

HSRC RESEARCH OUTPUTS

2740

+

**THE UNDERLYING SOLUTIONS TO THE  
FOOD CRISIS IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICA  
REGION**

2004



**Scott Drimie**  
**Human Sciences Research Council,**  
**Pretoria, South Africa**

## **Objective:**

**to inform the development of OGB's strategy to promote sustainable livelihoods in the region through programmes and advocacy, by providing an analysis of the different factors affecting people's food and livelihood security.**

## **Understanding the “entangling crises”:**

**A Range of “Entangling Crises” including:**

- rainfall failure,
- widespread disruptions in food availability,
- failures of governance,
- extreme levels of prevailing poverty,
- HIV/AIDS.

### **Implications:**

Need to support people through short-term crises while reducing their long-term vulnerability.

- Need for social protection - linkages between chronic and transitory food insecurity.
- Need to build national capacity and self-reliance

## **HIV/AIDS & Food Security:**

Relationship is bi-directional: vulnerability and food insecurity feed into the risky behaviour; and the impact of HIV/AIDS exacerbates food insecurity, which again feeds into risk.

Impact on besieged agricultural systems severe – communities respond through “erosive” or “non-erosive” coping strategies.

Women experience the greatest losses and burdens

## **Agricultural subsidies and price controls:**

- Economic liberalisation & removal of agricultural subsidies.
- Inadequate safety nets
- Developed countries able to exploit markets (subsidies).
- Food price fluctuations.

## **The impact of drought:**

- The environmental shock of drought will bring collapse to already weak systems
- Unavailability of seeds and fertiliser.
- Reinforces OGB's dual mandate

## **The impact of land reform:**

- Access to land is part of a multiple-livelihood strategy that is particularly important for single-headed households, widows, orphans & landless, including farmworkers – therefore land reform is important.

## **Policy Recommendations - relief, rehabilitation and development:**

Not a transitory “traditional” food crisis - but a long-term development challenge with immediate relief and rehabilitation required.

Needs integrated approach through strategic partnerships, rather than “silo-orientated”, fragmented development support.

Need to adopt “fast track” recovery combined with longer-term consolidation to “drive down” prevailing vulnerability.

**Policy Recommendations - relief, rehabilitation and development:**

Need action research for a robust understanding of the underlying situation, diversity of needs and creative & pragmatic responses.

Learn from research - cases exist where innovative interventions have been implemented which need to be documented & shared.

Need to close gap between policy & practice - research and policy to catch up with experiences to better understand them.

## **Policy Recommendations - building diversified sustainable livelihoods:**

- Alternative indigenous staple crops.
- Effective communication systems.
- Strengthen government capacity.
- Rehabilitation of rural infrastructure (incl. health).
- Promote rural development policies beyond agricultural production.



## **Policy Recommendations – HIV/AIDS:**

HIV/AIDS must be recognised as a cross-cutting issue:

- Identify specific needs of HIV/AIDS affected households and communities to support productivity.
- Identify gender and age bias in policies to meet the needs of orphans and elderly.
- Implement gender analysis - given the close link between gender inequity and vulnerability to HIV.
- Implement welfare models for vulnerable people (eg, subsidies, food distribution).

**Policy Recommendations – agricultural subsidies and price controls:**

OGB “traditional” role in advocacy on trade issues should be strengthened to build an enabling environment for small producers.

Strengthen link between global advocacy and local experiences - micro-level analysis and anecdotal evidence help in taking forward advocacy at various levels.

Need to stop stereotyping about who writes or defines policy and practice – facilitate “write-away weekends”.

## **Policy Recommendations – agricultural subsidies and price controls:**

Conceptualise community safety net programmes to mitigate the negative effects of rapid economic liberalisation.

Build these on existing government welfare and social programmes – using local participation.

Focus on income maintenance or asset strengthening to enable households to maintain or re-establish their productive capacity.

## **Policy Recommendations – land reform:**

Oxfam-International faces a crucial challenge in whether they should contemplate expanding their work into the fast track resettlement areas in Zimbabwe.

If the position that fast track is a *fait accompli* becomes official within OGB then imaginative ways will need to be found to engage with the settlers on the resettlement areas.

Options include supporting extension services, improving productive capacities, training for farmers, and offering institutional support to partner organisations working in these areas (throughout region).

Land, HIV/AIDS & vulnerability central.