



Case Study Six

Seed Fairs, Marracuene District, Maputo Province, Mozambique⁷

Mozambique experienced cyclical disasters (floods⁸ and droughts⁹) that affected food security dramatically. As part of a broad range of interventions, seed kits were provided to assist with re-establishing agricultural activities, and seed fairs were set up. Catholic Relief Services first introduced this approach in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan. The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) published *Organizing Seed Fairs in Emergency Situations*¹⁰, a handbook which outlined various relief methods.

Where?

After the floods of February 2001, ActionAid and the Food and Agriculture Organisation successfully tested new approaches to emergency relief in South and Central Mozambique, which were then expanded into new areas. Seed fairs are commonly known as *Feiras de insumos agrícolas* (input trade fairs), and provide not only seeds but also all the equipment and advice needed to commence agricultural production.

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⁸ 2000 and 2001.

⁹ 2002 and 2003.

¹⁰ <http://www.icrisat.org/web/uploads/presentations/18062003163009Organizing%20Seed%20Fairs.pdf>

¹¹ In 2003 the droughts were worse than in 2002. The government, in collaboration with FAO and PMA, estimated that 1 500 000 persons were seriously affected and 65 000 would need food aid. The emergency areas included Gaza, Inhambane and Maputo (Gaza only in 2002). Maize, peanuts, greens have not grown properly. Bean leaves are the only edible food source. Sweet potatoes and cassava have had limited success. It was urgent to organize a new distribution structure due to the lack of production.

Why?

It is important to ensure that subsistence farmers affected by drought¹¹ have seeds for the next season; promote seed fairs as a new method of seed distribution; promote the local economy including producers, traders and community-based organisations; strengthen co-ordination at local government level under supervision of local authorities; make a contribution to food security.

What?

ActionAid distributed seeds for 15 000 families through the seed fair. Eight seed fairs were organised: 6 in Manhiça district and 2 in Marracuene district. In Manhiça, three national and international companies and 57 local traders were present, while in Marracuene, two national and international companies and 29 local traders participated.

Who?

The participating institutions included:

- *Direção Distrital de Agricultura e Desenvolvimento Rural (DDADR)* District Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- *Comissão Distrital de Emergência (CDE)* District Emergency Committee comprising the DDADR, District Department of Industry and Trade, District Disaster Management Unit, *Chefe de Posto* (district sub-division)
- Community Based Organisations
- ActionAid.

Donors included ActionAid Mozambique, *Ayuda Cordoba*, and *Voluntariado*. Partnerships were developed with the private sector; SEMOC (a seed agro-processor

from Mozambique), PANNAR, HIGROTECH-Mozambique, and other foreign firms specialising in seed production.

How?

Before developing the project, ActionAid and local government conducted a participatory diagnostic with the communities in Manhiça, where 9 000 needy families were identified out of 13 689 families. In Marracuene, the last monitoring report of August 2002 was used, which highlights 29 481 needy persons. An emergency action plan was developed, which included seed distribution of cassava and sweet potatoes to reactivate the farming systems, in line with the approach of ActionAid which prioritises the poorest people in an integrated approach. Seed fairs were organised to market the seeds and were open to the public; seeds were not donated (except to the poorest people) but had to be paid for by recipients.¹²

Implementation of the project

Step 1: Building the work team

Meetings were held with the emergency committee at district level, with the aim of disseminating the project and setting up a work team of officers from DDADR, CBOs, ActionAid and *brigadistas locais*. Several teams were created, including Management team (4 persons); Promotion team (4 persons); Data compilation team (4 persons); Production and *montagem de distritos* team (4



persons); Delimitation local team (2 persons); Radio dissemination (1 person), who were responsible for the dissemination of the project, the selection and listing of recipients, and supervising trade at the seed fair. The management team also selected a task team to organise the fair, the *grupo de planificação das feiras* (GPF) or Fair Preparation Group, which comprised government representatives (DDADR, DDIC) and NGOs working in the area, key persons having a good understanding of the common system of seed acquisition, and one community leader. Their brief was to plan the activities; identify and assess potential resources; identify with the community the best location for trading; assess seed availability and quality with local farmers; identify potential traders; and promote and prepare the fair.

Step 2: Participatory approach at community level

A meeting was called with community leaders to present the work team and tasks, the details of the project and timelines. At a second meeting with the community, criteria were presented for selection of participants.¹³ For example, would it include children, the wife of the head of the household or only the head of the household in charge of the farming system? Selection of recipients took two days in each community; dates and locations were identified for the fair, and community representatives chosen to assist with the organisation.

¹² The report does not include these aspects that were highlighted to me during my visit. Thus we don't know how many people not classified as recipients have been accessing the trade fair.

¹³ Proposta de metodologia de selecção de beneficiários de insumos agrícolas em situação de emergência. ActionAid Mozambique Report, MADER, FAO.

Step 3: Identification of local seed suppliers and other companies

At local level, the promotion team provided information at each administrative council and invited the local traders to a meeting where the process was explained. However, the process of ensuring participation of the local traders and the quantities of seeds to be made available was not documented. At national and international level, invitations to participate were sent to various companies.

Step 4: Seed fair

Vouchers to be used at the fair were printed and verified by *brigadistas*. Two days before, the area was demarcated with the community that included a space for recipients, a space for trading, and a space for *brigadistas* to register the transactions. Participants could view the stock two hours before the fair commenced. All seeds, pesticides and tools were checked and certified by the *brigadistas*, including quality of the seed, packaging and weight, neatness of the trader, advertised prices, all new practices which guaranteed consumer rights. On the day itself, the fair was officially opened by the DDADR; explanations given about the process; seed quantity registration done at the beginning and at the end of the fair by *brigadistas* (3-4 persons); recipients called individually by a *brigadista* to give their tickets (one *brigadista* assisted by one leader of the community); 15 *brigadistas* helping recipients inside the fair, and conducting value queries among recipients and traders; and finally, registration of the quantities and type of seeds sold during the fair was done, with ten *brigadistas* counting the tickets, and doing bills and payments (original for the trader, and a copy for ActionAid).

A solidarity scheme which recognises the needs of the poorest people in a community was combined with boosting the local economy by procuring seeds at local level. Seed choices were increased; subsistence practices and knowledge were used.

Step 5: Monitoring of recipients after the seed trade fair

The DDADR was responsible for the assessment of cropping development among random recipients. This evaluation has not yet been done, partly due to the ongoing drought in the region. Without an irrigation scheme for the Incomati valley, it is not likely that much progress will be seen in ensuring food security for the area.

How much?

While this is difficult to assess, the initial project proposal was to service 15 000 families, but only 3 784 have been directly selected as beneficiaries. However, as the seed fairs were opened to other community members and local vendors, there was an increased economic benefit.

Timeline

The project took place in September and October 2003.

Gaps in evidence

Not all recipients were able to participate fully, and some did not participate at all due to financial constraints¹⁴ as explained by representatives of their communities. It proved difficult to properly evaluate the project as documented information was limited. Traders and

¹⁴ The report is not clear concerning the conditions of participation.

recipients appeared to appreciate the initiative but the impact regarding the general access of the community to seeds and support was not clear.

How is this different from standard interventions?

A solidarity scheme based on recognising the needs of the poorest people in a community was combined with boosting the local economy by procuring seeds at local level. Seed choices were increased; subsistence practices and knowledge were used.

Enabling factors

ActionAid has been working in Mozambique since 1996, and also has much experience in co-ordination and capacity-building. Over 60 per cent of the recipients participated to a value of 30 000 meticaïs. ActionAid provided micro-credit funding to the Tchuma agency to support small-scale producers, ranging from US\$10 000 to US\$25 000 between 2002 and 2004. This ensured the availability of micro-credit to small-scale farmers and other businesses.

Constraining factors

Limited planning, short time-frames, delays in information dissemination and funding payments, communication and transportation challenges, weak leadership, lack of financial control in using vouchers, collection of data, all presented their own challenges, and must be addressed in future projects to ensure better results.

Additional ideas or potential improvements

The experiences could usefully be documented and disseminated. Difficulties encountered by the farmers included:

- How will farmers be able to sell out their micro-credit loans if severe drought destroyed their crops?
- The type of seed and its characteristics is not a guarantee of adaptation to local agro-climatic conditions. If the seeds were adapted there would not be a need to introduce new resistant varieties to counter cyclical disasters.
- To what extent did the preparations for the seed fairs include discussions on innovations, research issues and new experiences?
- Will the traditional seed exchanges, where there is no economic transaction, be replaced by 'sell and buy' seed systems?
- Do seed trades constitute a common practice in subsistence farming communities, and will more recipients benefit from any savings that are made?

ActionAid Mozambique uses a participatory mapping process at community level that clusters villages to make a district-wide impact on district planning. This initiative should be developed and presented to national authorities for wider application. ActionAid has extensive experience of working with government institutions, and could have a meaningful impact, for example, in irrigation management, the introduction of seed varieties resistant to drought and floods can be a short-term alternative.

4.9 Scaling up and 'Mainstreaming'

A number of projects, which are successful at a local level, are now at a stage of expansion to a larger population and geographical area. Such scaling up has significant resource and support implications and also raises the question as to how effectively projects can be replicated from one region to another. Careful adaptation to the local context and the establishment of effective monitoring systems are critical.

The importance of recruiting or training staff to ensure an understanding of the relationship between HIV and AIDS and development that is dynamic, flexible and open to new ideas was raised in a number of the case studies. This relates directly to the issue of "mainstreaming", which implies staying with core business and objectives, but using an HIV and AIDS lens (see Abbot, 2004). Haddad and Gillespie argue that 'new interventions to address HIV and AIDS mitigation should only be developed if existing agriculture, food security and nutrition intervention areas cannot be effective by adapting them through the use of an HIV and AIDS "lens"' (2001). Oxfam-GB and CARE South Africa-Lesotho define "mainstreaming" not as a series of fixed activities but rather a process of changing attitudes and deepening understanding about complex issues, which requires continual learning and reflection (Abbot, 2004). It is important for staff involved in projects to continually deepen their understanding of HIV and AIDS and how it relates to vulnerability and food security.

In the case of the MSF Community Home-Based Care programme, there is great potential for scaling up through collaboration with the large number of NGOs, CBOs and FBOs operating in the District. Technical expertise on crop production, livestock, labour-saving technologies, soil conservation techniques and income-generating activities would complement the Home-Based Care activities and increase the impact of these through improved food security for affected households and communities. The Zikometso Smallholder Farmers' Association, World Vision and Oxfam-GB could provide such expertise in collaboration with government departments.

4.10 HIV and AIDS and Nutrition Interventions

The focus of the ActionAid intervention in Mozambique was to increase nutritive food consumption for a better diet that can strengthen health and fight against HIV and AIDS. Difficulties with food production lead to poor nutrition: both protein-energy malnutrition and deficiencies in micronutrients such as iron, zinc and vitamins (Barnett & Whiteside, 2002). Poor nutrition leads to compromised immune systems, making individuals more susceptible to infection in general. Research has shown that the onset of the disease and even death might be delayed in well-nourished HIV-positive individuals, and diets rich in protein, energy and micronutrients help to develop resistance to opportunistic infections in AIDS patients (Gillespie *et al*, 2001). Barnett and Whiteside argue that for rural populations, the impact of HIV and AIDS on nutrition is potentially serious and an issue that has been largely overlooked in the focus on prevention (2002).

4.10.1 Nutrition Intervention (Sweet Potatoes), Manhica & Marracuene, Mozambique

As previously emphasised, HIV and AIDS threatens the labour capacity of a household. This impact is exacerbated by nutritional deficiencies caused by food insecurity. The distribution of seed to rehabilitate agriculture activities is often the first response to strengthen food production, and has recently been combined with the introduction of highly nutritive varieties into the farming system to ensure a better diet for the community, including people infected with HIV. The intervention is thus focused on the entire community and not on a specific group that might cause stigmatisation; and is coupled with an HIV and AIDS awareness strategy based on “stepping stones” techniques¹⁵, which focus on engaging with taboos around infection to ensure those in need receive care and protection.

ActionAid in Mozambique has implemented a nutrition programme based on the introduction of sweet potatoes rich in Vitamin A known as “*Batata dolce polpa alarajanda*”, which are useful in strengthening the immune system, and is used also to treat poliomyelitis during childhood. The new variety of sweet potato is more resistant to climatic variations such as drought or floods than older types, and this new variety was facilitated through communities that used these potatoes as the main subsistence crop in their areas. The focus on diet and the need for nutritious food was a catalyst in creating a greater “open-mindedness” among local people and encouraging consumption of the new variety. In addition, ActionAid used the introductory seed to develop an agro-processing component by linking it to their seed fairs intervention.

Since its introduction in 2002, there has not been an evaluation conducted on the benefits or otherwise of the programme, although anecdotal evidence indicates that in Manhica and Marracuene, most of the subsistence farmers were cultivating the potato and eating it with tea, because of its particularly sweet

taste. It has not, however, reached the Maputo markets, most likely due to the lack of a trade network. At a local level, however, there is a huge demand for sweet potato and the market is open. Combined with an emergency saving scheme, it could allow members of the community to become better equipped to cope with both natural disasters and food insecurity.

The opportunities of increasing the impact of the intervention, particularly if it does strengthen immunity, should be a priority for the organisations involved in the project. Marketing the potato more widely and ensuring its availability in the urban markets would be a natural scaling-up opportunity for the intervention. An obvious concern about the new varieties was the uncertainty about whether they had been genetically modified, particularly in the context of the contentious debate in the region about genetically modified crops.

¹⁵ <http://www.unesco.org/education/ibe/ichae>