

**Strengthening responses to the Triple Threat in the
Southern Africa region – learning from field programmes in
Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia**

**Joint Project of Concern Worldwide (CW), Oxfam International (OI) and
the Southern Africa Regional Poverty Network (SARPN)**

Mozambique

1. Background

A number of Concern Worldwide and Oxfam-International offices and partner organisations were visited in Mozambique between the 9th and 17th of April as part of the joint project on strengthening responses to the Triple Threat of HIV/AIDS, food insecurity and weakening capacity for service delivery in the Southern African region¹. The project consisted of a blend of policy level discussions with organisations such as Concern, União Nacional de Camponeses (UNAC) and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) with on-site discussions with field staff currently engaged in development work in Manica Province. The objective was to debate and document the experiences and understanding of practitioners engaged in supporting communities to achieve livelihood security taking account of factors underpinning a complex situation.

The following represents some of the field observations, which are shared to elicit commentary and debate amongst interested parties. At the outset it was recognised that southern Africa is experiencing a complex crisis, with both acute and chronic dimensions. Drawing on the lessons of the 2001-03 livelihoods crisis and more recent experiences, particularly those of field practitioners, a more nuanced response strategy is called for. A number of issues emerging from the field exercise as crucial with regards to livelihood insecurity in Mozambique have been grouped as common themes.

**2. A Brief Overview of Livelihood Security in Manica Province,
Mozambique**

Concern Worldwide has been operating in Mozambique since 1987 through a variety of interventions. Initially the focus was on relief and rehabilitation, which has gradually shifted towards longer term developmental interventions in the areas of education, livelihoods, governance and HIV/AIDS. Concern targets isolated areas in three provinces in the country, which are affected by numerous shocks, such as the 2000 floods, and stresses, such as more recent climate variability that has affected rainfall.

Manica Province is located in the Central Region of Mozambique, bordering Zimbabwe and crossed by two major transport corridors. The central districts are more densely populated than the districts in the north and south, which are more isolated, less developed and more vulnerable to external shocks. Manica province stretches across three agro-ecological zones with significant differences in livelihood strategies, vulnerability patterns and poverty levels.

¹ The underlying problems of HIV/AIDS, food insecurity and weakening capacity for service delivery (triple threat) is rapidly reversing development gains, leaving communities and whole societies more vulnerable to external shocks, such as the effects of the dry-spell that impacted the region in late 2005.

When analysing poverty and vulnerability, the Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition (SETSAN) divides the population into seven livelihood groups². The three lowest groups are characterized by households that are entirely dependent on agriculture with low levels of crop diversity (LG 1-3), by a higher percentage of female-headed households (25-37% against 14-28% for group 4-7) and a lower percentage of literacy (40% against 67%). Stronger households (group 4-7) have been able to diversify their livelihood strategies and are thus better able to expand their assets and to cope with cyclical disasters. The table below compares four districts in Manica Province with neighbouring areas using data from the 2004 vulnerability analysis. It demonstrates that these areas are worse off in comparison to the other vulnerable districts in central and Southern Mozambique.

2004 data	LG 1	LG2	LG3	LG 1-3 (total)	LG 4-7	vulnerability ranking
Project target area (Machaze, Guro, Macossa, Tambara)	16.3%	17.2%	21.3%	54.8%	45.2%	1
project target neighbouring area east – Sofala Province	8.9%	24.5%	10%	43.4%	56.6%	4
project target neighbouring area north (Tete Province)	11.4%	13.8%	27.2%	52.4%	46.2%	2
project target neighbouring area south west - Northern Gaza	23.7%	12.9%	9.6%	46.2%	53.8%	3
Vulnerability analysis total area (42 districts central and south Mozambique)	14%	11.5%	12.2%	37.7%	62.3%	

It is widely recognised that a major compounding issue around vulnerability to food insecurity is HIV and AIDS. The corridors and migration patterns, particularly in terms of migrant labour to South African mines, have contributed to the spread of HIV, causing Manica to become one of the worst affected provinces in terms of prevalence levels with an average of 20 percent. As a result, in the Manica districts in which Concern is operating, HIV/AIDS is causing frequent death and illness, especially among households that use migrant labour as a livelihood strategy. Limited availability of data and absence of testing and treatment facilities do not allow this to be verified. However, anecdotal evidence from field staff and in research documentation³ indicate that at household and community level there is a strong impact of the epidemic.

Field level staff can see that livelihood insecurity in Manica is growing both in terms of the number of people affected and in its impact, particularly in certain areas where erratic rainfall and ill health and deaths from AIDS have occurred. More people are trying to secure their livelihood from a diminishing asset base, exacerbated by the effects of an adult HIV/AIDS prevalence rate that reduces household labour and increases health care costs. Growing numbers of people are taking up ever more risky livelihood strategies that may exhaust one or more assets beyond recovery or make decisions that limit options for the future. This could be unsustainable livestock sales, theft or sex-work for survival. Another strategy encountered was the removal of children from school in order to release them for household strategies requiring labour or to relieve costs associated with school attendance (fees, uniforms,

² Manica District Development Project (2006) Project proposal, Chimoio, Manica Province.

³ See Swennenhuis, J (2005) 'Final evaluation of the Machaze drought mitigation project' and Roos, E (2006) 'Livelihoods and Coping Mechanisms in Machaze District', unpublished research report, Concern, Maputo.

stationary)⁴. The “erosive” nature of such a strategy is the diminishing stock of human capital for future livelihood options.

In 2005, large parts of Mozambique experienced substantially lower than average rainfall. In a region where the last four agricultural seasons have had reduced harvests, this raised a significant threat to livelihoods. According to an assessment conducted by SETSAN⁵, although overall food production in Manica was “slightly affected by the drought”, Machaze district to the south of the province was amongst the more seriously impacted⁶. This led to an increase in food aid in Machaze (from 6,800 people to 32,900 people). Essentially the rationale behind this increase was the slow attrition of livelihood assets over time due to repeated reduced harvests and the compounding impact of HIV/AIDS (with an official statistic indicating that one in five was infected).

However, another conflicting perspective exists. As a result of a lack of understanding of livelihood strategies, community-based resilience has been underestimated⁷ and food aid may be contributing to weakening livelihood options.

This exemplifies a wider regional debate about the role of food aid versus longer-term development approaches. Food aid, largely distributed through relief, has proven to be effective in saving lives in situations where food availability has failed. However, it should be recognised that it often fails to protect people from destitution. This is because food aid tends to be untimely, insufficient and sometimes inappropriate as a means to address hunger in the medium to long term. As it is only designed to feed people, the system fails to protect people’s productivity or build protective capacity to feed themselves over the longer-term.

3. Mozambique: Space for Social Protection?

Field staff have recognised that the overall numbers of people who could be considered livelihood insecure is increasing and that their ability to get back on their feet after a short sharp shock such as drought has decreased. This is largely because of health and in the erosion of livelihood reserves. Recognising the different perspectives about how to respond appropriately, Concern has continued to focus on education and governance, supporting different partners to implement development projects in Manica. Staff interviewed indicated that they believed that they should move away from engaging in or promoting emergency interventions and rather focus on longer-term initiatives, in particular governance. This emerged from a livelihood analysis of the underlying situation, which consistently demonstrated that socio-political capital was a key determinant for livelihoods strength. Indeed, a recent Concern project proposal held that food aid has eroded rather than supported the

⁴ Age, cultural habits and social class may play a significant role in removing children from school. For example, many children only attend half a day of school and any work to assist the household such as herding goats is done during the other half of the day.

⁵ Supported by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

⁶ FAO/WFP (2005), Food and Crop assessment, p.1

⁷ See Swennenhuis, J (2005) and Roos, E (2006). Roos claims that many people in Bassane, Machaze, were accustomed to food aid and interviewers and wanted to create a perspective of “needy” and “hungry”.

diversification of livelihood strategies and limited the options for disaster preparedness⁸.

At community level, Concern staff and partners believe that in order to meet humanitarian and development commitments in Manica - to protect livelihoods and to save lives - community empowerment (interventions aimed at strengthening social capital and diversifying livelihoods) needed to be prioritised, through direct livelihood programmes and those focused on governance, which would bring both short and long-term improvements to the lives of people.

In reflecting about how to respond appropriately to both the chronic and acute dimensions of the existing situation in Manica, programme staff from Concern Worldwide and partner organisations argued that this clearly demonstrated the need for safety nets such as cash, food and asset transfers to cope with cyclical shocks, but it also showed that unless the structural nature of livelihood insecurity was addressed, communities would become ever more vulnerable to livelihood shocks and stresses and ever less able to support themselves.

Not surprisingly a strong emphasis was heard from Concern partners such as Magariro and the Association Kwaedza Simukai Manica (AKSM) that there needed to be an increasing focus on the “software” of governance and rights-based issues, particularly if a comprehensive response to food insecurity was to be developed. The Mozambique government is providing just such an opportunity within its decentralised planning process whereby government will be held more accountable to its people by bringing planning and service delivery closer to community level. In other words ownership of the development process led by government will be shifted from national to provincial and district level. This would entail focusing on the removal of structural barriers to local development through supporting district government increase connectivity between these areas and development, improve public service delivery and increase access to markets.

Although the Mozambique government has indicated that social protection is off the development agenda at present, decentralisation may enable local level officials and practitioners to raise the issue as an appropriate mechanism to underpin livelihood recovery and resilience. Given the reality of AIDS and other multiple stressors underpinning vulnerability to food insecurity, the entire approach to development may need to change. Interventions should always consider development, relief and rehabilitation aspects, and that without increased support through safety nets and other forms of ongoing social protection standard development practice will not suffice for the most vulnerable.

In Mozambique, the Ministry of Social Welfare has a number of policies and practices in place, including limited cash transfers to pensioners, the most vulnerable and old-combattants, which have a social protection function. There is therefore a rationale to help the state comply with its social protection responsibility by strengthening these mechanisms. This raises the importance of working strategically with government, building the capacity at district level to be both more responsible to the obligations to its citizens and for communities to be more proactive in articulating and claiming their rights. In terms of practically responding to these rights, NGOs have an important role to play in helping communities articulate and claim their rights and supporting government to meet its obligations in the area of livelihood security.

⁸ Manica District Development Project (2006) Project proposal, Chimoio, Manica Province.

Linkages between politics, food insecurity and poverty are often skirted by international NGOs, with the result that many debates become depoliticised and rather focus on technical issues. The rapid adoption of HIV/AIDS as a key explanation of the livelihoods crisis in southern Africa can almost be seen as a development narrative in the making: a way of depoliticising poverty and powerlessness so that they can be portrayed as a set of more manageable technical problems that can be addressed by development agencies⁹. Concern in Manica is embracing this challenge and using political change and governance issues to underpin a new strategy of development in the province.

4. Using “Political Capital” to Facilitate Development

Many Concern partners in Manica argued that a comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS and food security entailed moving beyond “traditional” livelihood programmes into the realm of rights and governance. The Concern Manica office felt that they were doing well in the areas of emergency response (they were complimented for an effective and speedy response to the Machaze earthquake, which occurred on the 23rd of February 2006) and livelihoods but felt that they should focus more on rights and governance programmes.

Working with a rights-based approach, often focused on governance issues around service delivery and accountability to citizenship, requires a careful strategic approach in a country where government has recently raised the issue of INGO legitimacy in operating in certain parts of the country. Government is still keen that INGOs provide the “hardware” of schools, clinics and agricultural technologies rather than process-orientated interventions. Some partners articulated an apprehension that the government becomes suspicious of NGOs when communities are mobilised around rights. This was exemplified in a recent experience when community members refused to move from their land when made aware of their rights under the Land Law.

This raises the importance of working strategically with government, building the capacity at district level to be both more responsible to the obligations to its citizenship and provide the necessary rights. Organising communities to speak for themselves rather than speaking on their behalf is essential to dilute allegations of supporting “opposition politics”. Being persistent and demonstrating the benefits of a rights-based approach were two key lessons identified by Concern and their partners. For example, the President recently visited a number of the poorest districts in Mozambique including two within Manica province. Having observed Concern’s interventions in Machaze and Tambara, President Guebuza strongly recommended them for their work, referring to their efforts in providing schools and other infrastructure. This immediately opened the way for concerted dialogue with local-level administrators having created the “space” for influence.

5. Mozambique Land Law: An Opportunity for Sustainable Livelihoods

Another major issue raised by a number of partners, including the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN and the União Nacional de Camponeses (UNAC), was that of the Mozambique Land Law. Although the link to food insecurity and HIV/AIDS may not appear clear in the first instance, the Land Law provides important opportunities for NGOs facilitating local economic development in Mozambique.

⁹ See Paul Harvey, (2004) “HIV/AIDS and humanitarian action”, Humanitarian Policy Group Research Report 16, London, United Kingdom.

According to Dr Chris Tanner, one of the architects of the Land Law, the vast majority of rural households have customarily acquired land rights, which are now legally recognised as equivalent to an official state land use right. When necessary, they can be proven through an analysis of local land management and production systems, which can result in very large areas being registered in the name of 'local communities'. With their rights recognised and recorded, communities are then able to enter into negotiations with investors and the state on a more equal footing and secure agreements that bring real benefits to promote local development and reduce poverty.

These benefits include more secure livelihoods, which are increasingly important in a context where there are multiple stresses affecting communities. These stresses, such as climate variability with recent low rainfall or flooding, are often compounded by HIV/AIDS. More robust, diversified livelihoods enable communities to become more resilient in the face of these stresses and to decrease vulnerability to HIV infection. Thus the Land Law can become an important opportunity for community development through new livelihood options opening up as the local economy evolves. Through consultations with investors, they can choose to keep their rights, or strike deals that generate resources for local development.

Discussions with a number of key respondents in the field indicated that the Land Law implementation has been partial, with a neglect of community aspects by the public sector especially. Recalling experiences in Manica, Concern partners emphasised that relations between new land investors and communities were not good. In some instances this was because the state recognised the rights of the investors more than those of the community. Contradictory understanding of the Land Law was a major hindrance for the rights of communities over their existing resources becoming a reality.

In many instances the progressive mechanism of the community consultation is being applied but in a way that does not bring real benefits to local communities. Sometimes the unintended consequences of fast-tracking true consultation and community engagement are likely to fuel conflicts over resources in years to come. Another issue was that communities often lack alternative skills for using their land in other ways. In a context of general poverty and lack of social infrastructure, investors are often the "only" alternative when the government has achieved limited impact in providing essential services.

This is proving to be an emerging challenge for development partners in rural areas such as Manica: to ensure that the rights of people are protected and that the existing legal framework be harnessed to ensure long-term rural livelihoods in a context of social justice. It also clearly highlights a difference between policy and practice in rural Mozambique. This raises challenges for NGOs and their partners to understand the existing legal framework in order to ensure communities are able to realise their rights. A progressive enabling legal framework, such as that which exists in Mozambique, requires mechanisms to "draw down community rights", which need to be facilitated by civil society organisations.

The challenge for Concern, Oxfam and their local partners is to help communities understand that their rights are private and exclusive, and that they *can* say 'no' to the investor if they do not want to cede their land. If they *are* prepared to cede their rights, they should be able to negotiate with the investor or the state, on the basis of real knowledge of the value of their resources and the potential return that the investor can expect. Another major challenge is the participation of women in the consultation process, which is allegedly very weak. Rural women are not aware of

the specific rights that they enjoy in the context of the Land Law and its constitutional backdrop.

In response, Association Kwaedza Simukai Manica (AKSM), has been using community management committees to discuss the Land Law and to debate concerns that have arisen. This initiative arose out of a negative experience with a forestry company, whose rights were seen by the national government to be superior to those of the community. The increased numbers of fires in the commercial plantation, allegedly due to arson, led AKSM to step in and act as a mediator between the investors and the community. With time some trust has been restored, particularly as the management communities have provided a forum for grievances to be heard.

Another opportunity exists in the decentralisation process. Awareness campaigns and skills learning could be introduced jointly by the Government and NGOs to look at different options around land tenure and land use that might increase opportunities to diversify livelihoods (for example medicinal and nutritional plants gardens, ecotourism, agro-forestry centres for community experiences exchanges, etc.)

Existing laws in Mozambique, such as the Land Law, provide real opportunities to build community resilience, diversify livelihoods and to make local people true partners in economic development. As such, these laws become important elements in the fight against HIV/AIDS and food insecurity.

6. Supporting Livelihoods: New Approaches?

Most practitioners indicated that there was a need for continued livelihood support, in particular rebuilding the asset base and diversifying livelihood options. When outlining various interventions, most referred to agricultural-based options, that were built on existing institutions.

For example a recent research report highlighted a shift towards small livestock, as an important option accessible to all households¹⁰. In this regard, chicken and goat breeding, provided that vaccinations were available, was identified as important income generating options. Other alternatives included supporting perennial crops such as cashew, agro-forestry and drought-resistant crops. Some partners were focusing on sustainable agriculture based upon smaller land holdings with an emphasis on soil protection and organic fertiliser. A focus on natural medicine and local knowledge, disseminated across communities through medicinal plots, were also identified as crucial in a context of increasing illness. Most field staff agreed that these types of interventions were important, particularly in a context of HIV/AIDS.

AKSM has focused on bringing technology into Manica. Backed by VSO technical expertise, AKSM is offering training in computer literacy and an Internet café, which is situated on the Beira Corridor in Manica town. The delighted expression of a backpacker surrounded by several children engaged in web-surfing was a striking image: a Western traveller connecting home whilst local youngsters surfed the information highways, exploring a myriad of new realities, ideas and opportunities. Apart from training youth in new technology, which they might use later in life, another primary focus of the café was to disseminate information about local products, linking the community with markets. The space created by the café also enable AKSM to arrange HIV/AIDS awareness meetings for younger people,

¹⁰ Roos (2006).

recognising that the Beira Corridor is probably “the most affected area in Mozambique” in terms of HIV/AIDS.

Savings clubs are another initiative deemed worthwhile in a context of HIV/AIDS. Rather than credit programmes, which resulted in a 45 percent default rate, AKSM introduced savings clubs as a sustainable alternative. These institutions were already emerging in some areas, which the NGO was able to strengthen through training and learning from other experiences. In this instance the CARE microfinance model was adapted to suit local needs.

7. Treatment: The Backbone of Addressing AIDS?

An important insight gained from Oxfam-GB in Mozambique was that of an emerging programme in Manica around supporting access to basic health care and sexual reproductive rights, as the backbone of a strategy to address HIV/AIDS. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) have played a leading role amongst NGOs in implementing programmes aimed at showing that treatment is possible in resource-poor environments and has concrete clinical benefits and dramatic effects on the lives of individuals and their communities. This approach recognises the mortality caused by the epidemic as creating a humanitarian imperative to act¹¹. To date support to health systems in southern Africa have been comparatively neglected largely because such support provides a long-term and complex development challenge – and are not amenable to short-term humanitarian responses. Where political will by donors or INGOs is matched with funding, the fortification of health care systems and the wide availability of affordable medicines, countries can achieve dramatic results with their HIV/AIDS treatment programmes. In Brazil, for instance, universal access to free AIDS treatment led to a 54% reduction in AIDS deaths between 1995 and 1999, and government savings totalled US\$472 million between 1997 and 1999, thanks to prevented hospitalisations and a reduction in the burden of opportunistic infections.

OGB, in beginning to engage with this challenge, has followed a similar line to MSF although broadened the focus beyond treatment to health care in general. In essence the increased focus will be on supporting the Machaze and Mossourize district health systems so that government commitments to universal access to basic health services, including anti-retroviral therapy, becomes a reality for a populous heavily affected by HIV/AIDS and other health issues. The programme is based upon a detailed situational analysis conducted in 2003, which argued that access to basic services is an imperative in Mozambique for development work to be effective. This is in some ways similar to the position of Concern. There are five main components of the programme in Manica. Firstly the objective is to strengthen provincial and district AIDS Councils through funding to ensure effective co-ordination. Secondly, to undertake research to understand the drivers of HIV infections in order to develop an effective behavioural change strategy. Thirdly, to provide direct support to district and local health systems through Health Alliance International (HAI), which will provide basic equipment and health infrastructure, as well as provide training of medical personnel. Fourthly, a home-based care initiative will be developed around the health system, and finally, a focus on orphan and other vulnerable children will ensure one of the most vulnerable categories of people will be included in the programme.

OGB has in effect challenged their own paradigm of “classical” development work, arguing that if the organisation is going to meet its humanitarian imperative in a context where HIV/AIDS has increased levels of mortality and morbidity, then basic

¹¹ MSF, (2002) “Equitable access: scaling up HIV/AIDS treatment in developing countries”, www.accessmed-msf.org

health care should form the backbone of development work. In many ways, the Manica programme may push OGB's thinking significantly around HIV and livelihoods.

8. Credit, Savings and Economic Empowerment for Women

In terms of developing additional sources of income, many rural households lack the basic skills, resources and access to services to participate effectively in the rural economy. In particular women, who are frequently unable to participate in economic activities, are a marginalized group. Even when basic skills do exist and women do participate in (very) small business activities, they lack access to basic financial services such as savings and credit, which can allow the activity to become financially viable.

Rising rates of HIV infection among women are an increasing cause of concern. When combined with the increasing workload that women must assume in caring for AIDS patients, orphans and their own families, the situation becomes untenable. Thus the link between poverty, gender inequality and AIDS creates a vicious circle as the impact of HIV/AIDS drags down the development potential particularly of women. The Mozambique NGO Kukula (Associação dos Técnicos e Profissionais em Desenvolvimento Rural) has focused on these issues, particularly improving household livelihood security of women. In Northern Inhambane they have developed a programme to underpin improved livelihoods through efficiently transferring skills and resources to women who are under time constraints that are likely to be exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This programme essentially involves facilitating the development of saving and credit clubs.

The saving and credit group methodology is inherently participatory. Women create groups with elected officers, and they operate savings and loan activities. All group functioning, loan mechanisms, criteria and interest rates (around 10%) is completely determined by each women's group. According to Kukula staff and programme documentation, the saving and credit system is a steadily growing community-based intervention with growing saving and loans activities. As an indication of its success, some women have been entirely willing to pay local facilitators to train them in methodologies for establishing the groups and to provide on-going support for a period of six months.

As more money becomes available through credits and savings so the need for business training increases. These skills include being able to make more informed decisions on what business activities to invest in and how to achieve the highest return with the available resources. The businesses women tend to become involved in include production of agricultural products (cashew, peanuts) with drought resistant crops (sweet potatoes and pine apple), sewing and carpentry. Some of the savings are also used for investment into school or health fees and house renovations. Most activities will therefore directly contribute towards the economic security of participating households.

The credit and savings clubs can also be used to promote awareness and provide information around HIV and AIDS, gender equality and livelihoods more generally. Thus the project assists women improve economic conditions, helps reduce their vulnerability and improves the HIV/AIDS community coping strategies and responses.