

SARPN, FANRPAN, ODI

LOOK, LISTEN & LEARN: An Action Research Project in Southern Africa

Promoting the use of CSOs' evidence in policies for food security

National Consultative Meetings Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho, Zimbabwe

July 2005

Background

This project was conceived and prepared by a tripartite collaborative effort of three organisations: the Southern Africa Regional Poverty Network (SARPN), the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), and the SADC Food and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN). The tripartite held a regional inaugural stakeholder consultative meeting for the project on May 25, 2005, in Johannesburg, South Africa aimed at identifying, in a participatory manner, the key on-going regional policy processes in the food security sector and assessing the level of CSO involvement and participation, as well as, the potential for deeper involvement through evidence-based policy advocacy.

The tripartite now seeks to carry out national level stakeholder consultative meetings in the four pilot countries of: Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Project Rationale

1. Review of Millennium Development Goals

Strengthening the food security of poor and vulnerable people is an issue of increasing regional and international importance. The Millennium Review process during 2005 will raise the profile of food security issues worldwide and thus provides a useful backdrop for this project.

The Millennium Declaration adopted by world leaders in 2000 set a series of ambitious targets for contributing to a better and safer world in the 21st Century, including a specific commitment to halving, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger (MDG-1 Target 2). In September 2005 a high-level UN summit will review progress towards these global anti-poverty goals: MDG-1 Target 2 should be high on the agenda because it is central to improving lives and livelihoods but progress has been notably slow. The review is an opportunity for the development sector, especially civil society organisations (CSOs), to assess the progress made towards the MDGs and to formulate new strategies for improved impact.

2. Food Security a Priority for SADC

Progress towards strengthening food security in the SADC region has been impeded by the humanitarian crisis, which affected the region between 2001 and 2003. Better policies for increasing food availability, strengthening effective access to food, and improving food utilisation are now recognised as a priority need in the SADC region and fundamental to the achievement of the Millennium goals. Accordingly a number of countries (e.g. Lesotho, Malawi and Mozambique) are conducting comprehensive reviews of national food and nutrition security policies, and a number of donors (for example, DFID, USAID and UN-WFP) are putting in place long-term funding to support policies and processes contributing to food security at national and regional levels.

3. Inadequate Food Security Policies

However, there is considerable evidence in the SADC region, that poor progress with strengthening food security over the last two decades has been as much the result of weaknesses in policy processes as failures in food production and utilisation technologies (e.g. negative outcomes relating to issues surrounding distribution and strategic grain reserves in Malawi; and the disastrous consequences of Zimbabwe's land reform policy implementation).

4. Limited CSO participation and awareness

A contributing factor to the weakness of policy processes has been the marginal participation of members of civil society organisations in the development and implementation of policies relating to food security. Many CSOs lack adequate awareness of on-going inter-government policy processes. Hence strengthening the participation of CSO in policy processes in the region and increasing their awareness is an important component of the strengthening policy processes as a whole. This is largely because civil society organisations would provide hands-on and grassroots experience in strengthening policy processes because they operate in the arena between the household, the private sector and the state and can thus effectively negotiate matters of public concern.

5. Evidence – Based Policy Advocacy

It is now clear that the likelihood for CSOs to successfully influence policy makers and policy practice is greater if their interventions are evidence based. The extent to which CSO can be successful in representing such evidence is determined by the political context, by the nature of links between policy makers and other stakeholders, as well as by external influences that may be at play. The quality and credibility of the evidence must be the basis for the legitimacy of CSO advocacy. CSO engagement in policy processes needs to be strengthened. Through a SWOT analysis strategies that will

maximize the strengths and opportunities while minimizing the weaknesses and threats must be developed.

Promoting CSOs Project Objectives

Not enough is known about the context, evidence and links in policy processes for food security in southern Africa. This project, which will be a collaborative effort between CSO networks working on food security in southern Africa, is aimed at developing understanding in this area, to test the impact of different approaches, and to disseminate lessons on both context and process, at national, regional and international level.

The very first steps must, therefore, be to create CSO awareness of on-going policy processes so as to create a level ground for meaningful dialogue. Many CSOs are so locked in hassle and bustle of programme implementation at grassroots levels – they find themselves unaware of on-going policy processes. This awareness will be created through preparation of background studies capturing on going processes, as well as, national consultative processes to identify the burning issues and existing gaps.

The project is intended to engage with a range of development partners at national and regional level in southern Africa to:

- 1) Promote the contribution of civil society organisations to the debate within southern Africa on food security policy;
- 2) Promote the voice of Southern Africa civil society organisations in the context of the international debate on food security policy;
- 3) Publicise within the region and internationally the policy and practice lessons learnt;
- 4) Disseminate within the region relevant evidence and policy lessons from civil society organisations elsewhere in the world.

Objectives of the National Consultations and Awareness meetings

Most CSOs operate within the confines of national borders and tend to pay little attention to issues and processes beyond these borders. However, there are a number of CSO networks based in different countries that now have a regional mandate and are engaged in national issues with a regional scope and impact. Food Security is one of these. Many aspects of national food security require regional cooperation including: seed policy, GMO and biosafety policy, water and irrigation, early warning systems; and agricultural trade. The main objectives of the national consultations are:

- 1) To share findings from the background study on on-going regional policy processes
- 2) To bring together the leading stakeholders in the Food Security sector at national level and identify key on-going policy processes with a regional scope and impact
- 3) To assess the level of participation, involvement, and engagement of CSOs in food security policy development at National and regional level

- 4) To create a platform for national dialogue between CSO networks, private sector and government in the food security sector that will serve as the constituency for regional dialogue platform
- 5) Assess the relevance and contribution of the CSO project at national level
- 6) Identify active CSO networks that will participate in the evidence-based CSO policy advocacy project

Target Group

The National Consultations will be targeted at leading actors in the food and nutrition policy sector. This should include stakeholders involved in key food and nutrition sectors including: Seed, Maize trade and trade in other foods and products, food aid, food import and export, water and irrigation, land issues, GMOs, bio-safety and trans-border movements, early warning systems, nutrition, Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary, and poverty eradication. The participants should thus include:

- 1) *Representatives from the line government ministries of Agriculture, Biosafety, Trade (agricultural component), health (nutrition), finance and economic development (poverty experts), water (especially irrigation) responsible for policy development and SADC reps in the agriculture sector*
- 2) *CSOs and CSO networks engaged in policy advocacy in poverty issues, sustainable agricultural systems, food security, nutrition security, water management, early warning systems, trade and Biosafety*
- 3) *Private Sector Organisations and Foundations involved in food trade*
- 4) *Food Aid Agencies – with keen interest in food security policy*
- 5) *Research Institutions - with keen interest in food and nutrition security*
- 6) *Regional Bodies with a SADC scope – with keen interest in food and nutrition policy*

A maximum of 30 participants is targeted for these consultations

Expected Outputs

- *Key on-going national policy processes in the food security sector – with a regional scope identified*
- *Key CSO networks with both national and regional level mandate in policy advocacy in the food security sector identified*
- *Key gaps and issues in the food security sector that need to be addressed through policy research and advocacy at regional level identified*
- *National platform on food and nutrition policy development strengthened*
- *National constituency for the LLL regional project established*
- *Key national level partners for regional cooperation identified*
- *National level policy research institutions to partner with identified*
- *Key government contacts for subsequent engagement and dialogue identified*
- *Increased CSO awareness of on-going regional policy processes*

Duration

The consultations will take the form of half-day meetings (5hrs)

Dates and Venue

The 4 national consultations will take place between the 1 – 20 July 2005. The actual dates and venue will be confirmed with the national organisers

Conveners and Facilitators

The FANRPAN national nodes will convene the consultative meetings. The national nodes and a regional consultant hired by the tripartite will facilitate the meetings. The national nodes will be responsible for preparing a report of the meeting proceedings and outcomes. The meeting reports must reach the tripartite desk on or before the July 22, 2005

Methodology

The meeting will be conducted in a participatory manner using action-learning methodology. Group sessions will be used to ensure effective participant participation. Visual aids (LCD projector, flip charts and flash cards) will be utilised in plenary to ensure full participant attention and participation. Feedback from group sessions will ensure that the valuable contributions from group sessions are shared with the larger group