

Minutes of RVAC Meeting – February 4, 2009

Oxfam GB Office, Pretoria

Members Present

Duncan Samikwa – SADC PMU

Basra Hassan – UNICEF

Gary Sawdon – RHVP/PMU

Bruce Isaacson – FAO

Phumzile Mdladla – FEWSNET

James Bwirani – Oxfam

Isaac Tarakidzwa – FEWSNET

Eric Kenefick - WFP

Elias Mabaso - OCHA

The meeting was held at the Oxfam office in Pretoria. The main issues discussed were the AOM and the workplans for the NVACs and the RVAC as well as issues related to staffing and funding. Since the PMU Manager was running late, the meeting was chaired by Phumzile until Duncan arrived.

1. Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was reviewed and adopted.

2. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

The following matters were reviewed and discussed:

- PMU Posts: Reported by Gary that the posts (Regional Vulnerability Assessment Expert) had been advertised with a February 13th deadline and the recruitment is being handled by SADC. Later it was confirmed by Duncan that RVAC members will be asked to participate in the interview process.
- Establishment of NVACs:
 - i. **Angola:** Gary plans a follow up mission there to discuss zoning and HEA training, etc. and institutional processes but would like to be accompanied by Isaac or Phumzile who went there for the Stakeholder Workshop.
 - ii. **Madagascar:** Concept note and TOR drafted by Sylvie for Technical Advisor in BNGRC and was discussed at AOM with Ginna and RVAC members. Next step is for Ginna to request PMU for advisor. **ACTION:** Sylvie and Duncan to follow up with Ginna on this process of hiring.
 - iii. **Namibia:** Gary provided an update on livelihood zoning and HEA training going on for the NamVAC including the development of a workplan and the placement of a technical advisor from RHVP to the Namibia VAC for one year. There were concerns raised by some members of the RVAC on whether that process was shared with the RVAC. **ACTION:** No explanation was provided at the time but request still outstanding on the process used to hire technical advisors for National VACs.
 - iv. **South Africa:** After a set of discussions it was determined that DoA wants the review of FIVIMS as well as to proceed with the transfer of remaining funds to HSRC to continue their work on FIVIMS roll-out. Money will be transferred as per MOU from WFP accounts to HSRC but must wait until March or April due to WFP procedures for closing out Trust Funds. **ACTION:** PMU needs to follow up on the review.
- AOM reporting: The RVAC and NVACs prepared a template for CO reporting while the consultant who managed the AOM is working on the AOM report, with guidance from the PMU. Template was reviewed by RVAC and NVAC members. **ACTION:** Template to be circulated a last time to RVAC members before being sent to NVACs.

Review of Workplan

There was much discussion on how to proceed and then it was agreed that the RVAC would only review those activities under PMU/RVAC/RVAA. According to Gary, the RVAA Programme includes RVAC, NVACs and PMU and is funded by DfID. There is about \$700,000 available for VAC activities in 2009. In the matrix, it was recommended that 'costs under consideration' be changed to 'shortfalls'.

It was also recommended that to avoid PMU having to travel to NVACs and help them develop workplans early in the year, the PMU provides better guidance BEFORE the AOM this year for 2010 workplan development.

- Market Analysis training/workshop takes place in Maputo. Follow up by FEWSNET to send around the agenda/TOR to RVAC members while RVAC agencies see if they have funds to support VAC member participation. PMU to circulate notice to VAC chairs for nominees.
- Crossborder initiatives with livelihoods zoning baselines – follow up by FEWSNET at country level, most likely in Mozambique and Zambia. DFID requested to RHVP for this activity as well.
- Dissemination meeting – request to see if it can be done in June rather than July yet still linked to the SADC Council of Ministers meeting. PMU will follow up with SADC on the dates. Venue likely in Johannesburg.
- Annual Organisational Meeting – Date set for November with knowledge that often it happens in December. Note: Better and earlier guidance for NVACs in workplan templates, including statement of objectives and outcomes followed by activities. Also likely to be held in Johannesburg due to costs.
- Technical backstopping missions – PMU to develop field visit plan with understanding that all RVAC members keep others informed of field support missions.
- RVAC meetings – Last Thursday of the month rotating the costs between members with next meeting held last Thursday of February (Oxfam). Next physical meeting to be hosted by UNICEF.
- GIS data collection and cleaning: Linked to regional livelihood zone map. Conceptual at this point with concept note shared at next RVAC meeting. This will be lead by Charles Rethman and it's suggested that a meeting take place between GIS experts from the various agencies in the planning processes to facilitate design and also sharing of data.
- Strengthening nutrition elements – UNICEF wants to build on existing VAC activities to strengthen the nutrition aspects. Funding to hire a consultant to look into the methodologies and sampling VAC presently uses and while the Food Security aspect of the assessment is not harmed to come with a sampling that will provide a statistical valid results and at the same time will not overburden the surveyors is still a question. Proposal to fund this project among others was submitted to a number of Donors and 3 of the donors have not giving a response yet.
- Support to Agricultural Information Management System with crop estimates – Discussion on what this actually means but seems it focuses on technical assistance from Swaziland to Lesotho for modelling. It was brought up that the terrain in Lesotho precludes this from being a very successful tool in that country. The other question is does RVAC have a role in strengthening crop production estimates? Also, it's pointed out that crop estimation is a very sensitive subject at the SADC agricultural production meeting. FAO agreed that it's beyond the scope of the VACs to be involved in this activity. Regional Early Warning System should be involved. Follow up by FAO (Bruce) with Bentry on the way forward, especially building upon high food prices issues.
- Information/data management systems trainings – discussion around work done by OCHA in the past on how to proceed and what data management means including archiving and access. FAO recommends that OCHA take the lead on this activity. Follow up: PMU and OCHA to meet with countries using VAC info to see what worked and what didn't and develop a follow-up strategy for the data management and archiving.
- GIS training – Debate on whether this is useful or not because we have experts available to assist with this activity. Some requests were made for this training by country offices. Suggested that a

GIS/mapping training module, if developed, should be targeted to particular individuals who will be followed-up, especially in small countries. Follow up – FEWSNET will follow up with USGIS on incorporating some VAC members into the trainings.

- Emergency Assessments – OCHA wants to respond to some requests by national VACs for emergency needs assessments with lots of discussion around what's already been done and what is out there. Suggestion by PMU to do an inventory on what's available by agency on emergency needs assessments and inquire more into CO requests for these types of trainings. Follow up is that OCHA directly deals with country requests and coordinate with other agencies. However, not to confuse with higher level support provided by OCHA to SADC Secretariat on coordination issues as opposed to technical issues.
- Generation of Southern Africa Livelihood zone map – linked to the GIS data management and collection as the product of that activity.

RVAA Capacity Building and Training

Contact was made to Sheryl Hendricks to arrange the workshop on capacity building and training and response from the institutional review. RVAC not clear on the way forward with UKZN and the CoE. PMU said that the review had been sent in July to UKZN for comments with follow-up but no response yet. It was noted that the funds WFP had for support were lost due to the delays on moving the process forward. Suggestion that Senior SADC people contact UKZN and ask if she will move forward with this CoE or not and then move on. Problem is to define the way forward for capacity building. Follow-up is to give Sheryl a deadline to respond and then discuss the way forward at the next meeting.

RVAC Technical working group on IPC

FAO has shared a proposal to establish such a working group which was reviewed. This proposal was supported by RVAC, especially as an opportunity to keep in step with what is going on at the global level. Follow-up is that a request will be made by the PMU to the 4 interested countries (South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi) to recommend one technical member from each VAC to participate. RVAC agencies to be members include: FAO, WFP, Oxfam, UNICEF, PMU, OCHA, FEWSNET, and RHVP. The PMU will also send out an invitation to all other global members in the region. Propose first meeting to be done in mid-April or prior to the global meeting (TBA).

RVAC Technical working group on HFP

FAO shared another proposal for a technical working group on high food prices which was reviewed by the RVAC. Discussion on how and what the scope of the work of this group would be based upon what has already been done, taking into account agency work and guidance plus urban and price issues and to feed information up to the RDT working group plus guidance down to the COs also including what's going on with NEPAD and the World Bank. WFP recommended broadening the scope to include the global financial crisis. Way forward: WFP to send to WFP HQ for expanding the scope to include GFC and then FEWSNET, Oxfam and WFP will work with FAO to streamline proposal into a more action-oriented working group.

Proposed RVAA Consultancies

- Joint Financing and Technical Cooperation Agreement (JFTCA): Being piloted in SADC for the HIV and AIDS programme. This was not clear to the team initially. After discussions, it was agreed that there needs to be a consultancy for joint financing as well as separate consultancy to evaluate the implementation of the 5-year programme (independent, team, not individual). Way forward: First a TOR for the review to be prepared and circulated by the PMU to RVAC members, followed by the TOR preparation and circulation of the joint financing review.
- Communication Strategy: TOR generated and circulated by the PMU.
- M&E: Request to explain the M&E activity which was focused on the performance monitoring of the implementation of the 5 year plan. TOR drafted and circulated to PMU. This would then feed into the programme strategy for the next phase of activities (change 5-year plan to 4-year plan).

Agency updates:

- **Oxfam:** Oxfam international will launch a campaign 16th March for Rights to Humanitarian Assistance (Right to Survive). Oxfam GB will work on contextualising report to southern Africa issues. Oxfam will call upon some RVAC members to participate in this global event.
- **WFP:** Reported on preparation of regional issues paper on Climate Change in the next month. HQ is also going to do more work in 2009 on food security monitoring systems, starting with stock taking (globally) and could have funds to support activities in the region. Continued work to support market/price analysis and impact of high food prices and the global financial crisis in the region. Also about the HQ initiative to prepare County Outline Documents and Country Strategy Documents on the role of food assistance at the country level in helping to include hunger issues into UNDAF and PRSPs with priority countries of Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia.
- **OCHA:** Update on Contingency Planning support, especially help in tools for sudden onset emergencies.
- **FAO:** Has a new regional cassava initiative to deal with cassava diseases moving into southern Africa region. Had a meeting with the FAO emergency coordinators in the region to strategise for the next year(s).
- **UNICEF:** For 2009, focus will be on building capacity in-country for emergency response and preparedness. **Lana Wreikat**, focal point on Emergencies for Southern Africa from UNICEF is now based in regional office in Johannesburg and is keen to attend RVAC meetings when possible. Her email address is Lwreikat@unicef.org. UNICEF requested her name to be included in the RVAC mailing list.
- **RHVP:** Had a work plan review process with key stakeholders and are following up on the country level work plans.
- **PMU:** Activities documented in the minutes for follow-up on various issues.
- **Update on position formerly funded by FAO/WFP:** Request by FAO to understand the current staffing structure in the PMU and what profile of technical support would be necessary from the jointly funded UN staff to complement the existing staffing structure. PMU will prepare a request for technical assistance to the UN team based upon their current needs.
- **FEWS NET:** Reported that the market analysis workshop planned for March is on schedule. Invitations were extended (and sponsorship) was extended by FEWS ET to one government partner in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. FEWS NET has also requested regional partners (notably FAO, WFP and RHVP) to sponsor NVAC members who meet criteria for participation at the workshop which will be held from 9-12 March in Maputo. FEWS NET promised to circulate relevant documentation on workshop and requested feedback by February 9th to enable proper planning. On the scenario skills development, FEWS NET reported that a consultant has been hired to finalise the guidance. The draft is available for review, and one RVAC partner will be requested to review this document. On the way forward regarding scenario building capacity building for the VACs, FEWS NET pointed out that though they agreed and fully supported the idea/ proposal to hire a consultant to assist one or two NVACs, they did not have any funds to contribute to the activity.

Next meeting on February 26th at 10:00 and will be a teleconference hosted by Oxfam.