

SARP Consultative Meeting to enhance awareness on the work of Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) in poverty reduction and the MDGs in the SADC Region

Meeting Report

**Faith Based
Organisations
(FBOs)
&
Poverty**

1. Introduction and Objectives:

The meeting opened with a prayer. The chair welcomed and thanked all present for their attendance at this meeting. Participants gave brief introductions and their expectations for the meeting.

**REGIONAL
CONSULTATIVE
MEETING**

Ms Sue Mbaya, the Executive Director of SARP, gave an overview of SARP as a non-profit organisation that promotes debate and knowledge sharing on poverty reduction processes and experiences in Southern Africa. SARP aims to contribute towards effective reduction of poverty in the countries of SADC through creating platforms for effective pro-poor policy, strategy and practice. SARP achieves this goal through widening participation, bringing people together across the region to exchange ideas, and disseminating information to deepen understandings of poverty issues and improve policy and practice. It was noted that this particular discussion falls under the Social Dimensions Programme headed by Alfred Hamadziripi.

Ms Mbaya highlighted that there is a false dichotomy between policy and practice and emphasised that rather we should be engaged in both activities. This is the reason why SARP has come with this initiative; to encourage FBO's to do both

**30 Nov
2005**

Expected Outcomes of this meeting:

Ms Mbaya emphasised that it is the hope of the organisers that participants leave this roundtable with a more passionate desire for engagement in policy process. The choice of MDGs as a starting point was deliberate because they are an internationally agreed framework with buy-in and commitment at international level, there are resources available and this makes them an easy target. MDGs also represent the closest thing we have as a framework for human security, which is encompassing and multi-sectoral. As such we want to discuss to what extent MDGs have been localised by our national and local governments, and to what extent your institutions are speaking to the targets.

**Johannesburg
South Africa**

The meeting clarified that SARP works with a broad range of actors (international, regional and national) in different capacities. Of these only 20% of partnerships end in joint activities, others remain at the phase of information sharing.

2. Summary of Presentation and Discussions

2.1 Allan Goddard - Background paper on FBO's

Mr Goddard opened his presentation with a brief overview of his background. The last 2 years he has been pioneering A Rocha (a Portuguese word meaning the rock).

A Rocha are Christians in conservation and helping people of all and no faith to understand the importance of conservation, the role that the biodiversity of the earth plays and the need to care for the earth. Increasingly the environment has to receive some attention and the links between environment and poverty are direct. He referred to an opening sentence in a recent article "...neither poverty nor the need for conservation are accidental. They are caused by the same problems"

He further outlined some of the context and issues we are facing in the sub-region.

- Globalisation of cultures - where in Southern Africa we are being infected by the dominant western culture and this is having a deep effect on our psyche and how we think about ourselves and the wider world. Incidents of teenage suicide, which is skyrocketing in the region, can be linked to this problem. They have a strong set of expectations coming to them through a global culture that can't be met because of the social realities they live in.
- Globalisation of markets - opportunities to reach global markets is limited due to unfair trade practices. My expectation in how to get A Rocha linked to the policy level on alleviating poverty.
- Context of unequal development - for example on a recent visit to Hartebeespoort dam it was shocking to see the walled and gated communities and how the mountain has become covered in concrete. Just outside the walls of these communities are informal settlements and in terms of the planning of this urban area- no plan had been made for those who would work there in service and labour jobs that people require. The reality of economic apartheid and uneven development is unfolding before our eyes
- Geophysical context - physical environment in which we live is changing and its ability to support us is being undermined. The biggest problem is climate change- where the average temp of the earth has been increasing and icecaps are melting. For example the Great Lakes area is rapidly shrinking. These lakes cross many political boundaries and only source of fresh water for many nations. water quality is deteriorating and ability to sustain people is declining. Reality we have to understand - link between the geophysical world environmental world and poverty within this context of ecological collapse. Although South Africa has one of the best environmental legislation the problem is in implementation.
- Food security - is being reduced due to a number of factors. One of the main threats is Genetically Modified crops which are compromising the environment of Africa. In addition they are designed not to produce seed that requires farmers to buy seed annually. GM pollen also infects indigenous plants, which is causing concern.

Mr Goddard shared a case study from Kenya in poverty alleviation where they are running a bursary scheme for rural children on coast of Kenya. This allows children from the area access to secondary school education. This is all in line with A Rocha's Five Commitments:

- Christianity
- Conservation
- Cross-cultural
- Community
- Cooperation

In closing Mr Goddard stressed that the most important issue to face is the issue of integrity. Do we say what we mean, do we mean what we say? Do we practice what we

preach? This integrity should be at a political and social level - integrity from top to bottom. Are we setting the example and calling others to account?

Questions and Answers

The following points were raised:

- ✓ An observation on the question of integrity - as FBO's we have to make people feel that they can own the process otherwise we will be as bad as others. Globalisation effects not only governments but also FBO's. The lesson is to not treat people as homogenous, but rather to treat people differently in order to bring out their own initiatives locally. To bring back integrity people have to know they have something to give at all levels.
- ✓ Looking at the geophysical link to poverty. An example of this is two mining sector companies who are making a lot of money but the people in the surrounding area live in abject poverty. There are a number of factors that create this situation: people don't know what their rights are; government takes the money into national coffers and difficult to monitor and hold corporations accountable. Our organisation wrote a report to the churches that sent a letter to the head of state. As FBO's if we see a problem we must intervene and carry out our own research to find the challenges facing the poor and empower people.
- ✓ Challenge to FBOs - do our members actually appreciate the linkages between governance and poverty between the policies that our governments enter into and the implications they have on poverty and other socioeconomic issues? What remains a further challenge is to deal with causes of poverty rather than the manifestations (e.g. medical shortages is not a cause but a manifestation of a deeper issue that has been there and is only starting to show now)
- ✓ On the issue of GMO's it has been indicated that South Africa has accepted this and taking it to the region through their business development (e.g. Shoprites etc) It is a serious issue and African Governments need to have a common position on this.

2.2 FBO's, MDGs and Poverty Reduction: Country Reports

Zimbabwe

The EDICISA Youth Empowerment and Transformation programme assists youth to develop skills such as entrepreneurship and job creation. The Government has launched their MDG priorities as poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS and gender equality and we are looking to hold them accountable. This is done through the national budget programme to track government expenditure on these priorities. Youth also want to participate in the budget and have given their priorities as food security, HIV/AIDS water and dept cancellation. EDICISA hosts a number of publications and collaborates with 17 FBO's in Zimbabwe. The challenge is to reflect national consensus on FBO's work towards a common goal and strategy. In dealing with Goal 8 (Partnerships for development) we are still deciding whether to focus on advocacy and monitoring of government commitments or continue the work we have already been doing. We see the MDGs as a tool for consensus as well as a safe topic to talk about and entry point in engaging the crisis in the country. A broader challenge is whether we actively or passively engage government.

Malawi

Malawi is a small country of 12 million people of which it is believed that 65 - 70% of people live in abject poverty. The major source of livelihood remains agriculture. 50% of Governments budget still comes from donor community. There is a 15% infection rate for

HIV/AIDS in 15-49 year olds and there are currently 2million orphans. There is also a food crisis which is caused both by natural causes and poor government policy. The FBO sector is very active and has been a provider of services where government cannot meet the needs. This includes food security, the health sector, water and sanitation, micro-credit facilities and education. In addition, FBO's are engaged in issues of economic justice (particularly debt cancellation) advocating against privatisation and other general economic interests. Activities also include information dissemination, gender issues and budget monitoring. It is generally the policy of FBO;s to collaborate with government, the donor community, regional and international NGO's and CBO's, the media, and other constitutional bodies. In our activities we work both at policy level and grass-roots implementation of projects.

Challenges - arise from the mindset of the same people we target and include:

- donor dependency -
- capacity - certain FBO's that believe in cheap labour and low quality which makes it difficult to analyse policy.
- supply and demand - very few religious institutions involved yet there are very high expectations from our people.
- MDGs - are recent - how do we move our programmes into these concepts and get people to participate

Opportunities:

- our programmes have come together are coordinated and there are synergies which maximises resources
- people give us respect
- networks that exist through which we can speak with one voice
- move of donor money towards us away from NGO's

Zambia

There is a strong and united ecumenical network where 60% of our services are run by churches. Our vision is to have a transformative impact on church and society. Our activities range from facilitation to advocacy, capacity building and networking. In relation to MDGs the goals

- **Goal 1: Poverty Reduction** - with a focus on the empowerment of women we are engaged in entrepreneurship development, disaster and emergency relief, economic empowerment (crop diversification) and business management
- **Goal 2: Primary Education** - this is a continuation of over 100 years of the church running education at all levels
- **Goal 3: Gender** - in church and society through the transformation of unequal relationships created through unjust structures of any kind.
- **Goal 4: Reducing Child Mortality** - engaged in education to raise nutrition standards
- **Goal 5: Provide quality care and church health centres**
- **Goal 6: Combat diseases** - particular focus on HIV/AIDS through the provision of circles of hope, nutritional support and training and home based care programmes.
- **Goal 7: The Environment** - growing awareness that this is linked to poverty - and a particular focus on rejecting the imposition of GMO's on our markets
- **Goal 8: Partnerships** - done by working with different civil society organisations on issues such as debt cancellation and trade justice, budget analysis and tracking.

Challenges:

- being misunderstood to be a political party by government and other churches

- limited financial expertise
- mindset - not having passion or heart to develop, waiting for others to come and develop our country

Opportunities

- widespread and represented even in remote areas
- credibility of long history of providing social services
- will between mother bodies to cooperate
- rationalisation of resources

Mozambique

Mozambique will be hosting the All Africa Council of Churches Assembly in 2008. We believe that the church throughout Africa can learn something on issues of peace-building based on our role in bringing about peace in our country. We are hoping that delegates attending the Assembly will, wherever possible, drive rather than fly from their countries. Through the creation of stations on the way it can become an opportunity to pray with the region.

Mozambique has just come out of long war that makes the top priority FBO's developing a culture of peace in the country through providing a moral obligation to bring about peace. On our most successful programmes is transforming weapons/guns into ploughshares to assist with demobilisation. Linked to this is the tree of Life - representing Africa - how instruments that were used to kill can be transformed into weapons to better our lives. We are also engaging with political leaders to enhance tolerance and understanding and the monitoring and observation of elections, social and economic justice through the eradication of poverty, emergency relief, food security and encouraging economic activities with our neighbours.

Lesotho

The Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL) consists of 5 member churches and 1 association. We are currently taking documents on poverty reduction and contextualising these to assist with implementation of good policy. Right now one of the major issues facing the nation is food security. Here we work with a broad range of actors and linking gender and HIV/AIDS to agriculture.

Challenges

- find out whether policies actually deal with poverty reduction - we have workshops but no implementation and monitoring

Opportunities

- workshop participation - e.g. budgeting - people knew us and would come to our office for education

Swaziland

There are 3 main Christian bodies - but due to theological differences this has led to most FBO's dealing with the manifestations rather than causes of poverty. Some FBO's believe that the gospel spreads beyond spiritual needs and must be holistic in dealing with people which others believe that the church should stick to non-contentious issues. There is a youth driven programme where young people assist the elderly to build houses. Also a justice and peace programme where we give legal assistance to indigent people and have recently openly demonstrated against the new constitution.

Challenges

- middle income count but 10% of the population control the wealth
- 40%- 69% live under the poverty line

- gender equality limited - can MDGs be achieved without this because poverty affects men and women differently
- linking spiritual needs of people to the holistic.

Discussion: clarification and questions

The following was raised in discussion:

- ✓ Zambia - how do you monitor resources in the budget for highly indebted countries? People we have trained in every Province do our budget tracking and monitoring. What makes this easier is that government breaks out in the budget where the source for different expenditure comes from. We have further had meetings with the IMF and World Bank to request them to assist us in monitoring government expenditure.
- ✓ How can you successfully run income generating activities for women? We have found that it is important to organise women through their local church structures so that there is accountability for the funds at a local level. As they realise the benefit of getting these loans the faithfulness begins to increase. A key question to ask is why are women failing to repay the loans and dealing with the problem from there.
- ✓ South Africa has the biggest economy on the continent and some perceive the country pushing for neo-liberal policies. Can a forum like this assist us in influencing the SACC to talk to government about this and can we as the church talk with one voice? There is an opportunity for us to be raising these questions and working on issues together, but we cannot assume that being pro-poor means being anti-neo-liberal economic solutions. We need to talk more even about issues such as GMO's, Zimbabwe and other programmes that cross our national borders.

3. Summary and Conclusions

This session focused on identifying the gaps and key challenges that need to be address in order to reach the next level of effectiveness in our programmes

3.1 Key Challenges and Gaps

- Capacity issues within our churches
- Rethink our theologies to live with the times
- Profiling the results of FBO's
- Enhancing and consolidating our networking
- A deeper understanding of the connection between the environment and poverty reduction.
- Linking the spiritual to the holistic needs of our people
- Opportunity that is being missed is connecting to a larger international movement like those that protest against the WTOI
- Bringing together regional networks to create a greater impact (e.g. FOCISA, IMBISA, Evangelical Association in Southern Africa, the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa, AMISIA) Need to map what each of these bodies are doing and whether they can coordinate regional activities.
- A larger organisation to bring us all together
- Understanding the politics within and between FBO's
- Being more precise on the theological underpinnings that inform our poverty reduction work
- Deliberate capacity building of clergy.

3.2 Way Forward

The meeting agreed that there are a few concrete steps that can be taken by SARPN out of this meeting:

- ✓ A scoping exercise to determine the activities of key regional entities working on poverty reduction and MDGs
- ✓ Hosting a regional conference on theological perspectives as they relate to poverty reduction which will focus only on the Christian faith
- ✓ SARPAN to assist in creating a loose network for information and experience sharing
- ✓ Holding a second all encompassing meeting which includes those FBO's not present today.

Mr Hamadziripi thanked participants for their attendance and the meeting closed with a prayer.

Organisations Represented

United Church of Zambia
Zambian Episcopal Conference
Evangelical Lutheran Development Service
Council of Churches in Zambia
Christian Service Committee
Church and Society CCAP Synod of Livingstonia
Christian Council of Lesotho
Christian Council of Mozambique
Presbyterian Church of Mozambique
Malawi Council of Churches
EDICISA
Episcopal Conference of Malawi
Zimbabwe Council of Churches
Council of Swaziland Churches
A Rocha South Africa

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AGENDA -30 November 2005

12:00 - 12:10	Welcoming & Introductions	Alfred Hamadziripi, Social Dimensions Programme, SARPN
12:10 - 12:30	Opening Remarks, SARPN Overview & Meeting Expectations	Sue Mbaya, Executive Director, SARPN
12:30 - 13:00	Background paper on FBOs: The Role of Faith Based Organizations in Poverty Reduction: The context and issues in Southern Africa	Allan Goddard
13:00 - 14:00	LUNCH	
14:00 - 15:30	FBOs, MDGs and Poverty reduction: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What work are we doing? 2. Any policy work? 3. How are our results profiled? 4. Who (organizations/institutions) do we collaborate with? 5. Which levels? 6. In which Platforms? 7. What are our challenges? 8. What opportunities for collaboration do we see with other practitioners and policy makers? 	Chair: Davison Mafinyane FBO Representatives/ country Zimbabwe Malawi Zambia Mozambique Lesotho Swaziland
	TEA BREAK	
15:30 - 15:45	Strengthening Synergies beyond the FBO world: Which areas do we see opportunities for strengthening collaboration with other actors? Which actors? What strategies are needed to explore these opportunities?	Plenary
15:45 - 16:45	Collaborating with SARPN: What opportunities exist for collaboration with SARPN? Which FBO initiatives/platforms can SARPN be engaged?	Plenary
16:45 - 17:00	Closing Remarks	Sue Mbaya, Executive Director, SARPN