ONE WORLD ACTION
FOR A JUST AND EQUAL WORLD

Making a Difference

Citizen's and their organisations and networks contributing to change
OWA PPA 2008-9: Case study 13

Title of Case Study:	Discrimination faced by PLHIV in agricultural subsidies, Malawi

1. PPA partner name	One World Action
2. Countries highlighted in case study	Malawi

People living with HIV are discriminated against in many ways. In Malawi, they have been denied access to vital farm subsidies.

The Paradiso PLWHIV support group in Ngwenya, Lilongwe (Malawi) has both women and men members living with HIV. Women members of the Paradiso support group are also members of the Coalition Of Women Living With HIV/AIDS (COWLHA), a partner of One World Action. Community members felt the need to organise and have their voices heard because of their concern that institutions such as the National AIDS Commission were not accessible to grassroots level people, especially women. **"We wanted to highlight the discrimination that we face on a daily basis and to get national policies to address our needs."**

One concrete example of discrimination is in the distribution of vital agricultural subsidies. Group members shared their experiences with One World Action regarding fertilizer coupons that were distributed as part of the agricultural subsidies scheme of the government from 2005-07. Fertilizer coupons were distributed through the agricultural extension worker, who first of all consulted the village head. Just as in the past, the village head was used by the ruling party to influence potential voters and the fertilizer coupons became political tools. Rural people in general have had difficulty in accessing fertiliser coupons and many village heads themselves had trouble accessing the coupons. **People living with HIV/AIDS and women in particular, who needed the subsidies the most, appeared to be the lowest priority in the distribution scheme.**

Due to the discrimination faced by women living with HIV in accessing fertilizer coupons in the first round of coupon distribution in 2005, COWLHA took the issue to the President. The President promised that 2 coupons would be given to each person living with HIV in the period 2006-07. But the Office of the President failed to inform the agricultural extension workers and discrimination persisted. When COWLHA wanted to discuss and resolve the issue with concerned senior chiefs and village heads, they refused to meet with them.

For Malawi to reach the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative completion stage, the IMF and World Bank insisted that the national government remove all agricultural subsidies and privatise the state marketing board, the Agriculture and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC). This pressure was a clear contradiction to supposed basic donor principles such as 'country ownership' and 'alignment with country priorities'. **Under pressure from donors, the Bakili Muluzi government stopped all subsidies in 1994, resulting in widespread hunger and food insecurity in Malawi.**

Agricultural subsidies became the key election mandate in the 2004 elections. Going against donor wishes, the new government of Bingu Mutharika announced fertilizer subsidies for 2005-06. The government funded this initiative entirely on its own as it did not have the support of donors. Due to relatively effective distribution of the coupons and good and timely rains, Malawi had a bumper harvest and food insecurity was significantly reduced across the country. DFID and other donors then realised the difference that agricultural subsidies could play in countries such as Malawi and decided to roll out an extensive programme for the following year. Donors believe that 2006-07 was also a successful year because actual wages increased and food prices remained low. Results for 2007-08 remain to be seen as coupon distribution was very poor due to a number of political reasons.

This year the fertilizer coupon distribution has been delayed to such an extent that it is too late now to use the fertilizer and for it to have any effect. The irony of the situation is local people have seen loads of undistributed coupons being dumped in 'six miles', a dumping ground very close to Ngwenya where Paradiso support group members live!

Agriculture and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) which has again been nationalised plays an important role by being the distribution network for affordable maize during periods of food shortage. It provides benchmark prices, is a reliable source of agricultural inputs, and purchases crops from farmers.

ADMARC has not been able to deal with the present food shortage in the villages allegedly because buffer stocks have been sold to Zimbabwe. This was a decision that was taken based on an expectation that 2007-08 would also produce a bumper harvest. A small bucket of maize is being sold for MK600 by local traders and people in the villages cannot afford the prices. **People are managing on a meal a day and waiting for the harvest period which does not look promising. Women and particularly PLWHIV face hunger unless the government of Malawi can do something soon to address the issue.**

The Paradiso support group and COWLHA have two concrete suggestions to make to the government and to donors:

1. That fertilizer coupons be reserved for PLWHIV (2 per person)
2. That these coupons be given to community-based organisations such as Paradiso or COWLHA to distribute in a just manner to PLWHIV