

**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)**

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November 2006**

1. Background

April marks the end of the hungry season in Southern Africa, characterised by the appearance of green maize and other seasonal food crops that become available at the household level, as well as on rural markets. Overall food security generally improves as many households access the new season crops following the above average growing season of 2006, which was enhanced by the availability of natural resources in open-access areas². However, a cursory impression of food abundance, reinforced by roadside images of pedestrians, cyclists and scotch carts carrying crops such as banana and sugar cane, overshadow the reality of many households who continue to suffer the reality of extremely serious or acute food insecurity. The fact remained that in many parts of Southern Africa a chronic emergency was still unfolding, momentarily offset by seasonal abundance. This essentially meant that many households run a continually high risk of being unable to meet the food needs of its members.

This emergency, due to the negative impact of climate variability, HIV/AIDS, gender inequalities and a macro and micro policy environment that has not prioritised the rights and needs of vulnerable people³, raises important challenges for development agencies like Oxfam and Concern, especially around how to respond effectively and appropriately. This implies an understanding of the complexity of the livelihoods crisis facing southern Africa, which is recognised as having both moderate and severe dimensions. Understanding livelihoods means having a focus beyond agriculture alone and embraces the complexity of vulnerability studies, which appreciates the complex spatial and temporal dynamics of threats to human welfare. These include socio-political dimensions, the role of markets, social protection responses and other issues.

Recognising this complexity, and taking advantage of a period when many project-level practitioners were reviewing their interventions in anticipation of new funding and activity cycles, Concern-Worldwide, Oxfam-International and the Southern African Regional Poverty Network (SARPN) commissioned a study of a number of projects in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. The exercise was designed to assess what has happened at grassroots level through working with staff, and through them communities and partners, to identify how their activities help respond to long-term livelihood insecurity, including short-term responses to acute need. A “debriefing” process enabled the perspectives and experiences of “front-line” staff and partners to be captured to allow debates to emerge within the country offices. In many instances the discussions were critically retrospective and therefore contentious in some instances. The three country reports or case studies have been presented as annexes to this paper to enable quick reference. The objective of this exercise was to initiate a learning process within the country and district offices and partner organisations, drawing out key impressions around four main areas:

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² See FEWS NET, Southern Africa Food Security Update March / April 2006, www.fews.net for a detailed assessment of the season progress, production outlook, regional price movements and trade flows.

³ The thinking of most agencies is that 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.

1. The level of understanding by NGO practitioners of the drivers of food insecurity and their knowledge of community coping strategies in response to rising food insecurity, particularly differences for men and women;
2. The appropriateness of the response to the ‘humanitarian imperative’ of saving lives and protecting livelihoods in response to HIV/AIDS in particular;
3. Interventions that should be strengthened to address the nexus between hunger, vulnerability and HIV/AIDS and new approaches that were being tested; and
4. Current targeting mechanisms around vulnerability and HIV/AIDS considering the gender dimensions of these and addressing inequalities.

These four areas were used as a loose guide in many discussions although respondents were allowed to discuss any issues that were important. The identification of key lessons has been presented by overviews of issues in each country (see annexes) and this synthesis paper, which compares and contrasts experiences across countries and agencies. The synthesis paper draws in and validates many of the issues with recent literature in order to bring these perspectives into the discussions. It should be emphasised that the issues discussed emerged from interaction with practitioners and the debates reflect observations in the field rather than considerations from other sources.

The synthesis paper has been structured in four main sections, which present the main issues and lessons emanating from the field, including a number of challenging issues. Firstly, an analysis of broad livelihood patterns across the three countries is presented, drawing out some of the specificity of particular sites and case studies. Where appropriate, an assessment of coping strategies in response to shocks and stresses is provided. Building on this, the following section explores innovations in the field as developed by the organisations and their partners in response to underlying livelihood insecurity. An analysis of the implications and integration of these innovations into broader programming is provided followed by a section focusing on the role of the state. A discussion on whether agencies are meeting the humanitarian imperative and a summary of challenging issues, which emerged during the study, feed into a final section depicting a way forward.

2. Livelihood Strategies

A major focus of policy frameworks and field interventions in southern Africa is livelihoods and food security. This section draws out some of the key issues emerging from the field, looking particularly at community and household strategies in the face of increasing vulnerability. This sets the scene to for presenting actual field interventions designed in response to these strategies.

Clarifying Concepts

Working with three international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and their partners in the field it became clear that there are a range of diverse meanings to terms that have become common in “development-speak”. As such it is necessary to provide clear definitions around terms such as coping strategies, livelihoods, food security and vulnerability to ensure consistency of meaning throughout this paper. In fact, a key recommendation is to ensure that staff and partners have a common understanding of terms that reflect the reality of the situation on the ground and the commensurate responses. The following section therefore clarifies a few concepts up-front.

The concept of livelihoods is central to this analysis and therefore a key starting point for the paper. There are many varying definitions of livelihoods, although most share key characteristics. The definition underpinning many of these variations was developed by Chambers and Conway (1992)⁴, which states:

⁴ Chambers, R and Conway, G., 1992: Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century, IDS Discussion Paper 296, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton.

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social assets) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resources base.

Households apply livelihood strategies to pursue their desired goals or outcomes such as food security. A household's livelihood strategy is determined by the resources and assets that it owns, has access to or controls, and the restrictions created by the institutional environment. A household seeks to adapt its livelihood strategy in response to crises such as conflict, natural disaster or economic shock.

As indicated above, one desired goal of a livelihood strategy is food security. This term is understood to mean "secure access by all people at all times to enough food for a healthy, active life" (World Bank 1986)⁵. Food security exists in a situation in which people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (UN World Food Summit, 1996)⁶.

Food is only one of a whole range of factors that determine why the poor make decisions and spread risk, and how they finely balanced competing interests in order to subsist in the short and longer term. People may choose to go hungry to preserve their assets and future livelihoods. It is misleading to treat food security as a fundamental need, independent of wider livelihood considerations (Frankenberger *et al*, 2000)⁷.

When a household or another social unit is affected by a shock or a stress, such as a sudden flood that washes away irrigated fields or a gradual stress like the erosion of health status due to limited access to essential health services, temporary adjustments will become necessary for survival. These temporary adjustments to respond to change or a short-term modification of livelihood activities in the face of a shock or stress are widely defined as a coping strategy.

The distinction between chronic and transitory livelihood insecurity is purely temporal, and does not include an analysis of the severity or intensity of the insecurity that may exist. For example the distinction between chronic and transitory food insecurity is often conflated with measures of severity, whereby transitory food insecurity is assumed to be severe and chronic food insecurity moderate. The severity of food insecurity does not depend on the temporal dimension (Devereux, 2006)⁸. To avoid this source of confusion, it is recommended that the terms 'moderate' and 'severe' to describe the severity of livelihood insecurity, and chronic and transitory the temporal aspect.

Resilience was referred to by a number of field practitioners as a positive outcome that they were trying to underpin within communities. This concept, although intuitively understood by many practitioners, has a variety of meanings in the development and ecological literature. Here resilience is defined as the capacity of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure. It is a measure of the household's (or other social unit) ability to absorb shocks and stresses, of how robust it is. A household with well-diversified assets and livelihood activities can

⁵ World Bank (1986) Poverty and Hunger: Issues and Options for Food Security in Developing Countries. Washington DC. <http://www-wds.worldbank.org> (accessed 25 July 2006)

⁶ World Food Summit (1996) 'Tackling hunger in a world full of food: Tasks ahead for food aid', <http://www.wfp.org/policies/policy/other/hunger/P1.html> (accessed 25 July 2006)

⁷ Frankenberger, T; Drinkwater, M and Maxwell, D., 2000: Operationalizing Household Livelihood Security: A Holistic Approach for Addressing Poverty and Vulnerability, CARE USA, Atlanta.

⁸ Devereux, S., 2006: Identification of methods and tools for emergency assessments to distinguish between chronic and transitory food insecurity and to evaluate the effects of various types and combinations of shocks on these different livelihood groups, World Food Programme, Emergency Needs Assessment Branch (ODAN), Rome.

cope better with shocks and stresses than one with a more limited asset base and few livelihood resources.

The Drivers of Livelihood Insecurity

A major focus of the field study was to ascertain whether livelihoods in the various sites were resistant to the various shocks and stresses that affect the region, including climate variation, institutional failure and HIV/AIDS. Once a general understanding of livelihoods had been developed, a detailed discussion and critique of interventions was conducted with a particular focus on what was working and what needed to be strengthened. This on-site reflection of field staff, partners and communities was repeated throughout the fieldwork across the sites in the three countries. In Malawi the research was carried out in Blantyre, Lilongwe, Dowa, Phalombe and Mulanje Districts. In Mozambique the research focused on Manica Province and Maputo. Finally, in Zambia the research was carried out in Mongu District in the Western Province and in Lusaka. Additional details are provided in the three case studies, which are attached as annexes.

Risk has been driven upwards by often silent but intensifying conditions of political, socio-economic and environmental vulnerability, which requires a modest external threat such as an unexceptional drought, to trigger widespread suffering⁹. It was widely acknowledged across the sites that vulnerability has increased as a result of the complex set of issues, including rapid economic decline, the erosion of traditional structures, and increasing poverty of the most vulnerable households over the past decade. An important reflection was the increased burden on kinship support with a resultant decrease in resilience.

There was also widespread recognition by field staff and partners that vulnerability was not uniform and that it affected some individuals and groups more than others. Vulnerability is here defined as the characteristics that limit an individual, a household, a community, another social unit or even an ecosystem's capacity to anticipate, manage, resist or recover from the impact of a natural or other threat (often called a hazard). When reflecting on vulnerability in general, it was stressed that groups likely to be worse off were women and girls, children — especially those orphaned by AIDS — the elderly, the sick, the disabled, those without education or formal skills, and the landless. The implication of this was that in order to understand the reality of vulnerability on the ground and to develop effectively targeted interventions, a disaggregated approach to rural communities was required and an understanding of power relations within these groups, with a commitment to reaching those who are most at risk. In particular, a focus on gender relations was crucial in this regard.

A number of common drivers of livelihood insecurity were identified across the sites. Climate stress, especially rainfall failure, was identified as a key driver that had impacted severely on agricultural production during earlier seasons. Climate change and its consequences do not occur in a vacuum; very often they merely unveil an already precarious and vulnerable situation. This has been the case in many of the sites. Although language like "rainfall failure" and "climate change" were often used in the discussions, it should be noted that there has not been a predictable season for decades in southern Africa and this discourse probably reveals more accurately that climate stress is having a significant impact on weaker livelihood systems. The implications of this are that variations in climate may indeed become more marked, extreme and frequent in the future in southern Africa. It also emphasises the strong links between local livelihoods and natural resources.

Another common driver of livelihood insecurity identified by respondents were the weakening capacity of service delivery, particularly in terms of agricultural extension and inputs. Coupled with this, inadequate agricultural policies, which favoured large-scale commercial enterprises, did little to underpin a small farmer sector ensuring that they marketed little if any produce and were largely net

⁹ Risk can be described as the probability of harmful consequences, or expected losses (deaths, injuries, property, livelihoods, economic activity disrupted or environment damaged) resulting from interactions between natural or human-induced hazards and vulnerable conditions.

buyers of food, depending on farm labouring and non-farm activities to provide cash. This is obviously a sensitive issue and should be carefully understood. If this was deemed to be the case because of factors such as a “normalised” limited resource base within government services, then the response generally of NGOs was to work proactively with government to better meet the obligations of the state to its citizenship.

The impact of structural adjustment policies in the 1980s and 1990s often resulted in the dilution of state-run services for agriculture. This was based on the faulty assumption that the private sector would replace the state in delivering services and contributing to economic growth in distant areas. One result has been increasing isolation of rural areas and the growth of rural poverty over two decades. Certainly the fact that there was no veterinary services or cattle inoculation in Western Province in Zambia enabled the decimation of the livestock base through contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP). The reduction in cattle affected food crop production, as cattle provide draught power and field fertilisation for essentially poor, sandy soils, which resulted in a decrease in the size of cultivated land per household.

HIV/AIDS was also widely acknowledged as a major driver of livelihood insecurity across the sites although the emphasis predictably localised. The rural impact of HIV/AIDS is subtle. For the most part it goes unnoticed as the seasons and natural rhythms that frame rural existence mean the pace of this long-wave event's impact will be slow (Barnett and Whiteside, 2006)¹⁰. Each turn of the cultivating season will see a small, significant and usually negative change in farming, household relationships and the social fabric of the community. Although most change will be gradual there will be marked steps when, for example, the remaining parent in a household dies and the family unit is dissolved. Gradual changes include leaving fields uncultivated which are easily reversible in the short-term but increasingly difficult as the bush encroaches or others lay claim to it. Property disputes may surface easily when there are opportunities to contest inheritance because institutions governing landholding are complex.

The material losses that many practitioners refer to when reflecting on HIV impact, particularly the liquidation of assets or savings to cover the cost of death or illness, are an indication of deeper events. The loss of material things is often coupled with the dilution of social solidarity and social bonds as the sick and the troubled call in their social and familial obligations (Barnett and Whiteside, 2006). As a result of gender or class differences, this does not happen equally: men have more assets than women, the better off have more resources to call on and for longer than the poor. As a result most practitioners also acknowledged the relationship between poverty and HIV/AIDS, particularly as limited options pushed vulnerable groups into dangerous coping strategies. For example many groups interviewed claimed that women and girls might engage in transactional sex as a coping strategy if a shock such as a crop failure impacted a household.

According to many practitioners, another significant driver of livelihood insecurity was difficulties in accessing land and other resources by the most vulnerable households. These included female-headed households affected by inheritance disputes. In some instances property grabbing or dispossession was causing destitution. When combined with evidence that female-headed households tend to be poorer in general than their male-headed household neighbours, NGOs face a serious challenge to devise means to protect the rights of poor households (and particularly poor female-headed households) to land within future poverty alleviation and rural development strategies. Some answers are already evident within local responses as there are examples, such as in the Kangoma Community in Mulanje, where widow dispossession has been actively engaged by community structures. This was partly facilitated by Oxfam and the local government through awareness raising part driven by local drama groups.

¹⁰ Barnett, T and Whiteside, A., 2006: *Aids in the Twenty-First Century: Disease and Globalisation*, Palgrave/Macmillan, New York.

As a result of these and other multiple stressors, it was felt that many communities had not really recovered since the livelihoods crisis of 2001 and were definitely worse off than during the 1990s. In particular the erosion of assets meant that the resilience of many households had decreased. Resilience implies that a household or community has the ability to absorb shocks (such as the death of a household head) and stresses (such as limited access to health services) because they have well-diversified assets and conduct a range of livelihood activities. In a diversified household, if one productive activity does not provide enough, or fails completely, there are other sources of livelihood that the household can fall back on.

However, some practitioners also argued that there was evidence of increasingly diversified livelihood strategies being employed. This was the case in Mongu, Western Zambia, which was allegedly a result of communities utilising the different environmental options available as they sought alternative strategies in a changed environment. An interesting indicator of change was the increased use of cassava to supplement maize, as its drought-resistant qualities were increasingly recognised by communities. Despite this optimism around livelihood diversification, it was conceded that many coping strategies, utilised during times of stress, had become normalised.

The Concept of Coping

Some field practitioners felt that they did not fully understand community coping strategies in times of stress. In other words, the short-term modification of livelihood activities in the face of a shock or stress should be better integrated into programming. Such understanding was deemed essential if responses were to build livelihoods and underpin resilience.

However, it was raised in the field that the actual concept of coping needs to be questioned in some contexts, particularly that of high HIV/AIDS impact. Focusing on coping strategies in situations of food stress and in the context of HIV/AIDS may imply that people do cope with the situation and will ultimately recover from a transitory change to their livelihoods. However, this fails to distinguish between “erosive” (unsustainable, undermining resilience) and “non-erosive” (easily reversible) strategies that may be adopted. HIV/AIDS, by its complex nature, often implies that these strategies will be erosive, particularly when entwined with the range of other factors affecting livelihoods in southern Africa.

Consumption reducing and switching strategies are generally the first line of defence against food shortage. Households may, for example, switch to “wild foods” or skip entire days without eating. Another option for households under stress is 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, stationary). The “erosive” nature of such a strategy is the diminishing stock of human capital for future livelihood options. Another “negative” for food security is that these children may be removed from school feeding schemes and denied opportunities for nutritional balance.

In related literature, some commentators have challenged the usefulness of the concept of “coping strategies” in some situations. Rugalema, for example, emphasises the negative effect of HIV/AIDS-induced illness and death on the ability to produce food, schooling of children, cropping patterns, livestock production, the allocation of labour, access to productive assets and the consumption of goods and services essential for household maintenance and reproduction (2000)¹¹. In many instances households have been unable to secure these livelihood outcomes and therefore a concept that implies that the household is managing or persevering is misleading.

It should also be recognised that households often do not act in accordance to a previously formulated plan or strategy but react to the immediate need by disposing assets when they run out of alternatives. When HIV/AIDS impacts become severe, decisions are increasingly based on health needs and not on the importance and usefulness of assets. For example, in some cases, land has been abandoned and

¹¹ Rugalema, G., 2000: Coping or struggling: A journey into the impact of HIV/AIDS in southern Africa. Review of African Political Economy 86: 537-545.

sold formally and informally to meet medical costs, a situation that has long term implications for the food security of households dependent on own production.

Since coping strategies tend to be described as short-term responses to entitlement failure, they give an impression that it only requires negligible additional costs, in which case it obscures the true cost of coping. For example, while reducing the quantity and number of meals is a coping strategy it can also have long-term health implications. Similarly the withdrawal of children from schools (mostly girl children) has serious implications for future literacy levels and the child's participation in the modern economy. In essence, the use of the concept of "coping strategies" is appropriate in circumstances of drought or famine but not for the impact of HIV/AIDS, which not only changes communities and demographic patterns but also agro-ecological landscapes with long-term implications for recovery.

There are, however, more positive conceptualisations of coping strategies even in the context of HIV/AIDS. For example, De Waal *et al* argue that there are indications that traditional rural African coping strategies can mitigate the worst effects of AIDS where households are not subject to additional multiple stresses and when viewed over a short reference period of, for example, a couple of years (2005)¹². De Waal describes the complex factors that determine the success of these strategies including:

- The sex, age and position in the household of the ill/deceased person,
- The household socio-economic status,
- The type and degree of labour demand in the production system,
- The availability of labour support to affected households,
- Other livelihood opportunities,
- Available natural resources,
- The availability of formal and informal sources of support including credit and inter-household transfers,
- The length of time that the epidemic has been impacting upon the rural economy, and
- The existence of concurrent shocks such as drought and a commodity price collapse.

Other research, has also reiterated the factors that determine a household's ability to cope such as access to resources, household size and composition, access to resources of extended families and the ability of the community to provide support (Mutangadura, Mukurazita & Jackson, 1999)¹³. The interaction of these factors will determine the severity of the impact of HIV/AIDS on the household. Hence households that have higher incomes or better alternative resources are better able to cope with the impact of HIV/AIDS.

The key message here is that it should not be assumed that coping strategies are enabling households to manage or to persevere during a period of stress or shock, particularly when it is HIV/AIDS related and when there are multiple stresses over a period of time. In other words, programming must have a more nuanced understanding of whether individuals, households or communities are actually coping and what can be done to realistically bolster their resilience.

Implications from the Field

One of the most important lessons experienced by field practitioners across the many sites was the importance of livelihood diversification. Although this is well documented and is often a mantra in "development-speak", it is often a challenge to facilitate programmes that actually diversify livelihoods. Many practitioners agreed that households with more and better assets tended to have

¹² De Waal, A., Tumushabe, J., Mamdani, M. and Kilama, B., 2005: *HIV/AIDS and changing vulnerability to crisis in Tanzania: Implications for food security and poverty reduction*. Paper presented at the international Conference on HIV/AIDS and Food and Nutrition security, Durban, 14-16 April, 2005.

¹³ Mutangadura, G., D. Mukurazita, and H. Jackson., 1999: *A review of household and community responses to HIV/AIDS epidemic in rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa*. UNAIDS Best Practice Collection. Geneva: UNAIDS.

diversified livelihood strategies and were probably more resilient in the face of shocks. These households also tended to have developed social networks that traversed rural and urban settings, which challenged the notion of a “rural livelihood”. This raises interesting opportunities about linking rural and urban programmes that weave a stronger asset base that households can utilise in diverse situations.

It was also clear across the case studies that communities preferred support that underpinned self-reliance rather than perpetuate dependency. It was often reflected that communities have their own mechanisms for identifying broader livelihood strategies but often lack the ability to put into practice as a result of HIV or poverty. Field interventions should recognise this as a starting point and ensure that community dialogue through participatory planning identifies these mechanisms as a basis for projects. The key, articulated by a range of field practitioners, was to enable people to construct livelihoods based on a diverse mix of activities. Some practical examples of these are presented in the following section.

Another key message was that livelihood insecurity should not be de-politicised if real changes are to be made. In many of the field sites, INGOs and their partners had experienced positive engagement with government when it came to working with the “hardware” of development, such as building school infrastructure and wells. Tensions often arose when it came to issues around governance or rights. Although rights of citizenship (access to health and other services, recourse to justice, etc) are central to livelihood security, working in these areas was seen to be the exclusive domain of government. In some instances INGOs had to be extremely careful about how they presented their rights-based programmes. This issue is discussed in more detail in the section entitled “rights and the role of the state”.

3. Promising Innovations

Building on the analysis above, the most promising field innovations were those that helped diversify livelihood strategies, which enabled people to be more resilient in the face of shocks. When reflecting on the rationale of many field interventions, the basic logic was that a household with well-diversified assets and livelihood activities cope better with shocks and stresses than one with a more limited asset base and few livelihood resources. Resilience may be shaped or created by some of the following key factors:

- Livelihood diversification;
- The role of social capital;
- Building of the asset base;
- Access to markets; and
- Formal sector employment and migration.

The following section will discuss a selection of interventions taken from the case studies to better understand these factors. As such they are clustered under the headings of the resilience factor concerned. Many of the interventions achieve more than one or two of these factors so this is simply a way of organising the discussion to draw attention to whether resilience was being achieved. It should be noted that this reflects a selection of interventions and is not intended to be comprehensive in terms of providing a catalogue of what was being done in each site.

Livelihood diversification

The lack of new initiatives was posited as a major reason why livelihoods had not recovered more significantly, particularly in places like Mongu in Western Zambia. As such, many programmes were too rigid or too focused on one dimension of a livelihood strategy to be effective. The integration of different issues would be a better way of engaging the full spectrum of livelihood strategies and enable beneficiary communities to choose and adapt what best suited their situation.

Although research around livelihoods was an operational norm of most organisations interviewed, discussions revealed that there needed to be more focus on the cultural underpinnings of livelihood strategies. In particular there needed to be a greater understanding of broader community resources and livelihood options of the past. For example, it was recognised that some households were never food insecure as they survived on a variety of different foods, including less popular traditional crops, throughout the year. Those dependent on food crops such as maize and cassava were perceived to be more vulnerable to food insecurity in a context of climate variability. Understanding the seasonal food types and cultural attitudes towards them, as well as sourcing seeds for propagation, would be useful for future interventions.

The emergency cash transfer scheme in Mongu was primarily set up by OGB as its sole response to projected household food deficits for a relatively short period of time, which provides some insights into the impact of cash on maintaining livelihood diversification during a crisis period. Recipients of cash transfers primarily purchased food with the cash, which helped protect consumption levels and reduced the need for piecework and gathering wild foods thus enabling recipients to work more on own agricultural production. Those households that did not receive relief did “cope” largely by intensifying existing livelihood strategies, including intensified piecework, greater reliance on wild foods and reducing household consumption¹⁴. They were able to benefit from indirect sharing of assistance and the greater availability of piecework. The evaluation and insights from OGB partner organisations also confirmed that the cash transfers had a positive effect on local economies creating multiplier effects. At least some food was purchased from local producers or farmers in neighbouring areas.

The role of social capital

One of the central issues in agricultural input programmes is the availability of labour within the household (or clusters of inter-related households). The impact of HIV/AIDS on food security suggests that households may suffer serious labour constraints, which means affected households might be unable to participate effectively in agricultural input programmes. However, the extent to which labour constraints are affecting participation in agricultural programmes remains unclear. In many instances, households with chronic illness are able to find sufficient labour through social networks. Research in Zambia maintains that the utility of labour-saving technology has been over-generalised, although such technologies may be appropriate for certain types of households and regions¹⁵. Other research argues that labour-saving technologies may even be harmful if they further drive down wage rates that are already falling due to HIV-induced cash-constraints on ability to hire¹⁶.

This reinforces the understanding that social norms and networks, also known as social capital, is key to local responses to stresses and shocks such as those induced by HIV/AIDS. It also confirms that some interventions, such as labour-saving technology, are blunt instruments in the reality of how people organise themselves to respond to a crisis. This emphasises the need to understand how social capital works, building this analysis into interventions. For example, emphasis should be placed on other ways of assisting the households described above, possibly such as cash transfers to help them with labour hire.

Building of the asset base

¹⁴ This indicates that there was not an acute crisis facing households in the two districts but a “moderately difficult year in which already chronic food insecurity and poverty was exacerbated by poor harvests” (Harvey & Marongwe, 2006).

¹⁵ Jayne, T.S., and Chapoto, A., 2005: Characteristics of individuals afflicted by AIDS-related mortality in Zambia. Working paper No. 14, Michigan State University, Food Security Research Project, Lusaka, Zambia.

¹⁶ Dorward, A. and Mwale, I., 2005: *Labor market and wage impacts of HIV/AIDS in rural Malawi*. Paper presented at the international Conference on HIV/AIDS and Food and Nutrition security, Durban, 14-16 April.

The building of a diversified asset base was a core component of many interventions. For example, the concept of “passing on” offspring (of goats and chickens), which was widespread in Malawi programmes, was acknowledged by staff in Zambia as having great potential for enabling households to create their own resilience. This was particularly so for the Mongu branch of the Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS, which recognised that this would have particular appeal for their membership.

Access to markets

The Mongu District Farmer Association (MDFA) were particularly concerned about increasing access to markets for their membership. It has been suggested in the development literature and reiterated in the field that farmer organisations perform three distinct functions in relation to addressing the production and marketing problems faced by farmers. Firstly, farmer groups take the lead in identifying and consolidating members’ demands for goods and services, thereby lowering the costs of commercial activities of doing business with smallholder farmers. In other words, create a local market. Secondly, farmer organisations lower their members’ production costs through the bulking of activities, especially group transport and group purchase of inputs, realising economies of scale where otherwise they could not as individuals. Thirdly, farmer organisations provide goods and services, such as access to information on prices and markets.

However, the major limiting factor facing the MDFA was accessing information around markets. It was recognised that a marketing system needed to be developed to give impetus to small-scale producers and enrich the local economy. It seemed that small-scale production in Mongu had not yet reached a level where the bulking of production activities (creating economies of scale) or group demands for services were major concerns. The sector was not yet developed enough for these to be prioritised although there were requests for scotch carts and a vehicle to enable produce to be collected and to ease access to members.

Formal sector employment and migration

Another dimension to building resilience, which was not emphasised by the organisations visited, was the role of formal sector employment and migration. In terms of the underlying causes of livelihood insecurity the decline in remittances from formal sector employment is one of the contributing factors in the last decade. Remittances, particularly from mining, that underwrote consumption back in the home areas as well as for providing funds to buy farm inputs, hire farm labour and tractors, and to invest in cattle, dried up as the sector faced increasing economic pressures and restructured. This was compounded by a decline in formal jobs in many regional cities along with falling wages in real terms, which effectively cut back on the urban remittances flowing back into the rural areas. Economic stagnation in many of the regional economies left governments without the revenues to invest, to provide services, or to subsidise their economies.

There was some focus on developing rural self-employment, particularly for women. Faced with the difficulties of offering rural women an exit route from poverty that depends on rising levels of production on their own or their family farms, practitioners were looking at other forms of rural self-employment, especially non-farm rural employment. The policy mix advocated by many agencies and implemented by partner organisations revealed a similar menu: the promotion of retailing enterprises, food processing or catering stalls, hairdressing, handicraft, tailoring and sewing, and small livestock enterprises.

One response in Mozambique has been to promote micro-credit schemes together with training of women in business skills. The promotion of groups or associations focuses on providing alternatives for women and attempts to overcome limitations imposed by economies of scale around marketing, transport or expensive equipment. Part of this approach has been to advocate for an “enabling environment” to encourage small business development and to overcome the problems of state inefficiency and bureaucratic hurdles. A major limitation encountered in this was that 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. In addition, this kind of enterprise is often abundant with an over-supply of products. To overcome some of these challenges the saving and credit group methodology has been used to some success.

There is, however, another trend that is not embraced by much of this analysis: the growing number of people seeking wage employment in places away from their rural homes in the labour market as casual or seasonal farm labourers or informal work in Maputo or South Africa. This is not so much a “new” trend but something that has been going on for decades. Some of this migration is within countries, to areas where there is economic growth such as on the Mozambique coastline. An important challenge for NGOs is whether this reflects a gap in analysis, recognising that there might be opportunities in looking at supporting such migrants. Such a focus could be on wage levels particularly on neighbouring estates (such as in southern Malawi or Manica), restaurants, holiday resorts. In other words, developing an explicit strategy about strengthening the bargaining position of these workers. This becomes even more urgent to offset potential exploitation whilst fledgling industries set up operation. This is a significant shift in focus for many NGOs that might provide an important topic of debate when considering existing livelihood interventions. Such focus may revolve around defending human rights and the living standards of the poor. Perhaps this is an area for “new” kind of research and thinking.

4. Programming

In discussions with field staff a few key issues emerged as being central to “good programming”. Some of these have been highlighted here as an indication of priorities identified by local staff and partners. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive list of what programming should involve. An important theme that ran through many of the discussions on programming was that practitioners often did not need to look for “new” solutions, but rather focus on doing what they know, better.

Emphasising “integrated” programming

A common approach that emerged either in practice or in programming documents was that of an integrated development approach. Essentially this approach relies on close relationships with people in the community, establishes strong relationships with local government through key individuals who are directly engaged with decision-making and community extension, and takes a longer term perspective in terms of building a track record and an iterative learning process. It is looking at making small, incremental changes through a variety of tried and tested methods. This approach is able to include people living with HIV (PLWH) and their families because it is sufficiently close to the ground to see them and adapt the way they work to include them.

The major challenge facing community safety nets, and interventions such as home-based care, was that of linkages. It appeared from community discussions that in many instances interventions addressing the nexus between hunger, vulnerability and HIV/AIDS operated, at best, with linkages between a few interventions. The full range of “upstream” and “downstream” opportunities, needs or necessary linkages were seldom evident. For example, partner organisations facilitating a home-based care initiative may identify the need to link to a local health centre or clinic for the project to become sustainable or to identify market opportunities to sustain vegetable production within a communal garden. However, on a cautionary note, focusing on an already over-stretched and fragile state institution such as government health facilities in Malawi will not address immediate problems of nutrition, compensating volunteers, supporting households overburdened with dependents and finding sustainability beyond the partner exit strategy.

A discussion with the Mphonde HBC group in Malawi was illuminating in terms of the potential of linkages. It was recognised that households that absorb orphans need additional support, often in the form of food, as a result of increasing pressures on a low resource base. Although there was

reference to some “connection” between a vegetable garden and the HBC, this was not a key component of the initiative. Linkages between interventions need to be built upon existing structures, and other community-based initiatives – although this should not diminish linkages with external opportunities provided by other agencies, in particular the state. Thus a combination of interventions should be woven together to provide a safety net for the most vulnerable to prevent a fall into destitution and to create opportunities to underpin resilience.

Working with the health system

There was widespread agreement amongst the staff of the INGOs across the three case studies that increasing government and NGO co-operation focused on longer-term development was necessary with a decreasing emphasis on an emergency response. Government structures had the potential of being more permanent, which through a capacitating process could support communities in the long-term especially when the INGOs pulled out of an area. As emphasised in the following section, close co-operation and partnership with government opened opportunities for advocacy. The linkages with government structures would help create sustainable interventions, particularly if the national government could be held accountable to allocating sufficient resources to decentralised structures. In turn local government should be held accountable to work with local community-based institutions

A good example of where support to the state is necessary is within the district health system in Mongu. Zambia declared HIV/AIDS a public health emergency several years ago, meeting their commitment to domesticating the TRIPS agreement, which stipulates universal access to ARV across the country. A brief assessment of the hospital in Mongu and the cluster of health centres in the District around the hospital, it is clear that the medical authorities are trying to provide these services. The offices of the District Health Commissioner reveal a “war map” against which a strategy to provide health services, including access to ARV, is depicted with the clinics identified across a grid of roads and rivers. An interesting dimension to this map was that the clinics and roads crowded the southern part of the district, leaving large areas “untouched” by the state’s facilities. However, the map did not reveal a key limiting factor to the strategy: the reality is that the majority of people in Mongu cannot access the drugs because there is one CD4 count machine in Western Zambia, a crucial component of any effective ARV regime.

This raises interesting challenges for INGOs operating in the area. Discussions with staff indicated that there is increasing need to focus on supporting the capacity building of this system through the District Health Forum that might operate as a vehicle to lobby central government for the provision of CD4 count machines to enable ARV to be more widely accessible. In other words, this alliance of NGOs, CBOs and local government authorities are trying to use the legal framework to develop a strategy to hold the Zambian government accountable.

A similar situation emerged in Mozambique. Oxfam-GB is beginning to focus on 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 act¹⁷. 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.

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

¹⁷ MSF, (2002) “Equitable access: scaling up HIV/AIDS treatment in developing countries”, www.accessmed-msf.org

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. 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 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.

There thus seems to be a renewed interest in the role of INGOs in working with existing state capacity at local level and helping to streamline systems and ensuring linkages between the various institutional formations. Part of this seems to be a focus on consolidating the delivery of basic social services, particularly around adequate health systems, which can make a significant contribution to securing livelihoods. This does, however, raise difficult institutional problems in terms of supporting government service provision.

Targeting

In theory it is easy to argue that public assistance to those with insecure livelihoods should be targeted to those in need. In practice, it is difficult and invidious to target when the shock faced is co-variant, and almost all households have been harmed. The pragmatic solution adopted by many agencies distributing relief food for general distribution, of discussing criteria for entitlement with local communities and their leaders – at ward or village level, and then allowing local people to make allocations according to their criteria, seems to work.

Participatory rural appraisal techniques have become an essential tool in terms of targeting as it enables a very close understanding of what is happening at community level. Existing targeting mechanisms used by partners of both Oxfam and Concern aimed to identify the poorest and most vulnerable and are usually able to identify vulnerability relating to HIV/AIDS through PRA. The presence of HIV/AIDS forces practitioners to examine existing criteria and expand these where appropriate. In the Joint Oxfam Programme in the Shire Highlands in Malawi, three categories of beneficiaries were identified to focus activities:

- The Innovative Group – which are people who have a more established source of livelihood security and have potential to engage in making markets work;
- The Adapting Group – which are people that require resource support to engage in sustainable livelihood activities; and
- The Coping Group – which are people who are deemed the most vulnerable through a lack of capacity to maintain a sustainable livelihood due to existing circumstances. They include HIV/AIDS affected households.

Oxfam agreed that at the outset of the programme it did not have an adequate understanding of the impact of HIV/AIDS on poor people and the demographic changes resulting from the epidemic. This led to an initial neglect of child-headed households. Integrating HIV/AIDS in a meaningful way through programme design built upon PRA that focused on the most vulnerable enabled the Joint Programme to engage with some of these issues.

It is important to recognise that community targeting may reflect embedded inequalities, and that there may be added difficulties in targeting HIV/AIDS-affected households in a context where the disease is highly stigmatised, or where people may not know their HIV status.

5. Rights and The Role of the State

The increase in the number of vulnerable households meant that any crisis, whether it be due to

climatic shocks, civil disturbance or economic mismanagement, becomes increasingly difficult for the communities to absorb. The ongoing situation of livelihood insecurity raises important questions about the role of the state and suggests that new needs for social protection are emerging, which are different from the past. The entwined factors, which have been described in section two, all impact negatively on informal social security systems and generally compound the poverty and vulnerability of people throughout the region.

The (Re)-Emergence of Social Protection

During a number of discussions, particularly with the district offices of the Concern and Oxfam, the concept of social protection was discussed. Although this term had a variety of meanings in terms of how practitioners presented it, it was clear that the concept was regarded as an important response to the underlying vulnerability of communities. In other words it was emerging at field level in terms of a need for coherent strategies to combat the current livelihood crisis. This was partly in recognition that projects, even if successful, were not providing the scale of impact that was necessary to underpin resilience and bolster livelihoods. This raised questions around state-NGO interaction in terms of providing social protection that might provide the basis for large-scale impact on poverty and livelihood insecurity.

In development debates more generally, the emphasis on social protection has led to a renewed focus on options for supporting social groups that are in danger of becoming destitute, particularly in the context of HIV/AIDS. The emphasis, however, has moved from short-term safety nets to longer-term social security and other initiatives that attempt to reduce the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups¹⁸. This may be done through providing income or consumption transfers to the poor, protecting the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhancing social status and the rights of the marginalised. There is therefore a shift in focus onto mechanisms that prevent people from falling into destitution when a shock hits, and to mechanisms that promote livelihoods and reduce dependence on social assistance. These mechanisms must ultimately focus on the structural causes of vulnerability.

Social protection is thus more than just focusing on safety nets to enable coping, as it shifts towards identifying possible linkages between the protection of people's livelihoods and the promotion of people's livelihoods through economic growth¹⁹. In a simplification, social protection should reduce risk and vulnerability and encourage pro-poor growth that can be pursued in order to provide protection both to the "active poor", enabling them to participate more productively in economic activity, and to the less active poor.

There is a growing understanding that social protection when well designed, managed by institutions with adequate capacity, and placed within a broader strategic framework, such systems can be affordable and not only save the poor from destitution but empower them to self reliance²⁰. In addition the need to look at regular, predictable and appropriate transfers has arisen as the impact of the HIV epidemic is increasingly recognised as creating a long-term humanitarian crisis.

However, despite this increased focus, the likelihood of social protection being provided by national governments in the short-term is not promising, as major constraints exist such as fiscal austerity within state institutions. In addition, given the close linkages between chronic and transitory food insecurity, the challenge arises how best to support people through short-term crises while reducing their long-term vulnerability. This provides a number of challenges for INGOs in considering if and how they could work with governments to provide social protection.

¹⁸ IDS In Focus, Issue 01: Social Protection, May 2006, www.ids.ac.uk

¹⁹ Devereux, S and Sabates-Wheeler, R, 'Transformative Social Protection', October 2004, IDS Working Paper 232.

²⁰ The Kalomo cash transfer scheme is an example of how such thinking is evolving and becoming "mainstreamed" within government thinking despite criticisms of such systems creating dependency and undermining economic activity.

A case in point is that of Concern in Manica Province, Mozambique. 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. 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-combatants, 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.

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 agencies. Concern in Manica is embracing this challenge and using political change and governance issues to underpin a new strategy of development in the province.

Using “political capital” to underpin development

Working with a rights-based approach, often focused on governance issues around service delivery and accountability to citizenship, requires a careful strategic approach in countries where governments are beginning to feel pressure about “failure of delivery”. In many instances, but in particular Mozambique, the Government is 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 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 in Manica. 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.

Another challenge for INGOS and their partners is 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. This raises challenges for INGOs 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 the Land Law in Mozambique, requires mechanisms to “draw down community rights”, which need to be facilitated by civil society organisations.

6. Meeting the Humanitarian Imperative?

The humanitarian imperative is essentially for INGOs such as Oxfam International and Concern to intervene in response to suffering – and to save lives and livelihoods. Standard development practice focuses on social and economic development, punctuated by occasional emergencies that require short-term relief until people get “back on track”. The advent of AIDS in particular underscores the

fact that “business as usual” is no longer applicable, as this “creeping disaster” has steadily eroded the livelihood base of millions of people. This raises an imperative for agencies to seriously consider their medium and long-term assistance priorities, as “silo-orientated”, fragmented development support. The challenge for agencies entails formulating responses that account for the extended and structural nature of the livelihoods crisis, while also responding effectively where people faced a devastating decline in their ability to support themselves. There is thus a need for sustained welfare support to continue at least into the medium term implemented through a comprehensive strategic analysis of the nature of the crisis and how to reduce vulnerability. In all the studies it was widely acknowledged that vulnerability had increased as a result of a complex set of issues, including rapid economic decline, the erosion of traditional structures and increasing poverty over the past decade.

A key question posed to practitioners in the field was the appropriateness of the response to meet this imperative. Not surprisingly the responses varied according to the nature of the interventions personnel were involved in and the duration in which they had been implemented. Taken from aggregate figures in terms of providing a mix of interventions for upwards of 800,000 people in three countries, Oxfam-GB, as one of several Oxfam International partners, is achieving a great deal. However, when focusing on particular places of operations where such a figure quickly becomes disaggregated, field practitioners become more circumspect.

In the Shire Highlands in Malawi, for example, it was felt that Oxfam was meeting its imperative particularly as programming was being successfully integrated. Similarly in Kaomo and Mongu in Western Zambia, the sites of the emergency cash transfer programme, it was felt by staff and validated by independent evaluation that lives and livelihoods had been saved. The integration of this short-term intervention with longer-term processes was a criticism although it should be reasoned that an emergency response does not by definition have the luxury of time to strategically integrate.

When stepping away from the response to the 2005/06 “acute phase of a chronic crisis”, an interesting debate emerges around INGOs meeting their humanitarian imperative. As a result of the multiple stressors identified earlier, it was felt that many communities had not really recovered since the livelihoods crisis of 2001 and were definitely worse off than during the 1990s. In particular the erosion of assets meant that the resilience of many households had decreased.

As has been mentioned earlier in this paper, in terms of engaging proactively with this situation and building sustainable livelihoods, most practitioners interviewed recognised the necessity of engagement with more “permanent” state structures. This was based on the argument that government structures had the potential of being more permanent, which through a capacitating process could support communities in the long-term especially when agencies pulled out of an area. In many ways the underlying problem is the constrained capacity of government to formulate and implement appropriate policies, in particular their ability to deliver key social services. The question arises as to what role NGOs can play in supporting governments in building this capacity, especially at local level. Capacity building should not imply training of personal alone but should also cover a range of other issues. Building on the work of others, it can be argued that capacity building has the following dimensions²¹:

- Ensuring that appropriate *policies* are in place (i.e. appropriate analysis of the underlying problem and the commensurate policy frameworks to guide responses);
- Providing sufficient *funds* to implement policies;
- Employing professional *personnel* in sufficient numbers to undertake a wide range of tasks;
- Equipping staff with appropriate *skills and expertise*, via a range of in-house and other training programmes;

²¹ See Cousins, B (2005) “Agrarian reform and the “two economies: transforming South Africa’s Countryside”. Draft chapter for a forthcoming book on “The Land Question in South Africa: the challenge of transformation and redistribution”, edited by Ruth Hall and Lungisile Ntsebeza (2005). Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies, School of Government, University of Western Cape.

- *Structuring* the institutions to ensure efficiency and effectiveness;
- *Streamlining systems and procedures*;
- *Managing* programmes and projects effectively; and
- Building systems (e.g. monitoring and evaluation) to maximise *learning from experience* and the inevitable mistakes that will be made.

There may be a role for NGOs in working with existing capacity at local level (within an operational area for example) and helping to streamline systems and ensuring linkages between the various institutional formations at that level. Part of this may be to consolidate the delivery of basic social services, particularly around adequate health, education and clean water supplies, which can make a significant contribution to securing livelihoods. For example, the case of the health system in Mongu, Western Zambia, and the cluster of health centres in the District around the state hospital provides opportunities for both OGB and Concern to consolidate the capacity of the state to meet its obligation to its citizenship, as well as meet the longer term humanitarian imperative. OGB, in beginning to engage with this challenge elsewhere (in Manica Province, Mozambique), has followed a similar line to MSF although broadened the focus beyond treatment to health care in general. This does, however, raise difficult institutional problems in terms of supporting government service provision.

7. Challenging Issues

A number of challenging issues emerged from this research, of which the most pressing have been highlighted here.

It was widely acknowledged that vulnerability had increased as a result of a complex set of issues, including rapid economic decline, the erosion of traditional structures and increasing poverty over the past decade. An important reflection from these discussions was the increased burden on kinship support with a resultant decrease in resilience. Thus in summary there was an emerging consensus that livelihood insecurity was often triggered by 'climatic stress but driven by:

- Soil degradation / environmental stress;
- Economic shocks (price of staples);
- Reduced employment opportunities;
- Growing poverty;
- HIV/AIDS;
- Weakening capacity for service delivery (becoming "normalised");
- Inadequate policy (agriculture in particular);
- Increasing isolation of some areas; and
- Land access (particularly for vulnerable households).

It should be noted that however alluring these points are, an analysis of the region should avoid generalisations. Undoubtedly there are common features such as HIV/AIDS and the certainty that there will be uncertain rainfall, but equally there are nationally or locally specific components to this situation. A few gaps in the analysis presented by practitioners was also noted:

- Governance failure, which only recognised by some groups;
- Declining quality and access to key social services such as health and education; and
- Longer terms historical analysis beyond the last decade.

In terms of responses to the underlying situation, most practitioners across agencies agreed that households with more and better assets tended to have diversified livelihood strategies and were probably more resilient in the face of shocks. These households also tended to have developed social networks that traversed rural and urban settings, which challenged the notion of a "rural livelihood".

A quick overview of livelihood responses commonly applied across the three countries has been tabled below. As demonstrated, there is a relatively common set of intervention options that characterise livelihood programmes. What is surprising is that there were relatively few examples of interventions to develop diversified livelihoods and that these often occur in relative isolation of each other in “silos”.

The differences between the agencies were more evident within countries as there tended to be shared approaches regionally. For example in Mongu, Western Zambia, it appeared that Concern were working more strategically with government than were OGB. In contrast, the long established Shire Highlands Project raised the accolades of District Officials as an example of good practice. A key message shared across the agencies was that livelihood insecurity should not be de-politicised if real changes are to be made. In many of the field sites, INGOs and their partners had experienced positive engagement with government when it came to working with the “hardware” of development, such as building school infrastructure and wells. Tensions often arose when it came to issues around governance or rights. Although rights of citizenship (access to health and other services, recourse to justice, etc) are central to livelihood security, working in these areas was seen to be the exclusive domain of government. In some instances INGOs had to be extremely careful about how they presented their rights-based programmes.

Table 1: Typology of food security interventions

Food availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase domestic food production through input supply, credit, production technologies, storage and processing • Market development • International and intra-regional trade promotion • Grain storage – particularly community storage facilities and national Strategic Grain Reserves • Food aid
Food access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incomes (income generating activities) • Social transfers – cash and food transfers • Price controls and subsidies • Credit and savings
Food utilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care practices (food preparation and child care) • Interactions with hygiene, sanitation and health • Education – food preparation, preservation, distribution • Nutrition – dietary diversity
Food stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency response • Risk reduction • Safety nets

Source: Adapted from Maunder and Wiggins, 2006²²

In theory it is easy to argue that public assistance to those with insecure livelihoods should be targeted to those in need. In practice, it is difficult and invidious to target when the shock faced is co-variant, and almost all households have been harmed. When reflecting on vulnerability in general, it was stressed that groups likely to be worse off were women and girls, children — especially those orphaned by AIDS — the elderly, the sick, the disabled, those without education or formal skills, and the landless. The implication of this was that in order to understand the reality of vulnerability on the ground and to develop effectively targeted interventions, a disaggregated approach to rural communities was required and an understanding of power relations within these groups, with a commitment to reaching those who are most at risk. In particular, a focus on gender relations was crucial in this regard.

The pragmatic solution adopted by many agencies distributing relief food for general distribution, of

²² Nick Maunder and Steve Wiggins, 2006, “Food Security in Southern Africa: Changing the Trend?” Review of lessons learnt on recent responses to chronic and transitory hunger and vulnerability, Oxfam-GB, World Vision International, CARE, RHVP and OCHA, Discussion Draft, September.

discussing criteria for entitlement with local communities and their leaders – at ward or village level, and then allowing local people to make allocations according to their criteria, seems to work. However, it is important to recognise that community targeting may reflect embedded inequalities, and that there may be added difficulties in targeting HIV/AIDS-affected households in a context where the disease is highly stigmatised, or where people may not know their HIV status. There may be possible tensions with the rights based approach in this regard.

Across many of the projects, the full range of “upstream” and “downstream” opportunities, needs or necessary linkages that the “resilience lens” raises were not always fully exploited or utilised. For example, market opportunities to sustain vegetable production within a communal garden in Swaziland. This is often a result of the intense focus of projects and achieving the core objectives promised to funding sources or other external agents. Seeking the upstream and downstream linkages entails taking through a longer-term view of the intervention and its possible impact.

The emerging analysis demonstrates that many interventions being implemented across the region are often at project or community level. As such many may be described as “boutique” projects that are expensive and locally effective. While many small-scale interventions may be successful, their scale often limits their impact. If these interventions are to meet the needs at the scale required across the region then an understanding of how to achieve the coverage necessary to meet this challenge is required. The challenge is how projects can be replicated to reach a large proportion of the overall population. In this regard external agencies are challenged to address the fundamental question: how can small-scale initiatives be scaled up or replicated to ensure that the greatest number of communities benefit across a broader geographical area or space. Part of the solution lies in integrating activities within the core activities of government. Based on a recent study undertaken by IFPRI (2005)²³, the following guiding principles can serve as an initial discussion around scaling up:

- Overall, keep in mind context, institutional arrangements, capacity, and the triggers and different processes of scaling-up.
- Donors and governments need to think of the process beyond the project, of transformation or transition, not exit. They need to balance push and pull factors and avoid “supply-driven demand-driven development”. Community-driven is citizen-driven, not client-driven.
- Capacity is pivotal and is more than simply resources; it includes motivation and commitment that necessitates appropriate incentives at all levels. Capacity development takes time and resources but is an essential investment. The capacity and commitment of facilitators and local leaders is particularly important.
- Learn by doing - and by communicating, monitoring, evaluating, and changing. Learn from failure, but learn faster from success. Start with the positive (what’s working), not the problem (what isn’t), and build on that. Be adaptive, flexible, and open to change. Anticipate and address trade-offs. Apply realistic time horizons (10-15-year, not 5-year, cycles).
- Build a library of well-documented, context-specific experiences through good monitoring, evaluation, and operational research. Use these to advocate for improvements in the contextual environment.
- To sustain interventions, anchor it within existing contextual systems (government), frameworks (for example poverty reduction strategy policies), and processes (decentralisation), even where these may be imperfect. The ultimate aim is to weave and embed sustainable interventions in national social, political, cultural, and institutional fabric.

Building interventions based upon local practice implies a degree of community mobilisation to firstly identify such options and secondly to ensure their sustainability. Community mobilisation is a capacity building process through which individuals, groups and organisations plan, carry out and evaluate activities on a participatory and sustained basis to achieve an agreed-upon goal, either on their own

²³ See Gillespie, S. 2004. Scaling up community-driven development: a synthesis of experience. Food Consumption and Nutrition Division Discussion Paper 181. Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

initiative or stimulated by others. One of the most fundamental elements of community mobilisation is to consider the various degrees to which communities participate in a given project. These range from co-option, compliance, consultation, cooperation, co-learning to collective action. The closer one gets to collective action, the more likely that ownership and sustainability will be achieved. A coherent strategy around community mobilisation that is flexible and dynamic must be developed if some consistency in impact is to be achieved across sites.

8. Suggestions for a “Way Forward”

In conclusion it should be recognised that this synthesis paper and the three country case studies emerged out of an iterative, participatory process with field staff. A number of “debriefing” sessions were held in person with district offices and, where possible, country office staff. In these sessions, practitioners were challenged to think through some of the observations and to identify ways of taking forward some of the “lessons learned”, which in turn fed back into the reflection and reporting. The following debriefing sessions took place during the process of the research:

<p>Malawi Joint Oxfam Programme in Malawi Programme Manager Shire Highlands Sustainable Livelihood Programme: Oxfam staff and District Government Officials Concern Worldwide Staff (via email on completion of Malawi case study)</p>
<p>Mozambique Concern Worldwide Staff, Manica Province Concern Worldwide Staff, National Office (via telephone and email after completion of Mozambique case study)</p>
<p>Zambia Concern Worldwide Staff, Mongu, Western Zambia Oxfam-GB Staff, Mongu, Western Zambia Concern Worldwide and Oxfam-GB Staff, Head Office, Lusaka</p>
<p>Regional Representatives of Concern Worldwide, Oxfam International (Novib), Oxfam-GB, SARP Representatives of Oxfam-GB and Concern Worldwide, Lusaka, Zambia</p>

In terms of challenging staff to think through their programming and to take forward some of the discussions, the following example is provided. In Western Zambia it was suggested that the evaluation of the emergency cash transfer programme in Mongu be discussed and debated in a space provided by the District Disaster Management Committee. It was agreed that this could lead to debates and discussions in Mongu about different forms of safety nets and the appropriate roles of different agencies. Apart from debating the merits and demerits of an emergency-based cash transfer programme, other interesting debates around linkages would be helpful for agencies. In a number of “reflective” discussions facilitated with OGB, Concern and their partners, it was evident that a cash transfer programme should in future be linked to longer-term development opportunities. For example, microfinance groups, farmers’ organisations, and savings clubs would all add another dimension to the initiative.

Another way that organisations involved could continue to be engaged in a reflective process is for the short country reports to be circulated and presented by a practitioner in a short session. In this way further inputs or points of clarification could be identified and integrated into the reports. This may be useful in the period before programming proposals are being finalised. In addition, the three case studies should be shared across countries to facilitate comparison and lesson learning. Where appropriate exchange visits could be organised.

It is also suggested that SARP facilitate electronic media discussions around some of the issues. A number of briefings were prepared, for example on social protection and the progressive land law in Mozambique, which elicited some commentary from regional expertise. This process could be

continued around some of the “challenging issues”, which were identified and discussed in the previous section.

In terms of new areas of focus for the agencies concerned, it seemed that debates around formal sector employment and migration, particularly in Mozambique, were important when considering opportunities and challenges to development work in the future. Another area, which has received significant attention, is social protection. Although widely researched and discussed, there is still uncertainty about what it is and the implications for agencies. This is part of a growing shift in the region amongst INGOs and their partners to reconsidering the role of the state and how best to engage with the immense challenges of institutional change in a fast changing political environment.

Finally, a key challenge that bears repeating and which has re-emerged in debates is that of scaling up. The challenge is how projects can be replicated to reach a large proportion of the overall population. In this regard external agencies are challenged to consider how small-scale initiatives be scaled up or replicated to ensure that the greatest number of communities benefit across a broader geographical area or space.

Annexure One: Zambia

1. Background

A number of Concern Worldwide and Oxfam-International projects were visited in Zambia between the 1st and 10th of May 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 region²⁴. The project consisted of a blend of policy level discussions with organisations such as Concern, Oxfam-GB, Women for Change, and HODI and on-site reflections of field staff currently engaged in development work in Mongu District in Western 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 Zambia have been grouped as common themes.

2. Livelihoods in Western Province

Discussions with staff of the Concern and OGB district offices, as well as partners of both organisations, provided a rich understanding of diverse livelihood strategies across Western Province. In many ways a shared analysis emerged around the drivers of food insecurity with some differences in terms of the emphasis.

Overall livelihoods have been seriously impacted since the 2001 regional livelihoods crisis, exacerbated by the outbreak of livestock disease (contagious bovine plural pneumonia, CBPP) that decimated the asset base of many people. The reduction in cattle affected food crop production, as cattle provide draught power and field fertilisation for essentially poor, sandy soils, which resulted in a decrease in the size of cultivated land per household²⁵.

Livelihoods in Western Zambia also to a large extent depended on rain-fed agriculture and access to labour. Thus the impact of climate variation, in particular rainfall failure, and chronic illness were perceived to be the major drivers of food insecurity. Rainfall variation coupled with high temperatures in the 2004/5 production season significantly reduced both cereal and non-cereal yields in many districts in Western Zambia. This combined with other underlying vulnerabilities such as weakening capacity of service delivery, particularly in terms of agricultural extension and inputs, reduced many households access to food and other essential non-food items.

This limited resource base within government, has “normalised”, for a variety of reasons and has had its effect on food insecurity. For example, the fact that there was no veterinary services or cattle inoculation meant that the onslaught of CBPP was seen as an unfortunate livelihood shock rather than a preventable disease that should have been averted as a right²⁶.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ Pigs and goats have been promoted as an alternative to cattle, which has impacted negatively on the environment, particularly the sensitive flood plains.

²⁶ The current emphasis on goats as an alternative to cattle may be undermined by CCPP for goats, which decimated this livestock population in West Pokot in Kenya in the late 1990s, without linking it to an inoculation programme.

HIV/AIDS was also widely recognised as a major driver of food insecurity. The Food Security Assessment conducted by Concern and MDFA claimed that a high number of people had inadequate information about HIV/AIDS; many in rural areas look at HIV as a disease of town people who return to the village to be cared for when sick²⁷. Typically respondents did not suspect the chronically ill to be suffering from AIDS but are thought to have been bewitched.

An important dimension to this relationship was the urban-rural connection whereby urban-based family members, who being more exposed to HIV, often returned to their rural home with AIDS. The double burden of caring for the sick and the loss of an urban remittance thus exacerbated the situation faced by many rural households. The fact that many households were now “preoccupied” with caring for those who were sick meant that available resources were not focused on sustainable livelihoods.

The relationship between poverty and HIV/AIDS was also acknowledged, particularly as limited options pushed vulnerable groups into dangerous coping strategies. For example many groups interviewed claimed that women and girls commonly engaged in transactional sex as a coping strategy if a shock such as a crop failure impacted a household.

According to many practitioners, another significant driver of food insecurity was difficulties in accessing land and other resources by the most vulnerable households. These included female-headed households affected by inheritance disputes. In some instances property grabbing or dispossession was causing destitution. This in turn often led to women being forced into sex work leading to heightened exposure to HIV infection. When combined with evidence that female-headed households tend to be poorer in general than their male-headed household neighbours, International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) face a serious challenge to devise means to protect the rights of poor households (and particularly poor female-headed households) to land within future poverty alleviation and rural development strategies.

As a result of these multiple stressors, it was widely felt that many communities had not really recovered since the livelihoods crisis of 2001 and were definitely worse off than during the 1990s. In particular the erosion of assets such as livestock meant that the resilience of many households had decreased. Resilience implies that a household or community has the ability to absorb shocks (such as the death of a household head) and stresses (such as limited access to health services) because they have well-diversified assets and conduct a range of livelihood activities²⁸. As a result many households or communities in Mongu had weakened capacity to anticipate, manage, resist or recover from the impact of a natural or other threat. In other words, they were more vulnerable to changes around them.

However, some practitioners also argued that there was evidence of increasingly diversified livelihood strategies being employed across the district. This was largely a result of communities utilising the different environmental options available as they sought alternative strategies in a changed environment²⁹. For example, a Food Security Assessment conducted by Concern and the Mongu District Farmer Association (MDFA) challenged the notion that livelihoods in Western Zambia were based only on subsistence farming of staple food crops such as maize. The report held that sources other than own food production made up 57 percent of total food sources and that up to 43 percent of food needs were purchased or exchanged for labour in Mongu district.

Despite this optimism around livelihood diversification, it was conceded that many coping strategies, utilised during times of stress, had become normalised. For example, the increased use of mango

²⁷ Concern (2005) “Food Security assessment Final Report”, August, Mongu, Zambia.

²⁸ In a diversified household, if one productive activity does not provide enough, or fails completely, there are other sources of livelihood that the household can fall back on.

²⁹ An interesting indicator of change was the increased use of cassava to supplement maize, as its drought-resistant qualities were increasingly recognised by communities.

porridge outside of the hungry season, as well as dependence on wild foods was increasingly common. It was also acknowledged that fishing and fish trading, as an increasingly important source of income, would likely fall under increasing pressure due to environmentally unsustainable methods³⁰.

3. Working with Institutions

In terms of responding to livelihood insecurity and the multiple facets underpinning the “triple threat”, a number of lessons were observed around working with existing institutions. These include the interaction between existing government institutions, such as the District Disaster Management Committee and the Health Forum.

There was widespread agreement amongst the staff of the INGOs that increasing government and NGO co-operation focused on longer-term development was necessary with a decreasing emphasis on an emergency response. Government structures had the potential of being more permanent, which through a capacitating process could support communities in the long-term especially when the INGOs pulled out of an area. However, it was not a given that government structures were permanent as evidenced by the reduction of the extension services due to government neglect and changes induced by structural adjustment.

Despite a general consensus that working with government was necessary, there were important differences in opinion about the terms of this interaction. In particular this involved concerns about being “controlled” by local government and relinquishing the independence of INGO work traditionally “outside” that of the state. These concerns appeared relevant, particularly in a context where agencies needed to move fast in order to respond effectively to an emergency situation. An inadequately prepared DDMC could prove to be a hindrance in some situations. Another fear included being associated with or being drawn into government “white elephants” (for example costly but ineffective agricultural stations) might impact on the legitimacy of INGO interventions.

Overall it was, however, recognised that close co-operation and partnership with government opened opportunities for advocacy. The linkages with government structures would help create sustainable interventions, particularly if the national government could be held accountable to allocating sufficient resources to decentralised structures. In turn local government should be held accountable to work with local community-based institutions.

In practice, Concern had actively sought strong partnerships with local government structures. Their support (“capacitating”) of the District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC) at the District Commissioner Office was intended to support the co-ordination of different interventions across Mongu. The DDMC were mandated by national government to co-ordinate responses to disasters, including slow-onset emergencies that required concerted long-term planning. Discussions with the District Commissioner and two members of his staff, including the Director of Planning, emphasised a need to move away from dependency in Mongu district. This “syndrome” was seen to be prevalent as a result of widespread food aid and community expectations around handouts. Essentially the DDMC was struggling with moving the focus in Mongu away from a relief and rehabilitation mode to that of long-term development that would ensure disaster preparedness partly through underpinning community resilience. The DDMC believed that they should identify and target areas most in need and then direct agencies to operating in appropriate areas. However, at present the Committee remained under-funded, evident by a lack of vehicles in an area without adequate road infrastructure.

A gap in terms of sustainable partnerships for INGOs in Mongu was that of the private sector. According to head office staff interviewed, this limitation in Western Province was due to the position of the Traditional Barotse Royal Establishment, which discouraged private investors. Part of the

³⁰ A conflict of interest has arisen between fishing and agriculture where prolonged rainfall failure has forced farming communities to place rice fields along waterways, which affects water flows and fish numbers.

problem was around property rights and the control that the Establishment held over land. This kind of disincentive has been overcome in other parts of southern Africa, such as in Mozambique, where investors were encouraged through a framework that attempted to protect both their and community rights.

In terms of working with existing institutions to meet an existing need amongst communities, the example of the District Health System was illustrative. It was acknowledged that the high prevalence of HIV (at about 22%) would lead to a significant increase in AIDS cases, which would seriously impact on the overstretched health facilities. The inability of the district health system to cater for the sick would have to be supplemented by INGOs working strategically with these structures. In particular the increase in more effective HBC initiatives was mentioned. However, a view that was not articulated within Mongu was that HBC might be considered as “burden shifting” from the public health system back onto fragile household systems. This is not to condemn the very necessary HBC system but to raise awareness of the dangers of raising the expectations of what such a system could accomplish. In many ways it might overwhelm communities without careful linkages back to professional health support.

4. Strengthening Existing and New Livelihood Programmes in Mongu

When considering which interventions needed to be strengthened or attempted as something “new” in a context of HIV/AIDS, such responses need to be adapted to reflect specific vulnerabilities relating to the epidemic. As has been widely cited in development literature, one of the central issues in agricultural input programmes is the availability of labour within the household (or clusters of inter-related households). The impact of HIV/AIDS on food security suggests that households may suffer serious labour constraints, which means affected households might be unable to participate effectively in agricultural input programmes.

However, the extent to which labour constraints are affecting participation in agricultural programmes remains unclear. In many instances, households with chronic illness are able to find sufficient labour through social networks. Research in Zambia maintains that the utility of labour-saving technology has been over-generalised, although such technologies may be appropriate for certain types of households and regions³¹. Other research argues that labour-saving technologies may even be harmful if they further drive down wage rates that are already falling due to HIV-induced cash-constraints on ability to hire³². Emphasis may need to be placed on other ways of assisting these households, such as cash transfers to help them with labour hire.

When considering “new” options in terms of livelihood interventions that engaged with chronic and acute food insecurity and HIV/AIDS, it was widely recognised that very few innovative approaches had been attempted. This was apart from the OGB cash transfer project, which was designed as a humanitarian response and which was criticised by organisations outside of OGB partnerships. OGB staff in particular felt that the lack of new initiatives was part of the reason why livelihoods had not recovered more significantly. As such, OGB staff felt that many programmes in Mongu were too rigid or too focused on one dimension of a livelihood strategy to be effective. The integration of different issues would be a better way of engaging the full spectrum of livelihood strategies and enable beneficiary communities to choose and adapt what best suited their situation.

Although research around livelihoods was an operational norm of both OGB and Concern, discussions with staff from both organisations revealed that there needed to be more focus on the cultural underpinnings of livelihood strategies. In particular there needed to be a greater understanding of broader community resources and livelihood options of the past. For example, it

³¹ Jayne, T.S., and Chapoto, A., 2005: Characteristics of individuals afflicted by AIDS-related mortality in Zambia. Working paper No. 14, Michigan State University, Food Security Research Project, Lusaka, Zambia.

³² Dorward, A. and Mwale, I., 2005: *Labor market and wage impacts of HIV/AIDS in rural Malawi*. Paper presented at the international Conference on HIV/AIDS and Food and Nutrition security, Durban, 14-16 April.

was recognised that some households were never food insecure as they survived on a variety of different foods, including less popular traditional crops, throughout the year. Those dependent on food crops such as maize and cassava were perceived to be more vulnerable to food insecurity in a context of climate variability. Understanding the seasonal food types and cultural attitudes towards them, as well as sourcing seeds for propagation, would be useful for future interventions.

Another range of “new” options existed around the water canals and using these to underpin sustainable fishing and irrigation for certain crops through careful community planning and sharing of the water resources³³. Building on fishing and fish trading, although an obvious option for livelihood interventions, would need to take cognisance of a locally imposed three-month ban on fishing during the fish-breeding period. It was also evident that livestock projects did not include the concept of “passing on” offspring (of goats and chickens), which was widespread in Malawi and visibly appealed to partner organisations such as the Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS when discussed.

In terms of improving existing programmes, a limitation of HIV sensitisation programmes was identified. This was the lack of a livelihood base to provide broader opportunities to support people dealing with the epidemic. It was argued that sensitisation had to be linked to livelihood options for the messages to have meaning otherwise the lack of alternatives rendered the information meaningless. Despite investment into awareness campaigns, it was held that inadequate information around HIV/AIDS was widespread.

5. Cash Transfers in Mongu, Zambia

A significant “new” intervention visited in the district was Oxfam’s emergency cash transfer programme. The large-scale use of cash as an emergency response to food crises is relatively new for international NGOs. OGB implemented the unconditional cash transfer programme as its sole response to projected household food deficits as assessed by the VAC and INGOs and caused by low levels of rainfall in the cultivation season. OGB used assessment information available from the Zambian Vulnerability Assessment Committee and an INGO assessment, which both concluded that a large-scale relief response was needed in different areas in Zambia. In contrast, the assessment undertaken by Concern and MDFA concluded that the impact of drought would not be catastrophic given the highly developed set of livelihood options. A baseline study conducted by OGB confirmed that the two districts were not facing a humanitarian crisis with little sense of acute suffering.

Although the programme ended in March 2006 when crop harvests became available, it was part of an exploration into appropriate responses to acute food insecurity and intended to broaden Oxfam’s experience in using cash as a tool to respond in emergencies. This can be understood to be part of current thinking around social protection and in particular social transfers. OGB regional staff would like to see experiences gained in Western Province feed into longer-term social protection although at the time of planning they were solely thinking about mounting an appropriate response to acute needs

The cash transfer programme in Mongu and Kaoma district involved unconditional transfers of 90,000 Zambian Kwacha (equivalent to a standard food aid ration) per household per month to 13,500 vulnerable households for a four-month period³⁴. The programme aimed to assist households that were had a 50% or more reduction in their harvest. Targeting was a combination of geographic and community-based targeting, with the latter conducted by village level local committees using certain criteria. Standard Chartered Bank and a contracted security company delivered the cash to distribution points, using the police as armed guards. Bank and OGB staff distributed the cash in

³³ It was alleged that earlier work around clearing the canal network had stopped because of people’s access to relief food. Concern intended to revisit this in its latest strategy.

³⁴ For an evaluation of the cash transfer programme see Harvey, P and Marongwe, N (2006) ‘Independent Evaluation of Oxfam GB Zambia’s Emergency Cash-Transfer Programme.

individual envelopes to registered beneficiaries in person (or their named deputy). Several monitoring exercises were carried out throughout the exercise to analyse the impact of the programme, including an analysis of local markets.

According to the evaluation of the programme, the response seems to have played a preventative role, rather than responding to an acute crisis. Even those that did not benefit from the cash transfer directly were able to benefit from indirect sharing of assistance and the greater availability of piecework. Recipients of cash transfers primarily purchased food with the cash, which helped protect consumption levels and reduced the need for piecework and gathering wild foods thus enabling recipients to work more on own agricultural production. Those households that did not receive relief did “cope” largely by intensifying existing livelihood strategies, including intensified piecework, greater reliance on wild foods and reducing household consumption³⁵. The evaluation and insights from OGB partner organisations also confirmed that the cash transfers had a positive effect on local economies creating multiplier effects. At least some food was purchased from local producers or farmers in neighbouring areas.

During discussions with the DDMC it appeared that local government structures did not know about the cash transfer programme and felt that this would create dependency and erode existing livelihoods. However, the independent evaluation of the programme and discussions with OGB staff argued to the contrary. According to these sources, the DDMC had agreed that the initiative target specific vulnerable wards (as per their function). Nonetheless, it became clear through a number of discussions that OGB should have consulted more widely, particularly with government officials and the MDFA, at the outset of the project.

Part of the DDMC discourse around “co-ordination” was levelled against the cash transfer programme, which was perceived to run contrary to development programmes and to have created “dependency”. It seemed that there was some overlap in terms of the geographic area in which OGB and Concern operated, which had created some misunderstandings about intentions³⁶. It was also evident during discussions with organisations not directly involved in the programme that there was a perception that the programme had caused widespread anti-social behaviour. It was felt that the transfer could disrupt existing social dynamics within villages and would be misused. This was particularly expressed by the DDMC. The evaluation and OGB’s own monitoring argued that it seemed likely that any anti-social use was relatively limited.

Certainly communication was a major limiting factor in establishing the cash transfer programme. If the DDMC could act as a forum to facilitate better co-ordination and to act as a vehicle for communication, then it is recommended that such opportunities be explored. It seems opportune to present the independent evaluation of the cash transfer programme in a forum such as the DDMC and elicit a debate to increase understanding and learning about cash in an emergency situation. In the context of a nation-wide social protection scheme involving cash transfers intended to help alleviate poverty, knowledge about the role and impact of cash will prepare practitioners in Mongu for a not too distant reality of the Kalomo model rollout.

This could lead to debates and discussions in Mongu about different forms of safety nets and the appropriate roles of different agencies. Apart from debating the merits and demerits of an emergency-based cash transfer programme, other interesting debates around linkages would be helpful for agencies. In a number of “reflective” discussions facilitated with OGB, Concern and their partners, it

³⁵ This indicates that there was not an acute crisis facing households in the two districts but a “moderately difficult year in which already chronic food insecurity and poverty was exacerbated by poor harvests” (Harvey & Marongwe, 2006).

³⁶ Concern felt that OGB should have shared beneficiary lists, discussed definitions of vulnerability and targeting mechanisms as they were already operating in some wards where the cash transfer programme was implemented. They believed that their programme to support winter cropping should have been better co-ordinated particularly over the issue of targeting where it was felt that beneficiaries of the winter cropping programme should not have been targeted for cash transfers. In this way they felt their programme promoting “self reliance” was undermined.

was evident that a cash transfer programme should in future be linked to longer-term development opportunities. For example, microfinance groups, farmers' organisations, and savings clubs would all add another dimension to the initiative.

Overall there appeared to be a growing recognition that cash-based responses may have advantages in certain circumstances over other, more traditional, responses. The Mongu cash-transfer programme provides a real opportunity to learn about transfers other than food, and a forum should be considered by OGB and Concern to debate and discuss the merits and limitations of such a scheme now that an external evaluation of the programme has been completed. Locally-based discussions forums, providing "safe places" to debate for a wide range of sectors including government, grass-roots organisations and NGOs, is a key mechanism to improving responses to HIV/AIDS and livelihoods.

6. The Role of Farmer's Organisations

The Mongu District Farmer Association (MDFA) offers some important insights into building a sustainable programme with local commitment that engages directly with food security issues and the reality of AIDS as experienced by local farmers. The membership-organisation is self-initiated and through local grassroots structures works collectively to underpin a viable small-scale farming sector in the district. The District Association is constituted by a number of Area Farmers Associations at community level, which in turn are made up of Farmers Clubs at very local level. The MDFA is affiliated to the Zambian National Farmers Union but "not led by them" thereby giving expression to the importance of accessing national information but operating collectively at a district level. District level partnerships include the DDMC, the District Commissioner's office and organisations like Concern, which are partnering them to build capacity.

Key questions discussed with the MDFA was their role in increasing access to the markets for the farmers and the extent to which the opportunities presented filter through to the vulnerable groups of society. It has been suggested in the development literature and reiterated in the field that farmer organisations perform three distinct functions in relation to addressing the production and marketing problems faced by farmers. Firstly, farmer groups take the lead in identifying and consolidating members' demands for goods and services, thereby lowering the costs of commercial activities of doing business with smallholder farmers. In other words, create a local market. Secondly, farmer organisations lower their members' production costs through the bulking of activities, especially group transport and group purchase of inputs, realising economies of scale where otherwise they could not as individuals. Thirdly, farmer organisations provide goods and services, such as access to information on prices and markets.

Although the focus group discussion with the MDFA was not detailed enough to corroborate all these issues, some important insights were gained about collective action in Mongu. In particular the third function identified above was emphasised by the MDFA in that accessing information around markets was seen as a priority. It was recognised that a marketing system needed to be developed to give impetus to small-scale producers and enrich the local economy. It seemed that small-scale production in Mongu had not yet reached a level where the bulking of production activities (creating economies of scale) or group demands for services were major concerns. The sector was not yet developed enough for these to be prioritised although there were requests for scotch carts and a vehicle to enable produce to be collected and to ease access to members. The Association claimed that it did help ensure that marginalised or poorer farmers voices were heard through their structures. This was in some ways confirmed when the chairperson ensured that all members, and in particular women, were given the opportunity to express their opinions.

The MDFA offers an interesting example of self-sufficiency in a context where most local organisations identify "dependency" as a problem. The concept of "self sufficiency" as expressed by the MDFA was essentially a response to what they perceived as a culture of "hand-outs" since independence and an inconsistent and very general agricultural policy established by national

government that did not truly benefit the diversity and complexity of Barotseland within Western Province³⁷. They also recognised structural limitations to farming in the Western Province (the “most neglected of the nine province”), in particular an inadequate road infrastructure, smaller bridges to connect isolated areas, and a weak extension service including a neglect of any veterinary services. The impact of HIV/AIDS was also identified as a problem, particularly for younger people who were becoming sick as a result of the virus. This was recognised as impacting on entire families and their ability to farm productively.

The MDFA appeared to be a useful vehicle for Concern to identifying appropriate support needs, which required response either through existing channels or linking to the state. For example, many members argued that they needed to find ways to add value to their produce in order to become commercially viable, an express objective of the group. In this regard the MDFA identified the need to understand food preservation to sustain households during times of hunger, to enable markets to be found in time and to eliminate waste, particularly after the glut of mangoes and tomatoes that occurred each year. This included understanding appropriate technologies and the development of storage infrastructure such as sheds. A major limitation facing the farmers was the lack of government extension services, iterated by the fact that they received very little in terms of expertise or advice outside of the NGO sector. They also expressed a desire to implement conservation farming in Mongu, using techniques such as organic fertiliser, intercropping, and crop diversification and rotation.

Another dimension to the MDFA was that of providing a “home-grown” role model for communities struggling with livelihood insecurity. The Association believed that their experience should be shared across Mongu using radio and other media, and through the establishment of a tape and document library where aspirant farmers can learn “from other farmers”. The Association also identified the role of media, particularly radio, in HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns, which were not seen to access rural areas. A limitation to radio was that many farmers did not possess radio or could afford new batteries, which raised the question of disseminating wind-up radios along Association structures.

Working with groups of farmers, particularly groups that have emerged from grassroots organisations, provides real opportunities for Concern and Oxfam to strengthen livelihood activities within their programme areas, as well as creating channels through which HIV/AIDS interventions can be delivered.

7. Women for Change

Women for Change is a Zambian NGO committed to working with and empowering remote rural communities, especially women, through gender analysis and awareness raising, human rights education, popular education methodologies and advocacy.

Having worked with both government and INGOs, Women for Change (WFC) believe that both need to be more accountable to the people “for whom” they exist³⁸. Reflecting on their partnerships with INGOs, WFC believe that external agencies must be clear about their role in Zambia: as programme or project funders, as facilitators of development or as implementers. The blurring of these roles and sudden changes in approach during projects has created some confusion amongst partners on some occasions. As such, WFC have been prepared to hold their partners accountable, believing that such advocacy will build a deeper commitment to citizenship in Zambia as opposed to an attitude of regarding Zambians, who are often poor and rural as no more than subjects.

³⁷ When discussing “food for work” and “food relief”, the MDFA believed that these had “killed a culture of independence” through undermining agriculture. They requested that NGOs move away from hand-outs to encouraging cultivation through the provision of expertise and seeds that might underpin independent farming.

³⁸ These views were expressed during an interview and have appeared in several recent project proposals developed by Women for Change.

In Mongu and Kaoma, WFC has facilitated a number of self-help initiatives as a way of dealing with rural poverty and gender inequality. Some of the groups that have been assisted include minorities in the province, who have migrated from nearby countries or other provinces in Zambia. These groups are regarded as vulnerable to livelihood insecurity because the Barotseland Chiefdom comprised of indigenous Lozi have not considered minority groups as first class citizens but as foreigners ineligible for assistance. On reflection WFC maintain that working with traditional leaders has been relatively difficult in Western Province compared to other provinces. This is mainly due to the fact that the Barotseland Chiefdom has strict, closed and well-established structures, which are not very permissive for interaction.

Part of their operational practice is for WFC staff to live amongst the communities with which they work. This is based upon the principle that if staff are integrated into the village system, then WFC will have a role to play in finding joint solutions with communities that will be sustainable. WFC believes that a top-down approach with infrequent community interaction would achieve little in terms of “transferring assets and skills”. Although this approach has been challenging, not least because communities often prefer receiving direct help from outside, it has been effective in building trust and developing joint solutions to challenges facing remote communities. The space created through such an approach has enabled WFC to effectively promote gender awareness and advocate for change around women’s rights at village level. This has also led to some communities “speaking for themselves” when lobbying for government services, which has been more effective than an NGO being accused by politicians of “speaking on behalf of others”.

The HIV and gender focus of WFC is embedded in a rights-based approach, which attempts to link both social and economic rights of women. For example, customary practices, which might make women susceptible to HIV, are confronted simultaneously to focusing on making women economically empowered so that they are not forced by default into to exchanging sex during times of stress. WFC maintains engaging gender and HIV issues more directly is more effective than focusing on them as a crosscutting issue across programmes.

Annexure Two: 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 region³⁹. 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.

When analysing poverty and vulnerability, the Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition (SETSAN) divides the population into seven livelihood groups⁴⁰. 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. 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

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ Manica District Development Project (2006) Project proposal, Chimoio, Manica Province.

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 documentation⁴¹ indicate that at household and community level there is a strong impact of the epidemic.

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%	

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, stationary)⁴². 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 SETSAN⁴³, 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 impacted⁴⁴. 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 underestimated⁴⁵ and food aid may be contributing to weakening livelihood options.

⁴¹ 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.

⁴² 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.

⁴³ Supported by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

⁴⁴ FAO/WFP (2005), Food and Crop assessment, p.1

⁴⁵ 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”.

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 diversification of livelihood strategies and limited the options for disaster preparedness⁴⁶.

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.

⁴⁶ Manica District Development Project (2006) Project proposal, Chimoio, Manica Province.

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.

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 agencies⁴⁷. 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.

⁴⁷ See Paul Harvey, (2004) “HIV/AIDS and humanitarian action”, Humanitarian Policy Group Research Report 16, London, United Kingdom.

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.

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 households⁴⁸. 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, 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.

⁴⁸ Roos (2006).

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 act⁴⁹. 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 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

⁴⁹ MSF, (2002) “Equitable access: scaling up HIV/AIDS treatment in developing countries”, www.accessmed-msf.org

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.

Annexure Three: Malawi

1. Background

A number of Concern Worldwide and Oxfam-International projects were visited in Malawi between the 23rd and 28th 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 region⁵⁰. The project consisted of a blend of policy level discussions with organisations such as Concern, the Joint Oxfam Programme in Malawi (JOPM), Word Alive Ministries, Evangelical Lutheran Development Service, and Mponela AIDS Information and Counselling Centre and on-site reflections of field staff and community meetings currently engaged in development work in Blantyre, Dowa, Phalombe and Mulanje Districts. 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 Malawi have been grouped as common themes.

2. The Drivers of Food Insecurity in Malawi

It was widely acknowledged in community discussions⁵¹, with partner organisations present, that livelihoods had come under increasing pressure across Malawi since 2001. Practically all discussions focused on the lack of soil fertility and the inability of communities to afford fertilizers despite the government subsidies of the past year. The unsustainable use of trees or “deforestation” was recognised as a major cause of soil erosion and diminishing fertility. Wood was increasingly used by charcoal makers for sale but also for the fuel and timber needs of most households whom had few alternatives. Another dimension of environmental stresses was uncertain rainfall and a lack of control over water. The “new” variability in rainfall meant that agriculture was less predictable than in the past with excesses washing away costly fertilizer and soil, or a dry period stunting crops.

Small landholdings, particularly in Mulanje, were identified in community discussions as a major limiting factor to food security. This problem was primarily a result of a high population pressure although the rigid boundaries of the tea estates (seen to be owned by “multi-nationals” and not “Malawians”) were also a factor in limiting expansion of areas under community agriculture. Tea estates were recognised as being important in terms of creating some employment and for broader economic development but these benefits were largely intangible for communities and therefore estates were regarded with some negativity.

Without prompting from the external agencies present, practically all discussions focused to some extent on how HIV/AIDS worsened this underlying situation (“there is too much of that here”)⁵², as many households (one group claimed “most” households) had sick adults, which diverted labour and eroded resources. It was clear that during discussions some community members clearly articulated

⁵⁰ 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.

⁵¹ Meetings facilitated by ICOCA (Word Alive Ministries), Manjumbe Village, Blantyre; Evangelical Lutheran Development Association, Thombozi Community and Mphonde HBC Group, Phalombe; Oxfam, Kangoma Community, Mulanje; and Concern, Mponela Community, Dowa District.

⁵² Thombozi Community discussion.

the two-way relationship between HIV/AIDS and food security⁵³. The recent excessive rains had also led to an increase in malaria, and incidents of severe diarrhoea, during the cultivation period.

It was significant that when discussing HIV/AIDS impacts, most people identified the trauma of illness within a family as a major contributing factor to food insecurity. Individuals caring for the sick would be continually thinking of them, diverting attention from other livelihood tasks at hand (“even the mind is on the sick”). This illustrates the very close relationship between the general activities of the household (for example child care and rearing, support relations between adults, home maintenance, food processing) and the production of crops and animal husbandry to feed the household. From the community discussions it appeared that these pressures were primarily borne by females within the household largely as a result of the gendered nature of caring activities.

In this general analysis, agricultural production, as a cornerstone of household food security of the areas visited, was undermined by a combination of environmental stress (soil degradation, lack of tree cover) and climate (rainfall variability), exacerbated by poverty (as individuals sought income-generating activities or livelihood assets from surrounding natural resources) and HIV/AIDS.

3. Integrating Responses to HIV/AIDS and Food Security

In terms of different responses to these underlying causes of livelihood insecurity in the various districts, a common approach of an integrated development approach arose. Essentially this approach relies on close relationships with people in the community, establishes strong relationships with local government through key individuals who are directly engaged with decision-making and community extension, and takes a longer term perspective in terms of building a track record and an iterative learning process. It is looking at making small, incremental changes through a variety of tried and tested methods. This approach is able to include people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) and their families because it is sufficiently close to the ground to see them and adapt the way they work to include them.

According to staff and community discussions, particularly at the Joint Oxfam Programme in the Shire Highlands, this approach had led to tangible improvements in the lives of people. Project documentation seemed to confirm this perspective along with discussions with government officials who were directly involved. The most important dimension to this success appeared to be the delivery of services through government extension agents who had developed close relations with communities along with the ability by both communities and officials to undertake problem analysis through participatory research approaches.

This kind of interaction has enabled the adaptation of various livelihood strategies as broader options are forged in a joint partnership. In particular HIV/AIDS has become core to this response, recognising it as a major stressor that requires a range of approaches from prevention messages (through drama groups and condom accessibility), mitigation (through a variety of more effective livelihood activities), and linking access to treatment and care where possible. Some of these elements are discussed in more detail below.

Participatory Rural Appraisal: Identifying Entry Points

Although the use of participatory rural appraisal is nothing new in development practice, in the Joint Oxfam Programme in Malawi, it was modified to ensure that individual contacts with households looking after chronically ill people complemented community meetings. This enabled the programme to identify the specific needs of these households at the design phase Focusing on the specific needs of HIV/AIDS affected households in order to support their productivity means placing them at the

⁵³ It is now well established that HIV has an impact on livelihoods, reducing food security through illness and death; whilst food insecurity and poverty fuel the HIV epidemic as people are driven to adopt risky strategies in order to survive. Ultimately HIV/AIDS impacts on the livelihood outcomes of households.

centre of research and analysis, programme design and implementation, and ultimately assessments around impact of interventions. Understanding why certain households and communities are more resilient than others is key to an effective response.

Another important dimension to the PRA was the inclusion of district level government officials and local leaders from the outset of the design phase. Consulting leaders during the research phase brought in an appreciation of their understanding of what drove the epidemic and opened space for debate to challenge cultural practices that may have become harmful in a context of HIV/AIDS. The inclusion of officials meant that the government was seen as the major player in the programme, as it was their existing system and structures that were used to bring development to the community. Oxfam staff were clear that they “did not want their names on the ground” and that a decision to “stand outside of the limelight” was at the core of their partnership with government. Government extension agents were also trained in PRA to enable them to undertake similar exercises in other areas of operation.

Targeting

PRA has become an essential tool in terms of targeting as it enables a very close understanding of what is happening at community level. Existing targeting mechanisms used by partners of both Oxfam and Concern aimed to identify the poorest and most vulnerable and are usually able to identify vulnerability relating to HIV/AIDS through PRA. The presence of HIV/AIDS forces practitioners to examine existing criteria and expand these where appropriate. In the JOPM, three categories of beneficiaries were identified to focus activities:

- The Innovative Group – which are people who have a more established source of livelihood security and have potential to engage in making markets work;
- The Adapting Group – which are people that require resource support to engage in sustainable livelihood activities; and
- The Coping Group – which are people who are deemed the most vulnerable through a lack of capacity to maintain a sustainable livelihood due to existing circumstances. They include HIV/AIDS affected households.

Oxfam agreed that at the outset of the programme it did not have an adequate understanding of the impact of HIV/AIDS on poor people and the demographic changes resulting from the epidemic. This led to an initial neglect of child-headed households. Integrating HIV/AIDS in a meaningful way through programme design built upon PRA that focused on the most vulnerable enabled the Joint Programme to engage with some of these issues.

It is important to recognise that community targeting may reflect embedded inequalities, and that there may be added difficulties in targeting HIV/AIDS-affected households in a context where the disease is highly stigmatised, or where people may not know their HIV status.

Cultural Norms and Gender

Cultural beliefs were often the starting point for communities when initiating strategies to cope with the reality of HIV/AIDS. Having understood how HIV transmission works from information and experience, “dangerous” practices were either changed or discontinued. Such practices included initiations for girls entering womanhood, male circumcision (which has exposed boys to the HI virus through the use of the same knife), and widow inheritance. It was emphasised in community discussions that many women were widowed “too young” and were left without support having had little chance to build up an asset base of their own. Despite some progress being made as a result of awareness raising property stripping still occurred in the focus areas. In response, it was felt that widows needed to be protected through encouraging the writing of wills, establishing community

forums around inheritance rights, and the vigilance of community structures. In some instances families had been brought together to discuss how the asset base should be shared⁵⁴.

These responses to cultural norms indicated that the vulnerability of some groups with low socio-economic status, in particular women and girls, were beginning to be interrogated by some communities⁵⁵. However, in the same discussions, women were often blamed for spreading HIV (“women are causing HIV to progress”). Livelihood insecurity often places women in situations where they may trade sexual favours for benefits (“they wear mini-skirts”). In contrast, men who find themselves migrating to find work and being exposed to situations where they may change sexual partners frequently were not identified as drivers of the epidemic. This betrays existing gender inequalities. Staff and government officials felt that the only way to address this was through continued gender equity work and increasing livelihood options for women.

Agricultural-Based Livelihoods

In terms of livelihood practices, the adoption of “modern agricultural methods” was seen to be important by both communities and the NGOs facilitating development. These included the use of composting, planting trees to stabilize and enrich the soil (particularly the use of the moringa oleifera tree), the (re-) introduction of drought resistant crops and increased diversification into animal production. The reliance on maize was often seen as a cause of vulnerability to food insecurity.

Access to fertiliser was another theme that was continually raised during community discussions. Many saw the need for continued government support to reduce prices. However, self-reliance was seen as being more important as dependency on the state reducing prices had failed the small-scale producers before. Self-reliance was loosely defined as adopting sustainable organic agriculture based on the use of compost and water harvesting techniques.

Irrigation and water harvesting were seen as important by communities who were directly involved with such interventions⁵⁶, to decrease dependence on rain-fed crops. In areas such as Phalombe where there was a constant water supply throughout the year arising from the Mulanje Mountains, irrigation had the potential of becoming the backbone of agricultural practice. It was emphasised by Oxfam that low-cost interventions, such as the use of watering cans and river diversions, were needed rather than sophisticated and expensive technology such as mechanised pumps (as opposed to treadle pumps), which were favoured more by partner organisations. An argument around sustainability was lodged against expensive technologies that required technicians and parts to maintain them. The cost-effectiveness of such inputs did not make sense at a small economy of scale.

Community Safety Nets

Members of the Manjumbe Village outside Blantyre identified the need to increase yields for the community in general rather than just for the extended household. These increased yields would enable the community to be better able to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable to food insecurity, which reflected an increased need for such institutions despite their erosion over time. These institutions included the chief’s grain bins (disregarded in Manjumbe because of theft), the chief’s fields and community labour. Reinvigorating such institutions would require a change in mindset, away from producing crops for the extended family alone towards sharing more generally. This

⁵⁴ In matrilineal areas, widowers were sometimes dispossessed by their wives’ families.

⁵⁵ It was significant that the Manjumbe Village, which was situated in a matrilineal area, was led by a female chief, who strongly articulated concerns about cultural practices that made women more susceptible to infection. Female home-based care volunteers who pointed out that men also had a role in sex and were also party to arrangements where favours were exchanged for benefits countered discussions around women causing HIV to spread.

⁵⁶ For example, those communities involved with the Evangelical Lutheran Development Association such as Thombozi Community outside Phalombe.

may raise challenges for income-generating activities that are targeted at individuals and which are based around similar agricultural production measures. It was not clear from the discussions how community based activities involving pooled labour would cope under the stresses of HIV particularly as communal work is often the first to be affected in situations of high HIV prevalence.

When probed, communities felt that the most viable community safety net for those affected by food insecurity and HIV/AIDS impacts was a communal garden. The produce of such gardens would be used to support the most vulnerable, and in particular orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC). In many communities such gardens already existed but were not prioritised as a strategy to deal with vulnerability to food insecurity, partly because of the recurring pressures experienced by communities over the past five years. These discussions confirmed that the good ideas generated by communities often became hard to put into practice largely due to labour constraints.

Nutrition

Nutrition was another theme that emerged as an important element of coping in the face of HIV/AIDS. It was recognised by many Oxfam and Concern partners, and the organisations themselves, that malnutrition increased progression of HIV infection, and may increase the risk of transmission from mothers to babies. The cycle of inadequate dietary intake and disease is accelerated by HIV infection that leads to malnutrition. Research suggests that the chance of infection with HIV might be reduced in individuals who have good nutritional status; that the onset of disease and death might be delayed where HIV-positive individuals are well-nourished; and that diets rich in protein, energy and vitamins might reduce the risks of transmission from mother to child⁵⁷. However, despite understanding good nutrition practices and the positive impact this may have against HIV/AIDS, the issue of poverty limited the ability of communities, even with external support, to use such knowledge in practice. Community preference for maize was another major limiting factor for nutritional diversification.

Discussions with Oxfam and Concern partner organisations raised the importance of knowledge around good nutrition. One option of improving knowledge was to seek linkages with the Ministry of Health or specialist organisations. In particular, information on different kinds of vegetables or other crops, which contained essential micronutrients, was a general concern of many partners. Such foods included sweet potato, pumpkin seeds and leaves, certain types of mushrooms, sorghum, millets, and the role of grasshoppers as a source of protein. The role of medicinal plants and their propagation in a context where environmental stress had diminished availability was also recognised and information around such instances sought. Sources of local foods that in the past had contributed to diverse diets had diminished due to environmental strain and rainfall variability. It was recognised that many solutions around nutrition security lay within communities (“the secrets of Africa are held by grandmothers”), which needed to be harnessed.

A partner of Concern Malawi, the Mponela AIDS Information and Counselling Centre (MAICC), taught HBC volunteers about how the diets of their clients and OVC could be improved. Such knowledge was linked to small vegetable gardens where “small remedies” based on herbs and other medicinal plants were grown. The intention was to increase the number of larger communal gardens with the support of government extension agents to ensure that more households, particularly those at a chronic stage of AIDS were able to access nutritional foods through the HBC system. A major hindrance to this programme was overstretched government staff (“who are always busy”) and a resultant lack of expertise available for the development of such gardens. An obvious alternative was stronger linkages with other NGOs, such as CARE and World Vision, which were operating in the area.

MAICC had a strong relationship with the locally based Blessings Hospital, which supplied them with a nutrition package to share with HBC and OVC clients, and the Mtengowanthenge Mission Hospital,

⁵⁷ See Paul Harvey (2004) ‘HIV/AIDS and humanitarian action’, Humanitarian Policy Group research Report, Overseas Development Institute and various papers on the RENEWAL website: www.ifpri.org/renewal

which provides voluntary counselling and testing, as well as anti-retroviral therapy. The Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM) provided monthly transport for HBC clients and others requiring services from the Mission Hospital. The provision of the food mix from Blessings Hospital via MAICC's on distribution was identified as an essential combination for the drugs, which were often toxic for the patients when taken alone. MAICC works as a facilitator, using its knowledge about the linkages between HIV/AIDS and nutrition to ensure organisations with different skills were brought in to provide a basic minimum of a comprehensive service to its HBC clients.

Every month two thousand nutrition packs were distributed to HBC and OVC clients, a small proportion of those requiring the service. Recognising this limitation, MAICC and Concern identified the importance of developing a larger, sustainable food security strategy.

Income Generating Activities: More Than Just Chickens?

Although there was generally a positive response when discussing different income-generating activities there were underway within many of the projects, there seemed to be a consensus amongst both “communities⁵⁸” and partner organisations that alternatives to agricultural-based activities needed to be found. In other words, chicken or she-goat “pass-on” projects were deemed important to build up an asset base⁵⁹. However, if real alternatives were to be found that would help diversify livelihoods in the long-term, particularly if young people were to be involved, then other options would have to complement these.

An initiative outside Blantyre facilitated by Word Alive Ministries (ICOCA) successfully established an artisan project whereby youths were apprenticed to artisans. These youths were taught how to work with different skills such as iron-smithing to car repairs. A concern expressed by both the community and partner organisation was that many of the youth had not returned to the village, preferring to stay near the urban area and nearer to their role models. Rather than see this as a negative, it seemed predictable that these apprentices would stay near Blantyre, which might bring other opportunities through these “living bridges” with other opportunities.

One way of strengthening IGAs as a viable means of underpinning livelihoods was through a strategy that identified linkages with other organisations from the outset of such projects. The identification of community strengths and existing activities are important starting points for such initiatives. However, they often fail to look more broadly at strategic linkages with other organisations that can enhance or adapt these activities. In this way, the partners or INGO operates as a facilitator, conducting a participatory situational analysis with the intention of mapping stakeholders and institutional linkages before IGAs are sought.

Another important option raised in discussions in the Shire Highlands was that of micro-saving schemes, which people had been heard about but had little sense of in terms of operational requirements.

Facilitating Linkages

The major challenge facing community safety nets, and interventions such as home-based care, was that of linkages. It appeared from community discussions that in many instances interventions addressing the nexus between hunger, vulnerability and HIV/AIDS operated, at best, with linkages between a few interventions. The full range of “upstream” and “downstream” opportunities, needs or necessary linkages were seldom evident when discussing projects⁶⁰. For example, partner

⁵⁸ Communities is loosely defined here as those individuals associated with the “community project” as defined by the project and who were present at the open discussion facilitated by the research consultant.

⁵⁹ Livestock multiplication schemes were recommended as being very effective, particularly as this was one viable way on building up the asset base and a safety net.

⁶⁰ One significant exception was that of the Kangoma Community, Mulanje.

organisations facilitating a HBC initiative may identify the need to link to a local health centre or clinic for the project to become sustainable. However, focusing on an already over-stretched and fragile state institution will not address immediate problems of nutrition, compensating volunteers, supporting households overburdened with dependents and finding sustainability beyond the partner exit strategy.

A discussion with the Mphonde HBC group was illuminating in terms of the potential of linkages. It was recognised that households that absorb orphans need additional support, often in the form of food, as a result of increasing pressures on a low resource base. Although there was reference to some “connection” between a vegetable garden and the HBC, this was not a key component of the initiative.

Facilitated discussions identified a range of existing institutions such as a community gardens, grain bins and care centres overseen by grandmothers, which could alleviate pressures on households with high dependency ratios. Initial discussions agreed that such initiatives could bolt onto an existing HBC programme to increase effectiveness. A community garden, sustained through irrigation, producing both staples and vegetables could alleviate nutrition insecurity. The shared labour could also be used to demonstrate to children agricultural skills they may have missed as a result of losing their parents (taking cognisance of tensions around child-labour). Grain storage could be used to offset food shortages for the most vulnerable households and invigorate community vigilance around food needs. The care centres could alleviate time spent on child-care and provide a space for psychosocial support. Although these connections may appear obvious it should be stressed that facilitating linkages remains a major challenge for partners seeking sustainability and increased impact.

Linkages between interventions, often built upon existing structures, and other community-based initiatives are important but should not diminish linkages with external opportunities provided by other agencies, in particular the state. However, rather than depend on this system, innovative ways should be sought to facilitate linkages. Oxfam Programme staff were considering the role of bicycle ambulances to connect the sick with mobile clinics or health centres. Linkages may be the key to community resilience to livelihood insecurity and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS impacts.

This type of approach can be summed as to recognise, assess and respond to the immediate humanitarian needs (such as insecure access to food, water, health care or education) caused by multiple stressors, while simultaneously and equally urgently planning programmes both to reverse the accelerating erosion of government, community and household capacity and to confront food insecurity and poverty.