civil society to voice its experiences for the benefit of regional development and approaches to food security

One of the main operating principles guiding the work of SARPAN is the commitment to networking with other civil society agencies within in the development sector. In keeping with this principle, initiatives constituting the programme of work outlined above will be made possible by the support of SARPAN's funding partners and will, in most instances, be implemented in collaboration with partner agencies.