

# introduction

This research publication culminates a one-year process initiated by World Vision in Africa to identify opportunities for a World Vision Africa advocacy strategy aimed at "...transforming AU and NEPAD policies and practices towards enhancement of the lives of children and their families".

In World Vision the term advocacy is used interchangeably with the phrase seeking justice. World Vision's mission statement, adopted more than 10 years ago, makes a commitment to promoting justice through changing unjust structures<sup>3</sup>. World Vision adopts a two-pronged approach to advocacy focusing on 'Policy Influencing' and 'Citizen Empowerment'. Advocacy targeting the African Union falls under the policy influencing prong which would seek to both see policy formulated or changed as well as implemented. However, the voices from the ground as a result of the citizen empowerment provide the necessary evidence for the need for policy change.

The AU is considered a critical focus of civil society advocacy, including World Vision advocacy, because it is playing an unprecedented and pro-active role in addressing Africa's crises, is exercising leadership in global negotiations, and is seen by the international community as an important actor in global affairs. Furthermore, while working at the grassroots or micro level is viewed as a critical undertaking, World Vision firmly believes, as do other organisations, that engaging in policy advocacy at the highest level of decision-making on the continent,

combined with World Vision's community-focused development and humanitarian programming, leads to real and sustainable impact in addressing poverty and injustice in Africa.

This research publication is one step in the continental advocacy strategy development process. It will provide the basis for a two-pronged World Vision Africa advocacy strategy with a focus on the African Union and the individual Commissions. However, the recommendations contained in this publication are equally useful to Civil Society Organisations in Africa grappling with AU advocacy.

### **Three research methods were harnessed to generate the relevant information:**

- i An in-depth review of relevant literature;
- ii Semi-structured and open-ended interviews with AU and NEPAD officials, NGO officials, CSO activists, researchers and World Vision staff;
- iii Participant observation of the 2006 AU Pre-Summit Forum process. Field visits were conducted to five countries – Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and The Gambia – with close to 60 respondents interviewed in the course of these visits (see Annex B);
- iv The draft research report was also discussed at an AU and CSOs roundtable organised by World Vision on 22nd November 2006 in Nairobi. Comments from the roundtable are incorporated in the final publication.

<sup>3</sup> Adopted by the World Vision Council, September 1992.

A workshop presenting some of the major challenges facing women in rural communities. Nyamphanda, Zambia.

photo: Collins Kaumba

