

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
52nd MEETING**

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**FAO Headquarters, Rome
Philippine Room (C277)**

Southern Africa: Background Note

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I) Co-ordination: operational context and interaction between agencies - the next steps

Background and Key Issues - what is required next?

- After an initial slow start, good collaboration between most recipient and donor governments, UN agencies and NGOs has averted a major catastrophe developing in 6 countries in Southern Africa.
- The creation of the Special Envoy function, the opening of the RIASCO office, the WFP regional office and OCHA regional presence have greatly increased the level of regional overview and analysis of the crisis. This regional presence should be maintained.
- The emphasis placed on links between HIV, food security and gender inequalities provides an opportunity to lobby for new approaches to be adopted across the “development paradigm”. Greater attention to age analysis can be included in the future given the demographic profiling in the region.
- The level of input from UN agencies remains inconsistent across the region.
- The regional crisis has highlighted the need for greater understanding of humanitarian principles across the international community, governments, NGOs and UN. Delays were experienced in recruitment of personnel with humanitarian experience.
- CAP processes have improved during the EMOP period. The next stage of the process will be to monitor the engagement of civil society on an on-going basis and set up mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the quality and delivery of the plans on the ground. There is much to learn from the Angola PRRO experience.
- Building on the point above; it will be important to develop stronger links between CAPs, PRSPs, VAC assessments and other national and regional plans.
- Low levels of funding support given for non-food items, in particular support for emergency health services and nation-wide nutrition surveillance, needs to be addressed.
- Co-ordination has varied on a country by country basis where co-ordination mechanisms were weaker and communication between UN, governments and NGOs poor, the effectiveness and efficiency of the response was affected

Outcomes

- Agreement/support for how CAP and other co-ordination processes and content will be monitored in each country and how CAP and VAC links can be strengthened at both national and regional levels.
- Agreement/support for tracking how civil society will be involved in CAP processes systematically across the region.
- Agreement/support for systematic monitoring of the quality and delivery of the plans on the ground.
- Agreement/support for maintaining regional overview for (at least) 2003 and 2004.

- Agreement/clarification on support from UN for Southern Africa 2003, particularly in terms of technical inputs, in face of increasing global priorities.
- Agreement that UN agencies will use their influence with national governments, donors, WB/IMF to ensure inclusion of the most vulnerable in PRSPs and sector wide financing strategies.

II) Beyond Food Aid – Responding to the longer term crisis

Food Security and Vulnerability assessments in Southern Africa - The next steps

Background and key issues

- A number of assessments have been undertaken of which have been of great value in informing all interested parties on the status of the food security situation in each country affected.
- The SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC) has been the co-ordinator of these assessments and with its wide membership developed a productive engagement between its principal collaborators (SADC REWU, WFP, FAO, FEWSNET, SC UK etc).
- The need to obtain rapid results in order to improve targeting of desperately needed food aid has strongly influenced the way assessments have been conducted.

What types of assessments are needed now?

- Most agencies are confident that they have a reasonable understanding of the food security situation on the ground. Most are now looking past food aid interventions to alternatives that will protect and develop livelihoods, and also take into account a wider range of factors including HIV/AIDS and information on vulnerable children and young people. Consequently, future assessments need a different focus if they are to play an important role in developing long-term national and regional approaches to the crisis.
- The Regional and National VACs are in agreement in principal with the SADC conceptual framework for undertaking livelihood based vulnerability assessments (LBVA). National VACs are keen to move forward in using this approach because, once baseline information has been gathered and a monitoring system established, it can be used for a number of purposes, specifically:
 - To inform disaster prevention and preparedness planning, using vulnerability analysis;
 - To predict food crises caused by factors such as climatic or economic change, conflict etc. rather than just respond to them; and
 - To inform development planners of poverty reduction and enhancing livelihoods.
- Funding is being provided by DFID to enable the Regional VAC to support National VACs in the next round of assessments) Currently the principal challenges to their effectiveness are:
 - There are insufficient people in the region with the necessary skills and experience.
 - Ideally the Regional and National VACs would be able to gather broad multi-sectoral information at the same time pursuing work within their established framework. However the expectation of comprehensiveness coupled with the lack of resources, in the same exercise has, in some cases, led to confusion in the approaches to use and an inability to analyse the data in a timely manner.

Outcomes

In order to improve present and future responses to the crisis in southern Africa, UN agencies are encouraged to support the development of improved and sustainable food security and vulnerability analysis systems by.

- Working with principal donors (DFID & USAID) to provide the Regional VAC and National VACs with the human & financial resources to build their capacity and structures to undertake livelihoods based assessments in a managed and planned way.
- Recognising that, given the limited capacity in the region, the Regional VAC has an important role to play in building this capacity and encouraging maximum development of a region wide approach.