



2. Methodology

ActionAid recognised that there is limited material readily available for discussion and debate around mitigation strategies based on the practical experiences of NGOs or other agencies; this supports the need for a systematic approach to allow the comparison of mitigation strategies that capture crucial aspects of changing development practice. AIDS-affected communities and NGOs have been at the forefront in responding to the impact of the epidemic, and many innovative local projects have emerged that engage with the devastation wrought on households and communities. Yet these are rarely recorded for public dissemination, largely due to the constraints experienced by development practitioners working at field level.

This issue was also recognised by the Southern African Regional Offices of Oxfam-GB, which developed a framework for such analysis that would be available to community-based practitioners. This framework was refined by the steering committee of the workshop on “Mitigating the Impacts of HIV and AIDS in Agriculture and Rural Development”, hosted in May 2003 by Oxfam-GB; the Food and Agricultural Organisation regional offices based in Harare, Zimbabwe; the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ); and the Human Sciences Research Council. The workshop was intended to initiate a process of analysing successes and constraints in mitigating HIV and AIDS through agriculture and rural development, and to define future actions (see www.sarpn.org.za).

An analytical tool emerged from the workshop process that enabled practitioners to evaluate examples of mitigation strategies and to compare these usefully. The tool was drawn from basic aspects of programme design using questions such as who? why? what? how? and with whom? The framework enabled practitioners to consider how the mitigation strategy differed from standard interventions, to assess constraining factors and additional ideas or potential improvements, and was used in this study as a starting point for evaluating a range of case studies depicting “best practice” from around the region. These case studies were each visited in person by the team commissioned to undertake the research. In this regard, the gender co-ordinator of the National Smallholder Farmers’ Association of Malawi (NASFAM), Lesley Holst, was commissioned to undertake the two

Malawi studies. Nathalie Paraliou, development specialist and founder of Competencies of Africa for Africa and Abroad was commissioned to conduct the studies in Mozambique, which brought an interesting comparison to her experience with similar initiatives in Brazil. Scott Drimie, a specialist researcher based at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in South Africa, undertook the Zimbabwe and Swaziland case studies. In addition, a range of other projects was accessed from other sources, such as the “Mitigation Workshop” website and wider literature, and used to supplement the detailed studies. These have been tabled in Appendix One.

