

HUNGER AND VULNERABILITY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

A DFID REGIONAL STRATEGY PAPER

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Index

I	Context	1
II	Why focus on hunger and vulnerability in Southern Africa?	2
III	The role of agriculture and the importance of access to food	3
IV	The HIV/AIDS pandemic and links to vulnerability	4
	Current DFID Commitments on HIV/AIDS	5
V	The role of trade and the private sector in promoting access to food	6
VI	Progress to date in SADC Countries	7
VII	What will DFID do?	8
VIII	Next Steps	11
	Annex 1: Current DFID Programme Activities on HIV/AIDS	13

I The Context

1. The humanitarian crisis that became acute in Southern Africa¹ at the end of 2001, when up to 14 million people were estimated to be in need of immediate food aid was the result of a complex mix of factors. Drought triggered but did not cause the crisis. The scene had been set by declines in remittances, the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the region, the effect of poor and inappropriate economic and social policies, the deterioration in rural infrastructure, and the decline in governments' capacity to deliver basic services.
2. The crisis has highlighted the need for greater national government commitment to improve sustainable access to food. It has also exposed weaknesses in national and regional strategies in preparing for and responding to food shortages, and has underlined the extreme vulnerability of increasing numbers of people in Southern Africa.
3. Although the worst aspects of the immediate crisis are over - Zimbabwe is the exception - the region remains highly vulnerable to food insecurity. Rising rates of HIV/AIDS infections are worsening this trend in many countries in the region (see section IV).
4. The scale of humanitarian needs, the costs of responding to them, and the effects humanitarian crises have on longer term development, have prompted calls for a rethink of food security in this region. This would look to strengthen national and regional approaches in ways that tackle the underlying causes of the problem, and to promote ways and means of helping people to secure better and more predictable access to food. The continuing food crisis in some parts of the region has exposed the lack of any robust system at national or regional levels in preparing for future shocks in food supply. And the massive cost of mounting humanitarian operations has underlined the need to invest in preventative measures that support the poor and promote long-term food security.
5. This strategy is part of DFID's response to these issues and to the Report of the International Development Select Committee (IDSC) on the crisis. That Report made 67 recommendations on improving the food security situation in Southern Africa based on a wide range of consultations with DFID, NGOs and academics². The Report highlighted the fact that as vulnerability to shocks has increased, coping strategies have progressively

¹ Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

² Report of the International Development Committee into the Humanitarian Crisis in Southern Africa. HMSO, March 2003.

weakened. It stressed the need for more effective action to tackle food security, both in emergency and development programmes.

6. This strategy sets out our assessment of the main factors contributing to food insecurity in the region, building on the analysis in “Eliminating Hunger”, DFID’s food security position paper. It will serve as a framework to guide DFID policy at regional level around these issues, and will provide a basis for our engagement with national Governments, UN Agencies, NGOs, and other donors on regional food security issues.
7. The strategy outlines four areas where DFID will deliver support through a three-year programme to improve regional food security. It will provide a better understanding of vulnerability, access to food, and broader issues affecting the ability of the poor to provide for themselves. This will feed into DFID programming in the region around pro-poor growth policy, including through Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper discussions. But it is important that governments in the region also give a higher priority to food issues and understand the impact of their policies on access to food for poor people.

II Why focus on hunger and vulnerability in Southern Africa?

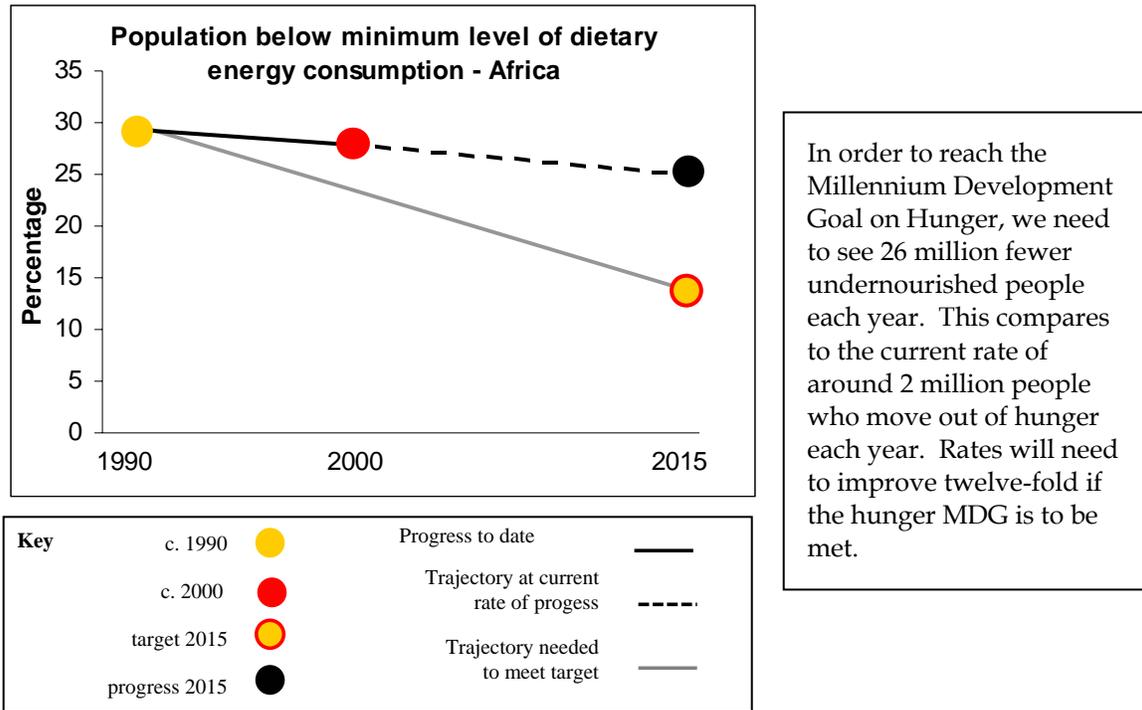
8. Poverty is the principal driver of hunger. But experience from developing countries, particularly Vietnam, has shown that there are benefits from focusing specifically on access to food and not simply relying on growth eventually to eliminate hunger: tackling hunger is itself a building block for securing growth. Improving access to food is a vital element in achieving the other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially on under-five mortality, and for improving people’s health and learning ability. We also need to avoid a downward spiral of increasing humanitarian aid which does little to promote sustained development.
9. More particularly, we need a specific focus on improved access to food and tackling malnutrition if we are to achieve the objective set by the Millennium Development Goal for Hunger³. After falling in the first half of the 1990s, hunger levels are increasing. Latest data from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) suggest that there are currently more than 840 million undernourished⁴ people in the world, of whom 748

³ A refinement of the original “hunger target” adopted at the World Food Summit in Rome, the MDG explicitly links the hunger target to the poverty target, calling for a 50% reduction in the proportion of hungry people in the world by 2015.

⁴ FAO’s measure of food insecurity, which it terms, “undernourishment”, takes into account the amount of food available per person nationally and the extent of inequality in access to food. FAO has been

million live in developing countries. Most of the increases in hunger rates since the World Food Summit in 1996 have been in sub-Saharan Africa.

Figure 1: On present trends, the Hunger Millennium Development Goal will be missed.



Source: FAO, UNDP.

III The role of agriculture and the importance of access to food

- Improving the performance of Southern Africa’s agricultural systems is central to improving people’s incomes and lifting them out of hunger in this region. Agriculture accounts for the majority of full-time employment in rural areas and a substantial proportion of Gross Domestic Product, but productivity has stalled. Despite increasing urbanisation, the majority of people without reliable access to food still live in rural areas. Policies and investments that enhance sustainable access to food and promote growth in rural areas are needed. Raising productivity would boost farm output and lower consumer food prices. Making basic food staples affordable will be a key element in developing pro-poor growth strategies for countries most badly affected by the recent food crisis.

encouraged to improve the data and the analytical approach used in calculating these numbers to allow for a disaggregation that better highlights trends at urban, rural and household levels.

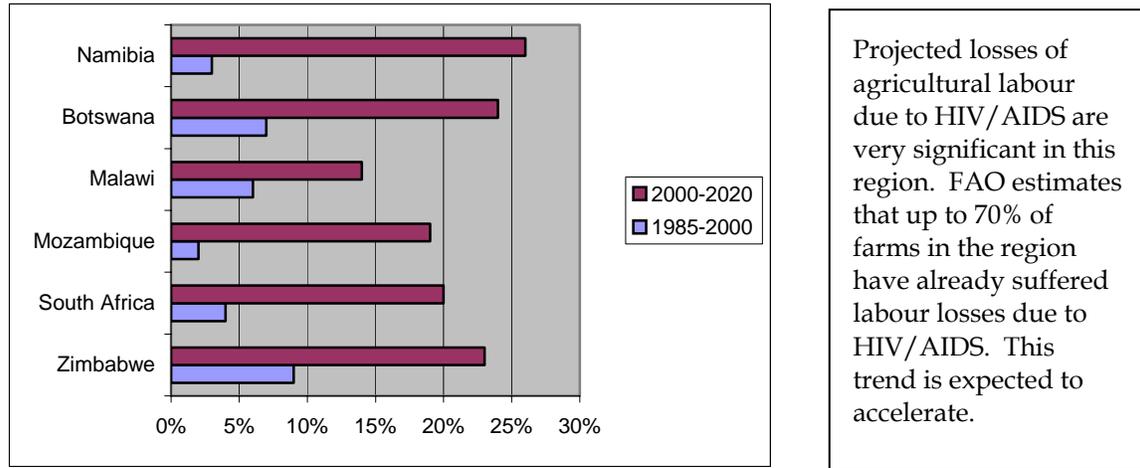
11. Efforts to improve access to food need to consider the impact of land reform and security of land tenure, especially for women. Trade reforms that can improve food security will also need to be supported. Greater investments will need to be made in rural infrastructure to allow for better market access for those living in rural communities.
12. As the Report of the IDSC pointed out, we need to ensure that issues around access to food are given a higher profile in wider thinking about poverty reduction in Southern Africa. DFID will work to ensure that rural development, vulnerability and access to food issues are properly considered in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. DFID country offices in the region are already examining how these issues can be better integrated into future country assistance plans.

IV The HIV/AIDS pandemic and links to vulnerability

13. Almost 28 million people in Africa are infected by HIV/AIDS, with the Southern African region particularly badly hit. In Swaziland and Botswana for example, one in four people is infected. Southern Africa's food security problems and the increasing rates of HIV/AIDS infections are very closely linked, especially for women and girls, who are more likely to become infected with the virus. So responses to improve regional food security need to be shaped around the impact HIV/AIDS has had and continues to wreak on people's lives.
14. There is growing evidence that HIV/AIDS has worsened already weak coping strategies in affected rural and urban areas. It is leading to a downward spiral of lower productivity, unsustainable selling of vital assets such as livestock, lower income levels and increased poverty, as people need to pay more for medicines and funeral expenses. In the worst cases, hunger and vulnerability can put people, especially women and girls, at higher risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Extreme coping strategies, including selling sex for food and migration in search for cash labour, contribute to this. The rise in HIV/AIDS infections has also led to a decline in the ability of governments to deliver basic services.
15. Despite very high prevalence rates, the epidemic has not yet peaked anywhere in the region and the rise in infection rates is set to damage food security further. The number of AIDS-related deaths can be expected to rise steadily. As the 15-49 age group is worst affected, we can expect increasing numbers of orphans and child-headed and elderly-headed households. HIV/AIDS brings to the region a new and different element of vulnerability which requires a different approach to food security

planning. Figure 2 outlines the dramatic effect that HIV/AIDS has had and is projected to have on the agricultural workforce in the region.

Figure 2: Actual and projected agricultural labour losses due to HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa



Source: FAO (2003). Report on the State of Food Insecurity in the World.

16. Although the effects of HIV/AIDS have been very pronounced, it is the combination of the disease with poor governance and other problems which has deepened the recent food crisis in the region. We need to ensure that humanitarian and development responses integrate the needs of those infected by HIV/AIDS into programme design and implementation. We also need to better understand the extent to which HIV/AIDS is contributing to the current crisis, closely examining age groups affected and how HIV/AIDS is affecting their ability to provide for themselves.
17. Governments need to be at the forefront of efforts aimed at preventing HIV/AIDS, and ensuring the links to food security are understood and acted upon.

Current DFID Commitments on HIV/AIDS

18. DFID is now the world's second largest bilateral donor on HIV/AIDS and DFID offices in the region are already working on a range of programmes aimed at tackling HIV/AIDS (see Annex 1). This is in addition to our multilateral commitments to the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria⁵, and others. The regional food security programme will seek to support

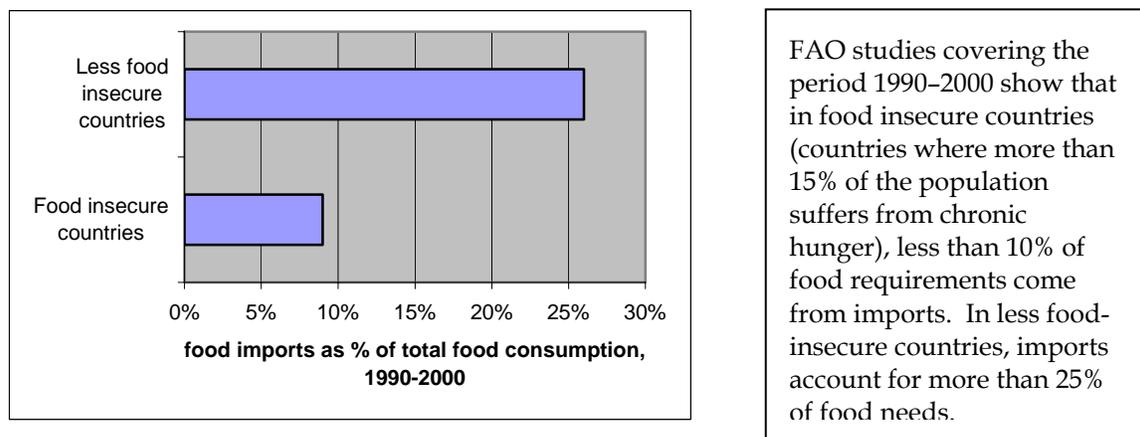
⁵ In 2003, DFID provided a total of \$452 million to fight HIV/AIDS.

existing HIV/AIDS work by integrating HIV/AIDS into better food security planning, and will draw on the experience of existing programmes.

V The role of Trade and the Private Sector in Promoting Food Security

19. In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, ambivalence over the impact of market liberalisation has reopened a debate on the role of governments versus free market forces in achieving food security. National policies have centred on achieving self-sufficiency in food production rather than exploring trading options to enhance household food security. Barriers to regional trade remain, despite a SADC free trade protocol, and there are varying levels of scepticism regarding the role of the market in bringing about better food security.
20. Trade does, though, appear to be valuable in improving access to food. FAO studies have shown that, in general, countries more open to agricultural trade suffer less hunger. Other evidence indicates that levels of malnutrition are lower in countries where agricultural trade is large in relation to agricultural production, and that food-insecure countries rely far more heavily on homegrown production. The fact that Southern African food markets are still restricted is therefore likely to have a significant impact on food security. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Food Trade and Food Security



Source: FAO (2003). Report on the State of Food Insecurity in the World.

21. Infrastructure and logistical constraints combined with market failures and poor policies have restricted trade in Southern Africa. More open, effective and efficient trade in agricultural products could provide important opportunities for improving food security in the region.

Governments need to develop more constructive relations and dialogue on trade and private sector policy if regional food security is to be enhanced. Making better use of the private sector in accessing surplus markets will be important and we also need a better understanding of informal cross border and intra-country trade patterns. However, these efforts need to go hand in hand with cuts in agricultural subsidies in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and with continued improvements in access to developed country markets for agricultural exports from the developing world. DFID, along with other Government Departments, has been actively pressing the European Commission to reduce, in view of eliminating, export subsidies in the WTO in line with the commitments made at Doha in November 2001.

VI Progress to Date in SADC Countries

22. Countries in the SADC region have developed a variety of mechanisms to tackle food security over the past twenty years or so. These have included the development of national and regional early warning systems to provide advance warning of food supply shortages; the establishment of Strategic Grain Reserves; and controls on the price and marketing of basic food staples. In some countries, strategic foreign exchange reserves were established to allow for emergency imports of food when these were required.
23. Despite these arrangements, it is generally agreed that most Governments in the countries worst affected by the crisis were not well prepared for the scale of the food crisis that occurred at the end of 2001. National and regional arrangements were found to be lacking in mounting a timely and effective response. Early warning systems did not prove adequate to direct early action. In Zimbabwe, badly-managed land reform combined with a state grain marketing monopoly have sharply reduced the supply of maize.
24. Grain reserves are still regarded by governments as vital elements of defence against food supply shortages, despite criticisms over inefficiencies surrounding their high running costs and problems with past management and supervision. Countries in the region need to develop clear guidelines on the use of reserves and explore alternative mechanisms for ensuring efficient food supplies.

25. Most SADC Governments recognise these weaknesses, and agree that national and regional systems need to be strengthened to enable more effective prevention and response strategies to take root in the future.

VII What will DFID do?

26. DFID will develop a three year programme of support for improved food security in the region. Building on the analysis we have set out, and in partnership with other donors, this work will focus on four main areas:

- i) strengthening vulnerability assessment and monitoring systems**
- ii) supporting more effective ways of protecting the poor from the impact of food shortages (“safety nets”)**
- iii) promoting the roles of regional trade and the private sector**
- iv) strengthening regional policy discussions**

27. It will be important that strong links are made between each of these components. Better vulnerability systems will enable the development of more effective safety nets. These will stimulate the private sector to provide more inputs (through voucher systems, seed fairs, etc.). All of this will build up evidence on what works, and enable the transfer of successful approaches across the region.

- i) DFID will strengthen vulnerability assessment and monitoring systems at national and regional levels**

28. A better understanding of where and why people are vulnerable, and how they can be better targeted with assistance that reduces their exposure to shocks, must be a priority for national and regional food security policymakers in the region. This will need to be linked to better early warning systems that allow for more appropriate and more timely responses.

29. To date, early warning systems have tended to concentrate on food supply and, in particular, on agricultural production. However, food production does not by itself ensure universal access to food. We need to better understand why poor people are vulnerable to food shortages and find better ways of measuring the demand for food before we can achieve more efficient targeting. For this to happen, vulnerability, targeting and sampling methodologies all need to be sharpened.

30. DFID has already supported national and regional vulnerability assessment committees (R/NVACs) in the region, providing extremely

useful information that has complemented WFP's and FAO's crop and food supply assessments. Working with other donors, we plan to build on existing investments and look for ways to strengthen early warning systems so that their outputs feed into more timely responses and more effective policy planning around food security. With national governments, NGO partners, UN Agencies, SADC, and established policy networks, we will take stock of vulnerability monitoring work done so far. The relocation of SADC's Food and Natural Resources Policies Analysis Network's (FANRPAN) regional early warning unit to Gabarone creates good opportunities to better link SADC to regional vulnerability work.

31. It is important that national governments play a full role in the design and delivery of vulnerability systems. It is also critical that the importance of tracking vulnerability, and providing resources to do this work, is captured in PRSP discussions. Developing closer links to FAO's Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping System (FIVIMS) will be an important component of this work. (DFID is a member of the FIVIMS working group.) Better vulnerability information will also be important in terms of more effective contingency planning for governments, donors, the UN system, and NGO implementing partners.
 - ii) **DFID will support more effective ways of protecting the poor from the impact of food shortages ("safety nets")**
32. The development of effective safety nets is important for this region. But with the exception of Malawi, little has been done to establish them. We need to understand what has worked well in Malawi and why, and explore the scope for transferring successful approaches to different countries.
33. Well-targeted programmes aimed at focusing support on the most vulnerable should also help to develop more *efficient* safety nets. Poor targeting of subsidies can depress prices and blunt production incentives. We also need to integrate work in safety nets within broader sector-level support and ensure they are designed in ways that allow for sustained donor investment.
34. Since agricultural activities form only one part of poor people's strategies for providing for themselves, safety nets must cover a wider range of needs than agricultural inputs. They must also address the role of nutrition, health, and education. So close links with the work of regional and country advisers working on these issues will be important.

35. We need to develop a better understanding of the proper role of food aid and other activities in the design of such safety nets, given the significant non-food needs of poor people, and the additional needs generated by high HIV/AIDS. We need to understand when and how public works programmes should form part of the safety net in these circumstances and what the appropriate mix of cash, food, and subsidized agricultural inputs should be in their design. Enhanced vulnerability systems need to produce data that can feed into the design of these safety nets, better targeting the vulnerable with more effective help. Our support for such systems will have this need clearly in mind.
36. DFID is already working with a variety of partners through its country programmes to build appropriate safety nets in food insecure areas. The regional programme will promote cross-country lesson-learning around this area.
- iii) DFID will explore ways of promoting the roles of regional trade and the private sector in enhancing regional food security**
37. Section V outlined the importance of improving regional trade and private sector involvement in securing better access to food. The food security programme will explore how DFID can best support the private sector in enhancing food security – for example, how to encourage its role in supplying and supporting safety nets – and how approaches to stimulate regional trade can be encouraged. Efforts here will include a closer look at informal cross-border trade and how information systems might be improved to better track this.
38. However, given the weakness of many institutions at regional level, we will also expect the design of the programme to consider how best to support micro-level and informal trade networks. The design team will explore ways in which capacity building at local levels can be supported in ways that build on developments at the macro level in trade discussions. In this respect, the programme will work closely with the Regional Trade project that DFID’s Southern Africa office is already progressing, where SADC and COMESA are important partners, and where efforts to stimulate cross border trade are currently focused.
- iv) DFID will work to strengthen regional policy discussions on food security issues**
39. Policy analysis in the region is currently weak, at both national and regional levels. This needs to be strengthened. We need to find ways of

improving the links between food security analysis and policy-making that can feed into more effective implementation of a food security strategy for the region.

40. SADC is a key organisation in this respect but its current capacity is weak. Assistance provided by USAID and the Rockefeller Foundation to support the work of the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) in stimulating and informing regional food strategies is already working along these lines. DFID will reinforce these efforts. The emerging roles and work of FANRPAN, the South African Regional Poverty Network (SARPN), along with the International Food Policy research Institute (IFPRI) will be important in determining the scope and focus of additional support. The design phase of the project will undertake institutional appraisal to identify key actors, wider policy links, and clarify priority areas for analysis.
41. One possibility is the creation of a flexible fund, which could be used to pilot approaches that support safety net design, especially with respect to those infected with HIV/AIDS. Possibilities include labour saving technologies, support for local trader networks, promoting market information systems in the region, and exploring options with governments on the futures markets for grains as a complement to physical grain reserves.
42. Some initiatives will work best at country levels. Others will require support targeted at regional mechanisms where this offers better scope for a sustained response.

VIII Next Steps

43. DFID's regional humanitarian adviser will lead and manage a team which will design a regional food security programme. The design phase of the project will allow for extensive consultation with a wide range of national and regional stakeholders, and will be aimed at addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity in the region and promoting policies that reduce vulnerability. This work will begin early in 2004.
44. DFID will work closely with other stakeholders, including governments, the World Bank, EC, USAID, other bilaterals, and the UN system in the design and implementation of the food security programme.
45. The areas outlined in section VII above will form the focus of this effort. Given the particular importance of developing effective safety nets and

promoting the role of the private sector in stimulating regional trade in food products, experts in each of these fields will be selected to participate in the design, implementation and management of the project.

Annex 1: Current DFID Programme Activities on HIV/AIDS

Botswana Lesotho/Swaziland/Namibia

DFID is funding a £9 million regional programme over the next five years which will support palliative and preventative work (treatment of sexually transmitted infections, condom promotion, and behavioural change programmes).

Malawi

DFID is providing core funding of at least £25 million over three years to the National AIDS Commission, in partnership with the World Bank, and the Canadian and Norwegian development agencies. This will support a multisectoral response to HIV/AIDS and finance civil society, private sector and Government activities. DFID Malawi is also focusing its efforts to mainstream HIV/AIDS into all its work in other areas such as education and access to justice.

Mozambique

DFID is working with Government, civil society and partners on the poverty reduction strategy, within which HIV/AIDS is one of the areas of priority. DFID supports mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS in the public sector; social marketing of condoms; establishing voluntary counselling and testing centres, STI (sexually transmitted infection) and youth-friendly health services; home based care; school, community and workplace programmes; as well as research and lesson learning. Support is being provided to the Mozambican National AIDS Council through a common fund for civil society initiatives as well as through broader support to the organisation. £17 million will be spent over the next three years on these programmes.

Zambia

In 2003, DFID approved £20 million over six years to support Zambia's national response to HIV/AIDS. Funding will be provided specifically for strengthening the National HIV/AIDS/STD/TB Council (NAC) and Secretariat (NAS), and for supporting strategic HIV prevention, care and mitigation activities within the National HIV/AIDS/STD/TB Strategic Framework. Other DFID assistance has been indirect through support to basic health care and hospital services, and

direct through support to youth friendly health services in urban areas, orphan support, life skills education in schools, and the provision of condoms.

Zimbabwe

DFID has committed £6.8 million to a four-year programme that uses social marketing techniques to provide affordable voluntary counselling and testing as well as male and female condoms, hormonal contraceptives and communication of the need for behaviour change. In addition, DFID is providing £14.75 million over 5 years to procure condoms and other contraceptives for the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council (ZNFPC). DFID's assistance is channelled through non-governmental and private sector organisations as well as through the public health system, to ensure that services and commodities are as widely available as possible at affordable prices.