

Institution: University of East Anglia
Unit of Assessment: 24 Anthropology and Development Studies
Title of case study: The Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (RHVP)
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (RHVP) sought to achieve research-based change in policy approaches to food insecurity and famine in southern Africa by investigating a range of policy options and generating debate. The programme's success can be identified in evidence of use, as provided by a post-programme independent evaluation of RHVP; policy response, as observed in social protection policy changes in Malawi, Lesotho, Botswana and Mozambique; and policy outcomes, measured by the impact on beneficiaries of social transfer schemes put in place or expanded in scope due to RHVP influence on social protection policy thinking in southern Africa.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (RHVP), funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), was competitively awarded to a consortium, with the School of International Development leading the research component. Frank Ellis, a full-time UEA professor throughout the period of research, was joint principal investigator with two others in the research design, management, analysis and outputs 2005-10. This role built upon earlier research led by Ellis concerning household level livelihoods and vulnerability in eastern and southern Africa (the LADDER programme funded by DFID 1999-2004).</p> <p><u>Context:</u> In the early 2000s, southern Africa experienced a series of food security crises characterised by widespread hunger and mortality from starvation. Emergency food operations were required in six different countries, for several successive years. The cost of these humanitarian responses was high, and due to delays in mobilisation, they frequently arrived too late to prevent distress in affected populations. At the inception of RHVP, donors and humanitarian agencies were seeking radical change to the policy approach to chronic vulnerability to hunger in the region. The research dimension of the programme was designed to investigate a range of policy options and to deduce from them promising avenues of policy change that could be discussed and debated by decision makers across the region.</p> <p><u>Research Findings:</u> The research confirmed an emerging view that countries and donors should move away from <i>ad hoc</i> responses to recurrent crises towards more routine support for citizens known to be persistently prone to hunger and destitution. This finding is captured by the phrase 'predictable funding for predictable needs'. In practical terms, it implies moving away from short-term food transfers towards regular cash transfers to those most in need. Such cash transfers can take many different forms such as social pensions, child support grants and poverty-targeted transfers to the most food insecure; however, they all have the characteristic that regular small payments enable their recipients to withstand the typical range of fluctuations in their circumstances without having to resort to emergency assistance.</p> <p><u>Research Components and Dates:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Knowledge review and gap analysis:</i> undertaken with counterpart teams in each of six countries, this exercise compiled an analytical inventory of existing social protection programmes in each country and identified gaps in coverage, such as the failure to provide for older citizens or the lack of effective safety nets to prevent hunger and destitution (2005-06) [Research References (RRs) 1 and 2]. 2. <i>Regional evidence-building agenda:</i> also undertaken with counterpart research teams, this investigated 20 different food security and social transfer schemes across 6 countries, with a view to distinguishing practice that worked well and promising innovations in policy design (2007-08) [RR1-3]. A critical policy dilemma arising was the appropriate level of transfers

[RR4].

3. *Frontiers of social protection programme*: this was developed with key senior researchers in selected countries, and conducted in-depth policy research on a series of topics identified in earlier phases as being of particular concern to governments or senior national policy actors (2008-10) [RR5]; for example the budgetary trade-off between social transfers and other efforts to ameliorate extreme poverty [RR6].

3. References to the research

[all available at www.uea.ac.uk/international-development/impact]

1. Ellis, F., 2007, *Social Transfer Case Studies Nos. 1-20*, Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (RHVP), Johannesburg, November, briefing papers available at: http://www.wahenga.net/briefs/case_study
2. Ellis, F., S. Devereux and P. White, 2009, *Social Protection in Africa*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar
3. Devereux, S., F. Ellis and P. White, 2008, *Social Transfer Thematic Briefs Nos. 1-8*, Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (RHVP), April, briefing papers available at: <http://www.wahenga.net/briefs/thematic>
4. Ellis, F., 2012, "We Are All Poor Here": Economic Difference, Social Divisiveness, and Targeting Cash Transfers in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol.48, No.2, pp.201-14
5. Ellis, F. (with co-authors), 2009-10, *Frontiers of Social Protection Briefs*, Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (RHVP), Johannesburg, September, available at: <http://www.wahenga.net/briefs/fosp>
6. Ellis, F. and D.D. Maliro, 2013, 'Fertilizer Subsidies and Social Cash Transfers as Complementary or Competing Instruments for Reducing Vulnerability to Hunger: The Case of Malawi', *Development Policy Review*, Vol.31, No.5, pp.575-596.

4. Details of the impact

RHVP had significant policy impacts and a wide reach across southern Africa and beyond. The research team produced 6 knowledge/gap reports, 38 briefing papers and 6 political context reports. The RHVP website (<http://www.wahenga.net>) was created in 2005 and was the focal point for the dissemination of ideas on food security and social protection in southern Africa from 2005 to 2012, hosting research outputs, regional social protection news and a resource library. It was used extensively by senior government officials, regional development agencies and humanitarian organisations [Impact Reference (IR)1]. It also provided the platform for the creation of a social protection policy agency, representing continuity in the application of these ideas (<http://wahenga.co.za/>)

Research Impact 1: Evidence of Use

This is demonstrated in three ways:

- (a) According to the formal evaluation for DFID of the second phase of RHVP [IR1, p.5]:

Some key achievements of [the research component] include:

- *An almost omnipresence of RHVP at every forum discussing hunger and vulnerability / social protection in the SADC region and beyond, and the provision of experience and advice to those – and the building of excellent links with relevant organisations in the region with which to collaborate*
- *The excellent website wahenga.net which has been almost universally acknowledged as very useful in the region but also globally, building on the phase 1 products with a*

Impact case study (REF3b)

new set of FOSP high quality products and opinion pieces

- *Very interesting support to parliamentarians and policymakers through the SADC Parliamentary Forum, supporting its members to become more aware on social protection*
- *A set of resources to provide practical information to those who need it, for example the parliamentary Handbook on poverty and social transfers*
- *Enhancement of SADC journalists' ability to report effectively on vulnerability and social protection, and the stimulation of a large number of relevant articles in the regional media*

(b) For a separate independent evaluation see IR2.

(c) The policy discussion traffic generated by *wahenga.net* is captured by an associated Blog called Wahenga Reporter, which remains accessible on the internet in 2013 (<http://wahenga.wordpress.com/about/>)

Research Impact 2: Policy Response

The following policy responses are verifiable from agency reports and government executive documents:

1. the adoption by the Malawi government of a white paper, *Social Support Policy*, which arose from the initial drawing up of a Social Protection Framework in partnership with RHVP funded by DFID UK [IR3]. This led to the expansion of Malawi's pilot social cash transfer programme [IR4].
2. the government of Botswana commissioned a new Social Development Policy Framework, designed in collaboration with the RHVP research team [IRs 5 and 6]. This work was undertaken in 2009-10 and involved an examination of existing social protection provision, followed by a collaborative policy discussion with the Department for Social Services to identify gaps and shifts in emphasis, incorporated into a draft framework.
3. in Lesotho, RHVP conducted research on delivering cash payments by mobile phone and found that this form of delivery was rapidly understood by vulnerable recipients, and resulted in income generation beyond the initial transfers [IR7]. RHVP used this and other evidence regarding innovative cash transfer delivery mechanisms to influence delivery systems in other southern African countries, including Swaziland, Malawi and Mozambique.
4. in all countries of the southern African region, the research contributed to strengthening vulnerability assessment and analysis (VAA), from which timely information is provided to governments regarding the location of emerging hunger problems across national territory [IR1, with corroboration available from IR8].
5. beyond the southern African region, RHVP's work came to the attention of the Australian government aid agency AusAid, which subsequently adopted social protection as one of its aid priorities in the countries and regions that are the main recipients of Australian aid [IR9].

Research Impact 3: Policy Outcomes

RHVP research was instrumental in achieving policy shifts in many countries. One example is the expansion of the Malawi social cash transfer pilot and its impact on its beneficiaries [IR10]. While it would be difficult to demonstrate that social cash transfers in Malawi resulted only from RHVP activities, it is also true that without RHVP's co-authorship of Malawi's Social Protection Framework based on knowledge gained from the research, the acceptability in public discussion of this type of policy intervention would almost certainly not have reached the critical point at which scaling up of

the pilot scheme was politically feasible. Between 2008 and 2012 the number of households covered by the scheme grew from under 2,000 to 26,000 (IR4). For evidence of the benefits of the scheme, see IR4; for corroboration of RHVP's involvement, see IR8.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[all available at www.uea.ac.uk/international-development/impact]

1. The IDL Group, 2011, *Project Completion Review: RHVP Phase 2*, Evaluation Report to the Department for International Development, Southern Africa Region, January.
2. Jones, H., 2011, *Learning lessons from the policy influence of the Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (RHVP)*, London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI), document available at: <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7320.pdf>
3. Government of Malawi, 2009, *Social Support Policy: Social Support a Right for All*, Social Protection Unit/Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Lilongwe, available at: <http://www.moafsmw.org/ocean/docs/Social%20Protection/>
4. Government of Malawi, 2010, *Updates on Social Cash Transfer Programme in Malawi*, Lilongwe, Ministry of Gender and Community Services, Lilongwe. Also referred to at: <http://www.stopaidsnow.org/node/327>
5. Republic of Botswana, 2010, *A Social Development Policy Framework for Botswana: Phase 1 Situation Analysis & Phase II Framework and Strategy*, Gaborone: Ministry of Local Government, Department of Social Services, 26 May.
6. Coordinator, Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Programme, SADC Secretariat, Gaborone. "It is my considered view that RHVP made significant contributions to the social protection agenda and debate...[and]...contributed to the thinking and understanding, through the provision of evidence, that the best way to tackle chronic poverty and hunger so prevalent in southern Africa was to go beyond the then status quo".
7. RHVP, 2009, "Ever upwardly mobile": How do cellphones benefit vulnerable people?', *Wahenga Brief*, No.16, February, available at: <http://www.wahenga.net/briefs/wahenga>
8. Director of Poverty Reduction and Social Protection, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Government of Malawi (for corroboration of RHVP's collaboration with Government of Malawi to create its Social Protection Framework)
9. Government of Australia, Australian Aid, 2012, *AusAid Social Protection Framework*, Policy Documents, Canberra, available at: <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/Publications/Pages/social-protection-framework.aspx>
10. Miller, C., Tsoka, M. and Reichert, K., 2008, *Impact Evaluation Report: External Evaluation of the Mchinji Social Cash Transfer Pilot*, Centre for International Health and Development (CIHD) at Boston University and Centre for Social Research, University of Malawi, available at: http://childresearchpolicy.org/images/Impact_Evaluation_Report_Final_August.pdf