

## Food Security Regional NGO Consultation for Africa

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) organised a 5-day consultation meeting for NGOs in Africa from 21-25 February 2000. The participants were drawn from national and regional NGOs involved in food security activities in East, Southern, Central and West Africa.

The objective of the meeting was to:

- Provide these organisations with an opportunity to voice their concerns and communicate them to the governing bodies of FAO
- Build collaboration among food security stakeholders and formulate a joint action plan in the context of FAA's new policy and strategy for cooperation with civil society organisations.

The discussions were focusing on the theme of "World Food Summit follow-up: Actions taken at regional and sub-regional level to implement the plan of action and by participating organisations. The participants also recapped the SADC planning meeting, which was held in December 1999 in Zimbabwe at Mandel Training Centre, facilitated by IRED-ESA.

The participants noted that on the occasion of the World Food Summit African governments formulated a certain number of observations regarding the particular situation of Africa. In effect, the African region is witnessing a slow but steady deterioration of the food security of certain underprivileged groups.

This food security situation affects certain categories of people for example the marginal populations of rural, urban and peri-urban zones, the sick, displaced persons, victims of war and social conflicts, children and pregnant women and migrant social groups etc. State retrenchment and withdrawal from agricultural support and social programmes as a result of the structural adjustment policies implemented over the past two decades have reinforced this cause-effect relationship between poverty and malnutrition.

The participants analysed the causes of food insecurity and highlighted the following:

- **Causes of an institutional nature** linked to institutional weaknesses of farmers organisations and of logistic support to production
- **Factors of a political nature** linked to conflicts, insecurity, insufficient involvement of local actors in the definition and the implementation of policies, and to the lack of coherent and prospective vision of food security
- **The absence of strategic management plans of production** permitting simultaneous control of quantity, quality, regularity, production costs, valorisation of products, as well as lack of transparent information in marketing
- **Factors of an environmental nature** related to climatic variations, isolation, the nature of soil, unsuitable technologies
- **Factors of an environmental nature** which lead to failure to exploit available food resources

FAO in its new strategy is now focusing in working in partnership with NGOs, Farmers, Farmers Organisations and Civil Society Organisations directly rather than working through the Government. In this regard the NGOs, Farmers Organisations and other Civil Society actors who

were involved in the promotion of micro-finance, literacy, training, community health, credit, income generating activities for women and young people, installation of processing units and cereal banks would also take on new responsibilities which include:

- Farmers organisations and NGOs shouldering responsibility for production support activities that the State is no longer ensuring
- Farmers organisations participating in technical advice/support agencies which are being established in the context of agricultural structural adjustment programme
- Farmers organisations taking responsibility for identifying the themes on which they feel they require technical support and selecting and contracting the necessary expertise.

**Some of the recommendations from the workshop include that:**

- For Food Security issues to be properly addressed there is need for a strong partnership between Government, FAO, NGOs and other stakeholders.
- The Government ensure the participatory formulation of a coherent and equitable national food security policy with the involvement of all stakeholders and also provide necessary protection and support for local food production in the context of attaining food sovereignty
- FAO to be the facilitator for policy dialogue, capacity building in policy analysis, service provision, incorporate consultations with OFS/NGOs as a regular feature of Regional FAO Conference
- NGOs should form coalitions and adopt transparent codes of conduct, network with each other and with farmers organisations to clearly define their respective mandates and areas of operation.
- Farmer's Organisations should develop leadership and ensure good governance and grassroots control. They should define a clear and broad vision of issues of food security involving grassroots groups

A specific action is to be undertaken by FAO, FOs, NGOs and Governments in 2000-2001 within a common project of food security, building on action and initiatives underway at national, sub-regional and regional levels.

### **Women's Issues and Views in Cross Border Trade**

The Programme Officer for Democracy and Economic Empowerment Mr Tinashe Mangezi carried out a research on problems encountered by Women in Cross Border Trade. The areas, which were visited, are Mashonaland East, Harare Urban, Bulawayo Urban and Matebeleland South. The main aim of the study was to take a glossary of the problems encountered by women in cross border trade.

Informal cross border trade is important and should be considered seriously because a lot of households are surviving through it. Some are managing to pay fees for their children and building or extending houses due to the income they get from cross border trade.

The findings of the research include:

**Sources of Funds:**

It was noted that the women in cross border trade lacked and still lack adequate funds to increase the volume of their trade. They lamented the habit by banks to insist on collateral security which they do not have Customs and Excise and Immigration

- ◆ It was evident from the research that either the cross border trade women do not know the Customs and Excise procedures or that the border officials are acting ultra vires. The side of the story from the customs officials is still to be heard. The women complained that they are not shown how the duty is calculated and in many circumstances the duty is just estimated. They also asserted that the Customs Officials demand bribes for easy passage of them and their goods
- ◆ The customs officials were also accused of being rude to these women, hurling vulgar words and at times the women are body searched by male officials. The message from the women was that the male Customs Officials should not view them as sex workers but that they are family mothers who are just out to fend for their families. The women also suggested that the government should make customs policies favourable to informal cross border traders
- ◆ Concerning Immigration, it was noted with concern that for these women to go to South Africa, one should obtain a visa and to obtain the visa one should have at least \$6 000 in their bank account. It was noted that one is only allowed 90 days per year to do business in Botswana. Usually, if one wants say 5 days, they are given 30 days so as to quickly exhaust their annual allocation of days
- ◆ The women are often arrested while in Botswana and South Africa. This shows that either they do not know the laws governing their vending there or that the officials who arrest them are acting ultra vires. The correct information should therefore be availed to the women. Usually when these women are arrested, they are bundled into lorries and dumped back at the border posts and they lose their wares in the process. This shows that there is lack of information on the correct trade procedures
- ◆ When the women check into lodges Botswana police who force them to check into hotels raids them. This shows that either the woman is breaking the law or that the police are acting ultra vires. There is therefore need to disseminate the correct information to the women from the correct officials.

The DSS of IRED is planning to organise a national workshop for the women and assist them in the formation of an association (proposed name Association of Women in Cross Border Trade). IRED will also do capacity building for the association and come up with a forceful organisation that will be able to advocate for policy change.

For more details regarding the Initiative and report contact the Programme Officer for Information.

## **Kellog Foundation Strategies for Advancing Social and Economic Community Development Conference**

The Kellog Foundation organised a regional conference for its staff, intermediaries, grantees, collaborators, scholars and other actors on issues, approaches, methods and processes that *promote social and economic progress for vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in Southern Africa*. The meeting was held at Sheraton Pretoria Hotel- South Africa from 23-25 February 2000.

The objectives of the conference include:

- To share experiences and review progress with the implementation of Kellog Foundation supported initiatives
- To dialogue and exchange critically on the development theories, strategies, assumptions and the practical implications of these initiatives
- To examine issues of program implementation, and to explore means of improving *effectiveness and efficiency of WKKF intermediaries and program staff*
- To consolidate the understanding of Kellog vision, values, change theory, purpose, strategies and initiatives
- To build a culture of shared ownership among intermediaries, project leaders, Kellogg staff and advisors for the initiatives and their eventual impact in Southern Africa

IRED was represented by the Director Mr John Mwaniki who presented a paper on ***“Community participation in rural development: best practices, processes and practical strategies”*** He highlighted issues on development approaches, model of development, benefits for participation at local community and the challenges faced in community empowerment.

The Director of Sapes Trust Sam Moyo also made a presentation and his theme was **“Challenges of strengthening Leadership for Civil Society Organisations in Southern”**. Some of the themes include; a) Exploiting the heritage of African Leadership philosophies, values and principles by Prof. Lovemore Mgigi of Rainmaker Management Consultants, South Africa, b) Transforming institutions for greater engagement of disadvantaged communities by Ruvimbo M. Chimedza and Themba Khombe of IDEAA regional Office –Zimbabwe c) Institutional and policy changes for smallholder farmers in the region: implications for IDEAA Programme by Emerson Zhou, Agricultural Economist Consultant- Zimbabwe. d) The State of Southern Africa and impacts of Economic Globalisation on Disadvantaged Communities by Kolela Mangcu and lastly Experiences and Lessons Learnt at Nyandeni with particular reference to strategies for civic participation, economic empowerment and human resource development by Welile Jack of ACAT- Zimbabwe.