

**Remarks by the Australian High Commissioner
HE Mr Philip Green OAM
at the Workshop on Enhancing Civil Society Participation in SADC Food Security
Processes**

**Johannesburg
November 14th 2005**

- Director, Southern Africa Regional Poverty Network (SARPN), Sue Mbaya
 - Representatives of SADC governments
 - Representatives from civil society organisations
 - ladies and gentlemen.
- ✓ Pleasure to be here, for workshop that addresses key issues for southern Africa – food security and governance.
- ✓ Also pleased that Australia able to fund workshop through SARPN, via the Australian Agency for International Development, AusAID (A\$47, 726).

Why do I think this workshop and project important?

- ✓ To understand need for good policy in responding to food security crises, need only look at the work some decades ago of development economists like Amartya Sen.
- ✓ Showed that famine in India, China not caused by overall food shortage; rather, causes were lack of openness of governments, lack of public info on shortages (including failure to publicise in press); failure of markets to move food to areas of need; lack of purchasing power of affected people.
- ✓ In short, not crop failure; but policy failure
- ✓ Thankfully, have learned some of the lessons of these tragic events – but nature of crises and humanitarian challenges constantly shifting
- ✓ Already this century seen tsunami, earthquake & other natural disasters, humanitarian crises caused by conflict, people movement or displacement – all demand policy responses appropriate for particular circumstances
- ✓ We must all recognise too the huge challenge of mobilising humanitarian resources to respond – governments, donors, communities have vested interest in ensuring scarce funds are used most effectively for relief and to get people back on their feet for the longer term
- ✓ Humanitarian relief programs are expensive, and we all want to move from an unsustainable “handout” framework to a “hand up” for people to attain food security for longer term

The Protracted Food Security Crisis in Southern Africa

- ✓ Must say in my experience of work in east and southern African that spans 20 years, I have not experienced a crisis quite like the one facing southern Africa now.
- ✓ The UN Secretary General’s special envoy for Southern Africa, James Morris, and the UN agencies more broadly, have done good work to bring southern Africa to world attention as a region facing perhaps the worst chronic humanitarian crisis in the world

- ✓ The response in food and other assistance since 2002 has saved many lives
- ✓ And identification of the “triple threat” characterised by devastating erosion of livelihoods by chronic food insecurity, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and lack of *government* capacity to respond, has been important rallying point for governments and international community.
- ✓ But we know the region has not recovered since 2002 in the way it did after the devastating droughts of the early 1990s – and we know garnering ongoing donor support for expensive humanitarian assistance is tough, in a tough global environment
- ✓ The region yet again in grip of an ‘acute’ phase of a ‘chronic’ food security crisis similar to that of 2002-2003 (eg Malawi badly affected with up to 4.6 million needing food help), that required a costly 1 billion dollar emergency operation (of which Australia \$A48m.
- ✓ Most governments trying hard, in difficult circumstances, to address the problems of food insecurity.
- ✓ But the reality is that the poor policy environment in Zimbabwe, and that government’s disgraceful disregard for the development and humanitarian plight of people, is a part of the problem; and the biggest blot in the region in this regard.
- ✓ On a more positive note, note efforts of SADC and many of its member states to better understand and respond to policy dimensions of the crisis. This work too needs to go further.
- ✓ Are also things the international community can do. In the area of agricultural trade, food production and markets, we can work harder to allow farmers in the developing world to get a fair price for their products – Australia is committed to doing everything we can to get rid of the subsidies the developed world pays to its farmers, that so distort international agricultural trade.
- ✓ Successive rounds of the GATT and the WTO have delivered substantial benefits to producers of industrial goods, but precious little to farmers. Assistance provided by countries of the North to their farmers dwarfs the assistance provided in ODA to developing countries. Australia working hard for a better deal for farmers from the current round of WTO trade negotiations.

Partners In Search of Appropriate Policy Responses

- ✓ This workshop, and the Look, Listen and Learn project, have important work to do in many of these areas
- ✓ Clearly communities, governments, and donors need to look closely at the causes of the food security crisis and to **search together for comprehensive and lasting solutions to problems**. Only when we tackle these issues can we create a platform for the achievement of sustainable development including the millennium development goal of halving hunger by 2015.
- ✓ To achieve these goals, there will **need to be a closer collaboration between all stakeholders**; government, NGOs, CBOs, private Sector, and dedicated individuals.
- ✓ The Australian government believes you (civil society) have a critical role to play in identifying challenges, in shaping appropriate responses, and in assisting with implementation.

- ✓ That is why we are funding a A\$50 million Australian Partnership with African Communities (APAC) program in seven east and southern African countries, working closely with civil society organisations, to strengthen communities most affected by food insecurity and HIV/AIDS
- ✓ The involvement of civil society, being closest to communities on the ground, will be a vital link between policy makers and communities in the process of food security policy formulation and implementation. The advocacy by CSOs on the ground is critical to ensuring timely and appropriate strategies to boost food security. **CSOs have an important role to play as partners in advocacy and policy implementation.**

Australia's interest in the Search for Appropriate Policy and Program Responses

- ✓ Australia spends large sums on humanitarian programs globally eg over \$A200m last year
- ✓ We have long term commitment to food security globally, particularly in our region of the Asia Pacific.
- ✓ But also been substantially engaged in Africa over many years (most recently \$40.1m Sudan, \$A48m in Southern Africa)
- ✓ Like others, we are interested in better responses to global emergency, including food security, crises.
- ✓ Australia will continue to support African communities faced with severe food insecurity through contributions to WFP, FAO, NGOs and other agencies that develop programs to support livelihoods and better equip those affected for the future.
- ✓ We also are interested in involving ourselves more in policy and analytical work on food security in this region, to benefit from the lessons learned and new approaches developed, and hopefully to bring some of our experience in our own region into the debate.
 - funded policy development by strengthening research collaboration with SARP with A\$47,000 and (through AusAID Canberra) the ODI with A\$500,000
 - We have contributed to FAO with A\$500,000 in its regional programme to support rural livelihoods in SADC
 - We intend to partners with DFID to support the Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Program (RHVP).
- ✓ Be conscious of the value of your own experience and on-the-ground knowledge as CSOs. Urge you to use your expertise, and to play your important role in this workshop and elsewhere to develop a more food secure southern Africa