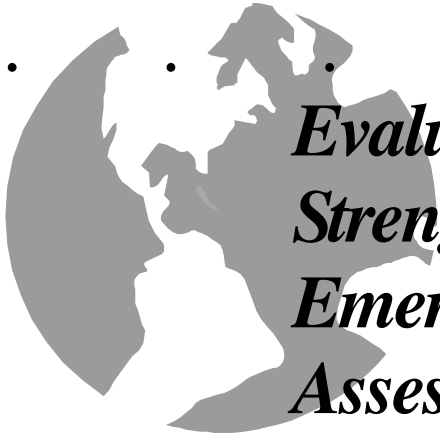




# World Food Programme

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**A Report Commissioned by the  
Office of Evaluation**



***Evaluation of the WFP  
Strengthening  
Emergency Needs  
Assessment  
Implementation Plan***

*VOL. I Evaluation Report*

*Rome, October 2007*

*Ref. OEDE/2007/009*

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# Acknowledgement

The evaluation team visited Chad, Nepal, Rwanda Uganda and Zambia from March 2007 to April 2007 and Regional Bureaux; Bangkok, Kampala, Johannesburg and Dakar. This document was prepared by the mission team leader on the basis of the contributions of evaluation team.

On behalf of the team, the author wishes to extend thanks to all those who facilitated the team's work in the field and in Headquarters.

Responsibility for the opinions expressed in this report rests solely with the authors. Publication of this document does not imply endorsement by WFP of the opinions expressed.

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## Acronyms

ADH	WFP Human Resources Division
AG	Advisory Group
APR	Annual Performance Review
CAP/NAF	Consolidated Appeal Process/Needs Analysis Framework
CFOB	WFP Office of Budget and Financial Planning
CFSAM	Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission
CFSVA	Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment
CO	Country Office
DFID	Department for International Development
DISI	Development Information Services International
EB	Executive Board
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office
EFSA	Emergency Food Security Assessment
EMOP	Emergency Operations Programme
ENA	Emergency Needs Assessment
EWS	Early Warning System
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDD	WFP Donor Relations
FEWS	Famine Early-Warning System Network
NET	
FSAU	Food Security Assessment Unit (Somalia)
FSMS	Food Security Monitoring System
HEA	Household Economy Analysis
HQ	Head Quarters
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IP	Implementation Plan (of SENAIP)
IPC	Integrated Phase Classification
JAM	UNHCR/WFP Joint Assessment Mission
NGO	Non governmental Organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODAN	Emergency Needs Assessment Service
ODB	Regional Bureau Bangkok
OD	WFP Operations Department
ODA	WFP Analysis, Assessment and Preparedness Division
ODAN	WFP Emergency Needs Assessment Branch
ODAV	WFP Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Branch
ODI	Overseas Development Institute, UK
ODD	Regional Bureau Dakar
ODJ	Regional Bureau Johannesburg
ODK	Regional Bureau Kampala
ODM	WFP Programme Management Division
ODO	WFP Office of Associate Director of Operations
ODTP	WFP Food Procurement Service



OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OEDE	WFP Office of Evaluation
PCNA	Post-Conflict Needs Assessment
PDP	WFP Policy, Strategy and Programme Support Division
PDPE	WFP Economic Analysis Service
PRC	WFP Project Review Committee
PRRO	Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation
PSA	Programme Support and Administration
QMC	Quality Monitoring Checklist
RAO	Regional Assessment Officer
RB	Regional Bureau
RHVP	Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme
SAF	Standard Analytical Framework
SC	Steering Committee
SC-UK	Save the Children-United Kingdom
SENAC	Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity
SENAIP	Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Implementation Plan
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAC	Vulnerability Assessment Committee
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
WFP	World Food Programme



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## Executive Summary

1. In recent years there has been increasing attention on improving *proportionate and appropriate* humanitarian assistance to food insecure population needs. As part of an overarching strategy to achieve this, there is a specific recognition of the requirement for sound assessment of food insecure population needs. Existing needs assessment processes, throughout the humanitarian sector, are acknowledged to be weak.
2. In 2003 the donors articulated their specific concern, to WFP, that food aid needs may be overestimated and that options for non-food interventions to address food insecurity were not being adequately examined. Coupled with an internal recognition of the need to strengthen assessment processes, this led to the formulation of a 30-month Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Implementation Plan (SENAIP).
3. Building on previous initiatives SENAIIP set out to:
  - increase accountability and transparency
  - strengthen methodologies and guidance
  - improve the availability of (pre) crisis information
  - augment assessment capacities
4. SENAIIP was subsequently implemented over a three year (2005 – 2007) period with an annual budget of approximately \$7 million. Several donors have supported this, with the major contribution coming from the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), as the Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessments Capacities (SENAC) project.
5. This independent evaluation of the SENAIIP has been commissioned by the WFP Office of Evaluation (OEDE). The purpose of the evaluation is twofold; to provide accountability for the expenditure of public funds and to provide guidance on the competencies and procedures to be mainstreamed in the budget for the 2008-2009 biennium.
6. The evaluation team was specifically tasked with assessing the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of SENAIIP. The evaluation methodology included interviews with key stakeholders, a structured review of the reports and products, electronic surveys and case studies in five countries (Uganda, Rwanda, Nepal, Chad and Zambia). The scope of the evaluation is SENAIIP activities carried out between January 2005 and December 2006.
7. The major evaluation questions are to examine the programme relevance; the extent to which the objectives of SENAIIP are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements and needs, the policy environment in which the IP operates and the logic and completeness of the project design.
8. The evaluation commended the validity and breadth of the SENAIIP design which simultaneously seeks to improve the credibility, quality, transparency and utility of assessments. For the purposes of the evaluation the logical interrelationship and hierarchy of these objectives is clarified.





9. The evaluation suggests that the SENAIP design could be strengthened through an increased focus on the linkages of assessment results to action and stronger food insecure population participation in the assessment process. It was noted that there is a continuing ambiguity over whether the purpose of SENAIP is to improved analysis of the appropriate use of food aid or appropriate responses to food insecurity.

10. The evaluation examined the main SENAIP outputs; the methodological developments in needs assessment, the development of guidance materials, the learning programme, the production of pre-crisis information and greater partnership.

11. The utility of the methodological developments are reviewed for each of the five thematic areas identified by SENAIP. The evaluation agreed that the focal areas of research had been appropriately selected. The most practical methodological advances under SENAIP have been in the area of market analysis. However, even in this case the outputs, so far, remain of limited utility to operational decision making. It is advised that future research efforts should be more narrowly focused and directly applied.

12. Consolidated and comprehensive guidance on needs assessment is provided in the Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) handbook. This was developed by WFP prior to SENAIP. Feedback on this product was very positive. Constructive suggestions are presented on both improving this manual and developing companion volumes for generalist staff. However given the limited progress with subsequent methodological development, the planned release of a second edition in 2007 may be premature.

13. A detailed assessment of the SENAIP training programme was conducted, including an electronic survey of trainees. The evaluation commends the underlying training strategy. A large numbers of staff that have been successfully trained over two years. This appears to have successfully enhanced capacities at different levels, with small a cadre of skilled and experienced assessors complemented by a larger number of front line staff trained in more basic skills. The decision to extend the training to partners and government staff is applauded. Continuing training in assessment methods is advocated to compensate for staff attrition and further enhance capacity within the country offices.

14. SENAIP has commissioned 16 pre-crisis baselines (CFSVAs) in high risk countries in order to support the conduct of subsequent ENAs. It is still early to confirm the utility of CFSVAs in this context, but preliminary indications are that the analytical content of the CFSVA may be of greater relevance than the data. Further investigation is needed of whether the data needs of an ENA may be more relevantly and cheaply met through a FSMS. This has a significant bearing on the CFSVA methodology used and the associated costs.

15. Furthermore, the SENAIP perspective neglects the major use of CFSVAs: directly supporting the formulation of many resilience building PRROs. Opportunities to improve the CFSVA process and methods are provided to improve their functionality in this role.

16. Compared to ENA and CFSVA assessments, there has been relatively little attention given by SENAIP to establishing and supporting FSMS. However, there is strong evidence that improved monitoring capacities play a critical role in triggering assessments, validating the conclusions and adjusting on-going programmes. ODAV possess considerable experience and demonstrated success in operating FSMS that should be drawn on to develop improved technical guidelines and rapidly increase monitoring capacities and systems.



17. A final output of the SENAIP strategy is increasing involvement of partners in the conduct of needs assessment. The evaluation found widespread appreciation of the value of partnership in assessment. In reality, partnership in assessment has been a long standing principle that predates SENAIP. It is rare to find any assessments that have been conducted independently by WFP. Decisions on partnership appear to be logically decided at the local (country) level and HQ may have only a marginal role to play in enabling stronger partnerships.

18. The evaluation goes on to examine how the above mentioned outputs have combined to improve the *quality* of emergency needs assessments. This includes both instances where SENAIP staff has led ENAs and the more indirect impact of investments in methodological development, training, capacity building and strengthened partnerships. The analysis is informed by both subjective opinions and ‘scoring’ a large number of EFSA reports against a pre-determined checklist.

19. Nearly all EFSAAs successfully provide core information on the scale of needs – in particular the number and location of food insecure population. However, they do so in ways which are non comparable – which undermines the ability to allocate resources proportionately. The ability to objectively assess the accuracy of assessments, even on an ex-post basis, is still lacking. The absence of this evidence reinforces the worrying tendency to equate *lower assessed needs* with more *accurately assessed needs*.

20. There is evidence that the quality of the contextual analysis (the ability to explain the causes of food insecurity) is improving. However, one of the weakest areas in the ENAs is the link between this analysis and response recommendations. The lack of appropriate tools to select responses is identified as one critical constraint, while the continuing lack of an organizational architecture to facilitate multi-sectoral analysis and recommendation is another.

21. Timeliness of ENAs is a significant issue. Many of the country offices reported specific instances where the assessment findings come too late to be useful for programme design. The evaluation suggests a two pronged response to this problem. The first is explicitly reducing the requirements from an ENA to the minimum information set that enables key decisions to be made on a timely basis. The second is ensuring adequate resources for assessment – with the timely access to assessors and budgets.

22. The importance of SENAIPs achievement in promoting greater transparency in assessment methods, processes and products is commended. The significance of this may be far greater than immediately apparent as it ensures a continuing cycle of criticism and further improvement.

23. The efficiency of SENAIP is examined including; the organizational arrangements adopted within WFP, the adequacy and performance of the monitoring systems, the conformance with the implementation schedule and the appropriateness and adequacy of the financial and human resources provided to SENAIP.

24. The evaluation concludes that integrating the functions of ODAN and ODAV would increase the coherence of information gathering and analysis. Considerable technical benefits, and savings, could be obtained from integration and rationalization. At the regional level it is recommended that ODAV, ODAN, M&E and nutritional staff be brought together in a unified *food security analysis unit* to support WFP's information needs in a coordinated manner.



25. SENAIP utilizes a good variety of mechanisms to monitor progress. This includes progress reports to the Executive Board, a Steering Committee (SC) of donors, an Advisory Group (AG) to monitor technical progress and reports to individual donors. All appear to be reasonably effective.

26. A particularly innovative feature of SENAIP was the establishment of a technical Advisory Group to provide substantive guidance on research, the development of methods and tools and coordination with related efforts. There is no doubt that the AG is an extremely well qualified group of individuals, but WFP and the AG members share the opinion that this potential could have been better utilized. On balance there is sufficient merit in the model that WFP should consider adapting and maintaining the AG beyond SENAIP.

27. An analysis is provided of the SENAIP budget to assess whether results have been achieved at a reasonable cost. Additionally the cost implications at country level of conducting assessments are investigated. The results of this cost efficiency analysis on sustainability and mainstreaming are discussed.

28. The overall budget for SENAIP is believed to be justified in relation to both WFPs overall budget and the potential cost savings on programmes. Based on performance there is a strong argument for substantial continuing core budgetary support. However, with the conclusion of extra-budgetary support the current portfolio of activities will inevitably have to be scaled back. It is hard to identify areas where savings can be made without impacts on performance but candidates include HQ staff costs, research, the operation of the AG and the cost of conducting a CFSVA.

29. In addition to the methodological guidance and rigor, it is recognized that the quality of assessment depends to a large degree on the quality of the responsible staff. WFP are encouraged to acknowledge this in their personnel policies and do more to attract and retain appropriate staff. There is also a specific need to retain the additional capacity of the SENAIP funded RAOs. In particular the market RAOs bring unique skills to the organization and market analysis is still has far from being embedded in the organization.

30. The evaluation also examines evidence for the impact of improved needs assessments on programme design, donor perceptions of credibility and the consequences on financing. The team acknowledges that it is very early to be judging programme impact at this level as SENAIP has been operational for only two years. However, these preliminary findings are highly pertinent to mainstreaming decisions.

31. SENAIP has successfully made WFP managers accountable for ensuring that programmes are supported by some form of assessment. This has gone a long way to institutionalizing the production of a separate ENA, with a transparent link to programming. This accountability is actively followed up through the mechanism of the Project Review Committee.

32. The evaluation found that the ENA results are routinely used to guide the implementation of WFPs food aid programme – in particular providing the basis for targeting, beneficiary numbers and total food needs.

33. Many ENAs do not provide well justified response recommendations in this form. Where ENA do provide response recommendations that fall outside of WFPs mandate it is not always



clear which agency has responsibility for follow-up and consequently such recommendations can be ignored.

34. The importance of (annual) reassessment of beneficiary needs in multi-year programmes is discussed. While a formal requirement exists it not apparent how this is conducted or monitored. An argument is presented that programme management should be informed by light monitoring of trends through surveillance systems, rather than through the reliance on the periodic assessment. A serious investment in monitoring and surveillance is justified. A possible model comes from southern Africa, where the CHS answers these operational questions and is an important adjunct to the initial needs assessment.

35. A principal concern of SENAIP was to improve credibility in its relationship with donors. The evaluation investigated donor perceptions of WFP's credibility through interviews at the global level and as part of the case study. SENAIP may contribute to credibility at several levels; the credibility of the ENAs, the credibility of WFPs programmes and the credibility of WFP as an organization.

36. There are indications of improving credibility, especially amongst those close to SENAIP. However current actions alone are unlikely to dispel donor concerns. Donors have yet to see demonstrable impacts in the content of programmes. It is also very hard to mollify the underlying concern that WFP has a strong self interest in the assessment outcomes, by improved technical methods alone.

37. Little immediate impact is observable on donor funding decisions. The lingering questions on credibility are compounded by donor decision making procedures that remain poorly aligned to responding on the basis of needs. A clearer incentive system would do much to encourage and sustain improved needs assessment methods in WFP.

38. In the short term sustainability will depend on transitioning budgetary responsibility from extra-budgetary funds to the PSA budget. WFP have demonstrated a willingness to engineer this change. However, the evaluation notes that this is occurring during period of extreme budgetary pressure within WFP. It would therefore be in the mutual interest of donors and WFP to consider extending the current period of extra-budgetary support if the momentum from SENAIP is to be protected and sustained.

39. The evaluation provides a substantial number of *suggestions* to WFP management and a smaller number of formal *recommendations*. The focus is kept on a relatively small number of formal recommendations that the evaluation team believes to be substantive, well supported by evidence and worthy of management attention.



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Responding to Need

40. The performance of international humanitarian aid has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years. A fundamental concern is that the response to specific emergencies often fails to reflect comparative levels of need. This was powerfully illustrated by a comparison of generous donor support to the Balkans crisis, with the ‘forgotten emergencies’ of Africa at the turn of the millennium. Furthermore, even where aid is forthcoming there are increasing questions on the *appropriateness* of the humanitarian assistance provided<sup>1</sup>.

41. Donors have responded to this analysis by making a formal commitment to provide assistance that is both *proportionate and appropriate* (Darcy and Hoffman, 2003) to food insecure populations needs. This commitment was formally stated as part of the principles of “Good Donorship” (this is discussed more fully in section 2.2.2).

42. Within the overarching strategy is a specific commitment to strengthen the needs assessment process. Needs assessments are (or should be) a critical input to decision making on humanitarian responses. A needs assessment should inform decisions on whether a humanitarian intervention is required; if so determine who needs what, where and for how long; and finally justify this requirement to financiers.

43. An influential report on needs assessment practice (Darcy and Hoffman, 2003) critiqued the practice of needs assessment in the international humanitarian system, and considered ways of achieving a more consistent and accurate picture of the scale and nature of the peoples needs and how to improve the links to decision making. This analysis suggested that needs assessments were only conducted sporadically, often leaving decision makers with inadequate information. Even when done, needs assessments were often found to be conflated with the formulation of the response. A clearer distinction between the definition of the problem and the formulation of solutions was called for in the report.

44. Darcy and Hoffman identified specific methodological weaknesses and operational challenges in the conduct of needs assessments:

- There is frequently an absence of adequate baseline data against which to measure the impact of the disaster.
- The use of comparable standards and thresholds to gauge the severity of a situation and the response requirements is often lacking.
- The validity and accuracy of needs assessments are often questionable as the underlying data quality is weak and the conclusions rely on the subjective opinion of the observer.
- There are very few attempts to provide a coordinated, comprehensive and prioritized picture of needs and agencies tend to assess situations narrowly in relation to their own programs. The Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) was not seen as an effective prioritization mechanism.

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<sup>1</sup> A case study on the appropriateness of humanitarian aid is presented in the study “Missing the Point” (Levine and Chastre, 2004).



45. The overall conclusion was that formal needs assessments played only a marginal role in the decision-making of agencies and donors. A wide range of other factors tended to influence decisions about humanitarian response, including the political interests of donors. Darcy & Hoffman also observed that needs assessments were conducted overwhelmingly by operational agencies, often in order to substantiate a request for funding. This leaves the process open to questions on the objectivity of analysis and the risk of distorting the scale of the threat and resorting to supply-driven responses. In conclusion Darcy & Hoffman called for a greater emphasis on evidence-based responses.

46. The general concerns on humanitarian needs assessment processes were echoed by WFP's own donors. In particular the European Commission (EC) representative to the Executive Board (EB) voiced her strong concerns on the *credibility* of WFP's needs assessments during the EB session in late 2003. The specific concern with WFP was two-fold; that food aid needs may be overestimated and that options for non-food interventions to address food insecurity were not adequately examined. Similar concerns were shared by other donors. The criticism from the EC was matched by a willingness to help WFP strengthen needs assessments.

47. WFP had also been reflecting internally on the need to improve the quality of needs assessment for some time<sup>2</sup>. However, it is generally acknowledged that the intervention of donors in the EB was the 'trigger' for the SENAIP initiative. The key objective of the subsequent initiative can be interpreted as the desire of WFP to improve its' *credibility* amongst donors.

## **1.2 The SENAIP initiative**

48. Although relatively unstructured and rarely formalized<sup>3</sup>, the process of needs assessment, is a long established WFP field activity to support the design of programmes. HQ technical support was first provided by a Chief Assessor, appointed in the mid 1990's. The responsibility was later divided into two positions, one for Asia and one for Africa, before being later abolished. In 2003, the Emergency Needs Assessment Unit (OEN) was established to provide support and guidance on needs assessments for the field and Headquarters and to collaborate with partners and donors. The Vulnerability Assessing and Mapping (VAM) unit, while not holding an official mandate for needs assessment, has in practice provided considerable support to conducting needs assessments, critically at the country level.

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<sup>2</sup> One interview with a WFP HQ staff member made reference to a senior staff meeting in 2000 where this topic featured prominently on the agenda.

<sup>3</sup> Prior to SENAIP the Joint Assessment Missions (JAMs) and Crop and Food Supply Assessment Missions (CFSAMs) conducted jointly with UNHCR and FAO respectively were the most formalized assessment processes that WFP participated in.



### Definition of terms used in the evaluation

In this report the following terms are used to describe different type of information products and processes:

Emergency Needs Assessment (ENA) is used to describe once-off assessments used to confirm the nature, severity and likely duration of a crisis, and recommend appropriate responses.

Within this generic term there are a number of sub-types of ENA, for which there is a defined purpose and methodology. This includes Joint Assessment Missions (JAMs), Crop and Food Supply Assessment Missions (CFSAMs) and inter-agency assessment missions (including the Consolidated Appeal Process).

There are also a wide variety of other miscellaneous food security assessment processes. The term Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) is used to describe these assessments in this report.

Pre-crisis information studies (including the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment), early warning and surveillance systems (Food Security Monitoring Systems) are defined, as being distinct from ENAs.

49. Donor support for improving needs assessment was provided by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) from the late 1990's as part of the Institutional Strengthening Programme (ISP). This financed the strengthening of WFP's needs assessment capacity, most significantly through funding the development and publication of the first edition of the WFP's "Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) Handbook". Furthermore, there have been numerous initiatives at the regional and country level to explicitly improve assessment capacity. Consequently by 2003 WFP already had an established capacity for conducting needs assessment and a number of on-going supporting capacity development activities.

50. To define an agenda for further improvements a "WFP-Partner Consultation on Emergency Needs Assessment (ENA)" was held in Castel Gandolfo in March 2003 (WFP 2003a). The meeting identified a number of key issues in the assessment of food security in emergencies. This was followed up through commissioned papers (WFP, 2003c) and a widely attended technical meeting on key issues in ENA (WFP, 2003b). In contrast to the broad critique offered by Darcy, the focus in this meeting shifted to technical and methodological issues. The meeting determined the priority issues for attention as: (i) non-food responses to food insecurity, (ii) chronic versus transitory food insecurity, (iii) markets, and (iv) sampling. In addition it refined the minimum information needs for EFSA reporting and identified critical pre-disaster (baseline) information needs.

51. Subsequently a policy paper on strengthening needs assessment was presented to the EB in January 2004 (WFP, 2004a). This paper acknowledged the urgent necessity of improving the conduct of ENAs: "*Emergency needs assessment findings provide the foundation for the design of relief operations, and must therefore be accurate and credible. Recent concerns regarding reliability and objectivity have led WFP to intensify its review of its emergency needs assessment practices* (WFP, *ibid*)". The policy paper defined WFP's responsibility, in emergency situations, "*for determining whether external assistance is required to meet immediate food needs and whether food aid is the appropriate form of assistance. WFP and its*



*partners also assess what other interventions are needed to promote food-security objectives” (WFP, ibid).*

52. The policy paper goes on to outline the main elements of an organizational strategy to improve emergency needs assessment on the basis of lessons learnt. It was recognized that ENAs are conducted through four main types of missions and strengthening is required across all these processes:

- i. Rapid assessment missions, usually led by WFP or Government, with NGO participation,
- ii. Crop and Food Supply Assessment Missions (CFSMs) done jointly by FAO and WFP,
- iii. Joint Assessment Missions to assess refugee situations conducted with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and WFP, and donor and NGO representatives, and,
- iv. Inter-agency assessments, frequently in support of the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) and the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), led by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

53. The detailed activities were further developed into a 30-month Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Implementation Plan (SENAIP)<sup>4</sup> presented to the EB in October 2004 (WFP, 2004b). The Implementation Plan (IP) clustered a more detailed list of activities (see Annex F for details) into four main areas:

- i. **accountability and transparency**, with a target that 100% of the Emergency Operations (EMOPs) and Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRROs) will be supported by assessment documentation by 2006;
- ii. **strengthened methodologies and guidance**, including new and revised assessment handbooks;
- iii. **improved (pre) crisis information** for selected emergency-prone priority countries; and;
- iv. **augmented assessment capacities** through partnerships, and a learning programme.

54. The implementation plan did not utilize a log frame approach, or present a hierarchy of objectives, so there is some ambiguity about the precise objectives. However, the IP states that the activities “*will enable WFP to strengthen its competencies and capacities to ensure the quality, credibility, comparability and transparency of emergency needs assessments*” (WFP 2004b).

55. The total SENAIIP budget was US\$6.9 million (in 2005) and US\$7.3 million (in 2006). Approximately \$1 million per year was financed directly through Programme Support Administrative (PSA) funds. The SENAIIP attracted considerable extra-budgetary support from a number of donors. The annual budgets and contributions by various donors are given in Annex H.

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<sup>4</sup> Delays at the inception phase mean that the implementation period has been extended to end in December 2007.





### **1.2.1 SENAC Project**

56. The major contribution to SENAIP has come from the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO). Financing SENAIP fitted well with the ECs recently initiated program of thematic support to UN agencies. In 2005 ECHO provided US\$5 million through the strengthening emergency needs assessments capacities (SENAC) project, with a similar amounts committed for 2006 and 2007. ECHO financed most of the SENAIP activities except improved accountability (where external support was not required) and the specific exclusion of collaboration on the development of the CFSAMs. A log frame was developed for the SENAC component of SENAIP (Annex E) and summarized in Figure 1

57. SENAC is guided by a Steering Committee (SC) of donor representatives which oversees the work plan and monitors progress. It is also supported by an Advisory Group (AG) composed of representatives of the academia, NGOs and other UN bodies. This group provides guidance mainly on research, development of methods and tools in key areas related to ENAs.

58. While SENAC is the more commonly recognized acronym to describe the initiative to strengthen ENA, both internally and externally to WFP, this evaluation uses the frame of the overarching SENAIP initiative. As SENAIP is the more inclusive ‘umbrella’ term and, by definition, includes the SENAC component.

### **1.3 SENAIP Evaluation**

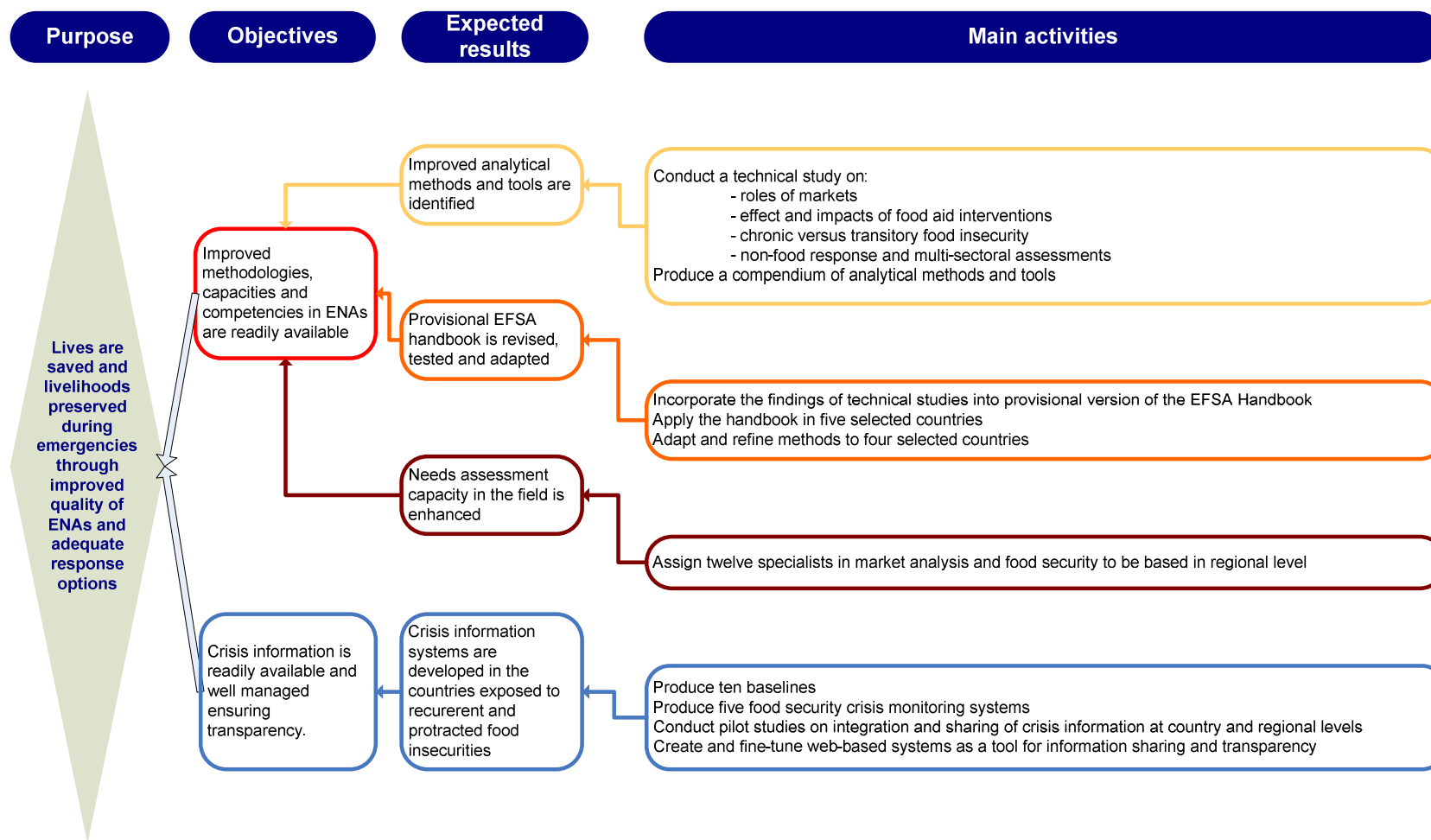
59. This independent evaluation of the SENAIP has been commissioned by the WFP Office of Evaluation (OEDE). The purpose of the evaluation is twofold; to provide accountability for the expenditure of public funds and to provide guidance on the competencies and procedures to be mainstreamed in the budget for the 2008-2009 biennium. To achieve this purpose the evaluation was tasked with assessing the progress made to improving the utility, credibility, transparency and quality of the ENAs undertaken in WFP.

60. The evaluation took place while the SENAIP in initiative was still on-going. The scope of the evaluation is SENAIP activities carried out between January 2005 and December 2006. While new activities are acknowledged to have occurred during 2007, it has not been possible to report on these. However, the fact that implementation is still on-going has been taken into consideration when forming evaluative judgments and recommendations.

61. The evaluation report has been targeted at a variety of stakeholders including; WFP at Headquarter, regional and country level, donors, other UN agencies (including UNHCR, OCHA, UNICEF and FAO) and implementing partners in the academic community, academia and host governments.



Figure 1-1: Figure 1 1 SENAC Logical Framework





62. OEDE recruited a three person evaluation team<sup>5</sup> to conduct the evaluation. This evaluation has been managed by an OEDE Evaluation Officer and supported by a research assistant<sup>6</sup>. The evaluation team commenced work in mid January 2007.

### 1.3.1 Evaluation Methods

63. The Terms of Reference (Annex A) set out clear criteria for the evaluation. The evaluation was tasked with determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability (see Table 1-1 for definitions of these terms). In addition the ToR asked the evaluation to focus on the cross cutting issues of *timeliness* and *partnerships*.

Table 1-1 Definitions for key evaluation terms

<b>Relevance</b>	The extent to which the objectives of an intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements and needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.
<b>Effectiveness</b>	The extent to which the objectives of an intervention are achieved, or expected to be achieved, taking into consideration their relative importance.
<b>Efficiency</b>	The extent to which inputs (human resources, funding, time, etc.) have been economically converted into outputs.
<b>Impact</b>	Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by an intervention.
<b>Sustainability</b>	The continuation of benefits from an intervention after major assistance has been completed. Probability of continued long-term benefits.

64. The evaluation team elaborated a comprehensive set of evaluation questions under these criteria in an Inception Report<sup>7</sup>. A number of research tools were defined and elaborated to systematically answer these evaluation questions. The research instruments included:

- **Interviews** at the 'global' level. This included WFP HQ staff, all members of the SENAC steering committee (donors) and all members of the SENAC Advisory Group (representing academia, NGOs and other UN agencies). Over 50 formal interviews were conducted by the evaluation team at this level. A checklist of questions was drawn up for these interviews.
- **Desk Research.** A full bibliography of relevant documentation was compiled, including documents produced directly by SENAIP (technical and administrative), ENAs (those developed over the last three years with WFP participation), programme documents (EMOPS and PRROs) and other

<sup>5</sup> Nick Maunder, Barry Riley and Nathan Morrow

<sup>6</sup> AnneClaire Luzot and Veronica Moretti respectively

<sup>7</sup> See "An Independent Evaluation of the SENAIP. Inception Report. Maunder, N, Riley, B and Morrow, N. January 2007" for full details of the methodological approach adopted by the evaluation team.



relevant documents (policy documents, academic research). This bibliography (Annex D) provides the core reference material for the study.

- **Structured review of Emergency Needs Assessment reports.** As part of this review there was a systematic review of 44 ENAs produced mainly in 2005 and 2006, using a structured checklist (Annex M) and the accompanying EMOP and PRRO documents (checklist in Annex N).
- **Survey of Country Offices.** Two electronic surveys were conducted. One was directed at all WFP Country Offices (COs) where there was an active EMOP or PRRO between 2004 and 2007. This canvassed senior staff (typically the Deputy Country Directors) on the utility of ENAs to programming decisions (Annex L).
- **Survey of ENA trainees.** A second survey canvassed ENA trainees (Annex K). This survey gathered feedback on perceptions of the quality and usefulness of the training, as well as the subsequent ability of trainees to apply their knowledge.

Table 1-2 Survey samples and response rates

Survey	No. sampled	Replies received	Response rate
Country office survey	56	40	71%
Survey of WFP trainees	417	162	39%
Survey of partner staff trainees	364	101	28%

- **Country Case Studies.** The evaluation undertook case study in selected countries and associated Regional Bureaus (RBs). As the case studies conclusions tend to be extrapolated the site selection was based on carefully chosen criteria. The specific case histories were used to test hypotheses from the earlier research processes. The case studies conducted a large number of interviews of staff from WFP and partner agencies. The findings of the case studies are given in Annex J. The final selection of case study sites was as follows:

Table 1-3 Countries selected for case studies<sup>8</sup>

Regional Bureau	Country 1	Country 2
Kampala (ODK)	Uganda	Rwanda
Bangkok (ODB)	Nepal	
Dakar (ODD)	Chad	
Johannesburg (ODJ)	Zambia	

65. The report that follows answers the evaluation questions formulated in the Inception Report. The structure of the chapter headings broadly follows the main evaluation criteria provided in the study ToR.

<sup>8</sup> Illness of a team member prevented completion of the Uganda case study.



## 2 The relevance of SENAIP

66. The starting point for the evaluation was an examination of the programme's *relevance*. This chapter examines the extent to which the objectives of SENAIP are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements and needs; and the policy environment in which the IP operates. This includes an examination of the logic and completeness of the project design.

### 2.1 The SENAIP design

#### 2.1.1 SENAIP objectives

67. The basic premise of SENAIP is that strengthening the needs assessment process supports a more proportionate and appropriate response to needs. The WFP evaluation of the DFID funded ISP, which preceded SENAIP, had already pointed to the weakness of WFP's assessment capacity. This perception was widely shared by internal and external informants.

*“Prior to SENAC the ENA quality was very variable. There were some good ones and some bad – often depending on the individuals responsible. Subsequently I realized that in many cases ENAs were simply not done at all. The second problem was that WFP were coming at ENA from the perspective of ‘what can we do with food aid’. There needs to be a change of perspective to a problem driven analysis – what is the food security problem, what needs to be done and finally what is the role of food aid”.* (AG Member)

68. These shortcomings were acknowledged by WFP in the design of SENAIP<sup>9</sup>:

*“Recent studies have indicated that humanitarian needs assessments require improvement including those of WFP. ... Concerns have been raised with regard to WFP assessments that food aid needs may have been overestimated in some cases and that options for non-food interventions to address food insecurity were not adequately examined. The credibility and objectivity of particular needs assessments have on occasion been called into question, which is a matter of particular concern to WFP and donors because assessment findings are used to substantiate funding requests.”*

69. SENAIP addresses this overall goal through the specific objectives of improving the credibility, quality, transparency and utility of assessments<sup>10</sup>. Interviews indicated a wide spread agreement on the validity of these objectives.

70. The *credibility* of assessments had been clearly called into question by donors. Improving the believability of assessments (and the overall organizational credibility) is widely agreed as a core objective. For WFP there is a direct link to financing:

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<sup>9</sup> WFP/EB.1/2004/4-A

<sup>10</sup> The understanding of these terms is discussed in more detail in the relevant sections of the report.



*“ENA is the source of our credibility which is the key to obtaining the resources we need to assist the people who are food insecure and affected by adversity. SENAIP is intended to strengthen our ENA system which will improve our credibility with the donor community, enabling more resources to be made available to help the food insecure poor” (WFP Country Director)*

71. Improving *transparency* is also widely supported as a means to influence credibility. There was evidently a lack of transparency prior to SENAC – for example a planned global study of WFP ENA methodologies by one member of the Advisory Group (AG) prior to SENAC had to be abandoned for the simple reason that they could not find enough examples of published ENAs or reports which included a transparent description of methods.

72. The *quality* and *utility* of assessments prior to SENAIP was disputed. Certainly the absence of assessment documentation does not mean that ENAs, in some form or other, were not conducted<sup>11</sup> or used. There was some debate over whether the quality and utility of ENAs prior to the SENAIP initiative was as much an issue as claimed (see the interim review of SENAC, Goyder, 2005). However, subsequent improvements in ENA quality and utility achieved during SENAIP implementation have left those interviewed in agreement with the value of these objectives.

73. Overall, there is a broad consensus among those interviewed for this evaluation that the SENAIP objectives were appropriate. There was also specific appreciation from several observers regarding the breadth of the initiative – that the underlying set of activities was a comprehensive attempt to confront the problem.

74. It should also be noted that the SENAIP design clearly acknowledges that improved ENAs are necessary, but not in themselves sufficient, to improve the ability of WFP to respond to needs. Performance is dependent on other elements of the WFP system and the actions of external partners – critically including donor behavior. It is important to bear this in mind when assessing the way forward; this asks whether further attention to improving ENAs is warranted as opposed to focusing on alternative constraints.

### **2.1.2 Results hierarchy**

75. An observation of the evaluation team is that while the SENAIP activities are clearly specified there is a lack of clarity in the specification of the objectives<sup>12</sup>. As the SENAIP was never formally presented as a log frame format the precise objectives, their inter-relationships and hierarchy remain ambiguous. A strong suggestion is made that in future, any similar initiatives are formulated using a standard log frame format.

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<sup>11</sup> As Darcy (2003) pointed out established practice was often to integrate assessment findings into programme proposals, but without separate documentation.

<sup>12</sup> There is a lack of consistency between SENAIP and SENAC documentation, and even within the various SENAIP documents. At various points the narrative refers to objectives of improving the quality, transparency, accountability, utility, credibility, accuracy, impartiality and comparability of assessments.



76. At a minimum the given objectives of improved quality, utility, transparency and credibility do not occur at equivalent levels and the interpretation of these terms remains undefined. This lack of clarity presents a challenge for the evaluation, and also for effective project management.

77. For the purposes of this evaluation an imputed results hierarchy has been constructed<sup>13</sup> (Figure 2-1).

- The SENAIP outputs are (largely as given in the IP) assumed as improved analytical methods, augmented assessment capacity, strengthened partnerships and increased availability of pre-crisis information.
- This is understood to result in a central outcome of improved assessment quality.
- The purpose is seen as inter-related impacts on improved program (EMOP / PRRO) design and increased donor credibility.

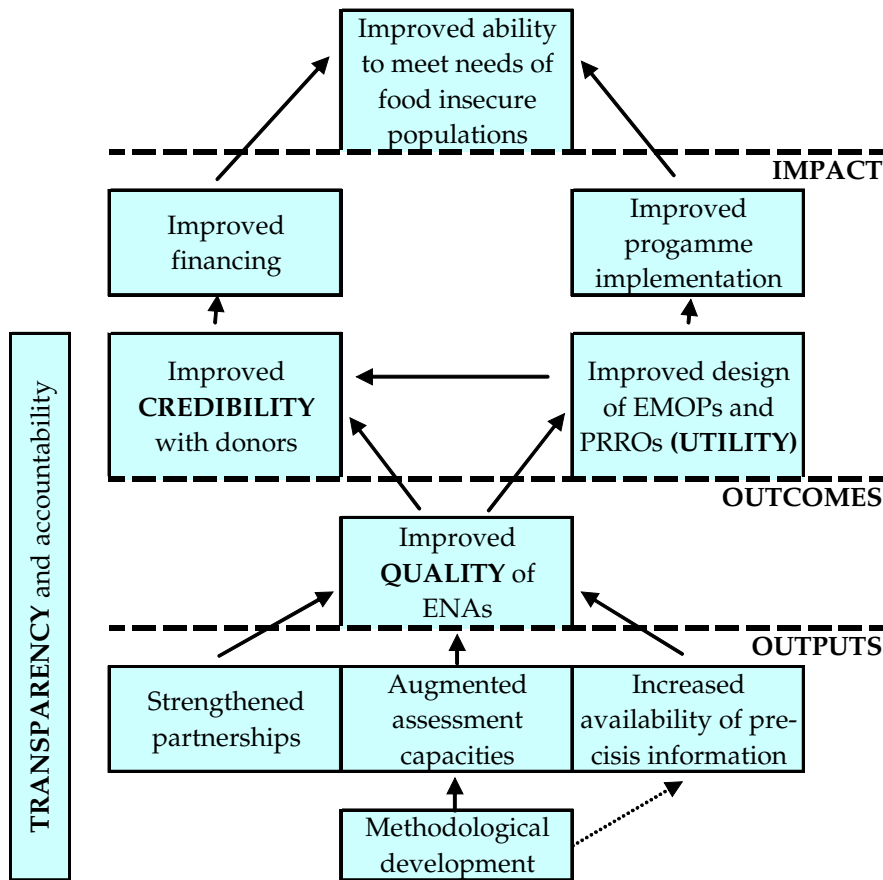
78. The imputed results logic is summarized in the figure below. This evaluation focuses on assessing the SENAIP outputs, outcomes and the impact on credibility and utility in programme design. Therefore the links to improved programme implementation and the ultimate impact on beneficiaries fall outside of the evaluation scope.

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<sup>13</sup> A revised log frame was developed by the evaluation team and included in the inception report. However, subsequent discussion and reflection has resulted in Figure 2-1



Figure 2-1 Imputed SENAIP results hierarchy



79. It is worth emphasizing that the impacts occur on two levels. The original trigger for SENAIP was the perceived need to improve the organizational credibility. But the benefits should be seen directly in *more efficient programmes*, as much as in improved credibility of the agency with donors:

*“The impact ... occurs as a consequence of better programming of food aid which leads to less food being allocated where it is not needed and larger amounts available where it is. Another related consequence of better, more accurate emergency needs assessments is the increased sense among donors that WFP requests are founded on solid evidence. The donors are more likely to respond positively (and perhaps more quickly) when they have full confidence in WFP’s numbers.”* (WFP regional officer)

80. There is an expressed interest, on the part of both donors and WFP, to ensure that neither too much or too little assistance is provided to beneficiaries – effectively meeting needs while avoiding possible disincentive effects.

81. The SENAIP highlights the need for greater transparency. This occurs at several levels; transparency in methods, partnerships, assessment products and the relationship to decision making. Therefore this is taken, along with accountability, as





a cross cutting theme. Transparency and accountability are discussed at several places in the report.

### 2.1.3 Design process

82. SENAIP was overlaid on a complex pre-existing situation containing many actors, a wide variety of contexts, numerous shocks of differing type and duration and a vast assortment of assessment tools and of response options already in existence. SENAIP did a relatively good job of acknowledging many of these elements in the design. However, it has proved challenging to factor in the diversity of country-specific initiatives in the design<sup>14</sup>. In a decentralized organization such as WFP the ultimate impact is expressed through the incorporation and adaptation of the tools to specific country situations. This requires motivating and engaging staff to do these things well rather than imposing excessive normative guidance. If not well handled, this can create underlying tension and requires careful management. The relationship between HQ and the field is discussed in more detail in section 5.1.

83. Several of the AG members criticized the process of developing the SENAIP. For example one AG member expressed the concern as follows: *“In terms of the project design a frustration has been in the sequencing of events. It would have been good to have more diagnostics at the beginning. Instead, the handbook came first and then this was followed by dialogue. The process moved too fast before adequate input and training has had to change dynamically. We were still debating diagnostics in the last AG – which was an awkward process”*. However, given the dynamic nature of assessment process, and a compelling timeline for results, it is not clear that WFP had much alternative.

### 2.1.4 Comprehensiveness

84. While the desirability of the type of inclusiveness the SENAIP design sets out to achieve is acknowledged, there are important areas where the scope of the IP could be improved.

85. First, the SENAIP design tends to focus on technical and methodological issues. The problem analysis, presented by Darcy & Hofmann, took the relationship between *needs assessment and decision making* as the context. Consequently findings and recommendations ranged across both technical and institutional issues. In contrast the subsequent WFP efforts appear strongly focused on a more narrow set of technical issues.

86. Several AG members suggested that SENAIP needed to pay more attention to process issues in needs assessment. A specific criticism was that the SENAIP did not include the linkages of ENAs to decision making as a core thematic area from the start, although SENAIP has subsequently commissioned a study by ODI on this

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<sup>14</sup> For example during the country case studies major field based initiatives to strengthen needs assessment observed include work with the national Vulnerability Assessment Committees (VACs) in southern Africa with funds provided by the Republic of South Africa and managed by ODJ and a process of strengthening emergency needs assessment methods and reporting in Uganda.



topic<sup>15</sup>. Certainly, as improved assessment methods are embedded there should be increasing attention to the linkages with – and impact on – decision making.

87. Second, the SENAIP initiative aims at removing the informational constraints to good programming. However it attempts to do so by strengthening ENAs rather than the overall food security information system. One way of understanding the broader framework for information analysis is given in Table 2-1. This framework is presented to clarify the subsequent evaluation analysis and recommendation<sup>16</sup>.

Table 2-1 Components of a food security information system

Component	Main purpose	Type of information / question addressed
1. Baseline Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment	Define/describe characteristics of the population to understand underlying causes of poverty and vulnerability	What is the nature and extent of poverty? What are the basic livelihood systems? What hazards may impact on these systems and what is the likelihood of their occurrence? – especially natural hazards, but social, economic and environmental as well Who are the most vulnerable groups, and why? What capacities and coping/risk reduction strategies exist to mitigate their vulnerability status?
2. Early Warning	Monitor and identify unusual deviations from normal situations providing timely warning of potential Problems	Monitoring (usually seasonal) Indicator and trend analysis; identification of unusual trends Where and how quickly is problem developing? What are the geographic dimensions of the problem? Where should in-depth assessments be conducted?
3. Emergency Needs Assessment	If early warning identifies existing or developing problem, then refine and focus information	More specific targeting of most vulnerable groups More specific definition of nature and dimensions of the problem What and how much is needed where? What is the most appropriate response?
4. Program Monitoring and Evaluation	Is the intervention or programme achieving the desired results?	Tracking inputs and outputs What adjustments are necessary What strategies exist for exit or transition into longer-term (e.g. linkage with development programmes/policies) How to improve overall programme – information, preparedness, response – feedback process

Adapted from Maxwell and Watkins (2003)

<sup>15</sup> “A review of the links between needs assessment and decision-making in response to food crises” by James Darcy, Stephen Anderson and Nisar Majid. Report still being finalized at time of writing the evaluation.

<sup>16</sup> It is noted that ODA are well aware of the various components of an information system. SENAIP has reviewed the utility of the Maxwell and Watkins model, while VAM developed an analogous Standard Analytical Framework in 2000.



88. The focus of SENAIP on ENA is understandable, given its critical importance to internal and external decision making and the significant donor interest in this tool. However, there is the risk that this perspective can over emphasize the relative utility of ENAs and lead to a relative neglect of other elements of the information system.

89. Where SENAIP does support the development of other elements of a more comprehensive information system (Table 2-2), this is done with a dominant interest in emergency needs assessment processes. For example, the interest on “pre-crisis” information components rests on how CFSVAs can provide a baseline for EFSAs and how monitoring systems can trigger EFSAs. This neglects the multiple uses that a CFSVA and FSMS may be put to. The implications of this are discussed further in the evaluation.

*Table 2-2 Typology of SENAIP assessments*

<b>Information System Component</b>	<b>SENAIP analyses and systems</b>
1. Baseline Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment	Comprehensive Vulnerability Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVAs)
2. Early Warning	Food Security Monitoring Systems (FSMSs)
3. Emergency Needs Assessment	Specific ENA assessment tools include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joint Assessment Mission (JAMs), conducted jointly by WFP and UNHCR, designed to assess needs of refuge populations</li> <li>- Crop and Food Supply Assessment Missions (CFSAMs), conducted jointly b y WFP and FAO, designed to assess needs of populations affected by crop failure</li> <li>- Emergency Food Security Assessments (EFSAs) generic term used to describe all other food security needs assessments conducted with WFP participation</li> </ul>
4. Program Monitoring and Evaluation	Food Security Monitoring Systems (FSMSs)



## **2.2 Consistency with the policy context**

### **2.2.1 WFP Policy**

90. At the most general level, the SENAIP falls within WFP's stated commitments to provide food aid on the basis of need<sup>17</sup> SENAIP is clearly justified within the overall 2004-2007 Strategic Plan (WFP 2003d) where numerous specific references attest to the need for excellence in needs assessment. For example under Strategic Objective 1: of saving lives and in the fourth management priority is given as strengthening WFP's knowledge base, viz.

*WFP will refine assessment techniques and build comparability between its food needs assessments and those of other organizations. This will include working with partners to develop minimum criteria, which should underpin all food security assessments; revising emergency needs assessment guidelines to include gender-sensitive and participatory situation analyses and to facilitate assessment partnerships with other agencies; consulting with affected people and local authorities; and building capacities.*

91. It is less clear that the implications of elements of other internal policies have been considered in the detailed planning of SENAIP. The most significant inconsistency is with WFP's stated commitment to food insecure population participation<sup>18</sup>. There is a fundamental and strongly stated policy that the design of food security interventions should take into account people's own preferences and opinions. However, the SENAIP initiative – as evidenced by the ENA methods – offers little scope for meaningful food insecure population participation. The conclusion drawn is that the over riding concern in the design of SENAIP is to build credibility through demonstrating rigor and transparency to donors. This contrast with on-going efforts elsewhere in the organization to actively strengthen beneficiary involvement.

92. A very real challenge for SENAIP lies not just in conformity with established policies, but in the current policy flux on several key issues. There is an active policy debate on the use of additional instruments by WFP to bolster food access – specifically cash transfers. Some interviewees indicated that more fundamental questions of mandate are also under debate. While it is beyond this evaluation to comment on these policy choices, these policy outcomes will fundamentally affect the scope of assessment competencies that the agency needs to mainstream.

93. Under established policy, the internal demand is primarily for analysis that supports the use of food transfers. A broader analysis of alternative “non-food” interventions, as promoted by SENAIP, is positively contributing to policy development. However, there is limited operational needs for such information. Under

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<sup>17</sup> See the WFP Mission Statement. Additionally, WFP is a signatory to the IFRC code of conduct<sup>17</sup>, the Sphere Common standards<sup>17</sup> and the Good Humanitarian Donorship General Principles (cf 2.2.2). All refer to standards and norms related to the application of needs assessments in emergencies

<sup>18</sup> For example: “WFP will ensure that its assistance programmes are designed and implemented on the basis of broad-based participation in order to ensure that programme participants (including beneficiaries, national and local governments, civil society organizations and other partners) contribute their knowledge, skills and resources to processes that influence their lives”. Mission Statement, WFP/EB.3/2000/3-D (October 2000).



the current policy guidance the sustainability of this broader analytical capacity is questionable.

94. It is also important to acknowledge the significance of the UN reform process. The UN system as a whole is striving to deliver more coherent developmental and humanitarian assistance. The cluster approach, to improve coordination and strengthen partnerships, is increasingly being adopted. Integrated needs analysis lies at the heart of a coordinated response. Several informants felt that WFP is well placed to take on a greater leadership role in food security assessment within the UN system, although this was distinguished from WFP taking leadership in providing the response. WFP is clearly sensitive to its role and partnership in assessment within the larger UN system. But in practical terms the benefits of SENAIP to date have occurred within WFP's own sphere of operation (see chapter 6).

### **2.2.2 Donor policy**

95. SENAIP is clearly aligned to (or derived from) collective donor humanitarian policy. The 23 OECD members have signed up to the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative – that commits to provide humanitarian assistance that is impartial and allocated on the basis of need and without discrimination. The GHD sets out 23 principles<sup>19</sup> of which the sixth is to “allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments”<sup>20</sup>.

96. While all donors support the role of WFP as a humanitarian agency they adopt more divergent positions on WFP's more developmentally aligned role in building the resilience of households and communities. For example ECHO does not see that WFP (food aid) has a role in addressing chronic food insecurity or establishing a basis for development. DFID sees WFP as a humanitarian agency, but does acknowledge the space for a food response to chronic crises. In Germany the Economic Cooperation and Development Office (BMZ) regard WFP as having a development role while the Foreign Office only fund emergency programmes through WFP.

97. The donor focus on an exclusively humanitarian role for WFP (especially amongst the main financiers of WFP) has resulted in a focus on needs assessment in an emergency context. However, this is inconsistent with WFP's own mandate that spans both emergency and resilience building. This dichotomy can also be seen as inconsistent with the donors own long-standing and continuing efforts to break down the ‘artificial’ barriers between relief and development programming. The USAID Food For Peace Policy on Development Relief (Haddad and Frankenberger 2003 and FFP 2005) is a good articulation of a policy to integrate relief and development

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<sup>19</sup> First agreed in Stockholm in 2003, in April 2005 these principles were endorsed by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD as the standard against the work of its 23 members should be judged.

<sup>20</sup> The subsequent reports and actions of the GHD confirm the continued priority given to translating this principle into policy and practice. The July 2006 meeting agreed a three point action plan of which the first point was an agreement “to find ways of delivering on our commitment to needs-based resource allocation”. In preparation for the 2007 meeting a discussion paper (Willets-King, 2007) reviewed mechanisms for improving coordinated donor actions, including specific recommendations for further improvements to needs assessment across the humanitarian system.



programmes around a vulnerability reduction objective (FFP, 2005). Broadly similar aspirations can be found in the policy statements of other donors<sup>21</sup>.

### **2.2.3 National Government policy**

98. The conformance of the SENAIP initiative with the policies of the member countries also needs to be considered. All member countries want a say in how the food insecure are identified and assisted in their country.

*From the government's perspective, what is important is that all the players are reading from the same script. We [the government] are in charge of coordination of assessments and we participate fully in the design, implementation and approval of the final assessment products. My ministry has to agree on early warning and food security assessment objectives and the National Statistics Institute of Rwanda (NSIR) has to approve the methodology. (Senior Rwanda Government Official)*

99. For WFP to adopt a purely humanitarian stance and to conduct ENAs in isolation from state structures can be counterproductive (see for example, Annex J.4 – Rwanda Case Study). SENAIP needs to ensure that it is demonstrating the willingness, to operate in transparent conformance with national policies. Not to do so is to risk failure. Examples and experiences of partnership with government in assessment are given in section 3.5.

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<sup>21</sup> See for example Commission of the European Communities, 2001.



### **3 SENAIP outputs**

100. The major SENAIP outputs discussed in this chapter are the methodological developments in needs assessment, the development of guidance materials, the learning programme, the availability of pre-crisis information and partnership. It is acknowledged that additional activities were financed through SENAIP (Annex J) that did not directly relate to these outputs<sup>22</sup>. However, the five themes defined above constitute the core SENAIP outputs and consequently the presentation of evaluation findings is restricted to these.

#### ***3.1 Methodological development***

101. Drawing from the preliminary ENA consultations (WFP 2003b) SENAIP supported research on a number of key themes. The AG was structured to support these thematic areas with a sub-group headed by a senior AG member appointed to each of these topics. During the first year of the SENAC project, the Advisory Group focused on five thematic areas:

- the role of markets in emergencies and the effect of food aid on markets;
- the effects of food aid on targeted and non-targeted households (specifically migration and dependency);
- chronic and transitory food insecurity;
- non-food responses to food crises;
- food security baselines and monitoring systems;

102. During the second year, additional priority areas were identified as estimating population numbers; strengthening the link between assessment results and decision-making; and improving food security measurement<sup>23</sup>.

103. For most themes one or more desk reviews were commissioned to draw out the main issues. Subsequently, additional research was commissioned, often drawing on the expertise of individual AG members. Several pilot studies were also conducted to attempt integrating the findings into practice. The “markets” theme group spawned a number of subsequent workshops. In total, a considerable body of knowledge has been developed (see Table 3-1) and an inclusive list of these reports can be found at Annex G.

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<sup>22</sup> This includes a communication strategy, piloting independent assessments, monitoring global food aid needs and pilots of national capacity development for needs assessment.

<sup>23</sup> This was appended to the baseline and monitoring theme group



Table 3-1 Summary of SENAIP research studies

Thematic area	Studies commissioned	Final reports available on web	Workshops
Market activities	20	14	2
Effects of food aid	6	6	-
Chronic and transitory food insecurity	2	2	-
Non food responses	3	3	-
Pre-crisis information	17	11	-
Linkages to decision making	5	0	-

Source: SENAC Project Status Report, Updated 21<sup>st</sup> December 2006 (ODAN)

104. It was not possible within the scope of the evaluation to systematically assess the *quality* of this extensive body of research. However, the limited feedback received was consistently positive on the quality of this research. Instead the evaluation concentrated on assessing the *utility* of this research. This is discussed for each of the thematic areas below.

### 3.1.1 Market analysis

105. There is widespread agreement on the critical need for an improved understanding of markets by WFP. There is a strong recognition, both internally and externally, of the necessity of WFP developing its own market analysis capacity. Doing so is critical to:

- understanding the potential for market and production disincentives of food aid,
- underpinning local/regional purchase decisions,
- informing decisions on the appropriateness of in-kind and other transfers,
- defining early warning indicators
- improving the targeting of food aid, and,
- signaling when it is appropriate to transition out of relief programing.

106. Interviews of WFP staff and others, at global regional, and country level, uniformly highlight the importance of SENAIP in injecting new skills relating to market analysis into WFP. This ranks are one of the foremost achievements of SENAIP. This success can be attributed to a number of factors, including: strong donor interest, a pre-existing but unfulfilled policy commitment in WFP and the backstopping provided by the specialist market analysts recruited by SENAC and posted to the RBs. The contribution of a highly active AG sub-group in pushing forward methodological development has been central in this effort. As an AG member (from another group) noted:

*“The market assessment sub-group has taken on a momentum of its own and is very active between meetings. It has developed into practical tools that are being implemented in the field. The findings have the potential to substantially influence practice – such as the analysis of the price impacts of food aid. It seems that this*





*section of the EFSA handbook will be extensively re-written at the end of SENAC on the basis of this experience”*

107. Collaboration has been successfully fostered between the main analytical stakeholders; FAO, World Bank, Tufts University and Michigan State University. This has mitigated the potential institutional rivalries that might have derailed this process.

108. The methodological work has followed a logical progression from a basic desk review on the effects of food aid on markets, to undertaking a number of national market profiles and “work shopping” consensus on the way forward. While the quality and utility of some of the intermediate products have raised concern in some quarters<sup>24</sup>, the general strategy appears reasonable. While progress has been made, practical market analysis tools that can be used by generalist staff, have not yet been produced.

109. The current focus is to integrate market analysis into existing CFSVAs, FSMSs and ENAs – this approach was confirmed in a workshop in January 2007 (WFP, 2007)<sup>25</sup>. However, attaining this goal relies heavily on the work of the Regional Assessment Officers (RAOs) tasked with market analysis. The case studies found that the RAOs suffer from too many competing claims on their time, including studies with only peripheral relevance to SENAIP and consequently their ability to make progress in this key area is compromised.

**Recommendation 5d<sup>26</sup>:** The evaluation team concurs with the stated intention to integrate market analysis into CFSVAs, FSMSs and ENAs. In order to maximize progress ODAN should ensure that RAO Market Officers prioritize this activity during the remainder of 2007.

110. One of the main activities has been the piloting of dynamic market models in Bangladesh and Zambia. While the potential utility is apparent, there are serious issues related to user friendliness, reliability (given the poor quality of basic market data) and sustainability (in the context of WFP’s policy of mainstreaming skills in non specialist staff) of such models. The appropriateness of this approach, vis-à-vis simple market tools appropriate to the profile of the typical social scientist (in VAM) where this capacity is expected to be mainstreamed, is questionable. It is therefore suggested that further investment in dynamic market models should be contingent on the successful pre-testing of the pilots amongst decision makers and system operators.

111. Secondly, there is still a gap evident in linking WFP’s household level market analysis and macro-level decisions. Short term policy decisions (including those related to tariff rates, import and export bans, for example) have major impacts on

<sup>24</sup> WFP programme staff interviewed during the case studies reported difficulties in integrating the national market profiles in decision making. In some cases the quality and timeliness of the profile was also an issue.

<sup>25</sup> SENAC goals in 2007 are to (i) develop 4 model products, (ii) develop tools and guidance (Zambia SS and EFSA chapter), (iii) database on elasticities in the website and (iv) capacity development through training modules.

<sup>26</sup> The numbering of recommendations follows the order of their appearance in the chapter that draws together the main recommendations (chapter 7) rather than the order that they appear in the main text.



food availability and access. While the WFP market analysis may be relevant to decisions on trade policy, and consequently improving food access, no apparent mechanism for linking this analysis to national policy making forums was observed in the case studies.

### 3.1.2 Effects of food aid

112. Work by this sub-group included studies on the disincentive effects of food aid, assessment tools to anticipate the effects of food aid on migration and real time reviews of the implications of assessments for aid programmes.

113. There appears to be only minimal awareness in the RBs and COs of the fruits of this research. Extremely few of the respondents in the country case studies<sup>27</sup> had read the disincentives report. Those who had, found it insightful – indeed the SENAC reports were compared favourably to the output of the various policy departments in WFP. However, the research has had very little utility for programming decisions.

114. There is no evidence of attempts to utilize the tool for anticipating migration effects within assessments, beyond the routine consideration of coping strategies.

### 3.1.3 Chronic versus transitory food aid

115. Two major pieces of work were undertaken in this thematic area. A report was produced on distinguishing chronic and transitory food insecurity and operational guidance for triggering an ENA. The topic is complex and contentious; the utility of analyzing needs by duration (as opposed to severity) was questioned by the AG. While intellectually stimulating, the audience at field level for these reports – at least thus far – appears to have been minimal.

116. The more practical side of the work was to define a chronic-transitory index and trigger points for initiating an ENA. Often, what determines whether a response occurs is often not how well or badly an ENA is done, but whether one is done at all<sup>28</sup>. Therefore having a clear trigger for an ENA is extremely germane to the ability to respond proportionately to need.

117. There have been some efforts to disseminate this index, including the preparation of a technical brief and by including it in an EFSA training session in Cambodia. However, awareness of this tool in the field remains minimal, at this point, and no evidence was seen of attempts to pilot it.

118. More recently the potential of the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) tool developed by FAO / FSAU is being examined under the auspices of this thematic group. While the tool itself has been developed by FAO, WFP is investigating the relevance of the IPC to its own work. The IPC potentially establishes a multi-agency platform for reaching consensus on the severity of a *humanitarian* crisis and developing a range of coordinated response interventions<sup>29</sup>. It is therefore closely

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<sup>27</sup> For example only one in Zambia, none in Nepal. One donor advisor noted the use of this.

<sup>28</sup> While the need for an intervention may be self evident in a big crisis, this is not the case for smaller crises.

<sup>29</sup> See Lawrence, Mark and Nick Maunder (2007) for a more detailed discussion of the pro's and con's of the IPC.



aligned to the goal of conducting, integrated multi-sectoral food security analysis and recommendation. The IPC provides a means to reach agreement on the severity of crises and attendant needs.

119. Two pilots have been run on the IPC in Cambodia and Indonesia as an analytical tool to support the development of new PRROs (WFP 2007b). The initial conclusion of the staff tasked with piloting it highlighted specific issues, including the limitations of adequate data to operate the IPC. While still in the process of development, the IPC does offer a potentially valuable tool for building consensus on the severity of food security crises (see 4.2).

#### **3.1.4 Non-food interventions**

120. A basic concern underlying the design of SENAIP was a sense that food aid is over utilized as a response to food insecurity. In the 1<sup>st</sup> AG meeting this thematic group defined their goal as investigating appropriate responses to food insecurity. Given the contentious scope of “food security”, the group defined their responsibility as investigating all short-term measures to improve food availability and access, including food, cash and input transfers, price stabilization, improved physical access and short term policy changes. This did not include responses to the underlying causes of food insecurity or wider issues of health and nutrition.

121. The research has focused on basic understanding of the “criteria of appropriateness” for different interventions. This stopped short of practical guidance in helping to select and recommend diversified non-food responses within a needs assessment.

122. As with the previous two groups there is very little knowledge among WFP field staff of the reports of this thematic group. Furthermore, an inherent constraint for pushing forward on this agenda remains WFP’s own policy. There is continuing uncertainty about the future role of WFP in implementing a more diversified set of response options.

#### **3.1.5 Pre-crisis information**

123. Under SENAC, considerable support was devoted to expanding the availability of pre-crisis information; the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessments (CFSVAs) and Food Security Monitoring Systems (FSMSs). The products are discussed in detail in section 3.4.1.

124. It appears that relatively little (initial) provision was given to support research on the methodological underpinnings of CFSVAs and FSMSs. This contrasts strongly with the active research directed to improving EFSA methodologies. Instead the emphasis in SENAIP has been on financing the implementation of the CFSAVs and FSMSs.

125. A subsequent critique of the CFSVAs has highlighted the needs to develop normative guidance (DISI, 2006) which is being actively addressed by ODAV. There is no consolidated information and guidance on the FSMS.



126. An important sub theme, falling under the pre-crisis group, is the development of standard approaches to measure of food insecurity. Comparability is needed between different studies in the same country (such as CFSVAs and EFSAs) as well as between crises in different countries. Ideally comparability between studies in the same country may be achieved by the consistent use indicators in the CFSVAs, FSMs, and EFSAs, defined and measured the same way. Dietary diversity is being investigated under SENAIP as one measure of food insecurity.

127. However, it is acknowledged that the complexity of food security and the operational contexts does not lend itself to the use of a single common indicator. Therefore it is more realistic to identify a range of indicators and methods, appreciate where and when these should be used and have the ability to compare the severity of food insecurity assessed by different methods<sup>30</sup>.

### **3.1.6 Findings and future priorities**

128. There is broad agreement amongst the AG members that SENAIP identified the most pressing general research questions to investigate. However, several 'gaps' emerged through discussion with practitioners in the field for additional guidance:

- The interface between nutrition and food security remains problematic. This appears to be compounded by inadequate communication between nutritionists and food security experts. There is little tangible evidence of improved understanding and analysis at the field level and this is exemplified by the general lack of integration within assessments<sup>31</sup>.
- Assessing the impact of HIV-AIDS on food security continues to be a problem for analysts. Field staff, especially in the southern Africa region, felt that they have received little useful practical guidance from SENAIP, or from WFP's HIV-AIDS policy unit.
- Assessment in urban areas is still largely unaddressed<sup>32</sup>.

129. In retrospect some members felt that SENAIP would have benefited from commencing the research on the linkage between assessment findings and decision making much earlier. The evaluators would agree with this perception.

130. The most practical methodological advances under SENAIP have been in the areas of market analysis and the use of a dietary diversity indicator. However, even in these cases the research has not yet produced practical applications. Some individual staff members informed the evaluation team members that they have benefited substantially from the research reports and materials. However, a large portion of the research is perceived by the majority of those tasked with assessments as too complex, overly academic and of limited direct relevance to operational needs as they see them.

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<sup>30</sup> The utility of the IPC framework is being examined for this purpose.

<sup>31</sup> Of course there are exceptions to prove the point - the 2006 Darfur assessment notably did an excellent job of integrating nutritional information. Outside of SENAIP, the VAC system in southern Africa is also increasingly integrating nutritional assessment.,

<sup>32</sup> It is understood that there was a specific decision by the SC to focus SENAIP on assessment in rural areas.



131. The capacity to generate high quality *conceptual* research under SENAIP is perceived to have contributed to a heightening of the organizational credibility. However, it is questionable whether expenditure on academic research is justified or indeed whether WFP is the appropriate agency to lead this. It is therefore suggested that any future research *commissioned* by WFP should concentrate on direct applications. However, WFP may well choose to continue *to partner* in more basic research.

<b>Good practice:</b>
<b>Development of market analysis tools</b>
The interactive model adopted by the markets groups – with training, workshops and technical assistance – appears more successful in delivering progress towards producing relevant and practical analysis methodologies.

132. In order to promote the dissemination of the research findings SENAIP produced seven short “Technical Guidelines” on the basis of key reports. The results of the survey administered to SENAIP trainees<sup>33</sup> indicate that the materials developed so far have not yet been widely disseminated.

133. The survey also appears to reinforce the conclusion, drawn from interviews, that the current research outputs are of limited utility to field staff (see Table 3-2). As one of the respondents noted, written guidance alone does little to attract the attention of field staff. It is rather academic and needs to be more applied, including best practice examples. Communication skills could be sharpened to deliver more concise summaries as even the current sheets are found to be too ‘dense’. Staff clearly need to be given adequate time and space to engage with these difficult concepts.

134. This poses the question of what measures are being taken to transform much of the new material into practical guidance and methods. It would be desirable to pre-test these methods prior to their inclusion in an updated EFSA handbook. Overall there is a perception that ODAN may have developed rather more research material than they have the capacity to assimilate.

Table 3-2 Use of technical guidance sheets by SENAIP trainees<sup>34</sup>

Topic	Very Useful	Somewhat useful	Little or no use	Not seen	No response
Markets	10	10	4	4	235
Non-food response	10	6	9	5	233
Chronic/transitory	8	10	4	3	238
Trigger factors	8	6	6	6	239
IPC	8	4	6	6	239
Dependency	5	8	7	5	238
Migration	5	7	7	4	240

Source: SENAIP Trainee Questionnaire (N=268)

<sup>33</sup> These technical guidance sheets were distributed from mid 2006. These were not included in most training courses. However, the question assesses whether the trainees (who represent a general sample of people tasked with needs assessment) have received the guidance materials and/or found them useful.

<sup>34</sup> On the basis of the pattern of responses it is concluded that “no response” can typically be equated to ‘have not seen’. Other questions in the survey had very much lower non response rates.



**Recommendation 5a:** Progress with the SENAIP thematic research should be reviewed. On the basis of this review, and the findings of this evaluation, future resources should be allocated to themes where the most pressing needs coincide with the highest probability of being able to produce applied products with direct relevance to field assessment methods. Other research themes should be officially concluded.

### 3.2 Technical guidance

135. Practical advice for field staff on needs assessments has been provided in three types of guidance materials:

- The Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) Handbook
- The Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) Handbook
- Guidance on Crop and Food Supply Assessment Missions (CFSAMs)

#### 3.2.1 EFSA handbook

136. The first edition of the EFSA handbook (issued in June 2005) was developed prior to SENAIP, using DFID ISP funds. The EFSA handbook is a comprehensive resource, running to 350 pages plus extensive annexes. This handbook provides the basis for the EFSA training curriculum.

137. The feedback on the manual by field staff was uniformly positive. It is widely circulated – and was clearly visible on the shelves of many offices visited. It was particularly well received by those tasked with running ENAs as a reference guide to backstop the design and implement of an assessment. It has a significant audience in other agencies and there was a suggestion that it should be more widely distributed amongst counterparts.

138. The trainee survey indicated that it was widely used by both WFP staff (69% reported using it, n=144) and staff from other agencies (60%, n=87). It was rated as particularly useful in conducting the assessment, but less useful in supporting the subsequent analysis (Table 3-3). It is therefore suggested that any revision to the handbook should pay special attention to improving the post-assessment analysis guidance section.

Table 3-3 Utility of EFSA handbook

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Little or no use
Rapid assessment	77%	23%	1%
In-depth	71%	28%	1%
Initial investigation	70%	25%	5%
Post-assessment	56%	33%	11%

Source: SENAIP trainee survey  
Answers as percentage of those who had reported using the handbook

139. One insightful observation, by a WFP analyst, is that the key to the success of the handbook is the conjunction with the training sessions. Without the training she



felt she would have been unlikely to read the guide, but having received the training she uses the handbook regularly.

140. There were anecdotal reports that certain sections, in particular key annexes, were more highly valued. It is therefore suggested that, prior to updating the EFSA handbook, WFP should seek more detailed feedback on the utility of individual sections of the EFSA handbook.

141. Multiple suggestions were offered on how the handbook could be improved. These could be usefully considered in the context of the goal of developing an updated version of the handbook prior to the end of the current phase of SENAC.

142. The most frequent observation dealt with the target audience and uses of the handbook. As it currently stands it was felt to be more appropriate to a technically sophisticated audience with a fair degree of prior experience. It was likened to a “training course for VAM officers”. It is not judged quite as useful as a practical guide for generalist staff who are often tasked with undertaking an assessment at short notice. As one person phrased it “We need a short guide that we can read in the back of the car on the way to the field, with step-by-step instructions”.

143. A related point is the bias in the material to conducting an in-depth assessment. Often sub-office staff are tasked with conducting *rapid* assessments at the onset of the crisis. They require guidance material for this specific function. These early assessments are critical in shaping a program and supporting staff at this level could have big benefits. It was pointed out that by the time an in-depth assessment occurs (of the type supported by this handbook) the task has usually been handed over to a more experienced assessor from the CO, RB or even HQ.

<p><b>Recommendation 5h:</b> Additional guidance, or a companion volume of the handbook, should be developed that is shorter, simpler and directed at a less specialized audience. This version should focus on initial assessment for generalist staff and provide rapid assessment tools that are easy to use.</p>
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144. Responses to the survey included comments of:

- The handbook risks being unworldly. It focuses on what are the ideal tools, but need to know what is feasible in the real world, what is commensurate with resources and field access.
- Multiple alternative methods are presented in the handbook. However, more explicit guidance is needed on how to choose the best method in a specific context.
- The focus is on natural disasters – more is needed on the assessment of protracted crisis in areas of weak or light governance. This takes analysis into the realm of food security policy analysis, which is not an established WFP strength.



- The section on markets needs updating and better integrating in other sections<sup>35</sup>.
- More practical examples of successful assessment practice. A related suggestion was to develop the web site to include real world examples drawn from posted ENAs which could be used as models. This may include guidance or examples of appropriate assessment technique in situations where security of staff and participants is a concern.

145. There are plans by ODAN to issue a second edition of the EFSA handbook in 2007. It is not clear to the evaluation team what criteria are currently being used to develop the second edition of the handbook. At the time of this evaluation<sup>36</sup> several AG members pointed out that they have not been invited to contribute to the revision so far, although this was initially assumed to be a core task for the AG. There is also a need to ensure that the reference group includes real world practitioners. It is therefore suggested that WFP should increase the transparency of the process being used to develop revised technical guidance materials. A reference group should be constituted to assist with the process, drawing on both AG members and field staff.

146. It may also be useful to recognize that methodological improvements are continuous and incorporate this in the physical design of the handbook – by utilizing either a loose leaf format or publishing it as a series of smaller volumes that could be independently updated.

147. It has been noted that the status of translating the methodological research into practical tools remains far from complete. This applies even in the most advanced areas – such as markets or the use of dietary diversity indicators. Ideally one would want well tested and agreed methods prior to developing a new handbook.

**Recommendation 5i:** From technical perspective, consideration should be given to delaying the production of a second edition of the EFSA handbook until ‘new’ methodological tools are adequately tested and proven.

148. Finally the development of technical guidance cannot be seen as a ‘one-off’ activity that will be completed by the end of SENAIP. There is a continual process of development. Consequently there is a continuing role for HQ to act as an interface between methodological developments and practical guidance to the field on an on-going basis. This needs to be taken into account in future staffing plans.

### 3.2.2 JAM Handbook

149. Joint Assessment Missions (JAMs) use a specific methodology to assess the needs of refugees and IDPs. As with the EFSA handbook, the JAM handbook was written prior to SENAIP. Compared to the EFSA methodology, the assessed needs of these beneficiaries are defined more widely to include nutrition and other basic needs. It was noted by an experienced JAM team leader that JAM missions to long running

<sup>35</sup> It is understood that Draft Market Guidance Tools are currently being prepared by PDPE and a smaller number by ODAN.

<sup>36</sup> Most of the AG interviews were conducted in February and early March 2007.





refugee situations tend to become evaluations of performance rather than assessments of needs.

150. The JAM handbook is appreciated by its users. While only 28% of those who responded to this question used the handbook, this was a reflection of the fact that fewer respondents had been involved in JAM assessments – only 10% of all respondents report participating in JAMs in their post-training period. However, those who had used the handbook generally found it very useful.

Table 3-4 Utility of the JAM handbook

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Little or no use
Rapid assessment	84%	16%	0%
Initial investigation	74%	26%	0%
In-depth	73%	27%	0%
Post-assessment	53%	40%	7%

Source: SENAIP trainee survey  
Answers as percentage of those who had reported using the handbook

151. The process of assessing refugees need is comparatively straightforward compared to an EFSA, especially where refugees are entirely dependent on relief for all their needs. In such a situation the assessment hinges on correctly enumerating the refugee population (including those with special needs) and using this to compute a basket of needs.

152. The main ambiguity and need for improvement in JAM methods occurs when there has been a certain degree of assimilation of the refugees amongst the host community so that they no longer require a full basket of assistance. The section in the guidelines on self reliance is reported to be vague and ambiguous. This section could be tightened up and more practical tools provided.

153. The JAM guidelines are planned to be reviewed in 2008 once the revised EFSA Handbook is available in order to incorporate up-dates, in particular regarding the analysis of refugee food security and self-reliance.

### 3.2.3 CFSAM Guidance

154. CFSAMs are conducted jointly by WFP and FAO to assess the particular shock of crop failure and identify appropriate responses. The current guidance dates from 1996. WFP has been actively involved in the revision of the CFSAM guidance in partnership with FAO.

155. The revised (draft) guidance has not yet been developed and therefore no evaluative comment is offered other than to note the extended period devoted to developing the draft revised guidelines.

### 3.3 Assessment skills and capacity

156. This section summarizes the progress of SENAIP in building assessment skills and capacity. The findings are based on both interviews and the results of the



questionnaire administered to the trainees. A full discussion of the trainee questionnaire findings is given in Annex K.

### **3.3.1 The SENAIP learning programme**

157. Prior to SENAIP, WFP had found itself with insufficient in-house capacity to meet peak demand for preparing ENAs and was consequently heavily reliant on partners and consultants. It was concluded that, as part of a capacity strategy, internal technical skills needed strengthening. A training module covering needs assessment was developed and employed to train a total of 174 WFP staff in ENA-related operations and analysis in 2003.

158. SENAIP built on this earlier initiative and accelerated the training programme<sup>37</sup>. A strategy for the EFSA Learning Programme was finalized in 2004<sup>38</sup>. The basic objective of this was to "...improve the ability of WFP programme staff and partners to plan, manage and implement sound and credible emergency food security assessments..."<sup>39</sup> It contains 5 constituent elements:

- i. Upgrading EFSA-related knowledge and skills of WFP and partner staff through a combination of distance learning, face-to-face learning events and follow-up.
- ii. Enhancing WFP senior staff capacity to: i) assess the quality of EFSA findings, ii) clarify the links between those findings and response decisions, and iii) advocate among stakeholders on behalf of the importance and relevance of these findings and emergency response decisions.
- iii. Developing and maintaining a cadre of EFSA trainers to deliver the EFSA learning programme events over the long term.
- iv. Developing and maintaining a cadre of EFSA mentors to assist and support post-EFSA learning programme efforts.
- v. Ensuring the sustainability of the EFSA learning programme by addressing short-term implementation needs and long-term concerns of an organizational or structural nature.

159. Funding for the learning programme was secured from, ECHO, Germany's GTZ, the UK's DFID, Canada's CIDA and, subsequently from Denmark's DANIDA. A major part of the capacity building strategy was the appointment of 11 Regional Assessment Officers (RAOs). The RAOs were recruited and posted to regional bureaus in 2005 – five of them specifically to support market analysis the other six to lead or advise on food security assessments. Their ToR includes backstopping needs assessments, field testing new methods and supporting training courses.

160. A detailed training needs assessment was conducted in 2005 involving consultations, a review of the effectiveness of previous training and the prevailing

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<sup>37</sup> It should also be noted that a significant amount of additional assessment-related training is organized and funded through the independent initiative of the COs and RBs.

<sup>38</sup> ODAN. Needs Assessment Branch. EFSA Learning Programme: Development and Implementation Strategy. (Provisional Draft.) December 2004.

<sup>39</sup> Tillman, Charisse. 2007. Note to evaluation team "A short summary on the learning programme."



state of WFP and partner field staff ENA and VAM-related skills. This helped inform the subsequent finalization of the EFSA Handbook – a necessary adjunct of the ENA training programme. ODAN developed a basic level course which could be adapted higher or lower depending on the expertise of the learners; beginners, basic and intermediate learning paths were developed for face-to-face and eventual “interactive distance learning programme” aimed at WFP and partner staff (potentially) engaged in ENA and pre-crisis assessments.

161. The initial emphasis was on basic skills training offered in regional workshops for both WFP and partner participation. During 2005, six regional EFSA workshops and one country EFSA workshop were conducted in which more than 340 staff (216 WFP, 124 partners) received training. In January, 2006 a “Learning Review” of the 2005 experience was held<sup>40</sup> and lessons were extracted from the “mixed” experiences of the first year’s training effort.

162. In 2006, a full slate of country level workshops was held and the beginning of interactive distance training was initiated as was a limited experiment with on-the-job training under the supervision of experienced assessors. In addition, 2006 saw the introduction of: i) a training facilitator’s “toolkit” to enable review of actual or potential trainees’ knowledge and skills, ii) a prototype of a web-based “community of practice” for sharing best practices and lessons learned, and iii) the beginnings of a database of assessors to enable the selection of the right mix of skills for emergency needs assessment teams.

163. In 2006 a total of 474 people received EFSA training (193 WFP, 281 partner); 85 received JAM or CAPNAF training (45 WFP, 40 partner), 10 participated in the “on-the-job learning scheme” and 46 (41 WFP, 5 partner) participated in Advanced Assessor Technical meetings.<sup>41</sup>

### **3.3.2 Utility of the training**

164. From the responses to the training questionnaire developed by the evaluation team several important themes emerge. These quantitative findings were complemented and corroborated by interviews with a sample assessment staff in the RBs and COs, other training participants and interviews with HQ staff.

165. Approximately 75% of survey respondents had attended the basic EFSA training, with the remainder participating in JAM and other advanced training courses. Almost without exception survey respondents regarded the training they received as very useful at the time of training. The clear majority of WFP and partner staff who responded found the training very or extremely useful (Figure 3-1 & Figure 3-2), only one percent found it not useful and four percent termed it of only limited use.

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<sup>40</sup> Klenk, Jeffrey. “EFSA Learning Programme Review: 2005” ODAN. January, 2006.

<sup>41</sup> See “Completed Learning Events: 2006” at Annex K.



Figure 3-1 Utility of SENAIP Training to WFP Staff

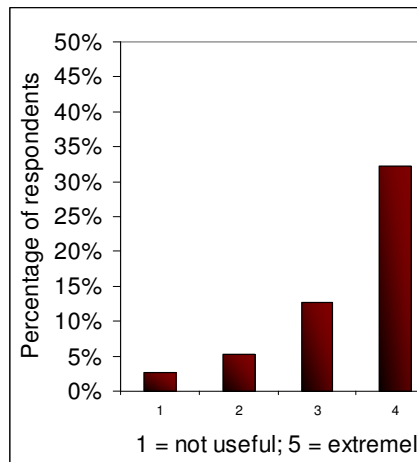
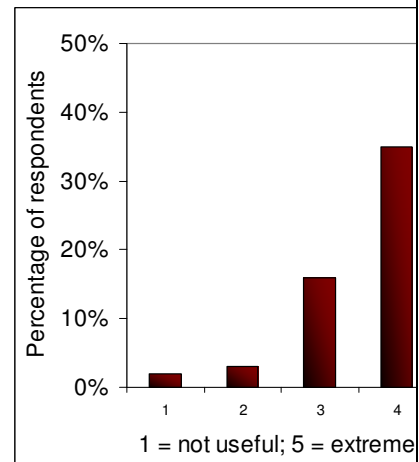


Figure 3-2 Utility of SENAIP Training to Partner Staff



Source: SENAIP trainee survey  
Answers as percentage of those who answered the question

166. Trainers and participants felt that the understanding of food security concepts varied widely amongst trainees. This was felt to slow the progress of some participants. Further emphasis is needed to bring participants to a common basic level of knowledge prior to participation in the EFSA courses. The finalization and roll-out of the self taught ‘e-learning’ curriculum should be a valuable adjunct to the training workshops. This should be complemented by more effective ‘streaming’ of participants in any given training activity, to ensure that they have roughly similar knowledge.

167. Trainees also made suggestions for improving the content and format of the basic training. Most of all, trainees want practical, rather than ‘classroom’ skills<sup>42</sup>. A common criticism of the workshop training provided thus far, one that ODAN has been made aware of from their own post-training analyses, is that most workshops have provided a more general overview of EFSA than training in the specifics of actually conducting an EFSA. Interviewees suggested that attendees of training sessions need to be walked through an actual EFSA assessment exercise rather than having it described for them in a PowerPoint presentation.<sup>43</sup>

168. CO staff clearly want more responsibility, tools and training in developing response recommendations. In Zambia the EFSA trainees found the training excellent in pointing out the weak links between analysis and recommendation – but less informative on how to fix the problem. As one response phrased it:

*I don't want to term it the least useful element, but the part on formulating response options seemed weaker than the other sections. More focus/time spent on this aspect would be a valuable adjustment to make for future trainings.*

<sup>42</sup> An existing trend to spend more time in the field as part of the EFSA training was noted.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Trujillo, Monica. 2006. “ODPC: EFSA Training Report.” EFSA Learning Program. WFP. Rome for a thoughtful analysis of a regional training workshop held in Panama.



169. The planned post training ‘mentoring’ or on-the-job training has not been fully implemented as responsibility has fallen to already over-stretched RAOs. ODAN reports they initiated an on-the-job pilot programme in 2006 with 10 participating staff. The rate of expansion is limited by the numbers of staff being released for participation. ODAN states: “Advanced planning and endorsement by Country Director and Regional Staff on the programme are essential to ensure the release of “coaches” and learners of the on-the-job learning programme.” The evaluation team fully endorses these efforts.

170. Where-ever possible it would be desirable to run training in conjunction with scheduled (i.e. non emergency) assessments to enhance practical skill development. It is also suggested that ODAN should develop a viable strategy to provide on-the-job training to consolidate the skills of trainees after the initial training, drawing on a wider pool of “coaches”.

171. Of those who responded to the question 63 percent had been able to utilize the training they had received in at least one food security assessment mission of some type. In these situations, trainees were unanimously positive and reported a wide variety of practical benefits (see Annex K for details). A particularly important benefit appears to be establishing a common understanding among WFP and partner staff on the basic precepts of food security, assessment criteria and methodology. This is perceived as enabling rapid consensus-building and agreement on assessment modalities in a crisis. Having the EFSA handbook as a further reference is seen as important in subsequently applying learnt skills.

172. When asked if the ENA training they received had resulted in the ability to take on more responsibility or to apply additional skills they had gained as a product of the training, a full 97 percent of WFP respondents answered yes. Twenty-nine of the 30 non-WFP responders concurred.

173. It should be noted, however, that more than half of our survey respondents declined to provide answers to the questions about the subsequent use of skills and it is possible that this denotes a significant number of trainees who have not had the opportunity to utilize their training. A variety of explanations were given for a lack of training skill utilization. These included situations where there had been no ENA work required in their country or region. Some respondents expressed disappointment that they had not been called on, even though there had been emergencies and related ENA work undertaken<sup>44</sup>.

174. A large majority (94% percent of WFP trainees, 98% of non-WFP respondents) indicated their desire for additional training – although the somewhat limited use of training so far suggests that the desire for training may be out of kilter with the strict need for training. While most trainees believe they had been promised follow-up training, none reported being contacted regarding follow-up training. The additional training desires are clearly weighted toward increased analytical skills,

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<sup>44</sup> For example a few months after the Zambia EFSA training occurred a flood assessment was required, but only 3 of the 20 trainees participated.



market analysis and report writing. Data collection and interviewing are at the lower end of the training wants. This tendency was corroborated in interviews with trainees during the evaluation team field visits in country offices and regional bureaus.

175. In the evaluation team's Country Office Survey, field managers were asked to convey their priorities regarding the categories of capacity-building they felt were most important to further strengthen food security analysis in their countries. The three areas receiving the largest number of votes for "very" or "extremely important" were: i) "monitoring and evaluation of the food security impact of programmes", ii) "early warning systems," and iii) "food security baselines (e.g., CFSVAs)". The three areas viewed as the least important were the various types of joint assessments: i) "joint assessment missions (with UNHCR) for refugee needs, ii) "crop and food supply assessment missions (CFSAMs)", and iii) "inter-agency assessment missions".

### **3.3.3 Findings and future priorities**

176. Faced with the challenge of inadequate needs assessment capacity and skills (as defined by their internal analysis at the inception of SENAIP) WFP had a number of options;

- i. To divorce itself from the assessment process (to minimize accusations of bias) and entirely contract-out responsibility for assessment.
- ii. To contract-in specialized consultancy skills as needed.
- iii. To develop a cadre of specialized and experienced staff at HQ, RB and in large COs.
- iv. To mainstream assessment skills in non specialized staff.

177. While there are proponents of all four solutions in the organization, SENAIP has basically rejected option (i) and is utilizing a mix of option (ii), (iii) and (iv). The evaluation team would concur with this strategy. While separating assessment responsibilities from response incorporates a valid logic, and mimics the norm in several other services, from a practical perspective it carries too much risk for WFP. Only in Somalia is WFP able to rely on an independent assessment unit – the Food Security Assessment Unit (FSAU) – although even this does not deliver adequate information for response planning.

178. There are specific opportunities for contracting-in services on the basis of addressing surge needs, cost efficiency, availability of specialist skills or to nurture national capacity. The development of the assessor database by SENAIP is potentially a useful resource in identifying and tracking consultant availability.

179. Large scale training of WFP and partner field staff is of seminal importance in improving the quality and credibility of emergency needs assessments and pre-crisis data. WFP's strong emphasis on training is appropriate, especially given high attrition rates. The number trained in less than 30 months, and the impact of the training, is impressive. The methodology – development and refinement of regional workshops, incorporation of trainee feedback, the subsequent devolution of these training sessions to the country office level, the additional development of distance learning is, in the evaluation team's view, the correct approach.



**Recommendation 5j:** A robust ENA training programme should be continued and supported with an adequate budget and training staff resources.

180. A specific finding is that the food security analysis and assessment capacity is needed in-country. In the case of rapid onset emergencies the RB or HQ is often unable to respond in a timely manner to critical initial information needs. It is often the sub-office staff are called on to do a first assessment of a breaking emergency. These rapid assessments are often more influential to decision making than the subsequent more in-depth assessments conducted by specialists.

*Some of the staff in the sub-offices are not as well-informed as they should be. They need training. We don't think the sub-offices are gathering good information in some places. (WFP Uganda staff member)*

181. Therefore it is suggested that basic awareness training needs to be rolled out more systematically and broadly at the sub-national level. Such training need not be very costly (see 5.4.1). there is an argument for offering a basic training to a larger number of staff at the national level, including those outside of the country offices.

182. Current training models appear to emphasize the role of country office staff in data collection and building a platform of relationships with an implicit assumption that design, analysis and recommendation are the domain of specialized regional and HQ staff. Illustrative of this approach is the surprise expressed in ODB when a WFP national staff member actually went ahead and developed an assessment proposal for Myanmar on the basis of her training.

183. There are repeated calls (many of them recorded in the CO survey responses) to move the focus of analysis, where-ever possible, to the country office level. A couple of comments from the COs illustrate the point:

*The "experts" need to listen to the country office staff. They are in the country, they know it, they have experience and "nose". Many of these "experts" have a tendency to ignore indigenous knowledge and experience.*

*The usefulness of the assessments could be improved by moving more of the analysis to the field level. Regular discussions and feedback between those involved in the assessments and users of the information would help to strengthen the linkage to programming decisions and assure that the information needs of the users are (where possible) being met.*

*"Before leaving the country, the assessment mission should hand over raw data and build up the capacity of country office, so that the country office can continue to utilize, analyse and update the data accordingly for its running operations."*

184. Therefore there is a need to follow-up on the basic training already provided to build national capacities to design, implement, analyze and report on surveys. While it may never be realistic to embed this capacity in some of the smallest country programmes, it does appear that the balance could be improved.



185. An important finding is that the ability to identify, mitigate and respond efficiently to crisis situations is closely tied to an established presence and relationships at the country level. This is as much about the accumulated knowledge as having the established logistical capacity. All the WFP COs visited during the case studies are supporting capacity building of Government to undertake needs assessment. Where appropriate (i.e., outside of conflict situations) there is an evident desire to build national capacity to analyze, plan for and respond to humanitarian crises.

186. Government staff are systematically included in the EFSA training programme. However, it is obvious that training alone cannot create capacity for assessments. As a more methodical attempt to address national capacity constraints, SENAIP conducted three pilot studies (two in 2006 and one in 2007) financed by a contribution from the Royal Danish Embassy. These pilots were based on a more systematic approach of “assessing the country needs, existing capacities, capacity-building activities supported by other entities and areas and activities where WFP has a comparative advantage”<sup>45</sup>. In addition, a draft strategy was developed drawing from the pilot experience. However, additional funding has not been successfully found for implementing the recommended activities for the pilot cases or the draft strategy.

187. While the ideal is to build Government capacity this needs to be tempered by the lack of sustainable impact of previous national capacity development efforts. The most innovative WFP capacity building effort (enacted outside of SENAC) is the support to the Vulnerability Assessment Committees (VACs) in southern Africa. This is funded by the South African government and managed by ODAV. The VACs provide a framework to draw on assessment skills from a diversity of institutional sources (government, UN agency, NGO and donor funded technical assistance) under the coordinating role of Government. This model has been relatively successful in assessment and has higher prospects of sustainability. It is therefore suggested that ODA should document and disseminate the experiences of the VAC system and actively encourage its replication in similar contexts.

188. Managers in COs and RBs – i.e., those responsible for preparing and/or approving EMOPS/PRROs – were supposed to have received training in optimizing utilization of ENAs in the preparation on programme documents. Such training has yet to be made available to the majority of this cadre of managers. This is critical in ensuring that ENAs are not just done well, but that they are used<sup>46</sup>. This could be efficiently provided as short sensitization seminars, possibly appended to other regional events.

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<sup>45</sup> WFP/EB.2/2006/4-B/Rev.1.

<sup>46</sup> One RAO noted that a common framework for understanding food security is not well articulated or shared in WFP. Consequently, even at relatively senior staff levels the basic foundations to utilize assessment findings are lacking.





**Recommendation 4a:** As soon as possible seminars should be organized for senior field managers to build awareness of the benefits of further improving needs assessment processes; clarify responsibility of managers in facilitating timely needs assessment (and reassessment); provide an overview of assessment best practices; and the appropriate use of assessment findings in programme formulation and implementation.

### 3.4 Pre-crisis information

#### 3.4.1 CFSVAs

189. For the findings of this section the evaluation team reviewed all SENAIP CFSVA documents and drew on case studies in countries where CFSVAs have been completed (Nepal, Rwanda, Uganda), interviews with key informants and the external evaluation of the CFSVAs conducted in May 2006 (DISI, 2006).

190. Responsibility for preparing and using pre-crisis information has traditionally fallen on the Vulnerability Analysis Mapping (VAM) unit. SENAIP efforts to increase the availability of this type of information need to be interpreted in the context of the preceding VAM activities and experience.

191. The establishment of VAM in Rome in 1994 provided WFP with a strengthened capacity in food security analysis. The then Executive Director described the role of VAM as follows:

*It is no longer acceptable to initiate an operation without a sufficient understanding of the needs of the population concerned and knowledge of the factors shaping their vulnerability. It is within this context that we value the contributions of VAM to WFP as it allows us to develop an understanding of vulnerability, location of vulnerable groups, and to develop an effective response strategy.*

192. In the early years, VAM was principally tasked with supporting the development and reorientation of WFP Country Programmes (CPs), while needs assessments were supported by a separate HQ unit. After 2003 the line of responsibility were increasingly blurred and VAM (later renamed as ODAV at HQ level) has been at the heart of WFP's analytical work to support its entire portfolio of CPs, PRROs and EMOPs. To do so it has received strong and consistent donor support (including DFID, OFDA and ECHO) over a number of years. There are currently over 100 VAM staff in the COs, RB and HQ.

193. The initial priority for VAM was to identify and map the location of the food insecure. VAM is particularly associated with pioneering the development of multi-indicator surveys of food security in WFP. This information is of direct relevance to *targeting* both development and emergency interventions. The objectives of VAM studies has expanded to incorporate a more systematic analysis of the *causes* of food insecurity and particularly focused on understanding people's *vulnerability*.

194. The VAM Standard Analytical Framework (SAF), developed in 2000, described these studies as Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessments (CVA). The



content has been further refined and the term Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessments (CFSVAs) was coined in April 2004 at a meeting in Dakar. This is a forward-looking analysis, focused on *risk analysis*.

195. SENAIP funded CFSVAs in a number of ‘priority’ countries. In all 16 CFSVAs have been commissioned, and 10 completed, in 2005/2006<sup>47</sup>.

196. CFSVAs can serve multiple purposes. They can:

- i. Provide a baseline for monitoring changes in food security as measured in subsequent ENAs,
- ii. Inform the design of *monitoring systems* to track changes in food insecurity (for example by identifying indicators appropriate to the particular livelihood system), and,
- iii. Directly influence decisions on the development, mitigation and preparedness interventions selected in resilience building programmes.

197. SENAIP (as opposed to VAM/ODAV) appears to be primarily concerned with the use of CFSVAs to provide a baseline to support the conduct of subsequent ENAs. It is still relatively early to find examples where a completed CFSVA has been followed by a subsequent ENA. However, the value added of CFSVAs to ENAs is most evident in the *analysis* of food security condition and determinants. A CFSVA analysis of the geographical breakdown of pre-crisis levels of food security helps to prioritize vulnerable areas for further assessment, while a livelihoods analysis helps to define ENA indicators and appropriate interventions.

198. CFSVAs can also provide *data* to directly compare pre- and post-crisis levels of food insecurity. The feedback from the VAM staff tasked with using CFSVAs to support ENAs highlighted problems with this assumption. There is a frequent lack of *coherence* between the CFSVAs and ENAs. Partly this is a consequence of the use of different indicators in the two types of studies; in one example it was not anticipated that data collection in the midst of a crisis had to use a very different methodology from the baseline. A second common observation was that the baseline data are insufficiently granular<sup>48</sup> to allow meaningful comparison. The CFSVA are nationally relevant and it would be extremely costly to stratify the sample to a level that coincides with the extent of a specific hazard. A final threat is that the situation in high risk areas may change rapidly and fundamentally, making the baseline data outdated more quickly than anticipated. At best the utility of CFSVA in providing *baseline data* to ENAs is still unproven.

199. Most CFSVAs include large-scale data collection exercises, in part to service the anticipated needs of future ENAs. This increases the cost and duration of the study considerably<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Complete: Angola, Mali, Mauritania, Comoros, Timor-Leste, Niger, Liberia, Uganda, Madagascar and Tanzania. Draft: Rwanda, Nepal, Palestine. On-going: Laos, Sudan, DRC.

<sup>48</sup> Granularity is generally thought of as the level of detail of a specific piece of information. For instance, national poverty level is too aggregated for emergency needs assessment

<sup>49</sup> This is not uniformly the case. The Comoros CFSVA drew exclusively on secondary data.



*“The CFSVA completed in 2005 is a considerable improvement over earlier VAM work. However, they are very demanding of staff time and inevitably the timetable slips with the likelihood that they will not be completed in time for use. They are very costly compared to EFSAs. The average CFSVA costs at least \$110,000-120,000 and they can go much higher. There is an important question to be answered: do they provide information worth their high cost?”* (National VAM Officer)

200. From the analysis of costs (see 5.4.1) it can be argued that *data* on the incidence of food insecurity may be provided more cheaply through a light surveillance system. A FSMS also provides trend, rather than point data.

**Recommendation 5g:** A study should be commissioned to compare the relative utility and cost efficiency of CFSVAs and FSMSs in providing data to support a subsequent ENA.

201. This should not be taken to imply that a choice should be taken between a CFSVA or a FSMS. Both are needed and each component has a distinct role as part of an overall information system (see Table 2-1). However, the comparative advantage of a CFSVA may rest in analyzing the existing food security related data, rather than in primary data collection. As a World Bank economist noted in Rwanda *“The real question for WFP is in determining how it can add value to resolving the diversity of datasets that already exist relating to rural Rwanda. If WFP can reduce rather than add to the confusion, it will be welcome news”*. The question is the best division of functions between the complementary activities of a CFSVA and FSMS.

202. The evaluation found that CFSVAs serve as a primary input into the design of many PRROs (and Country Programmes) – especially where the PRRO is predominantly concerned with resilience building (Table 3-5). For example in Rwanda preliminary CFSVA data – fully vetted by government – was the major input in the design of the new PRRO<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> See Annex J.3 regarding the experience in Rwanda on this point.



Table 3-5 CFSVA references in WFP project documents

Country	Time	Document	Referenced
Angola	Oct-05	Angola PRRO 10433.0	No particular reference to CFSVA but VAM surveys
Liberia	Oct-06	Liberia PRRO 10454.0	Ex.Summary, Para 4, 6, 10, 11, 22
Madagascar	Aug-05	Madagascar PRRO 10442.0	Para 6, 7
Mali	Dec-05	Mali PRRO 10452.0	Para 60, 84
		Mali CP 10583.0	Para 5, 6, 8, 9, 32
Mauritania	Sep-06	Mauritania BR for PRRO 10359	Page 1, 2
Nepal	Jan-07	Nepal EMOP 10523.0	Page 2, 4,
Niger	Sep-05	Niger PRRO 10509.0	Para 56
oPt	Feb-07	OPt PRRO 10387.1	Page 4, 7, 9, 12
Rwanda	Dec-06	Rwanda PRRO 10531.0	Ex.Summary, Para 8
Tanzania	Nov-06	Tanzania CP 10437	Para 24, 36, 68
Timor Leste	Jul-06	Budget Revision (BR) 5 Timor Leste PRRO 10388.0	Page 1 (BR is a short document)
Uganda	Mar-06	BR 5 for Uganda PRRO 10121.1	Para 1 (figures on this PRRO based on CFSVA)

Source: ODAV

203. This function of CFSVAs has not been clearly acknowledged in the design of SENAIP. This perhaps understandable as the focus of SENAIP is on *emergency* assessments and responses. However, this is a critical function of CFSVAs and it is necessary to acknowledge this as part of an inclusive information and analysis strategy. It is therefore suggested that this role of CFSVAs is more clearly acknowledged under SENAIP.

204. CFSVAs are typically used to inform the geographical targeting of food aid interventions in PRROs and CPs. However there is a widely shared perception that the CFSVAs could provide much more support to decision makers. Substantive concerns on the limitations of CFSVAs products and processes were expressed to the evaluation team by informants both inside, and outside, WFP.

205. A key potential component of CFSVAs is the analysis of risk and vulnerability. However, there is considerable demand for better risk analysis that is linked to recommendations on interventions to reduce vulnerability. No practical examples were encountered by the evaluation of how a CFSVA analysis has so far provided specific and feasible response recommendations on resilience building that have been taken up in a PRRO. As one CO remarked:

*“The CFSVA didn’t have strategic recommendations per se, it was more a snapshot of food diversity situation. However the various conclusions and general recommendations have been taken into account in the implementation rather than in the designing of the project.”*

206. Other specific suggestions include:

- Scheduling CFSVAs in line with the PRRO timelines.
- Simplifying the methodology to reduce the cost, time needed to complete and risk of delays.



- Strengthening the methods to formulate feasible and appropriate response recommendations for building resilience.

207. In the case of Nepal, CO staff were critical of the quality, timeliness and utility of the CFSVA. They attributed the problems largely to the fact that the CSFVA had been ‘externally’ commissioned, designed, analyzed and produced. In terms of analytical insight the CFSVA did not advance on the 2001 VAM Nepal Food Security Profile, which had already provided an excellent analysis of livelihoods. A CFSVA must be based on a proper gap analysis at the country level and avoid replicating existing data sets and analysis.

208. Under SENAIP there has been a relative (compared to EFSAs) lack of investment in an integrated learning strategy – methodological development, production of guidelines and attendant training activities – to support the improvement of CFSVAs. Some guidance has been prepared by ODAV but this is judged to fall short of the comprehensive guidance required on the design, implementation and reporting of CFSVAs (DISI, 2006). Workshops of VAM staff have been held to develop improved methods<sup>51</sup> and ODAV report that the development of a CFSVA learning strategy is a priority activity for the final year of SENAIP. While belated, the evaluation team would endorse and encourage this initiative.

**Recommendation 5e:** The primary purpose of CSFVAs should be acknowledged as supporting the design of programmes to build resilience to food insecurity – whether in EMOPs, PRROs or CPs. The comprehensive learning strategy proposed by ODAV should develop methods, models, guidance and training to enhance the capacity of country offices to conduct an analysis specifically for *this purpose*.

209. The AG collectively raised a number of substantive concerns on the CFSVA design, methodology and process with WFP<sup>52</sup> in late 2006. ODAV acknowledged the importance of these issues and consequently no additional CFSVAs have been commissioned in 2007. ODAV regards the forthcoming Laos CFSVA as a model which broadly addresses the articulated concerns. Given the substantial costs involved in CFSVAs it is important to transparently demonstrate that a satisfactory method and process has been developed. As this CFSVA is still in draft it is not possible for the evaluation to judge the extent to which this has been achieved. It is also anticipated that refining the CFSVA methodology will inevitably be a protracted exercise and external technical advice is appropriate on an on-going basis.

**Recommendation 5f:** An external assessment of the Laos CFSVA should be organized. This should examine the degree to which both the technical and process limitations, identified by the AG and DISI report, have been adequately addressed. Furthermore, routine external technical advice to, and reviews of, future CFSVAs should be invited.

<sup>51</sup> A VAM workshop on these issues was conducted in April 2007 which falls outside of the scope of this evaluation.

<sup>52</sup> Email from chair of the AG to ODAN dated 12<sup>th</sup> November.



### 3.4.2 Food security monitoring systems

210. As part of the SENAIP design WFP noted that “*baseline information should be complemented by systems to monitor changes in food security status as a result of shocks and aid interventions*” (WFP 2004). This has been translated into a commitment by ODAV to establish 10 Food Security Monitoring Systems (FSMS) in 2005-2006. The progress report to ECHO submitted in January 2007 noted that four systems had been established<sup>53</sup> and a further nine initiated in disaster prone countries.

211. The initial SENAIP policy was not explicit on the goals of establishing FSMS. Nor has a subsequent body of normative guidance been developed under SENAIP to guide the establishment, operation and sustainability of FSMSs. ODAV is reliant on guidance developed in 2000 as part of the Standard Analytical Framework.

212. The evaluation mission did not have the opportunity to visit any countries with an operational FSMS that had been specifically funded by SENAIP. Therefore it is not possible to directly evaluate the performance of this component. However, a number of more indirect, but relevant, observations are offered.

213. Without an effective Early Warning System (EWS) there is the risk that the need for an ENA will not be recognized, will not be undertaken and, as a result, needs will remain unmet. Therefore, in contexts where an adequate EWS capacity does not already exist, it is clearly in WFP’s interests to see one established.

214. However, monitoring is not an exclusive “pre-crisis” function, but also includes Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) functions. Regular information is needed to determine if the intervention achieving the intended result and what adjustments are necessary to response interventions, amounts if assistance and targeting.

215. Good examples of both types of monitoring systems operated by ODAV, although not financed through SENAIP, were witnessed in the case study countries. These examples illustrated the value (and costs) of an established monitoring capacity to WFP.

216. In Nepal WFP has been financed by DFID and OFDA to establish a monitoring system in the western hill districts. The decision to delegate responsibility to WFP was based on fears of the humanitarian impact of the Maoist insurgency in this area, coupled with WFP’s unique field presence. The monitoring system is impressive in its timeliness and flexibility, equipping field monitors in extremely remote locations with PDAs and satellite phones. Data that would otherwise take a minimum of weeks to collect and compile can be available in a number of days.

217. The benefits of this system have been demonstrated in providing early warning – authorities were rapidly alerted to a major drought and an EFSA organized that otherwise might have proved difficult to either identify or respond to. The regular monitoring information is also increasingly being used by field staff to refine the

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<sup>53</sup> Burundi, Haiti, Afghanistan and Cote D’Ivoire.



targeting of food transfers. In a country where food costs \$2,000 per MT to deliver<sup>54</sup>, accurate targeting is a prime consideration. The main disadvantage of the system is the cost. As the political situation in Nepal is normalizing donors are unwilling to continue to fund WFP to run this system. The operational costs, at between \$0.5 - \$1 million per annum are unsustainable as an overhead of a relatively modest country programme alone. Consequently WFP faces a difficult task in finding partners in government or elsewhere in the UN system.

218. A second example lies in the Community and Household Survey (CHS) operated in southern Africa. The CHS survey has been operational since 2004 with biannual surveys in WFP’s operational areas. It is designed to inform a regional PRRO designed to address a chronically food insecure target group. The monitors participation and impact, tracking key indicators of food consumption and the coping strategy index. The ability to track long term trends in specific indicators is critical to the success of the CHS.

219. The frequency of the survey is not geared to provide early warning, and indeed other reasonably adequate early warning systems (both government and FEWS NET) already exist in many countries.<sup>55</sup> However, the frequency is well suited to informing decisions on project implementation of the size, type and mix of programmes. Indeed information on a more frequent basis may ‘swamp’ decision makers and is not operationally useful. CHS data has been useful in justifying budget revisions. The existence of a CHS can obviate the need to conduct more expensive and cumbersome annual reassessments of need.

220. At a more strategic level the CHS has been instrumental in proving that existing targeting categories (vulnerable groups with the classic socio-economic identifiers such as hosting orphans, women headed households and households with chronically ill members) is deeply flawed. The CHS provided conclusive evidence that such targeting criteria are only weakly correlated with food insecurity status and that the only reliable indicator of food insecurity is the number of assets. This has immense potential implications for improving WFP’s overall performance in the region.

<b>Good practice:</b>
<b>Chad Food Security Monitoring System</b>
Because all major roads in Chad are closed during the rainy season, stock piling necessary food aid for distributions in the hungry season is essential. Successfully navigating this short programming window is completely reliant on decisions made from regular food security monitoring.

221. In Chad, the FSMS designed by the VAM unit and implemented with partners for the Ministry of Agriculture is extremely popular with WFP management, partners and donors. The Chad experience provides valuable lessons for expansion of FSMS in other countries. Based on an initial CFSVA exercise, regular food security bulletins are produced at key points in the agricultural year and program cycle. The Deputy CD argued that it was

<sup>54</sup> The terrain and civil conflict combined to necessitate delivery by helicopter.

<sup>55</sup> See Annex J for a discussion of the joint FEWSNET WFP monthly EWS reporting in Rwanda.



such an important activity that it should be funded as a core capacity from PSA.

222. A study on the linkages of assessment to programming (Darcy et al, 2007) concluded that surveillance systems that allow such changes to be monitored are the essential complement to ENA surveys. In practice, after the initial assessment and securing of funding, continuing or repeat assessment may not happen at all. In southern Africa (despite the existence of the CHS) and elsewhere, still too little attention was found to be given to surveillance (Darcy, 2007).

223. Under SENAIP there has been relatively little attention given to establishing and supporting FSMS – as opposed to the emphasis on ENA and CFSVA assessments. However, there is strong evidence that improved monitoring capacities are of critical importance to WFP. Therefore, at this juncture it is appropriate to consider devoting far greater emphasis to monitoring systems. Furthermore, ODAV possess considerable experience and demonstrated success in operating FSMS. This should be drawn on to develop improved technical guidelines and rapidly increase monitoring capacity.

**Recommendation 2d:** Guidelines should be developed for supporting FSMS, drawing on both SENAIP funded and other ODAV supported monitoring systems. WFP should allocate significant additional resources to initiating and institutionalizing food security monitoring systems in line with this guidance, either from PSA and / or extra-budgetary sources.

### **3.5 Partnership**

224. A final component in the overall SENAIP strategy is the involvement of partners in the conduct of needs assessment. The progress in achieving partnership in assessment is reviewed in this section.

225. There is a widespread appreciation of the value of conducting needs assessments in concert with partners by all the WFP COs, to the extent where it is now rare to find any assessments that have been conducted independently by WFP. The WFP 2006 APR reported that 85% of assessments were carried out with partners.

226. The range of assessment partners is indicated by the response to the survey to Country Offices (Table 3-6). The main assessment partners for WFP come from within the UN system – either as part of a formalized process such as the JAM or CFSAM – or as an ad hoc arrangement. There are some problems in establishing effective inter-UN partnerships –the diminished field capacity of FAO and UNICEF is reported to limit their participation in many countries. Personality and methodological differences can also hamper collaboration – specific instances were encountered where conceptual differences between senior UN country staff prohibited collaboration in assessment at the operational level.





Table 3-6 Agencies Participating in Assessments

UN Agencies	NGOs / Civil Society	Government	
FAO (11) UNICEF(11) UNHCR(7) UNDP(2)	NGOS(9) ICRC(1) CDC(1)	Statistics (7) Planning, Finance, and Development (5) Agriculture (4) Health (3) Interior (1)	Refugee service (1) Social welfare (1) Disaster management (1) Meteorology (1) Food Security (1) Education (1) Interior(1)

Source: Country Office Survey (N=40)

227. There has clearly been a big effort to engage national governments and this is reflected in the diversity of departments listed as partners in Table 3-6. However, pragmatic considerations may limit the ability to partner with Government in specific situations. For example, WFP Nepal could not partner closely with Government for the duration of the Maoist insurgency as this would have curtailed their access to rebel held areas. Participation is also often a problem for government staff, especially at senior levels, who are often already over stretched in collaborating with multiple agencies.

228. The NGO community, typically WFP's implementing partners, form a third main class of partners. Again effective partnership can be constrained by a shortage of staff and time. For example OXFAM(GB) was cited as a good potential regional partner in ODB, but rarely had the time for meaningful participation in specific assessments.

### 3.5.1 Purpose and leadership

229. SENAIP did not set out in detail the objectives and benefits of greater partnership. The evaluation team understands the range of potential benefits in joint needs assessment to include;

- Access to increased assessment resources; including staff, vehicles, finance and skills.
- Increasing the scope of assessment to encompass several sectors through inter-agency and inter-departmental cooperation.
- Mitigating agency bias in formulating recommendations.
- Establishing responsibility for implementing recommendations by participating agencies.
- Greater consensus on the assessment finding with direct links to increased credibility, timely decision making and mobilizing resources.
- Building the capacity and responsibility of national governments to exercise leadership in humanitarian crises.

230. From the interviews and case studies the evaluation found that a common objective for partnership in assessment is to increase the resources available for assessment. In many cases the primary role of external participants is to assist in



enumeration and data gathering. WFP still tends to lead the assessment design and analysis. Some see this unequal relationship as a reflection of the lack of national capacity, but other observers question WFP's commitment to a more equitable partnership. As one 'partner' at the national level observed:

*WFP typically drive assessment design, payment and purpose. They invite partnership – but not in purpose or recommendation. Consequently assessments remain wedded to WFP decision making processes and so will continue to focus on food recommendations.*

231. An underlying theme in the drive for greater partnership is the ultimate goal of building a multi-agency, multi-sector framework for assessment as envisaged in the UN reforms. There is evidence of some progress in Rwanda, where the theme of partnering has during the most recent 12 months come to characterize all assessment activity there. This will be an interesting situation to observe in the near future, as Rwanda is designated as one of the new "One UN" pilot countries. There are a few other examples of strong inter-agency assessment, especially in high profile crises. The positive assessment experiences of Darfur, Lebanon and Pakistan are cited as models of how WFP can effectively fulfil a post UN reform commitment to wider partnership. But overall the framework for WFP to effectively partner is multi-sectoral assessments is lacking in most countries.

232. An important objective of partnership is to offset the potential bias that individual agencies introduce into the assessment process. However, in order to do credibly it is important to partner with organizations that are not perceived to share similar biases to WFP. For example, partnership with an NGO that works with WFP as an implementing partner may not increase credibility as much as working with an independent NGO.

233. A key observation is that partnership is important in building consensus and this consensus is helpful in stimulating a timely response. As a FEWS NET representative said:

*Assessments are problematic if they do not come from consensus. Donors can not take a decision if there is a lot of controversy. Donors always ask -- what is the consensus? When WFP and FEWS work together, funding flows.*

234. However, the fact that consensus has been achieved cannot be assumed to result in greater *accuracy*. An illustration of this point comes from Zambia where two needs assessments were done in 2005; one through the VAC system (including WFP) and one by the international NGOs. For the sake of consensus, and mobilizing a response, the INGO study was ultimately shelved. However, privately the NGOs continue to contend that their higher numbers were a more accurate reflection of needs and that the consensus figures were designed to be *credible* to donors. Political consensus should be carefully distinguished from technical consensus.

235. Partnership risks slowing down the assessment process as more consultation is often necessary. In particular the process of official government clearance of final



reports can be time consuming. Therefore, in certain contexts such as rapid onset emergencies, it may be appropriate for WFP to restrict the partnerships.

236. Responsibility for *leadership* of assessments continues to rest with WFP in the majority of recent assessments (Table 3-7). At times leadership may be function of the scope of the assessment. For example in a collaborative inter-sectoral assessment it may be problematic to justify WFP as a lead agency.

Table 3-7 Leadership of food security assessment teams

WFP leadership	Other agency led
WFP (30) WFP as co-leader with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ UNHCR (4)</li> <li>▪ Government (3)</li> <li>▪ UNICEF (1)</li> <li>▪ FAO (1)</li> </ul>	Government (2) OCHA (1) FSAU (1) UNHCR (1) Multi-agency (1)

Source: Country Office Survey (N=40)

237. What is striking is the relatively low level of leadership currently provided by national governments. Indeed several informants saw WFP as having an important role in building the leadership capacity of government. Cases where government does fulfill this role effectively evidence the value of this goal. For example the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit in Zambia has been extremely effective in the coordination of overall response, tracking the contribution of different humanitarian agencies to ensure comprehensive coverage and minimizing duplication.

238. Assessments that do not take account of national governments risk serious problems. An example an early draft of the April 2006 EFSA in Rwanda, perceived to have been drafted independently by WFP, elicited a strong negative reaction from government. Subsequently, WFP decided to greatly increase the visibility of partnering; clearer communications and transparency of the entire pre-crisis and ENA processes (from inception through final reporting)<sup>56</sup> with government has succeeded in restoring a good working relationship with the government:

*The problem we had last year has been resolved, we believe. The issue is one of political sensitivity in Rwanda rather than with the ENAs themselves. We believe the ENA process is fine. From the government’s perspective, what is important is that all the players are reading from the same script. We [the government] are in charge of coordination of assessments and we participate fully in the design, implementation and approval of the final assessment products. (Senior Government of Rwanda official)*

239. Clearly the ENA process does not take place in a vacuum. It can work well in terms of design and implementation and still encounter problems caused by

<sup>56</sup> One CD stated “Everything we undertake is designed in concert with our partners and, where possible, the surveys are jointly conducted and the results widely and thoroughly vetted before publication”.



insufficient political sensitivity or unclear communications. Partnering, transparency and, in some cases, shared responsibilities are critically important – and must be made explicitly a part of ENA management in-country. The Rwanda experience is a useful lesson for all of WFP.

240. The procedures and guidelines used to design and implement ENA data-gathering and analysis may not, in some cases, be in accord with host government policies or practices which may predate WFP guidelines. There is need to achieve mutually-acceptable operating norms and procedures which may result in less than optimal implementation of SENAIP improvements. There may need to be greater understanding of this reality in applying SENAIP-inspired changes in ENA and pre-crisis data gathering, analysis and publication of results and conclusions. To this end, it may be important to ensure that host government decision-makers and emergency-related operational staff are provided with training to enable them to absorb and adapt the precepts underlying WFP's ENA improvement policies and the steps taken to implement these changes. The ENA seminars directed to senior field staff should be extended to senior government partners.

241. A particular point emerged about the participation of the donors in assessment, interestingly made independently by two donors representatives themselves and supported by observations of the case studies. Donors recognize that they themselves often have a vested interest in either deflating or inflating appeal figures. Therefore their full participation in the assessment risks inviting policy considerations into what should be essentially a technical process. It is therefore suggested that WFP should consider limiting donor participation in assessment missions to that of observer status.

### **3.5.2 Summary of partnership issues**

242. In overall conclusion it is evident that WFP is treating the issue of partnership seriously. While there has been much progress there is still the opportunity for WFP to further improve its institutional partnerships. In general the benefits of partnership outweigh any specific disadvantages, ultimately this is a better long-term and sustainable solution. The evaluation affirmed the importance of conducting joint assessments, subject to the local operating context. Decisions on partnership are best determined at the country level.

243. In reality, partnership in assessment has been a long standing principle that predates SENAIP. For example inter-agency assessments have been established in Zambia since the mid 1990's. While the variety and strength of partnerships has improved it is not clear how SENAIP *per se* has contributed to this objective.

244. The SENAIP partnership strategy advocated improved partnership through formal agreements with various partners at the global level. This included drafting or updating agreements with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UNICEF, FAO, OCHA, UNDG, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission and the Famine and Early-Warning System Network (FEWS-NET). While these agreements are unlikely to be counter-productive, there was very little observable impact of such global agreements on partnerships at the country or ENA level. Rather



partnerships appear to be primarily driven by individual relationships, capacities and the local context.

245. SENAIP has set a progress indicator that 75% of all ENAs are to be conducted in partnership by the end of 2007. However, as the discussion indicates, the mere fact of partnership may tell you little about the purpose and quality. In itself this can be a fairly meaningless indicator. It is suggested that ODAN may have a useful role in continuing to monitor partnership in assessment, but through more nuanced indicators that capture who the partners are, the purpose of partnership and the leadership exercised by WFP.



## 4 Quality of needs assessment

246. The central anticipated outcome from SENAIP is an improvement in the *quality* of emergency needs assessments. The degree of attainment of this objective by SENAIP is reviewed in this section. The evaluation team notes that SENAIP has only been operational since the start of 2005 and progress must be interpreted in this context. It is however, both germane and feasible for the evaluation to comment on this outcome.

247. SENAIP has supported quality improvements in ENAs both directly and indirectly. Firstly, SENAIP staff from HQ and the RB personally led a significant number of ENAs. This included needs assessments of the major humanitarian crises of Darfur, Pakistan and the Tsunami. Secondly, SENAIP has enhanced the capacity of the country offices to conduct their own ENAs. This is a culmination of the investments in methodological development, training, capacity building and strengthened partnerships. While the larger COs typically have the capacity to conduct all stages of an ENA independently, the smaller COs often draw on technical support from the RB and HQ. The evaluation looks at the quality of assessment across these scenarios.

248. This section reports on the *quality* of needs assessment where WFP has been an active participant. It is extremely hard to measure *changes* in assessment quality over the period of SENAIP – in part because of the paucity of baseline data. It is even harder to allocate the attribution of change between SENAIP and parallel initiatives. Conclusions on changes in assessment quality are necessarily tentative and qualitative in nature.

### 4.1 Defining Quality

249. While SENAIP set out to improve ‘*quality*’ no exact interpretation of this term was offered in the IP. In order to determine progress it is necessary for the evaluation team to develop their own definition. Quality is a very subjective term and consequently difficult to define and measure. Formal definitions and attempts to measure quality have also evolved over time. However, in the literature on quality assessment it is generally understood in one of the following ways:

- Conformance with *standards* of quality. Standards can be developed for inputs, processes, or outcomes.
- Quality as “fitness for use”. This broken down into criteria of relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility and coherence. Implicit in these criteria is the concept of transparency.

250. Each of these approaches is judged to have merits. The evaluation found both approaches helpful in an analysis of the quality of the ENA product and process. The findings are given in the following sections.



## **4.2 Conformance with standards**

251. SENAIP has supported quality improvements across a diverse range of ENA products<sup>57</sup>. Several of these were pre-existing processes, including JAMs and CFSAMs. These tools are designed for specific contexts, refugees and crop failure respectively. Each have their own specific guidelines. As JAMs and CFSAMs are relatively mature, little change in process or product is expected<sup>58</sup>.

252. However, prior to SENAC the majority of food security assessments were (methodologically) ad hoc. A major contribution of SENAIP has been to systematize and improve this large body of practice. Such assessments are locally referred to by a range of names<sup>59</sup>, but commonly utilize assessment methods from the EFSA handbook. Therefore in this evaluation, this diverse body of assessment practice is referred to collectively as Emergency Food Security Assessments (EFSAs).

253. One measure of quality then becomes a comparison of the degree of conformity between the EFSAs and the EFSA guidelines. This approach has been adopted within SENAIP itself in formulating a Quality Monitoring Checklist (QMC)<sup>60</sup>. The evaluation team made a similar, independent analysis that focuses on a smaller number of core indicators (Annex M).

254. The evaluation team reviewed and scored a selection of EFSA reports against a pre-determined checklist (Annex M). From the total of 93 EFSAs identified in the bibliography review (Annex D) a total of 44 EFSAs were read by the team. Some care is needed in interpreting the results as it is unclear how inclusive the sampling frame was (the sample was biased towards EFSAs made available by HQ that had been subject to some form of quality checking) nor was a random sampling procedure used (there was an intentional bias to select EFSAs from the case study regions of ODK, ODD, ODB and ODJ).

255. Of the sample 7 of the EFSAs were conducted prior to SENAIP (2003/2004), 28 after the inception of SENAIP (2005/2006) and 9 were undated<sup>61</sup>. While the analysis of results was attempted by year there were very few clearly observable trends and so the results are presented mostly as aggregate statistics.

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<sup>57</sup> Quality issues for CFSVAs are discussed in section 3.4.1

<sup>58</sup> The evaluation looked in detail at several CFSAM processes. The continuing role of CFSAMs is somewhat contentious given fundamental questions about the methodology and process. The strongest justifications for a CFSAM were found to occur where there was low credibility of in-country assessments by donors. CFSAMs also have the benefit of enhancing collaboration between WFP and FAO on response. As the new CFSAM guidelines have not yet been issued it was inappropriate to assess CFSAM quality.

<sup>59</sup> Illustrative examples include a rapid needs assessment in Cameroon, emergency food needs assessment in CAR, a joint needs assessment using the "EFSA methodology" in Peru, and emergency food security and nutrition assessment in Darfur.

<sup>60</sup> This is discussed further in section 5.2.3.

<sup>61</sup> This in itself is an issue – a large proportion of the assessments did not give basic information such as the dates of the field work and date of the report.



256. For EFSAAs where the team composition was mentioned, 40% included WFP HQ staff in the team, 43% included WFP RB staff and 68% WFP CO staff. It was not able to stratify the reports according to the degree of support provided by SENAIP.

257. The EFSAAs were conducted in response to rapid onset, slow onset, chronic and recovery contexts in relatively even numbers. It is relevant to bear this in mind as the expected content of an EFSAA will vary with the context. For example it would be reasonable to expect that an initial assessment, in the aftermath of a crisis, might reasonably be restricted to identifying the numbers affected.

258. There continues to be some debate about where the boundaries of an EFSAA lie – specifically when does the EFSAA stop and where does the programme formulation process start. This in itself is problematic as the expectations from assessment teams are not transparent. At their most inclusive EFSAAs can be seen as answering three questions:

- i. Measure (and predict) the incidence food insecurity (who, where, how severely and for how long)? This information is linked to decisions on targeting interventions.
- ii. Analyze the cause(s) of food insecurity. This information helps identify what type of intervention is needed. For example, food aid will be more appropriate where food availability is the problem, while cash might be considered where markets work, but purchasing power is the problem.
- iii. Recommend specific responses. This draws on i) and ii). It may also incorporate a consideration of *feasibility*, considering institutional capacity issues in addition to the technically preferred solution.

259. All of the EFSAAs provide an analysis of the target population. Nearly all EFSAAs delivered an estimate of the numbers of food insecure and/or ‘people in need’. 84% of the EFSAAs reviewed included a geographical breakdown of the incidence of food insecurity.

260. However, there is a tremendous diversity of methods used. In 44 studies no less than 18 different methods were encountered, although four common approaches dominated (Table 4-1). The reports often combined different sets of indicators to develop composite measures and used individual indicators in non standard ways.

Table 4-1 Leading methods used to determine food insecure populations

Indicator	Percentage of EFSAAs using method
Food economy analysis	35%
Dietary diversity	30%
Coping strategies index	30%
Nutritional indicators	25%

Source: Checklist of EFSA studies (N=44)  
(NB Numbers do not add to 100% as many EFSAAs combine more than one method)

261. It was impossible to make an objective comparison of the severity of need between any two EFSAA reports reviewed. This information is a necessary pre-





condition for a proportionate response. This priority has been recognized by SENAIP and the existing efforts have been noted (see 3.1.5). Reaching a technical consensus on measuring food security in a comparable way has been a long standing challenge and is unlikely to be resolved quickly. However, there is an urgent need to adopt an approach that allows comparability between assessments within WFP. In these circumstances WFP HQ may need to be bolder in delivering normative guidance to the field, even in the absence of a technical consensus.

**Recommendation 5b:** Corporate guidance on the measurement of food insecurity should be developed for the field. This should include a “toolkit” with a small number of alternative methods, advice on selecting the appropriate method (or combinations of methods) in a specific context and guidance on how to triangulate methods and reach comparable conclusions on the severity of different crises.

262. EFSAs are less systematic in the analysis of the food security context. Established areas of analysis – such as food access and coping strategies – are still better represented in the EFSAs than the analysis of markets or nutrition (Table 4-2).

Table 4-2 Analysis of food security context

Element of food security	Satisfactory or excellent	Poor or unsatisfactory	Not included
Prices and incomes	55%	34%	11%
Coping strategies	50%	39%	11%
Utilization and nutrition	36%	43%	20%
Food trade and markets	32%	41%	27%

Source: Checklist of EFSA studies (N=44)

263. While there is clearly further progress to be made in mainstreaming market analysis, the data did show a distinct increase in the inclusion of market analysis in more recent EFSAs – none of the sampled EFSA conducted in 2003 or 2004 had included any significant attempt to analyze markets. The real question is whether WFP CO staff have a sense of why this analysis is needed and if they are able to integrate the conclusions into programming decisions. WFP should recognize, however, that sustained investment and support is clearly warranted to ensure that all EFSAs uniformly incorporate market analysis.

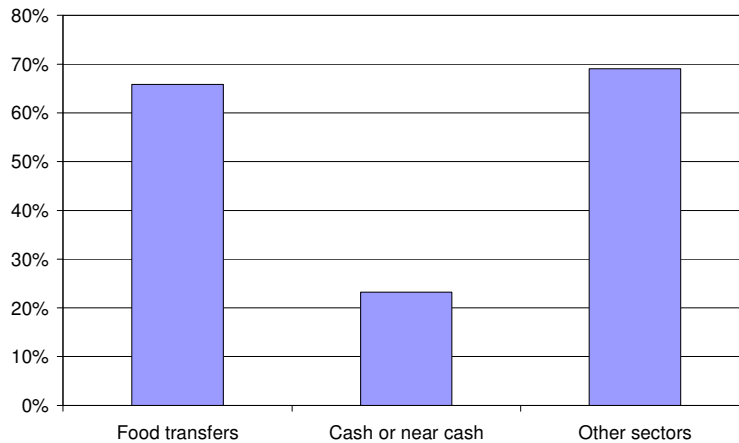
264. Overall, the evaluation team judged that approximately one third of the EFSAs did a satisfactory or excellent job of explaining the *causality* of food insecurity, a third did this inadequately and a third did not attempt this. Specific examples abound where there was minimal attempt to understand the reasons for food insecurity.

265. The third major area of the EFSAs concerns the inclusion and scope of the response recommendations. A major thrust of SENAIP is to improve response recommendations so that food transfers are clearly justified and there is a strengthened ability to identify and recommend alternative non-food responses when appropriate.



266. Recommendations for both food transfers and interventions in other sectors (agriculture, health, water and sanitation) were both provided in two thirds of the cases. The use of cash and near cash alternatives featured much less commonly. However, as a fair assumption is that prior to SENAIP cash transfers were very rarely considered in EFSAs, this represents a significant increase.

Figure 4-1 EFSAs response recommendations



Source: Checklist of EFSAs studies (N=44)

267. However, these bald statistics disguise more detailed findings. In the EFSAs reviewed the food transfer recommendations are generally well developed and quantified, while recommendations for other instruments or sectors remain general and superficial (Table 4-3). This is not surprising given the nature of technical competencies of WFP staff who provide the core assessment staff. The types of recommendations depend heavily on who participates in the assessment.

Table 4-3 Quality of responses recommendations by category

Response recommendations	% report with adequate or excellent analysis
Food transfers	49%
Other sectors (ag, water, health)	25%
Cash and near cash	22%

Source: EFSAs checklist (N=44)

268. In a third of EFSAs reports reviewed no specific response recommendations were offered. In a small, but significant, number of cases (2) this was because the EFSAs concluded that no response was warranted. However, more commonly the EFSAs stopped at the level of identifying priority areas of need without identifying precise interventions. In some cases (for example the Zambia VAC) the assessment team argued that they did not possess the technical skills to make well justified recommendations. Similarly the Sri Lanka EFSAs went as far as determining that the pre-conditions for a cash distribution existed and recommended a follow-up mission with appropriate technical skills.



**Good practice: Program staff reviewing assessment findings with technical staff to develop recommendations in Cote D’Ivoire**

The head of programme and VAM officer (from Cote D’Ivoire) came to Rome to finalise recommendations and targeting. CO staff met with: Nutrition, School Feeding, MCH group to discuss specific interventions based on recommendations from the survey. Others in VAM and ODAN provided a good sounding board for judging whether analysis and action were linked.

269. As one regional VAM officer noted: *As they have been prepared in the past – and still today in most of the countries in the region – EFSAs “tell you what the situation is” but they don’t usually make recommendations. Recently in some countries they have come closer to making recommendations, but it is still largely the case that they are descriptive with an added amount of analysis that discusses implications. EFSAs need to become more programmatic.*

270. Irrespective of whether the response recommendation should occur within the EFSA, or as a separate process, it needs to occur and the process be systematized. Although there are some recent attempts to develop tools<sup>62</sup>, the lack of objective methodologies and proven models to choose between alternative response options is a major constraint. Consequently recommendations remain open to subjective judgment and bias. Overall the weakest part of the EFSAs is perceived to be the link between the analysis and the recommendation.

**Recommendation 5c:** Simple decision tools should be developed to assist in selecting between alternative response interventions, building on existing models developed by other organizations and researchers.

**4.3 Fitness for Use**

271. Other diverse attributes of quality are discussed in the following section on fitness for use.

**4.3.1 Relevance**

272. The relevance of an ENA reflects the degree to which it meets the real needs of its clients. Therefore assessing relevance is subjective and depends upon the varying needs of users. Users within WFP, specifically programme staff, essentially have very specific and limited information needs. The priority is for information to support operational decisions on the use of food aid; who to target, where, for how long and the ration size. SENAIP driven developments have been directly relevant to addressing these needs. Given the current operational focus on food transfers, justifying the use of food transfers is more relevant than identifying alternative non-food response options<sup>63</sup> to increase food consumption.

273. However, donors may have a different perspective. Many donors are concerned with identifying the most appropriate interventions, food and non-food, to ensure adequate food consumption. Several of the interviews indicated a strategic desire for WFP’s take leadership in identifying and evaluating a range of possible

<sup>62</sup> For example CARE International are piloting response recommendation tools.

<sup>63</sup> For example the market analyses in Lesotho and Swaziland.



responses. Donors are hopeful that WFP's strong field presence can be used to gather a range of information to serve more broader food security and emergency related decision making purposes. To some degree SENAIP (with extra-budgetary support) has responded and successfully broadened the analysis. However, this tension remains evident.

274. There is a second dichotomy between the needs of WFP and some of the donors. The WFP mandate considers the use of food transfers across the relief-development divide. However, several of the donors envision a strictly humanitarian role for WFP. As one donor bluntly put it "*we want to hear how we can save lives and are not interested in reports about how we can save livelihoods*". The evaluators believe that the donor influence has biased SENAIP toward strengthening the analysis of humanitarian needs. However, WFP requires an analytical capacity to service its stated mandate.

**Recommendation 2b:** SENAIP activities should be integrated within a framework for food security analysis that services decision makers needs for both relief and resilience building related information.

275. Beneficiaries are also clients of the information system. As already discussed (see 2.2.1) consultation with, and the involvement of, potential beneficiaries in the assessment process has been inconsistent and is often absent altogether. As the International Development Committee of the UK House of Commons concluded that the best way to improve quality of assessment and response is through greater accountability to the beneficiaries<sup>64</sup>.

276. The current processes do not seek sufficient, systematic feedback from the beneficiaries. Correcting this offers a route to improved assessment quality. Greater participation is also consistent with WFPs own policy and on-going actions in other divisions<sup>65</sup>. While the evaluation can highlight this inconsistency as a significant issue, it was not part of the scope of the evaluation to identify specific means of improving food insecure population participation in assessment. Therefore, a very broad recommendation is offered.

**Recommendation 2a:** A strategy should be developed to strengthen food insecure population participation in food security baselines, monitoring and needs assessment activities.

### 4.3.2 Accuracy

277. At the heart of the question of assessment quality lies the question of accuracy. Put simply the concern is that WFP tends to over-estimate food insecure population needs. Although recognized as an important parameter there has been relatively little progress in WFP to develop methods to assess accuracy. Ex-post attempts to assess

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<sup>64</sup> Seventh Report of Session 2005-06. Volume I.

<sup>65</sup> For example the current work being carried out by the Policy Division on improved food aid targeting has a principle focus on beneficiary participation. It seems inconsistent not to carry this concern through to the preceding assessment.



accuracy of assessment have mainly been restricted occurred in the large scale evaluations of major disasters such as the Tsunami Real Time Evaluation and the Niger After Action Review. However, assessment accuracy is not examined through routine impact evaluations.

278. It was not possible to estimate the accuracy of individual ENAs in the context of this evaluation. This would require additional primary data collection that was outside of the scope of this evaluation. It is therefore not possible for us to answer the question of whether ENAs in the past have over estimated food needs and whether the accuracy has improved. However, this question is of critical importance to WFP.

279. Donors often draw the conclusion that food aid needs have been overestimated as, on one hand emergency appeals are routinely under-funded, and on the other acute impacts on mortality and morbidity are not generally observed. One explanation of this is that, while the needs may be genuine, WFP publicity may overplay the potential seriousness of the crisis to generate support<sup>66</sup>. In reality a reasonable assumption is that under response results in an erosion of livelihoods and increased susceptibility to the next crisis, rather than immediately visible acute consequences<sup>67</sup>.

280. Greater clarity in the analysis and anticipated consequences of a lack of response would effectively counter this criticism. It is notable that none of the EFSAs reviewed explicitly distinguish between live-saving and livelihood-saving interventions. This creates an environment for ambiguity in the presentation of needs and the consequences on inaction.

**Recommendation 4c:** Measures should be taken to ensure that assessments clearly differentiate between assistance necessary to save lives and assistance necessary to save livelihoods.

281. Subjective impressions of changes in accuracy vary. In Zambia there is a general agreement that accuracy had improved and that the assessment figures are now ‘good enough’. However, this is based on consensus rather than on any objective analysis. In other situations (southern Sudan was mentioned as an example) there is a perception amongst certain partners that accuracy has declined, assessments are less rigorous and more open to influence from the programming side.

282. The question of accuracy is often bound up with the use of a rigorous methodology. The shift to quantitative methods in principle allows statistical confidence intervals to be ascribed to the estimates. In the right circumstances WFP has demonstrated the capacity to deliver this. The Darfur assessment was widely regarded as an excellent piece of work even by the “serious economists” on the AG. However, many ENAs simply do not have the time or resources to achieve this level of statistical rigor:

*Statistical rigor has greatly improved over the years, particularly for small sample sizes where an inherent rigor in the statistics side is more essential.*

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<sup>66</sup> See Darcy et al (2007)

<sup>67</sup> For example this can be witnessed in the long-term decline in livelihoods across much of sub-Saharan Africa, even in areas and times of large-scale emergency assistance (Maunder and Wiggins, 2007)



*Methodological and statistical rigor comes at a price, in terms of budget, time, and staff constraints. Conflicting demands on the time of limited skilled people – mean that, in reality, some methodological imperfections remain. (VAM Officer)*

283. Efforts to be transparent about methods are also relevant to a discussion of accuracy. There is unanimous agreement that the transparency of assessment methods has greatly improved. This is widely cited as a major SENAIP achievement. In the evaluators review of EFSAs 68% of the reports included a section to describe the methodology, 63% included the survey instruments as annexes and 25% discussed limitations in the accuracy of the data or conclusions. As one AG member pointed out, the significance of greater transparency it that it generates *a self sustaining process of criticism and improvement*.

284. It was pointed out numerous times ENA remains an art rather than a science and the quality of assessment is highly influenced by the skill and experience of the individual assessors. Given the central importance of the accuracy of the estimates, it is suggested that WFP should develop a framework to evaluate the accuracy of future ENAs.

### **4.3.3 Timeliness**

285. The timeliness of ENAs is a critical component of overall quality. What is critical is the timely availability of information to decision making. Even if affordable, top end EFSAs with objective analytical rigor can end up being of little relevance if produced after decisions have been taken.

286. Timeliness of assessment results remains an issue. According to the CO survey, majority of the CO states that timeliness of ENAs is improving. However, half of them also reported specific instances where the assessment findings came too late to be useful for programme design<sup>68</sup>. There are many individual cases where ENAs have been produced too late to influence programming decisions.

287. A lack of proper documentation of dates from ENA and EMOP/PRRO processes constrained a quantitative analysis of the severity of poor timeliness. However, the case study findings typical found a complex relationship between assessment timing and the production of key programme documents.

288. Nepal illustrates several of the common issues that occur in the timelines of assessment (see Figure 4-2). Similar timelines have been produced for the other case study countries and appear in Annex J. The reality of the interaction between assessment and programming is rather more messy and iterative than the linear relationship assumed in the SENAIP design.

289. The experiences in Nepal include:

- For the long running refugee PRRO it proved relatively straightforward to schedule and complete the JAM in order to feed directly into the new PRRO.

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<sup>68</sup> This was in reference to an open-ended question.



- Timeliness proved far more difficult for an EFSA conducted to respond to a drought. A complex interaction of factors meant that while the peak hunger season occurred in February – March the EMOP only started in June. Getting information, of sufficient quality, in a demanding timeframe is problematic.
- The value of regular food security surveillance is clearly demonstrated in triggering the EFSA and providing managers with timely information to adjust initial targeting assumptions. However, this does not replace the function of an EFSA.
- The CFSVA study has taken over 18 months to produce. It has not proved particularly useful to the subsequent EFSA. Poor timing also means that it has limited relevance to the CP and new PRRO.

290. The problem of timeliness in assessment was explained in several ways in response to the CO survey:

- Management constraints. As an RAO observed, CDs may request assessments only at the last moment, even where programmes are planned well in advance. Limited availability of funding and expert staff can delay the implementation of an ENA. For example Rwanda wanted to conduct a CFSVA in 2004 but only received funding (from SENAC) in 2006.
- Delays associated with constrained access. For example the Lebanon rapid assessment of 2006 only occurred after the ceasefire in August, as the programme was closing down (see box). In Mozambique the WFP rapid assessment took several weeks to emerge, long after the initial decisions had been made.
- Delays associated with gaining consensus amongst partners. The Zambia VAC assessment report on the Dec – March floods only appeared in June 2006.
- Delays associated with government approval. For example crop assessment results in Nepal from a joint WFP-government survey carried out in November were only cleared for release the following February.
- Even where assessments are not particularly slow an ‘emergency culture’ in the organization prioritizes rapid response over analysis and reflection.



Figure 4-2 Timeline for assessments in Nepal

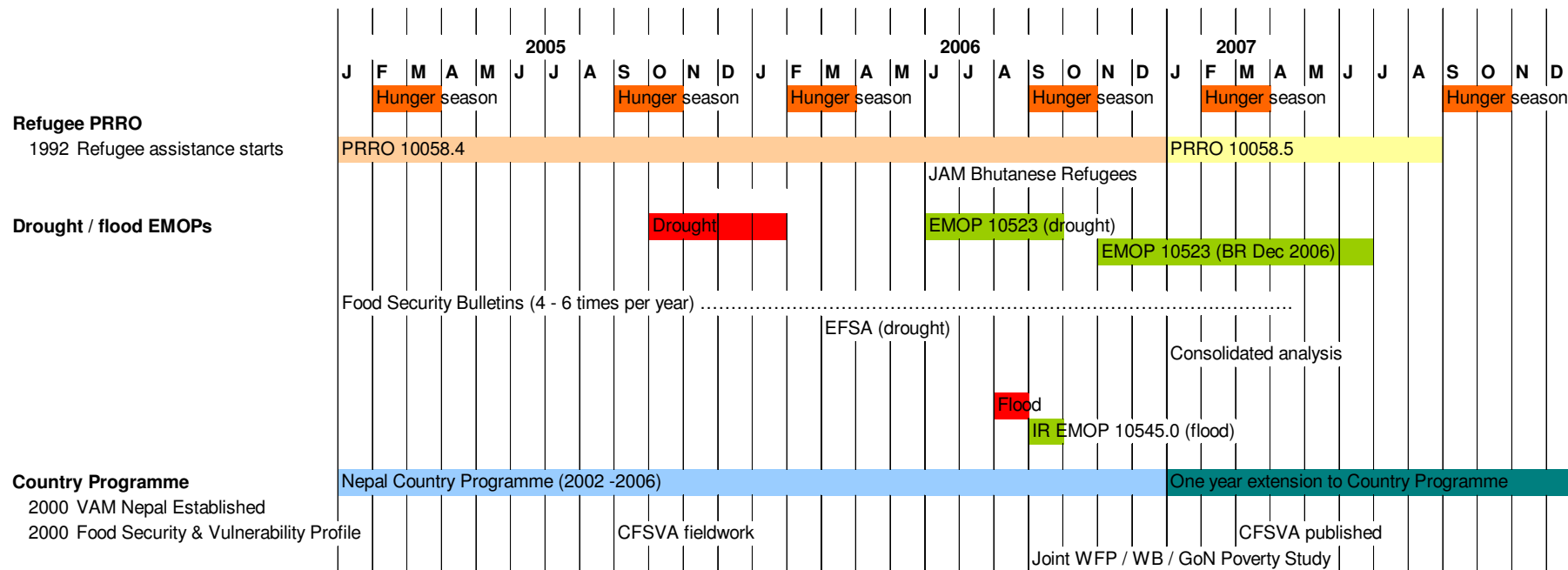






Figure 4-3 Timeline for Lebanon crisis

12 July	Start of conflict.
17 July	Emergency team deployed in Lebanon/Syria. <sup>20</sup> WFP opened country office in Lebanon.
23 July	WFP declares a "corporate emergency" EMOP and 3 SOs Approved. <sup>21</sup> EMOP 10537.0 (US\$21 million): Planned beneficiaries: 550,000 Food: 23,587 mt.
24 July	Launch of Flash Appeal: US\$150 million; WFP's proportion: US\$48 million, 32%.
26 July	First WFP-organized United Nations convoy. First food distribution.
14 August	United Nations-brokered ceasefire went into effect.
23 – 24 October	EMOP/SO closure <sup>22</sup> Total expenditures: US\$7.7 million <sup>23</sup> Total food distributed: 12,878 mt Total beneficiaries 824,000.
31 October	Closure of country office.

(from WFP 2006 Annual Performance Review)

291. Timeliness and delays have also been a major issue with CFSVAs. As a response to the Country Office illustrated:

*The final CFSVA was released two months after the PRRO design phase and at a time when the PRRO document was already undergoing internal clearance by RB and HQ through the PRC process. This turned out to be particularly problematic since:*

1) *The PRRO design and strategy had to be based on the draft CFSVA. When the final draft was released, it only allowed for cosmetic changes to the document (overall food insecurity figure etc) but it was too late for substantive changes, which the final CFSVA findings should have called for.*

2) *The methodology was changed between the draft version and the final version final, which did not have significant impact for the overall food insecurity figure, but drastically changed the food insecurity figures related to WFP's caseload. Overall, the number of non-refugee food insecure rose by about 25 %.*

292. The consequence of poor timing of assessments are either that programmes are formulated in the absence of assessment findings, or that programmes are delayed beyond the optimal implementation window.

*The 2006 EFSA for the northern IDP camps could not be completed in time for a variety of factors. Rather than trying to move forward a major BR replenishment of dwindling resources in the current PRRO without an update from the EFSA, we held back the EB presentation for four months. We wanted good numbers to support our request and we got them. (WFP CD)*

293. While some delays are unavoidable some practical measures can be employed to limit the constraint:

- Education of senior programme staff on the time required to produce ENA as part of the senior management sensitization process.
- Ensuring easy access to specialist staff to backstop assessment at short notice, including RAOs at the regional level.
- Establishing partnerships and 'rules of engagement' in advance of actual crises.

294. A better balance may need to be struck between timeliness and rigor. There is a difficult balance to be achieved in this regard. The appropriate trade-off will depend very much on the specific context. As one interviewee remarked the Pakistan assessment was extremely crude, relying on physical damage as proxy for food security impacts, but the utility was high. The



evaluation concludes that SENAIP has placed too much of a premium on rigor. For certain assessments this has been at the expense of timeliness and usability.

295. It is therefore necessary to clearly determine the minimum information needs that can be collected in a short enough period of time to make the knowledge programmer relevant. The over riding imperative should be to deliver the best possible analysis in the time available – not rigorous analysis irrespective of the timeline. This finding should inform the design of future EFSA guidance.

**Recommendation 4b:** In order to enhance timeliness and utility to decision making, guidance is needed on the *minimum* reporting requirements for different levels of assessment (initial, rapid and in-depth). This should clarify expectations for reporting (i) the number, location, severity and duration of needs (ii) the contextual analysis, and (iii) the specificity and scope of response recommendations.

#### 4.3.4 Accessibility

296. There have been efforts to improve the accessibility of ENAs. Improved partnership and transparency are major factors to improve accessibility of ENAs at the country level. Indeed access to the ENAs was not cited as a constraint by either WFP or partners at the country level. As one government official stated:

*In terms of transparency, WFP has been very good in sharing all reports with us, in allowing us to participate in survey design, participation in surveys and in our comments on draft reports. We will need the greatest openness in partnerships in the future.*

297. SENAIP has also sought to further improve the global accessibility (and transparency) of ENAs by posting completed ENAs on an open access website<sup>69</sup>. Both academics and donors saw the website as a positive development although it was interesting to note that none appeared to have actually made use of the facility. While senior decision makers are rarely in a position to drill down to the supporting evidence, they obviously value the reassurance of being able to do so if required.

298. The ENA Reports sub-section of the website provides a gateway to the on-line library of ENAs which have passed an in-house quality review and been placed on the website for public viewing and downloading. Excluding multiple language and duplicated summary versions of full ENAs there are approximately 216 documents<sup>70</sup> posted. While it is somewhat difficult to categorize many of these documents, a rough breakdown (as determined by the evaluation team) is shown in Table 4-4.

Table 4-4 Documents on WFP website by category and year

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	To May 2007
EFSA			3	13	28	52	5
JAM	1		5	7	2	8	5
CFSAM		23	12	16	9	4	2
CFSVA/VAM			1	2	3	9	1
Total	1	23	21	38	42	73	14

<sup>69</sup> [http://www.wfp.org/operations/Emergency\\_needs/index.asp?section=5&sub\\_section=6](http://www.wfp.org/operations/Emergency_needs/index.asp?section=5&sub_section=6)

<sup>70</sup> as of May 2007



299. It is interesting to compare the website lists with the actual numbers of ENAs undertaken in 2005 and 2006 (Table 4-5). The SENAIP logical framework proposed that 85 percent of ENA reports received by ODAN be posted on the public website. Given the data limitations<sup>71</sup> it is difficult to determine exactly whether this goal has been achieved. Overall WFP has been successful in displaying a large number of documents on the website and more are added frequently.

Table 4-5 Total number of ENAs conducted by year and type

	2005	2006	Total
EFSAs	55	33	88
CFSAM	14	11	25
JAM	11	19	30
Inter-Agency	10	27	37
Total	90	90	180

ODAN presentation to the AG in January, 2007

300. However, there is still some way to go – there are sometimes long delays in putting some ENAs onto the web, as only “quality controlled” ENAs are displayed. The evaluation favours posting all ENAs which have been used to inform programme development for full transparency.

301. The utility of the website as a ‘learning resource’ could be improved by becoming more than just a bulletin board. It could be used to display lessons learned, good and less good examples of the various ENA documents with explanatory dialogues. The current overlap of sub-sections could also be improved. Strong consideration should be given to a “makeover” of the WFP ENA website to enhance its utility as a learning tool.

### 4.3.5 Coherence

302. The coherence reflects the degree to which information can be successfully be brought together with other sources within a broad analytic framework and over time. The use of standard concepts, classifications and target populations promotes coherence, as does the use of common methodology across surveys.

303. It has already been noted that there is a lack of coherence between the ENAs and other components of the information system, specifically the CFSVAs and EFSAs. Organizational schisms have reinforced these technical weakness. Bringing coherence to these disparate elements has only recently been addressed by SENAIP and much still needs to be done.

## 4.4 Summary

304. There is a general consensus amongst external observers that the quality of WFP EFSAs is relatively good (when compared to assessments of other UN agencies) and improving. This in itself is a testament to the effectiveness of SENAIP given the relatively short implementation period.

305. Several countries were at pains to point out that SENAIP is only one part of a larger mosaic of capacity and methodological development which has been underway in WFP for some time.

<sup>71</sup> The uncertainties concern: a) the total number of ENAs conducted by year (this is difficult to confirm), b) whether the dates refer to the date of completion of the EFSAs or the date of posting, and c) the classification of ENA by type.



*The quality is definitely better. How much of that improvement can be attributed to SENAIP is hard to say. We had already initiated the process to improve our ENA reports a few years before SENAIP. SENAIP has been helpful in improving them further. Other external factors that have helped, especially donor desire for WFP to do a better job of analyzing the situation in the camps. They were pushing us several years ago for better justification for the numbers, and we have responded, and much of this work predates SENAIP. (WFP Country Director)*

306. The evaluation perceived a general improvement in the quality of ENAs over time. In particular the well resourced ‘flag ship’ ENAs directly supported by SENAIP (the Tsunami, Darfur, Pakistan, Niger, Guatemala assessments) have been evaluated within the AG as highly rigorous and thorough assessments. However, expenditure and acceptable quality needs to be commensurate with the magnitude of the problem.

307. Overall the quality of ENAs remains highly variable. The complex, difficult nature of the situations in which the data is collected often prevents the best possible result. It is pragmatic to accept imperfect methodologies in these emergency situations. In the words of an AG member:

*Given the difficulty of applying sound, rigorous methodological norms in these situations, quick and dirty has to trump statistical elegance in most cases. The point is the ability to reflect the real situation quickly, fairly accurately and in ways that are translatable into action. WFP is still learning how to do this – with mixed results so far. “Mixed” is a good marker in this case. It’s the best one could have hoped for. One has to be practical in determining relative success, particularly in so short a time as the SENAC period.*

308. There is still a basic lack of clarity over the scope of an EFSA. While ENAs are generally quite good at measurement, albeit in a non-comparable way – they are less good at determining the context and providing response recommendations.

309. The importance of experience and judgment was stressed above technical rigor, especially in less than optimal circumstances:

*Quality ranges from very good to poor. The difference is almost entirely related to the quality of the people doing the ENA work. Often field staff are required to draft reports and make recommendations on the basis of partial information or poor data. That is where experience and judgment have to take over. When WFP staff have those qualities the results are good; when those qualities are absent, the reports are pretty useless as guides to decisions (AG Member)*



## 5 SENAIP efficiency

310. This chapter examines the efficiency of the SENAIP activities and asks whether results have been achieved at reasonable cost. A range of factors are considered that bear on the overall efficiency, including; the organizational arrangements adopted within WFP, the adequacy and performance of the monitoring systems, the conformance with the implantation schedule and the appropriateness and adequacy of the financial and human resources provided to SENAIP.

### 5.1 Organizational arrangements

311. The principal question governing this component of the evaluation report is whether the best institutional arrangements for implementation of SENAIP have been adopted. The corollary question concerns the optimal post-SENAIP institutional arrangements.

312. In order to achieve the SENAIP objectives, the Analysis, Assessment and Preparedness Division (ODA) was established at Headquarter (HQ) level to maximize linkages between the Needs Assessment Branch (ODAN), the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Branch (ODAV) and the Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch (ODAP).

313. SENAIP is directly managed by ODAN. In addition to the HQ staff ODAN has 11 Regional Assessment Officers (RAOs) dispersed amongst the six Regional Bureaus. This structure provides technical support to assessment work. However, primary responsibility for the in-country emergency assessment work is accomplished by the CO VAM staff, usually abetted by monitoring and evaluation staff, emergency coordination staff, non-VAM programme office staff and nutrition staff. The particular permutation of staff responsibilities depends on the specific CO staffing arrangements. A few senior VAM officers are international staff, the majority are resident country officers.

314. During evaluation team field visits, it was evident that VAM staff are subject to competing demands from within their CO, from the RAOs and from at least two divisions in ODA/Rome. While ODAV provide support on pre-crisis (CFSVA and FSMS) work, VAM staff also receive instruction and direction from ODAN on ENAs. This can result in confusion among VAM staff regarding from whom they should take direction and in what order of priority. As one regional WFP programme officer noted:

*The split in Rome between ODAN and ODAV makes no sense and is counterproductive. The VAM people in the field don't know who is supposed to be giving them direction. One time it's a message from ODAV the next message is from ODAN.*

315. Furthermore this structural division may, unintentionally, leave elements of what should be a single integrated information system disconnected. For example the limited interoperability and coherence of CFSVAs and EFSAs has already been noted (see sections 3.4.1 and 4.3.5). While there are increasing efforts at integration, the development of methodologies and guidance by ODAN and ODAV has been somewhat isolated.

316. There is no apparent logic in maintaining the division between ODAN and ODAV responsibilities. Indeed considerable benefits, and savings, could be obtained from integration and rationalization.



**Recommendation 3a:** The two units of ODAV and ODAN should be combined into a single unit under ODA. This new division should provide a single source of direction and guidance on food security analysis, including baseline, early warning, needs assessment and monitoring functions.

317. Variable levels of integration of staff were observed at the regional level. Some cases, such as ODJ, bring together a whole range of analytical staff into one unit. This includes not just VAM and RAOs, but also M&E and nutrition officers under the direction of the regional VAM officer. In contrast, in ODB, the RAO and VAM staff are at an equivalent level and tend to maintain a division of responsibilities. The ODJ model appears to work far better from a personnel and technical perspective. In addition to merging ODAN and ODAV, establishing firm organizational linkages to M&E and nutrition has significant operational benefits.

**Recommendation 3b:** The RBs should consider establishing a food security analysis unit that brings together ODAV, ODAN, M&E and nutritional staff under unified management to support WFP's informational needs in a coordinated manner.

318. At country level, budgetary constraints often dictate that the analytical function be undertaken by a single staff member. However, in larger country offices the functions may be split amongst several staff. In the country case studies analysis staff were generally found to be under unified management. The precise structures adopted varied, with some staff falling under programming and others reporting directly to the CD. Where relevant, CDs could be usefully encouraged to replicate the integrated unit of analysis staff proposed for the regional and HQ level.

319. The success of the SENAIP initiative depends on strong collaboration between other units within WFP. In several cases this is already occurring. Notably strong and constructive collaboration is evident between ODAN and the Economic and Analysis Unit (PDPE) on market analysis. This should be sustained. However, there is a specific opportunity for improved collaboration between ODAN/ODAV and procurement staff (at HQ, RB and CO level). It was observed on multiple occasions that despite the relevance of SENAIP market analysis to procurement decisions, functional linkages were absent.

320. In the case study countries, programming staff in the RBs and COs were found to have a low awareness of SENAIP/SENAC. Equally donors and AG members believe that the nature and objectives of the SENAIP effort are not well articulated to other units at HQ level.

*“SENAIP focuses on the right areas for improvement and WFP has taken it quite seriously, especially in ODAN. The key is not so much in the design of the effort but in communicating the need for it – and the results from it – widely throughout the WFP organization – particularly to the senior-most staff. If they could be made advocates of the importance of high-quality, timely ENA data/information it would help to convert more donors to the proposition that SENAC-type assistance is money well-spent”*(AG Member).

321. A final dimension of the organizational aspects concerns the relationship of a HQ-driven initiative such as SENAIP with WFP's country offices. The COs are clearly appreciative of continuing backstopping and support from the RB and HQ (Table 5-1). The evaluation team argues strongly that the principal role of HQ and RB staff should be to *support* nationally owned assessment exercises through capacity building, surge capacity and quality control. Responsibility for financing assessments appears to be an unresolved issue.



Table 5-1 RB and HQ support requested by Country Offices

Potential assistance from HQ/RB to CO	Average score by CO
Financing of assessments	4.4
Technical assistance with food security baseline surveys	4.0
Training partner staff in assessment methods	3.9
Training WFP CO staff in assessment methods	3.8
Technical assistance with emergency needs assessments	3.7
Technical assistance with market analysis	3.7
Developing and disseminating technical guidance notes	3.6

Source Country Office Survey  
(Average score on basis of 1 = low priority 5 = highest priority)

322. As the evaluation report has noted elsewhere, there are strong technical and operational reasons for supporting the development of decentralized capacity. The CO survey and interviews provided clear feedback that the relevance, quality and utility could be enhanced through greater participation, or even control, of the assessment process at the national level. There is a clear demand for greater national level involvement in the assessments design, implementation and analysis. However, this should be complemented by continuing technical capacity at the regional and HQ levels.

**Recommendation 2c:** The capacity to design, implement and analyze needs assessments and other food security studies should be further enhanced at the country level. Budget control should be developed to the lowest competent level.

## 5.2 Monitoring arrangements

323. Progress reporting on SENAIP is carried out through a variety of mechanisms. This includes:

- Annual SENAIP progress reports are submitted to the Executive Board
- ODAN accounts to donors through a Steering Committee
- Technical monitoring and advice occurs through the Advisory Group
- Individual reports are submitted to donors to account for project funds (eg. SENAC)

### 5.2.1 Steering Committee

324. In order to provide oversight and strategic guidance to the implementation of the SENAC project, a Steering Committee (SC) was established. The Steering Committee includes members of WFP, ECHO, and bilateral agencies such as DFID, GTZ and USAID who are supporting WFP in complementary initiatives. The functions of the SC include: i) reviewing the overall implementation strategy, ii) receiving reports that monitor operational progress and appraise the quality of project outputs, iii) advising on the involvement of partners, and iv) comparing the project’s planned outcomes and outputs with final achievements. The SC meets between two and four times per year.

325. The establishment of a project specific SC was an innovative step for WFP. Accountability to donors usually occurs at the level of the Executive Board, rather than for



specific project funds. A willingness to open up management to scrutiny at this level required something of a culture change in WFP and is commended.

326. Overall the function and operation of the SC has been regarded generally positively by both donor representatives and WFP. All agree that the SC has served its intended oversight role adequately. WFP has provided regular and useful summations of progress. The committee has provided guidance to steer the strategy. For the most part the donor representatives had confidence that their advice was being heeded. Separating the technical advisory function into a distinct AG was also widely appreciated.

327. In addition, the SC has served other agendas. For WFP the SC has been an opportunity to educate key donors on the seriousness with which they are striving to improve needs assessment quality. Increased interaction has done much to improve organizational credibility with the donor representatives, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, has helped change perceptions of WFP more widely within these donor organizations

328. From the donor perspective, the SC has provided a welcome platform to expand and deepen their collaboration on food aid and food security issues. As it is both more intimate and more focused than the EB, donors have been able to improve their understanding of each other's positions and prepare a number of significant joint statements. These in turn carry weight with WFP.

329. The main suggestion from SC members was that WFP should shift the focus of their reporting from technical improvements in ENA quality, to reporting the impact of improved ENA on programmes. As one donor said "*We are not interested in information for information's sake*" They would like WFP to shift the focus of reporting to the impact of improved assessment on the content and implementation of its programmes.

330. While the SC should continue to function for the duration of the SENAC project, it will inevitable lose its *raison d'être* with the termination of this external tranche of funding. Overall accountability to donors should, at that time, revert to the EB.

## 5.2.2 Advisory Group

331. The Advisory Group provides substantive guidance on research, the development of methods and tools in key areas related to emergency needs assessments, and advising on coordination with related efforts elsewhere. The Advisory Group consists of representatives from academia, government, NGOs and other UN bodies. The members have been selected based on their expertise related to the key themes being addressed by the SENAC project, and emergency needs assessments. The three main functions given in the ToR are to (i) advise on thematic issues, research strategies and outputs (ii) review case studies and field research, and (iii) to facilitate coordination and partnerships with NGOs, UN agencies and research institutes.

332. There is no doubt that the AG has assembled an extremely well qualified group of individuals<sup>72</sup> and that collectively this group has great potential to assist WFP within the scope of the defined ToR. Equally there seems to be a shared (by both WFP and the AG members) opinion that this potential is not currently being capitalized on.

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<sup>72</sup> Although there are also concerns about the representative-ness of this group; e.g., that it is "*too academic, too western and too male*". There are calls to mix in more practitioners evincing more widely diverse backgrounds and adding more "policy" expertise.





333. The technical utilization of AG members has been uneven; while some thematic groups have taken off spectacularly, others clearly have not. Several of the AG members were frustrated not to have a clearer sense of how their inputs and outputs have (or have not) been used. There seems to be a limited ability to translate the (academic) knowledge of AG into operational tools for WFP field staff. Other AG members would have liked to contribute more to mentoring WFP staff and quality assurance functions, but were given limited opportunity to do so.

334. A group within the AG felt that the AG offers “*an overly narrow channel to advise*” as the AG focuses on technical issues, when their interests and contributions also lie in addressing the institutional issues. Allied to this point was a perception that there was a general ‘lack of attentiveness’ to their advice at the more senior levels of WFP.

*The AG has great value to both the WFP and non-WFP participants – at least potentially. It is unclear, however, that WFP is getting much out of it at this point. Interestingly, the AG has not been doing what WFP wanted it to do. It was set up largely to pass judgment or discuss issues of technical or methodological content. In fact, it has been a forum for questioning or discussing issues of process and policy. In that it has been healthy and of great potential use to managers. What is unclear is the extent to which managers are listening and using the AG sessions and discussions.* (AG member)

335. The format of the AG, reliant on large, periodic meetings with limited follow-up, is problematic. Members feel that there has been an inadequate opportunity for the cross fertilization of ideas between the thematic groups. It is of concern to the evaluation team that reservations expressed by the AG members were almost identical to those recorded in the interim review conducted 18 months earlier (Goyder, 2005). It would seem that an important opportunity to make use of – and improve upon – many important contributions of the AG has been seized somewhat less vigorously than it should. Drawing the best out of a group that contains such high level expertise requires strong leadership from within WFP.

336. However, despite the longish list of concerns expressed by AG members, it would be wrong to conclude that the AG has not been an important and successful part of SENAIP. Firstly, a considerable body of high quality research has been produced under the auspices of SENAIP/SENAC. WFP has benefited by being kept abreast of the latest technical developments in this field. Secondly, the profile of the AG has resulted in increased the credibility of SENAIP at several levels. It has improved the credibility of SENAIP within the WFP hierarchy. The willingness of WFP to invite a number of its principal critics to join the AG has helped increase credibility amongst donors and the AG members themselves. These achievements should not be underestimated.

337. Rather like the SC, the AG will lose its stated role at the completion of SENAC. If it is to continue, it will need a focus. As currently formulated, the AG is also a rather unwieldy and expensive group (see 5.4.1). In the medium term, ODAN would continue to benefit from technical support from an AG-type format. However, this might be achieved more effectively and efficiently through smaller technical support groups that would work with ODAN/ODAV in particular priority research topics. Obvious candidate thematic areas would be market analysis, strengthening response recommendations, CFSVA, FSMS and the measurement of food insecurity (including the use of the IPC and dietary diversity indicators). It is not proposed that these should be sub-groups, but rather operate independently.



**Recommendation 3e:** The AG should be maintained for the duration of the SENAC project. After this similar, but much smaller group(s), to assist in research and innovation should be considered. Possible areas of support would be a market analysis group, response analysis group, a CFSVA and FSMS group and/or the measurement of food insecurity group.

338. Several interviewees also noted the appearance of a conflict of interest in the operations of the AG. As noted above, the ToR for the AG include responsibility for identifying research topics and reviewing the research outputs. However, in addition to this, much of the research was actually conducted by AG members themselves under sole sourcing arrangements. As a consequence the necessary checks and balances are diminished. It is strongly suggested that ODAN ensure that the ToR and actual functions of the AG avoid any future conflict of interest.

### 5.2.3 Quality Monitoring Checklist

339. In order to monitor progress in improving the quality of EFSA's, ODAN introduced a Quality Monitoring Checklist (QMC) in 2006. This measures conformity with a large number of criteria drawn from the EFSA guidelines. The QMC output (Annex O) indicates significant progress in improving ENA quality under SENAIP. These results are at least partly confirmed ("partly" in the sense of non comparability of the methods used) by the analysis of a larger sample of EFSA's by the evaluation team (see section 4.2).

340. There is consensus that the QMC is an important tool for WFP. One donor noted that their own organization would be loath to subject themselves to such a detailed internal examination. While it is seen as good and positive start, the assumption that quality can be adequately captured through adherence to standards needs further scrutinized. Specifically this approach can be criticized for over-emphasizing attention to the EFSA *product* (the "report") and neglecting other stages in the *process* of needs assessment, from inception, through implementation to the utilization of the results.

341. It is suggested that ODAN should continue to improve and strengthen the QMC. They should consider simplifying indicators to measure the quality of the report and introducing new indicators to measure progress, in particular the actual uses made of the report and its timeliness.

342. The biggest gap in the present SENAIP monitoring system is the lack of a system to monitoring the use of ENAs by the EMOPs/PRROs. As donors and AG members have emphasized, monitoring the quality of ENAs should not be seen as the end point of the exercise. The main issue is whether – and to what extent – the actual programming documents – the *responses* to the problems identified in the ENAs – are strengthened as a result of the availability of improved ENAs. This is discussed further in section 376.

### 5.3 Delays in implementation

343. The original timeline for SENAIP envisaged the IP commencing in July 2004, running for 30 months and ending by December 2006. In retrospect the initial timeline now appears to have been rather ambitious. The main funds (from ECHO/SENAC) were not committed until October 2004. Subsequent delays in staff recruitment effectively delayed the commencement until January 2005. Subsequently the IP has now been extended to run for 36 months, and terminate in December 2007.

344. The adherence to the revised IP timeline has been relatively good. Overall, timeliness in the SENAIP project has not been a major issue in the sense that tardy implementation or



completion of any individual component has negatively affected the ability of the project as a whole to deliver acceptable progress in achieving planned outputs or objectives. Details of performance by individual component are given in Annex P.

#### **5.4 Cost efficiency**

345. The cost efficiency analysis was carried out at two levels. Firstly an analysis has been made of the HQ SENAIP budget to assess whether results have been achieved at a reasonable cost. Secondly, the cost implications of conducting (improved) EFSA on the budgets of COs is investigated. The implications of this cost efficiency analysis on sustainability and mainstreaming are discussed.

##### **5.4.1 Analysis of costs**

346. The overall 36 month SENAIP programme was **budgeted** at approximately US\$21.7 million. This includes contributions from WFP and from the various donors, including ECHO funds. The full breakdown by donor and activity is given in Annex H.

347. The evaluation team requested updated expenditures on activities at a sufficiently granular level to understand how resources had been spent in comparison with budget allocations. However, it proved difficult to retrieve sufficiently detailed records of **expenditure** from the WFP accounting system. This made the analysis difficult. A similar problem was encountered with accessing data at the country level on the actual costs of EFSAs.

348. Although beyond the immediate scope of this evaluation, it is strongly suggested that WFP improve the transparency and usability of their budget systems to support effective management.

349. Over 50% of the total SENAIP resources were budgeted to cover ODAN and ODAV staff salaries at HQ and RB<sup>73</sup>. No detailed cost break down of SENAIP staffing expenditure was provided. Therefore the following analysis is entirely of non staff costs. **However, the considerable staff costs need to be factored in to obtain a complete picture of activity costs.** Data was provided on the expenditure of \$6,333,900 over a 26 month period<sup>74</sup>. The breakdown of this expenditure is as follows:

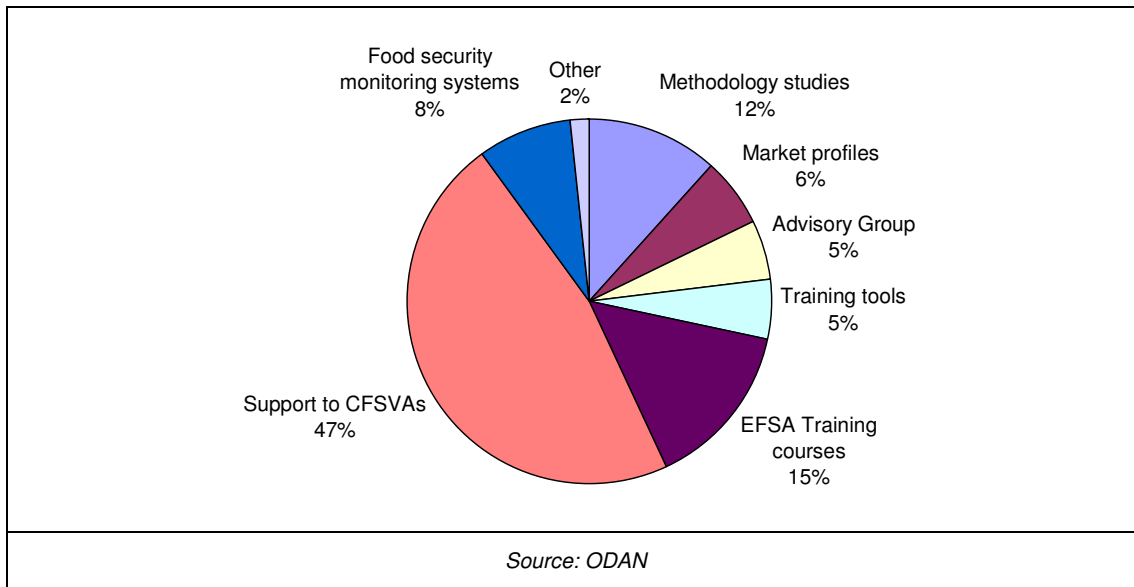
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<sup>73</sup> A precise calculation of this split is difficult as no data was provided on the actual staff cost expenditure. As an indication the 36 month SENAIP **budget** was \$21.7m. Of this total, the actual non-staff **expenditure** over 26 months was \$6.3m. On a pro-rata basis, assuming full expenditure of the budget, this would equate to a 60% expenditure on staff costs.

<sup>74</sup> The budget covers the period from 01/01/05 to 28/02/07.



Figure 5-1 SENAIP expenditure (excluding staff costs)



350. Expenditure on various SENAIP components is considered in more detail below.

#### Research studies and AG operation

- A total of 27 pilots, reviews and studies were financed under SENAIP, almost entirely funded by SENAC at a total cost of approximately \$740,000. 10 of the studies were completed for under \$10,000 while three cost more than \$50,000.
- A total of 15 market profiles were completed at a total cost of \$380,000. Individual studies vary in cost between \$10,000 and \$20,000.
- Four AG meetings are listed in the expenditures for a total of \$222,000, with individual meetings varying between \$45,000 and \$67,000.

#### Lesson learning

- Total expenditure on training is around \$930,000. However, this excludes the staff cost of trainers.
- The average cost of a regional EFSA training is approximately \$60,000, while the average cost of country level training is around \$20,000.
- The development of the training modules and interactive learning materials cost \$270,000. However this excludes staff time which constitutes the majority of the real costs.
- As the major EFSA handbook development costs occurred prior to SENAIP, only minimal expenditure was recorded on this heading.

#### Pre-crisis information

- CFSVAs absorbed the major part of the discretionary funding, accounting for approximately \$3 million in total.
- For 16 CFSVAs represented in the budget, the average SENAIP contribution is \$92,000. However, including (typically in-country) contributions from other partners the total



average budget is \$190,000. This excludes WFP staff costs; it is estimated that a CFSVA takes a VAM officer a minimum of 6 months.

- The most expensive CFSVA was \$550,000 in DRC for the first phase of a two-phase effort (The final budget is estimated at about \$1 million).<sup>75</sup> The least expensive CFSVA was in Comoros at a cost of \$37,000 which was based on secondary data analysis.
- Approximately \$250,000 has been provided by SENAIP to support the operation of six FSMS; an average of \$42,000 each. This was typically matched by an equivalent contribution by in-country sources.

#### **EFSAs costs**

- EFSAs are not financed directly by SENAIP but out of the operational budgets at the country level. There is a great variation in costs and it proved difficult to access accurate cost estimates from the countries.
- However, there is consensus that the minimum for a credible EFSA is \$20 - \$30,000 (excluding the value of staff time). Rapid surveys can cost considerably less.
- A 'gold standard' EFSA, such as that in Darfur, cost approximately \$800,000. However, this needs to be judged against the programme cost of approximately \$500 million.

#### **5.4.2 Implications**

351. A number of conclusions can be drawn from the available data. Extrapolating from the budget estimates in the WFP 2004-2007 Strategic Plan, SENAIP costs equate to 1.67% of the total organizational expenditure on support costs over the equivalent period. There is a keen appreciation amongst donors that better analysis, especially better market analysis, can have a big pay-off. As one said *"continued ignorance of market behavior leads to costly decisions to buy, ship and distribute food aid that are uneconomic and to a considerable degree unnecessary."*

352. Put another way, if better targeted ENAs saved 0.37% of the food distributed this would pay for the cost of SENAIP. Given the relevance of high quality needs assessment to WFP's mission this budget for strengthening ENA does not appear disproportionate.

353. However, in the post SENAC financial context WFP will have to look to make savings. The major expenditure lies in salary costs and there will obviously need to be a rationalization of positions, especially at the HQ level. This is discussed in more detail in section 5.5.

354. Other discretionary costs may be obvious candidates for trimming. While the quality of the research has been high, the expenditure will need to be reduced and more tightly focused on key applied research themes. Similarly, the AG would appear to be hard to justify in its current configuration.

355. The training appears to have offered relatively good value with the obvious conclusion that national level training events offer the greatest return on scarce funds.

356. There is a considerable variation in the cost of EFSAs. However, it should be possible to finance an acceptable EFSAs from existing programme overheads. Certainly the costs are

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<sup>75</sup> The high cost is attributable to the need for extensive air travel in this vast, often trackless, country and the costs of security protection for the enumerators and other field staff, among other things.



extremely modest when set against the value of the programmes; EMOPs averaged \$75 million and PRROs \$40m in 2006. An expenditure of \$100k for an EFSA on a \$40m project would represent 0.25% of the programme budget. Donor norms for development projects are 10% on planning, monitoring and evaluation. The AG suggested a more modest 1% budget for analysis to WFP.

*An EFSA can be fully surveyed, analyzed, and drafted in three months or less at costs averaging \$60,000 (but for special situations such as in the IDP camps in Northern Uganda where data gathering is simplified, they can be completed for as little as \$30,000). Rapid assessments can be completed, well, even more rapidly. (VAM Officer)*

357. The CFSVAs, as currently formulated, are substantially more expensive than EFSAs. Financing these studies is often dependent on significant external funding. Examples of this, in addition to SENAIP, include co-financing with other UN agencies (eg. the Liberia CFSVA) and additional extra-budgetary support of \$3.6 million from Citigroup for 2007-2008.

358. This evaluation argues that it would be desirable to reduce the costs to a level that is more commensurate with the immediate benefits to WFP's internal decision making needs. Sustainability of the baseline analysis would be encouraged if the CFSVA costs were more proportionate to the value of an ensuing PRRO. The most obvious option to achieve this is by adapting the methodology, for example by placing a greater reliance on secondary data analysis.

359. Monitoring systems can be run at relatively modest cost. The CHS in southern Africa costs approximately \$70,000 / yr to operate (excluding staff time). On a regional basis this is much lower than conducting an annual EFSA. Several COs saw this as key activity and argued for core funding by PSA. However, in the absence of an on-going programme, even such relatively modest amounts for running an FSMS are out of kilter with the typical level of support costs available in a country office<sup>76</sup>.

360. A final comment is the cost efficiency of building national capacity. It could well be that the added expense of better salaries and benefits for key ENA staff are a much more cost effective way of implementing WFP's overall ENA programme than the "cost" of high turnover, the need for 'costly' outside consultant assistance and the possibility of less well-done ENAs.

*We have been very good at keeping ENA expenses down – largely because we have a few key staff who can do it all. We haven't needed to go out and find expert assistance outside our own VAM staff. This will change and costs are likely to go up dramatically as some of these staff are leaving shortly. (WFP Emergency Officer)*

## **5.5 Staffing**

361. The question that relates to the staffing decisions made by WFP under the SENAIP is whether and to what extent staffing has been appropriate.

362. In all 15 staff are paid for by donor funds under SENAIP in ODAN/ODAV. All of the SENAIP staff are regarded as high quality professionals. Their quality has been a major factor in the success of the initiative. It has also helped in promoting the overall credibility of WFP.

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<sup>76</sup> For example Nepal operates on a total of \$970k in support costs to operate the entire country office.



363. Much of the field work undertaken to implement the tasks involved in WFP's strengthening needs assessment relies on the efforts of VAM officers – a cadre that pre-dates the initiation of SENAIP. Senior VAM officers at the CO level, abetted by assistance from ODAV at headquarters and regional staff have borne the brunt of the day-to-day pre-crisis and ENA workload. These are the staff for whom much of the training has been directed and who provide many of the advanced assessors.

364. The work of the 11 Regional Assessment Officers (RAOs) deserves special mention. The RAOs were recruited and posted to regional bureaus in 2005 – five of them specifically to support market analysis the other six to lead or advise on EFSA in their respective regions. All RAOs combine responsibility for support to ENAs, methodological development and serve as trainers. The demand for these functions varies considerably between regions.

365. Based on information from the field visits, interviews and readings, the RAOs have been critical to the success of SENAIP. They have provided the point of articulation between the methodological developments pioneered at HQ and the sharp end of assessment practice at the country level. The team has been impressed by the professionalism and positive attitudes displayed by the RAOs interviewed for this evaluation. Other CO and RB staff have also conveyed praise for the work of these officers.

366. It is clear that *the functions of the food security RAOs* need to be maintained within the proposed regional Food Security Analysis Units. However, the evaluation also argues that, with the completion of SENAIP, rather than maintaining distinct cadres the functions of the RAO food security officers and VAM staff positions should converge,. The exact number of food security analysis staff in each of the RB units, and the breakdown of responsibilities, will inevitably vary according to the availability of funding and demand.

367. While no specific recommendation is given to maintain the RAO food security analysts in their current positions this should not be understood to imply that this staff capacity is not required. In the most emergency-prone and, thus, relatively more active regional bureaus, the assessment staff are already over-stretched and *increased staffing levels are justified*. WFP is vulnerable on this point. ENAs are dependent on a few, key, often over-stressed VAM or RAO officers.

*This is a region with non-stop assessments. There have been 70 or more in the 2005-06 period. With a relatively small number of people, this means that people are working to fill gaps rather than working to an organized work schedule. You know what you want to do, but you don't have enough time; you do the best job you can in the time available and move on.*  
(RAO)

368. Specific priority should be accorded to retaining the current RAO market officer positions. Given the continued intense interest in the interface between local, national and regional food marketing and food aid expressed by donors and several members of the Advisory Group, it remains important to strive to make further progress in identifying opportunities to utilize market mechanisms wherever possible in responding to food insecurity situations. These staff possess a distinct (economic) skill set and cannot be easily substituted for by social scientist at this point. There is particular need to enable concerns with market issues and relationships to infuse other aspects of WFP and partner analysis and programming. These five positions are crucial to that task.



**Recommendation 3c.** It is imperative to maintain adequate skilled assessment staffing at the regional level to backstop assessments and continue lesson learning activities. Specific priority should be given to retaining the five RAO market analyst positions. The primary function of these RAOs should be on developing and mainstreaming market assessment tools and skills in analytical staff.

369. In ODJ the RAO have been out-posted to the countries. This has accentuated already complex and conflicting responsibilities to HQ, RB and CO. In the opinion of the evaluation team this has not been a success and the RAOs should be located within the RB. This will ensure that all regional COs have equal access and maximize interaction with other regional staff.

370. Undertaking emergency-related assessments requires skilled people. WFP lacks clear policy guidance recognizing the importance of retaining key national professional staff who are essential to the success of WFP's efforts to improve needs assessment capacity. In addition, the SENAIP focus on capacity building and training – and the money being spent is likely to be wasted in the absence of WFP policy guidance to try to retain these essential national staff through higher pay or other benefits. When good individuals leave key assessment positions in emergency-prone countries, the situation returns to a status quo ante. Therefore it is hard to argue that the issue of adequate human resources has been fully addressed. Progress made to date is not guaranteed to be sustained.

*As mentioned earlier, it is not a question of numbers. “Appropriate” in this case means the right person, the right people. If we find them, we have difficulty retaining them after they have developed the skill level and experience that makes them highly valuable to us. Unfortunately they are also valuable to others at that point and we don't seem to be able to compete, so we lose them and have to start over. (WFP CD)*

371. Based on our field visits and other interviews, it seems that a significant number of the most skilled ENA field staff – international staff, senior country VAM officers, RAOs – have been, or are being, attracted away from WFP by richer rewards offered by other development agencies, consulting firms, research institutions or other international organizations. If this is an agency wide phenomena it may be necessary to review and, as necessary, adjust agency personnel practices to retain the best of these skilled officers. The sunk investment in staff development and staff training should not be lost. This needs to be addressed by WFP senior management; it is not primarily an ODAN issue.

**Recommendation 3d:** The attrition rate of other WFP staff trained as assessors should be monitored. If excessive, WFP senior management and those who develop and review agency personnel policies should find ways to retain ENA-related VAM and other needs assessment officers who have been made more productive and useful to WFP as a result of the large WFP investment in their training.





## 6 Impact and sustainability

372. Improving the quality of the ENAs is in itself insufficient to achieve the overall SENAIP objective. The value of better ENAs lies in the use made of this information to inform – and thereby improve – the design and implementation of programmatic responses to situations of severe food insecurity.

373. As WFP relies entirely on voluntary donations (rather than assessed contributions by UN member states) an inevitable management concern is that more credible programme documents should increase the likelihood that donor funding will be adequate, and food insecure population needs met.

374. However, this is not the only chain of results that can, or should be looked for. Programmes that are based on high quality ENAs should result in the optimal use of the available resources. Many donors, and WFP managers, are constantly seeking to improve the cost efficiency of humanitarian interventions.

375. The team acknowledges that it is very early to be judging programme impact, especially as SENAIP has been operational for only two years. However, the evaluation has nonetheless attempted to assess early evidence of impacts in order to provide at least a modicum of feedback pertinent to mainstreaming decisions which will need to be considered in the near future.

### 6.1 Accountability

376. Integral to SENAIP has been the notion of assigning responsibility to WFP managers for ensuring that programmes are supported by adequate analysis. In May 2004 a directive from Senior Deputy Executive Director was issued that held WFP Regional and Country Directors *accountable* for ensuring that that all new EMOPs and PRROs are adequately supported by either a needs assessment or VAM analysis.

377. WFP deserves considerable credit for this action. This has gone a long way to institutionalizing the production of a separate ENA with a transparent link to programming. The lack of assessment, or its documentation, was a basic justification for the SENAIP. While the evaluation found mixed evidence about the dissemination of this directive, many interviewees felt that substantial progress had been recorded:

*The real measure of improvement is the impact of the SENAIP project on culture and thinking in WFP. Some of our more notable accomplishment in the region include (seven EFSA's listed). These are notable because two years earlier they would have either not been undertaken at all, or been done quite poorly. (WFP Regional Programme Officer)*

*The most important result of the SENAC project has been the creation of a sense that there must be an evidentiary basis for food aid appeals. SENAC has created a strong expectation that solid data and analysis must always underpin food aid decisions. This is no small accomplishment because that expectation works as a corporate incentive to generate ENAs. There is still much room to make them better but the fact that they are not only required but that the organization will ensure that they are always done should. (AG member)*

378. The SENAC review report of September 2005 said that “... this Review has documented some communication gaps: only some RBs and COs see the strategic importance of SENAC.



*Others see it as yet another externally funded, Headquarters-led initiative.”<sup>77</sup>* In other words, these managers seemed not to be taking the task seriously enough.

379. The evaluation field work suggested that while progress has been made, this issue persists. In several cases regional staff indicated that, although they were doing their best to reinforce the message, it was “still in the process of filtering down”. One RB felt that the value of assessments is not fully understood in the COs. Consequently the demand for ENAs has not yet been embedded in the COs – evidenced by a limited number of requests being received by the RB to support assessments. As one of the AG members noted:

*Accountability is a function of managers using ENA results to improve programming. This is a key area where much improvement still needs to be made. There still seems to be a unwillingness by managers to understand what they need from ENAs or to make good of what they are getting. Transparency, as noted above, is much, much better.*

380. There is the risk that the requirement for an ENA can be treated as an administrative hurdle. Several instances were observed where an ENA has been commissioned when the process of designing the PRRO was already well advanced. In these cases, while the analysis may well be useful, it is not the analysis *per se* that is driving the program design.

381. Although included in the SENAIP design, there was no evidence that country and regional directors actually received the promised awareness training enabling them to better understand how to employ improved ENAs and pre-crisis data to shape better EMOPS/PRROs. This training is still highly relevant and should be followed up.

382. The progress indicator used by WFP to measure progress is the percentage of EMOPS and PRROs approved during a reference period that are supported by needs assessment and VAM analysis. The target has been set at 100% for all new EMOPS and PRROs approved in 2006. The WFP 2006 Annual Progress Report gives the actual achievement as 45% in 2004, 70% in 2005 and 96% in 2006. Only one new PRRO was reportedly approved during 2006 *without a supporting assessment*.

383. While a noteworthy achievement, this in itself says little about the extent to which the ENAs are actually utilized, how well, or how accurately – or in some cases even if they were utilized in the ensuing programme documents. The indicator merely confirms that an ENA has been done (or, in some cases, was underway) prior to the submission of the EMOP or PRRO to the Executive Board.

384. The EMOP / PRRO approval system does include provision for a more rigorous examination of the relationship between the programme document and the underlying assessment work<sup>78</sup>. The Project Review Committee (PRC) affords an opportunity for all divisions to comment on draft project documents. ODAN is included in this committee and has responsibility for this topic.

385. While a discussion of the underlying ENA does not feature regularly in the PRC notes there are heartening trends evident. Certainly ODAN was more consistently vocal at the PRCs in

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<sup>77</sup> WFP. ODAN. “Interim Review of the SENAC Project” September 2005. p.27.

<sup>78</sup> There is no PRC process for the Immediate Response (IR) EMOPSs. While the need for timeliness may be paramount in such cases it is also noted that this is when much of the initial and rapid needs assessments takes place and the parameters of the subsequent EMOPS tend to be set.



2006 in asking about the relationships between the assessments and the related EMOP or PRRO under discussion. The actual degree of probing varied – ranging from the basic (e.g., at the Mauritania PRC, the CO was seriously encouraged to cite the assessment in the program document) to the more demanding (e.g., where the Mali CO was given a two-month extension to rewrite their program document to better incorporate assessment and nutrition information).

386. Good examples of how ODAN performed this review tasks in the PRC context come from the Niger and Occupied Territories of Palestine PRCs respectively:

*The PRRO document makes several references to the EFSA results. However, the caseload figures for the various proposed interventions differ significantly from the EFSA recommendations (for example for FFW, FFT, contingency plan), and some programmes that were mentioned in the EFSA do not appear at all (e.g. free food distributions to food insecure households unable to work). More explanations should be given on the reasons for these discrepancies and on the adjustments that were done to the numbers.”*

*The assessment methodology is described comprehensively and analysis based on the findings is provided, including the reasons for increasing food insecurity and the characteristics of the food insecure households. However, the variables used to determine the household food insecurity have not been clearly spelled out*

387. Unfortunately for this evaluation, it is not clear how, or even if, the respective COs chose to respond to the concerns raised at the PRC. A fundamental criticism heard on more than one occasion is that the process serves to improve the document rather than the actual programme modalities. As one senior member of WFP in HQ remarked “*the danger is of only polishing a report, when in practice the operational decisions have already been taken*”.

388. It is also noted that the interpretation of accountability is internal. Managers are held accountable to WFP’s own internal management structures. As yet there is no formal requirement for WFP to be accountable to the beneficiary communities. It is becoming increasingly apparent that WFP needs to consider its accountability in this additional dimension.

389. Overall the conclusion of this evaluation is that an important cultural shift is occurring within WFP and that this, happening in such a short time period, constitutes a noteworthy achievement. However, practice still remains uneven and the “accountability” message to managers needs further reinforcement.

## **6.2 Utility to programming**

The evaluation findings on how ENA results are actually utilized in programme design is discussed in the following section.

### **6.2.1 Programme design**

390. In an attempt to assess empirically the utility of ENAs to programmes, the evaluation systematically reviewed the majority of the EMOP and PRRO documents prepared during 2005 and 2006 (Annex N) An important observation is that, from the documentation alone it proved impossible to determine the relationship of the EMOP/PRRO to the underlying ENA. Typically the EMOP/PRRO cited one or more assessments but gave few if any details as to which ENA recommendations were utilized or explained how they may have been modified in the resulting programme proposal.



391. Without adequate context a comparison of the programme documents to the underlying ENAs was unenlightening. Working from the documents alone, the conclusion would be that ENA conclusions are poorly used in programming. The current level of transparency in the utilization of ENA results is clearly inadequate. It can, however, be relatively easily corrected.

**Recommendation 4d:** The EMOP and PRRO proposals should include a one page annex transparently demonstrating the specific recommendations taken from the assessments, together with an explanation for any discrepancies in the programme proposal.

392. The findings of the case studies and the results of the Country Office survey proved far more insightful. An implicit assumption of SENAIP appears to be that EFSAs (and to a lesser extent JAMs) are the key assessment process used in formulating programmes. Certainly the design primarily places pre-crisis information in a supportive position. Consequently a major emphasis has been placed on developing and disseminating the EFSA guidelines. In practice, a much wider variety of assessment tools is used.

393. The CO Survey asked what ENAs were primarily used to inform the design of on-going programmes. The results indicated an interesting diversity of primary assessments methods used to support the design on-going EMOP and PRRO’s (Table 6-1).

Table 6-1 Primary type of assessment supporting on-going PRROs/EMOPs

Supporting assessment	Count	Percentage
VAM studies (including CFSVA)	17	34%
EFSAs	11	22%
JAM	9	18%
Monitoring systems	6	12%
Annual assessment	5	10%
Included in programme preparation	2	4%

Source: CO Survey

394. The conclusion of the evaluation is that EFSAs have a comparative advantage in assessing *emergency* needs that are typically addressed through an EMOP<sup>79</sup>. In contrast PRROs respond to a very diverse range of food insecurity contexts. It is apparent that EFSAs were the assessment tool of choice in only a minority of cases – particularly where PRROs address emergency or post-emergency caseloads. JAM assessments support refugee PRROs, but this still leaves a significant cluster of PRROs that attempt to build resilience or ‘recovery’ activities. In multiple countries<sup>80</sup> there is a *de facto* use of CFSVAs to support the development of new PRROs(Table 3-5).

395. The survey asked programme staff for feedback and suggestions on the utility of ENAs. A clear and uniform picture emerged from the interviews with WFP staff that COs are consistently utilizing assessments<sup>81</sup> in their programme design. In so far as the assessments provide the information, the programming staff incorporate recommendations on the size, nature and duration of emergency food aid programming. In a self ranking exercise most COs judged their utilization of the information provided by the ENA to be high (Table 6-2).

<sup>79</sup> In 2006 WFP targeted 16.4 million people through EMOPs compared to 41.7 million through PRROs.

<sup>80</sup> Examples include Madagascar, Angola,

<sup>81</sup> This leaves aside the question of timeliness of assessment discussed earlier in the report.



Table 6-2 Use of ENA recommendations in EMOP/PRROs

	Used fully	Used partially	Not used	No rec in ENA
Targeting	70%	0%	3%	28%
Total beneficiary numbers	60%	30%	3%	8%
Total food needs	48%	38%	3%	13%
Ration composition	45%	33%	5%	18%

Source CO Survey (n=40)

396. The clear majority of responses to the CO survey indicated limited deviations from the ENA recommendations on beneficiary numbers, total food quantities and ration composition. This general conclusion was substantiated by a rather laborious process of comparison in the country case studies<sup>82</sup>. In some cases countries reported the assessment did not provide sufficient information. In a small number of cases significant deviations occurred either because (in their opinion) the recommendations were inaccurate, a technical recommendation had been made, but without consideration of feasibility given the institutional capacities, or one case where the ENA did not take account of “funding forecasts”.

397. There is a certain degree of ambiguity over precisely what decisions should be informed by the ENA, as opposed to information from other sources. There is a consistent demand from WFP programme staff for information to guide decisions such as targeting and food basket composition. Ideally this could be done by more detailed analysis conducted after the needs assessment. However, in reality programmes often become locked into the rather crude initial assessment findings so the initial analysis is significant.

398. A specific criticism encountered is that the ENA findings can inappropriately constrain programme decision making. For example in Zambia, the implementing partners have been unable to use detailed knowledge of their operational areas to adjust the operational parameters, which were set by the original and necessarily crude VAC assessment.

399. There is only limited evidence that better quality ENAs are leading to more thoughtful programming of food transfers, or encouraging the use of a wider basket of non-food interventions. A specific criticism (by assessors) is that the programmes tend to focus on the headline food aid recommendations of ENAs. There has been little apparent change in WFP’s reliance on a limited number of food transfer instruments to address humanitarian food crises. As one WFP HQ staff member observed, the current incentive structure in WFP pushes the agency towards large-scale General Food Distributions (GFD) not interesting, innovative small-scale programs. Coupled with the pressure to react quickly to an ‘emergency’, WFP tends to rely on established response mechanisms.

400. In particular the market analysis has so far shown limited demonstrable impact on food aid programming decisions. Several observers voiced strong disappointment on the lack of progress in integrating market information to decision making:

*There is little evidence that WFP’s food allocation decisions are being influenced, in general, by market analysis, better or not. It is still too early for the influence of improved market analysis to have been felt. There continues to be a lingering mindset in WFP that*

<sup>82</sup> Often the ENA estimates the total national requirement, where-as WFP only meets a portion of needs. Therefore, it is necessary to have an overall picture of national response to reach this conclusion.



*food aid is provided as if markets were unimportant. There is little understanding among WFP decision-making staff of how markets influence food availability and how food aid and commercial food markets can and do interact. (AG member)*

*WFP started in a time in which the economies and markets in its recipient countries were, to a large degree, government-directed or controlled. It seems as if WFP is still more comfortable operating its food aid programmes in these environments than in free market economies. The effort to understand markets generally, and food markets in particular, should be a major concern and interest to WFP staff because ... depending on how they are used, they can reduce the overall need for emergency food aid in many situations. (SC member)*

401. One positive example is the post earthquake assessment in Pakistan that resulted in the decision to target food aid to rural areas, where the market infrastructure had been destroyed, rather than the urban areas, where markets continued to function. Market analysis was also cited as influential in East Timor (in justifying the need for in-kind transfers) and in Lebanon (in phasing out the relief programme). Beyond these cases, concrete examples of links to decision making grow scarce.

402. ODAN-sponsored market analysis has also had little apparent influence on procurement decisions<sup>83</sup>. Strong stove-piping of responsibilities was evident at HQ, RB and CO levels. This could be interpreted as competition over institutional responsibilities and limited staff financing. While most procurement decisions seem driven by macro-level price comparisons, SENAIP should be able to bring new and relevant analyses to bear on procurement decisions. Market analysis should be more than simply about best value – WFP has an important role in stimulating local trade and markets rather than stifling them.

**Recommendation 4e:** ODAN/ODAV and those responsible for food aid procurement should actively collaborate on market analysis and the utilization of ensuing recommendations.

403. The majority of ENAs either still do not look beyond food aid or do not provide concrete recommendations for non-food interventions. In these circumstances the constraint is in the content of the ENA rather than its usage.

*“Short shrift has been given to non food aspects. Nutrition remains relatively neglected. So do other forms of livelihood support, de-stocking, seeds and tools, market interventions, etc. SENAC is constrained by over fixation on food aid.” (AG Member)*

404. However, where ENAs do deliver usable non-food recommendations responsibility for action is often unclear, follow-up poor and recommendations are often ignored. For example, when assessments have recommended cash distributions the follow-up has generally been limited to NGOs at a very local level<sup>84</sup>. The ability, or desire, of government to take responsibility is a crucial dimension, especially as so many of the possible alternative intervention instruments remain uniquely under their control.

<sup>83</sup> The exception encountered was in East Timor where the market study was used to inform a decision on whether to do local procurement for a national SFP – it as decided not to proceed given the risk of rice price inflation.

<sup>84</sup> Recommendations for cash transfers were observed to be followed up in the wake of the tsunami in Sri Lanka and Indonesia (with CARE). Pilots on cash and voucher programming are taking place in southern Africa but this is not strictly in response to assessed needs.



405. There is, arguably, a long-standing lack of capacity in the humanitarian system to address non-food needs. As the enumeration of these needs improves, so too should the response capacity to address them. In the absence of this there are few apparent incentives for WFP to sustain a broader base to their assessments after SENAC is concluded. The risk is that current enhanced assessment capacities may rapidly degrade.

### 6.2.2 Monitoring and re-assessment

406. It is also easy to forget that ENAs involve a large degree of *prediction* and that even the best of them may be undone by the subsequent evolution of events – a classic example is the tsunami assessment. This inherent problem is evident throughout the humanitarian system and is not specific to WFP. Past experience shows that key response decisions are routinely taken early in crises, on the basis of timely but crude assessments, and then later prove hard to change.

407. There is a general requirement by WFP for the annual reassessment of beneficiary needs in multi-year programmes. However, there does not appear to be a clear mechanism for monitoring adherence to this guideline. The evaluation team was not able to assess how rigorously this advice has been followed. However, in larger operations, there is an “annual needs assessment” of some type. This was reported in Sudan, Malawi, Kenya, Mauritania, and Somalia and is likely the case elsewhere. It appears to be the norm in all large countries in Southern Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. Institutionalizing an annual assessment process may carry the risk of institutionalizing an annual emergency response, however, and this approach is not recommended by the evaluation.

408. Reassessment (and documentation of this process) transparently usually occurs in order to substantiate a request for a budget revision. However, these periodic programme adjustments might well be more effectively and cost efficiently informed by suitably designed monitoring and surveillance systems. As one CO responded in the survey “*Food security monitoring systems would be helpful in showing trends within shorter timeframes and could provide the backbone of bi-yearly assessments*”.

409. While there are several examples where a subsequent (re)assessment has triggered an *upwards* revision of the numbers in subsequent budget reviews, there are few examples where assessment has resulted in scaling-back a funded operation. Again the tsunami response provides a good illustration of the point. The ideal would be a more iterative process, where regular information updates can be used to flexibly modify programming choices. This implies changes in donor decision making procedures, as much as changes with WFP procedures and incentives.

410. This lends considerable weight to the argument that programme management should be informed by light monitoring of trends through surveillance systems, rather than through the singular reliance on the initial needs assessment process. A serious investment in monitoring and surveillance is justified. A possible model comes from southern Africa, where the CHS answers these operational questions and is an important adjunct to the initial needs assessment.

### 6.2.3 Programme implementation

411. It would be interesting to know not only at the impact of ENAs on planning, but what actually took place in terms of actions on the ground. This would separate out the question of how successful ENAs are in going beyond contributing to ‘nice reports’ by practically influencing actions.



412. It is noted that programming decisions are dependent on far more than information and analysis. For example the ability of management to identify competent implementation partners or manage pipeline breaks is critical. These factors undoubtedly play a deciding role in who gets what type of food and when. However, this analysis falls outside of the scope of this evaluation.

### **6.3 Credibility and donorship**

413. A principal concern of SENAIP was to improve credibility in its relationship with donors. SENAIP may contribute to credibility at several levels; the credibility of the ENAs, the credibility of WFPs programmes and the credibility of WFP as an organization.

414. Simply put, credibility can be defined as believability. Credibility is a perceived quality rather than intrinsic in the ENA, EMOP or PRRO. Therefore measuring it can only be done by reporting the perceptions of the target group of donors. The perception of credibility can be broken into two sub-components; perceptions of expertise and perceptions of trustworthiness. In evaluating credibility donors assess both trustworthiness (how well intentioned or unbiased is the information or organization) and expertise (how knowledgeable, experienced and competent is the source) to arrive at an overall conclusion on credibility.

415. The evaluation investigated donor perceptions of WFP's credibility through interviews at the global level and as part of the case study. Again it is early to try and draw conclusions on possible impacts of SENAIP. Findings are presented as illustrative and indicative.

416. Firstly, it should be pointed out that the credibility of WFP's programmes was, and is, highly variable. Interviews elicited a considerable range of opinions from donors. There is (still) a general perception that WFP tends to exaggerate food aid needs. Several examples were cited by donors where they felt that specific current appeals lacked credibility. However, this is by no means a universal perception. The evaluation gained a qualitative impression that the degree of credibility varies according to a number of factors, many unrelated to ENA capacity:

- Small donors were found to be less critical than the larger donors. Small donors usually lack the capacity to attempt to 'second guess' WFP's assessments and are far more willing to take WFPs analysis on trust.
- The closer donor staff are to the field level operations generally the lower the degree of skepticism. Senior donors staff based in capitals tend to be far more critical than field representatives.
- Credibility appears to be more of a problem in the context of chronic, protracted or repeated crises. This may be an artefact of donor fatigue or conversely that once-off emergencies are handled by non specialist donor staff. For example skepticism on WFP programmes was high in southern Africa but almost non existent in Nepal where WFP had launched its first EMOP in 40 years.

417. Although progress is far from even, it is more frequent to hear reports of improving perceptions of credibility, than worsening credibility. A significant part of this is related directly to perceptions of growing expertise and technical improvement in ENAs. SENAIP has allowed WFP to bring on board high quality specialist staff and this has heightened the overall organizational credibility. Opinions about whether ENA quality has actually improved as a result, as we have seen, vary greatly. However, the increased transparency is important in building trust.





418. The real question is whether WFP has yet done enough to dispel donor concerns. The evidence suggests that it has not. The problem seems to occur at several levels. Firstly, it takes time for changes to percolate through the system and it is still early to see widespread evidence of the impact.

*“There is a perception among donors that WFP will always err on the side of determining that more food is needed. To change this mindset will take a lot more time than the period of the SENAC project”*(Senior donor representative)

419. Secondly, donors have yet to see demonstrable impacts in the content of programmes. Donor decisions are made on the content of PRROs and EMOPs, not on the content of ENAs. Most of the senior donors clearly rarely read the supporting ENAs, although they appreciate that they are done.

*“There has been laudatory improvement on the technical side. WFP’s efforts to make these reports widely available is much appreciated. There is still much skepticism, however with regard to credibility – not so much in the ENAs themselves perhaps – but in the extent to which the numbers in the programming documents reflect true needs. This skepticism also relates to how ENAs are actually utilized in the preparation of programme documents”*.(Senior donor representative)

*“There is a perception of donors that the quality of the EMOPs/PRROs still falls far below expectations. The focus is still on food aid. We would like to see more emphasis on other instruments, including cash, and better linkages to other partners, such as UNICEF, where water and health is the issue”*. (Senior donor representative)

**Good practice: Assessments that have concluded that no assistance is required**

Two assessments were encountered in this study where the outcome was not to proceed with a relief operation after an assessment.

For example in Nepal in 2004 WFP was being encouraged by UNDP to establish a programme to feed 150,000 IDPs. An assessment of internal migration pointed out that these people were employing migration as a normal coping mechanism rather than displaced by conflict.

420. Thirdly, while SENAIP may have increased perceptions of WFP’s level of expertise it cannot effectively address the question of trustworthiness. There is a strong perception of self interest in WFP’s assessment process. Technical improvements in ENA practice are seen as an inadequate mechanism to counter strong organizational incentives. On more than one occasion questions were raised on the commitment of senior WFP staff to a needs based approach:

*“There is a primary conflict of interest in a situation where the food providing agency is also the organization performing the task of determining how much food assistance is needed.*

*The donors and many observers have long felt that WFP has an interest in coming out on the high side in its estimates of food needs. This puts the pressure on WFP to demonstrate that the numbers are solidly based. Right now the skepticism remains”* (AG Member)

*“There remains suspicion of WFP’s motivation in determine food needs. It is interesting that there is no known instance of WFP’s ENA analysis suggesting no need for food. This would be true acid test – and one that donors would certainly notice – a case where WFP did an*



*assessment and determined that food was not needed*<sup>85</sup>. In the Guatemala earthquake response, for example, why did WFP conclude that food aid was needed, when every overseas Guatemalan was lining up at the local Western Union to send money to their own families back in Guatemala. Food aid wasn't needed, cash transfers were. (AG Member)

421. Improved partnership in assessment has proved to be one relatively effective means of addressing the concerns about institutional bias. Working within a larger framework of partnership tends to balance out the intrinsic biases of each institution. However, this in itself is an inadequate mechanism.

### **6.3.1 Financing**

422. An important question for WFP is whether changes in perceptions of credibility are translating into changes in donors' proclivity to fund WFP. The conclusion drawn by the evaluation is that the linkage is weak at best. Several factors need to be taken into account.

423. For several donors the funding envelope for WFP is set and allocated annually. For example Germany provides an annual grant to WFP of €30m for PRROs and CPs. This is an annual lump sum of annual funding and is independent (at least in the short term) of the quality of individual appeals or assessments. Better assessment leads to "*easier funding (less questions in the EB) rather than more funding*". However, the possibility remains that better assessment might influence long term trends in resource allocation.

424. The quality of individual assessments may influence the allocation of resources to specific appeals. For example the CO in Zambia felt that 100% funding for the 2006 flood appeal was directly attributable to the consolidated VAC assessment findings. While donors had been initially keen to moderate the response, in the light of a consensus on needs, they eventually agreed to support the appeal in full.

425. Donors, while evaluating individual appeals on merit, still work within a centrally set limit. One donor field officer commented:

*"I was not convinced that this was a "life-saving" EMOP appeal and the government had not been pushing it. However, at the end of our financial year HQ indicated that they had funds remaining and asked us to identify any "flagging" issues. As the money was there we went ahead"*.

426. Another example that was encountered more than once concerns the specific case of refugee PRROs. It was not uncommon for donor representatives to agree that the JAM assessments were technically good, while admitting that the decision on whether or not to fund these long standing programmes has been taken long before, essentially on the basis of policy.

427. There are provisions for supplemental allocations in certain donor procedures (including the US Government and EC) that potentially provide a pathway that solid assessment can be used to influence financial allocations. However, these supplemental allocations tend to be highly political in nature.

428. In other countries a solid analysis of need may carry little weight compared to donor's sectoral priorities. For example in Nepal donors had been funding the WFP response to

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<sup>85</sup> See box



protracted needs (In this case packaged in the CP rather than a PRRO) with \$18m annually. This funding has now halved, not because the needs have diminished, but because the donor priority has now shifted to supporting the peace building process.

429. Or more simply as one donor put it:

*“In reality knowing the depth of poverty in this country it is very unlikely that we can do harm with transfers to the poor. I am more constrained by available resources than lack of confidence in assessment outcomes and justification of needs”.*

430. A conclusion that donor funding patterns are largely determined by externalities is should neither be surprising or a reason to diminish the focus on improving ENAs. Firstly, given donor commitment to the GHD it is not reasonable to extrapolate from past donor behaviour. Secondly, as has been pointed out elsewhere, the benefits of SENAIP should not just be understood in terms of the agency-donor dynamic. What is most important is the ability to meet food insecure population needs proportionately and appropriately. ***If SENAIP results in a more cost effective use of the available resources, then it is well justified.***

431. However there is a risk that should be mitigated. Donors have become used to significantly under-responding to WFP appeals. Consequently several donors now equate credibility with low food insecure population numbers. This is a potentially serious issue – second guessing an assumption of bias is no alternative to rigorous and believable assessment. The major risk to WFP that more accurate assessment will not necessarily elicit a higher level of response.

#### **6.4 Sustainability**

432. The evaluation has shown that while ENA methods and products have demonstrably improved, much more still needs to be done. Therefore the question of sustainability is not just sustaining the improvements that have occurred, but also sustaining the capacity to innovate. Sustainability can be related to a number of factors including:

- Sufficient resources, including budget and staff
- Building enthusiasm at the country level
- Establishing incentives for improved performance.

433. In the short term sustainability will depend on transitioning budgetary responsibility from extra-budgetary funds to the PSA budget. WFP have demonstrated a willingness to engineer this change. However, the evaluation notes that this is occurring during period of extreme budgetary pressure within WFP. It would therefore be in the mutual interest of donors and WFP to consider extending the current period of extra-budgetary support if the momentum from SENAIP is to be protected and sustained.

***Recommendation 1a:*** The objective of mainstreaming SENAIP activities within the PSA is commended. However, continued short term extra-budgetary may be justified during 2008 to ensure key activities are sustained and transitioned to PSA funding.

434. Much of the enhanced capacity for ENAs resides in a relatively small pool of highly skilled individuals. The importance of retaining these staff within WFP has already led to an earlier recommendation.



435. The ultimate impact of SENAIP depends heavily on if and how the tools and skills promoted through an HQ initiative are taken up by the field. There appear to be a reasonable level of ‘buy-in’ to the SENAIP objectives from the COs:

*“The results which SENAIP is supposed to achieve will be sustained in Uganda, because these are the very same results – strong, transparent, useful needs assessments – which our office and our partners want to achieve, as well. Our objectives and the SENAC objectives are virtually identical. We are committed to achieving them with or without SENAC”* (WFP Country Director)

436. However, more could be done to consolidate the centrality of the CO role. Several earlier recommendations refer directly to this point.

437. Finally, there is an unresolved question of the scope of needs assessment, especially involvement in analysis that falls outside of WFPs core business and their immediate decision making needs. In a climate of financial stringency and as external funding fades, there is a risk that any expanded capacity engendered under SENAIP could rapidly dwindle.

438. Three potential outcomes can be anticipated:

- i. If WFP expand their mandate then broader analysis will be required and sustained.
- ii. Within the UN reform process WFP may maintain their intervention focus but are tasked with leading integrated food security assessments. Financing may occur through collective resources.
- iii. In the absence of outcomes i) and ii) only the ENA capacity and skills necessary to meet core functions will be sustained.

439. A large part of the incentive system consists of the donor-agency dynamic. It is also beholden on donors to recognize that if they want WFP to embed new patterns of behaviour then they need to consider what they should change in their own response systems. If the donors positively respond to, and reward, the move towards better assessment and programming then this will do much to sustain the process in WFP. However, if they retain their own established patterns of behaviour then there is little real incentive for WFP to change.

440. In the long run it is unrealistic to place so much responsibility for better food security analysis and response to needs on WFP alone. The UN system as a whole needs to respond much better and national government take more responsibility. This in turn will require donor investment across the system.



## 7 Conclusions and recommendations

### 7.1 Conclusions

441. Drawing on the preceding findings this section draws together the main conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation team. This is done for each of the main evaluation questions of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

#### 7.1.1 Relevance

442. The evaluation encountered considerable positive feedback on the relevance of the SENAIP programme design. There is an agreed imperative, acknowledged throughout the sector, to improve the *proportionality* and *appropriateness* of humanitarian assistance. Donors expressed particular concern that WFP's own operations exaggerated the need for food aid and paid insufficient attention to alternative response interventions. SENAIP correctly identified improving the quality of emergency needs assessment as a means to address these concerns.

443. WFP are commended for the breadth of the SENAIP initiative. The programme intended to strengthen needs assessment methodologies and guidance, improving the availability of pre-crisis information and augmenting assessment capacities, including appointing skilled assessment staff. Crucially these technical activities were complemented in the design by measures to improve internal accountability for conducting assessment and greater transparency in assessment methods and products.

444. SENAIP initially identified five key thematic areas of research to improve assessment methods. There is general agreement with the research focus determined by SENAIP. In particular there is a common agreement on the urgent need for WFP assessments to incorporate a better understanding of the role of markets in emergencies and the effect of food aid on markets.

445. However, it is possible to suggest areas where the design could have been improved. SENAIP's initial focus was on improving the technical quality of assessment products. Ultimately what concerns WFP is not just the quality of the assessment, but how this information is utilized and acted on by decision makers. While SENAIP has subsequently incorporated an analysis of the linkages to decision makers, this could have usefully been done earlier and greater attention to these linkages is still warranted.

446. The SENAIP design paid scant attention to the process of food insecure population participation in assessment processes. This is a significant gap. At the policy level WFP has an established commitment to ensuring food insecure population participation. There is also evidence that direct food insecure population participation in assessment is highly effective as a strategy to ensure that needs are correctly identified and appropriately responded to.

447. SENAIP focused on improving one part of a larger information system. SENAIP has focused on *emergencies*, whereas WFP works in a variety of contexts including pre- and post-crisis resilience building. SENAIP also has a principal focus on improving *needs assessment*, rather than the full range of information products that assist decision makers including; baselines, early warning and M&E<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> While SENAIP does support pre-crisis information systems it does so from the narrow perspective of the links to ENA.



448. This initial focus may well have been warranted to achieve concrete results in a limited time frame. However, at this juncture it should be recognized that a proper balance should be struck between these analytical instruments in order to best address the informational constraints to good programming in a variety of contexts.

449. The evaluation encountered divergent views on the implicit role of WFP in identifying more appropriate responses. For many donors SENAIP is a means to generate a better analysis of appropriate responses to food insecurity, while, to many in WFP, SENAIP is about a better analysis of the appropriate use of food aid. In practice uncertainty persists, given WFP's current mandate, on the role it can and should play in identifying non-food responses to food insecurity.

### **7.1.2 Outputs**

450. The evaluation examined the main SENAIP outputs; the methodological developments in needs assessment, the development of guidance materials for conducting needs assessments, the learning programme, the production of pre-crisis information and greater partnership.

451. The evaluation concluded that the focal areas of research had been appropriately selected. The most practical methodological advances under SENAIP have been in the area of market analysis. A promising effort is also being made to improve the measurement and comparison of food insecurity through dietary diversity and the IPC respectively.

452. While a considerable body of high quality research has been generated there is so far little to show in the form of tested methods that can practically be applied by generalists, and have a demonstrated relevance to decision making. It is therefore advised that future research efforts should be more narrowly focused and directly applied.

453. Prior to SENAIP, with the exception of specific assessments such as JAMs and CFSAMs, the assessment methodology and process was somewhat ad hoc. SENAIP has had a major role in systematizing this process through the EFSA handbook<sup>87</sup>. This provides a standard against which the more recent assessments can be judged.

454. This handbook is widely disseminated and was found to be of practical use to both WFP and partner staff. The feedback on this basic resource was highly positive and constructive suggestions have been offered on how to improve future editions. However given the limited progress with subsequent methodological development, the planned release of a second edition in 2007 may be premature.

455. SENAIP identified insufficient in-house capacity as a key constraint to meet peak demand for preparing ENAs. SENAIP has accelerated existing training programmes to improve skills in planning, managing and implementing needs assessments. Over 800 WFP and partner agency staff received training with basic, intermediate and advanced skills.

456. Under SENAIP specialist staff were also recruited and posted to the RBs and HQ. The evaluation noted the critical importance of the 11 RAOs to the success of the programme. Five of the RAOs specifically support market analysis, while the other six are responsible for both EFSA trainings and conducting assessments in their respective regions.

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<sup>87</sup> This was developed prior to SENAIP with DFID funding.



457. A detailed assessment of the SENAIP training programme was conducted, including an electronic survey of trainees. The feedback from trainees was positive on both the quality and, subject to opportunity to apply it, the practical utility. The main suggestions for improvement included more practical training, more emphasis on analysis and how to develop response recommendation and more post training mentoring.

458. SENAIP has relatively successfully balanced enhancing the assessment skills of generalists, including large numbers at the country level, with establishing a cadre of specialist assessors at HQ and regional level. The evaluation endorses this dual strategy. The maintenance of a cadre of skilled and experienced assessors is critical to continuing assessment quality.

459. The evaluation also recognizes the importance of increasing assessment capacity at the local level. Often responsibility for initial assessments, which are highly influential to formulating programmes, falls to front line staff. Countries are also actively seeking greater responsibility as a means to increase the relevance of assessments to local programming decisions. Continuing training in assessment methods is advocated to compensate for staff attrition and further enhance capacity at the Country level.

460. SENAIP recognized the need to build counterpart assessment capacity within the Government system. Training is a necessary part of building this overall capacity. Three country pilot studies were conducted by SENAIP to investigate how this could be achieved in each country and to develop a general strategy. However, there seems to be little enthusiasm amongst donors to finance the further development of government assessment capacity, either through WFP or an alternative agency.

461. SENAIP has commissioned 16 pre-crisis baselines (CFSVAs) in high risk countries in order to support the conduct of subsequent ENAs. It is still early to confirm the utility of CFSVAs in this context, but preliminary indications are that the analytical content of the CFSVA may be of greater relevance than the *data*. Further investigation is needed of whether the data needs of an ENA may be more relevantly and cheaply met through a FSMS. This has a significant bearing on the CFSVA methodology and the associated costs.

462. The evaluation highlights that CFSVAs are primarily used in designing PRROs – especially those focused on resilience building. However, the CFSVAs could be made more useful as there are limitations of analysis (including the few specific response recommendations on vulnerability reduction), approach (they are not generally aligned to the PRRO programme cycle), timeliness and cost. The evaluation suggests that a learning strategy, similar to that rolled out for EFSAs, is required to enhance the utility of CFSVAs.

463. FSMS have received relatively little attention under SENAIP. The evaluation highlights the importance of monitoring to trigger an ENA. But in addition on-going surveillance, more aligned to the function of M&E, is critical to checking the initial programming assumptions and adjusting the subsequent interventions. A major conclusion of the evaluation is that more emphasis should be placed on monitoring, compared to existing bias towards large one-off assessments such as CFSVAs and EFSAs.

464. Competence has been demonstrated in operating effective FSMS, including those operated outside of SENAIP. The CHS in southern Africa is worthy of particular mention. It would be appropriate to consolidate the experiences and best practices as a basis for expanding the investment by WFP in FSMS.



465. A final output of the SENAIP strategy is increasing involvement of partners in the conduct of needs assessment. The evaluation found widespread appreciation amongst WFP staff at all levels of the value of partnership in assessment. This has multiple justifications from increasing assessment resources and capacities, to mitigating against agency bias and building consensus and commitment to recommended responses.

466. Partnership in assessment is a long standing principle that predates SENAIP. It is rare to find any assessments that have been conducted independently by WFP. The evaluation found that there is a healthy degree of partnership in most needs assessments, with diverse partners including government, UN agencies and NGOs. Decisions on partnership appear to be logically decided at the local (country) level and HQ may have only a marginal role to play in enabling stronger partnerships.

467. The main issue of partnership is that WFP continues to dominate and lead the needs assessment process. Despite the UN reforms there is so far sparse evidence of multi-agency platforms evolving that are appropriate to supporting a more inclusive analysis of needs and response recommendations.

### **7.1.3 Effectiveness**

468. The evaluation goes on to examine how the above mentioned outputs have combined to improve the *quality* of emergency needs assessments. This includes both instances where SENAIP staff have led ENAs and the more indirect impact of SENAIP investments in methodological development, training, capacity building and strengthened partnerships. The analysis is informed by both subjective opinions and ‘scoring’ a large number of EFSA reports against a pre-determined checklist.

469. There is a general consensus amongst external observers that the quality of WFP ENAs is relatively good (when compared to assessments of other UN agencies) and improving. This in itself is a testament to the effectiveness of SENAIP given the relatively short implementation period.

470. SENAIP is only one part of a larger mosaic of capacity and methodological development with the goal of improved needs assessment which has been underway in WFP for some time. It was not always possible for the evaluation to attribute the precise responsibility for observed changes.

471. The importance of SENAIPs achievement in promoting greater transparency in assessment methods, processes and products is commended. Quality expectations are clearly articulated and monitoring mechanisms (such as the Quality Monitoring Checklist) have been established. The significance of this may be far greater than is immediately apparent, as this ensures a continuing cycle of criticism and further improvement. Achieving this required somewhat of an institutional shift within WFP and deserves recognition.

472. Nearly all ENAs provide core information on the scale of needs – in particular the number and location of food insecure populations. While SENAIP has defined a package of activities that will logically improve the accuracy of these estimates, the ability to objectively





assess the accuracy of assessments, even on an ex-post basis, is still lacking<sup>88</sup>. It was not possible to address this question in the scope of the evaluation.

473. A dangerous yet common assumption was encountered amongst WFP's partners that food needs assessments remain inflated. Consequently improved accuracy is often confused with *lower* assessed needs. In the absence of objective assessments (including ex-post) of accuracy, this assumption is likely to persist. In this case the efforts of SENAIP could count for little.

474. There is a continuing lack of the comparability between the severity of needs in different crises. The evaluation was not able to objectively compare the level of needs between any two of the assessment reports reviewed. Comparability is a necessary pre-condition to providing a *proportionate* response. Underlying this is the thorny and unresolved question of how to measure food insecurity.

475. The evaluation concludes that urgent guidance is needed by the field to bring greater standardization and comparability. While no one method will be universally applicable, it is realistic for WFP to develop a small toolkit of complementary/alternative methods, guidelines on when and how to apply these measures and a framework to compare the results from applying different approaches.

476. There is evidence that the quality of the contextual analysis (the ability to explain the causes of food insecurity) in assessments is improving. However, the weakest part of the assessment process is arguably the link between the contextual analysis and the response recommendations. When provided, the justification for the proposed response recommendations is too rarely apparent. There has also been relatively little progress in broadening the scope of recommendations beyond food transfers.

477. To rectify this weakness it is suggested that WFP should prioritize the development of simple decision tools to transparently guide the choice of appropriate response recommendations. This should build on existing similar initiatives. However, it is also recognized that the continuing lack of an organizational architecture that facilitates multi-sectoral analysis, recommendation and response is a major constraint.

478. Timeliness of ENAs remains an issue. According to the CO survey, majority of the CO states that timeliness of ENAs is improving. However, half of them also reported specific instances where the assessment findings came too late to be useful for programme design.

479. The evaluation suggests a two pronged response to this problem. There is a fundamental need for all stakeholders to trade off detail to ensure higher utility. The *minimum* expectations from assessments in different contexts should be defined and the EFSA guidelines revised to reflect this approach. This needs to be complemented by measures to ensure timely access to skilled assessment staff and budgets.

480. The importance of (annual) reassessment of beneficiary needs in multi-year programmes is noted. While a formal requirement exists, it not apparent how this is conducted or monitored.

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<sup>88</sup> Although strictly outside of the scope of the evaluation, it is noted that a proposal for "Evaluating the Accuracy of ENAs: A preliminary study for standards and norms" has been subsequently developed and approved, with final outputs to be delivered by the second quarter of 2008. Therefore no recommendation is made for further action.



An argument is presented that programme management should be informed by light monitoring of trends through surveillance systems, rather than through the reliance on the periodic assessment. A possible model comes from southern Africa, where the CHS is an important adjunct to the initial needs assessment and answers operational questions.

481. In addition to the methodological guidance and rigor, it is recognized that the quality of assessment depends to a large degree on the quality of the responsible staff. WFP are encouraged to acknowledge this in their personnel policies and do more to attract and retain appropriate staff. There is also a specific need to retain the additional capacity of the SENAIP funded RAOs. In particular the market RAOs bring unique skills to the organization and market analysis is still far from being embedded in the organization.

#### **7.1.4 Efficiency**

482. The efficiency of SENAIP is examined including; the organizational arrangements adopted within WFP, the adequacy and performance of the monitoring systems, the conformance with the implementation schedule and the appropriateness and adequacy of the financial and human resources provided to SENAIP.

483. The evaluation concludes that integrating the functions of ODAN and ODAV would increase the coherence of information gathering and analysis. Considerable technical benefits, and savings, could be obtained from integration and rationalization. At the regional level it is recommended that ODAV, ODAN, M&E and nutritional staff be brought together in a unified *food security analysis unit* to support WFP's information needs in a coordinated manner.

484. SENAIP utilizes a good variety of mechanisms to monitor progress. This includes progress reports to the Executive Board, a Steering Committee (SC) of donors, an Advisory Group (AG) to monitor technical progress and reports to individual donors. All appear to be reasonably effective.

485. A particularly innovative feature of SENAIP was the establishment of a technical Advisory Group to provide substantive guidance on research, the development of methods and tools and coordination with related efforts. There is no doubt that the AG is an extremely well qualified group of individuals, but WFP and the AG members share the opinion that this potential could have been better utilized. On balance there is sufficient merit in the model that WFP should consider adapting and maintaining the AG beyond SENAIP.

486. The overall budget for SENAIP is believed to be justified in relation to both WFPs overall budget and the potential cost savings on programmes. Based on performance there is a strong argument for substantial continuing core budgetary support. However, with the conclusion of extra-budgetary support the current portfolio of activities will inevitably have to be scaled back. It is hard to identify areas where savings can be made without impacts on performance but candidates include HQ staff costs, research and the operation of the AG.

487. Cost savings may be found in the assessment themselves. While average EFSA costs are reasonable the more elaborate and rigorous models are not recommended from either a cost or timeliness perspective. Substantial costs savings in CFSVA may be achieved through shifting the focus from data collection to data analysis.



### **7.1.5 Impact**

488. The evaluation examines evidence for the impact of improved needs assessments on programme design, donor perceptions of credibility and the consequences on financing. The team acknowledges that it is very early to be judging programme impact at this level as SENAIP has been operational for only two years. However, these preliminary findings are highly pertinent to mainstreaming decisions.

489. SENAIP has successfully made WFP managers accountable for ensuring that programmes are supported by some form of assessment. This has gone a long way to institutionalizing the production of a separate ENA, with a transparent link to programming. This accountability is actively followed up through the mechanism of the Project Review Committee.

490. The evaluation found that the ENA results are routinely used to guide the implementation of WFPs food aid programmes – in particular providing the basis for targeting, beneficiary numbers and total food needs.

491. Many ENAs do not provide well justified response recommendations. Where ENA do provide response recommendations that fall outside of WFPs mandate it is not always clear which agency has responsibility for follow-up and consequently such recommendations are often ignored.

492. The evaluation concluded that improved market analysis is not being fully utilized to support internal WFP decisions. Specifically there is a lack of dialogue between the RAO market analysts and WFP staff tasked with food aid procurement. This also points to a more systemic issue. More attention is needed to generate the understanding of, and enthusiasm for, the value of assessment work amongst decision makers.

493. A principal concern of SENAIP was to improve credibility in its relationship with donors. There are indications of improving credibility, especially amongst those close to SENAIP. The heightened levels of expertise under SENAIP and the increased transparency, have served to increase WFP's organizational credibility. This effect is most pronounced amongst those working most closely with SENAIP.

494. It is important to appreciate that donor perceptions of WFP's credibility are formed primary on the basis of the EMOP or PRRO proposal, rather than the quality of the supporting assessment. Therefore until more dramatic changes in programme content are evident, significant changes in credibility are unlikely. Furthermore, as the WFP response is limited to food transfers, the perception that self interest will influence assessment findings may persist.

495. Little immediate impact is observable on donor funding decisions. The lingering questions on credibility are compounded by donor decision making procedures that remain poorly aligned to decision making on the basis of needs. A clearer incentive system would do much to encourage and sustain improved needs assessment methods in WFP.

496. However, it is noted that the donor – agency relationship should not be the only reason for WFP to adopt sound assessment practices. Generating sufficient resources is a valid concern, but a major consideration should be the agency – beneficiary dynamic. Better needs assessment should help WFP to use the available resources to meet food insecure population needs in ways that are proportionate and appropriate.



### 7.1.6 Sustainability and mainstreaming

497. In a relatively short time span SENAIP has had an observable impact on the quality of assessment and the credibility of the results. To a significant extent it is anticipated that these benefits will be sustained. Critically it has put in place a framework of accountability and transparency that should do much to encourage continuing quality assessment practices and the active utilization of the results.

498. However, the process of strengthening needs assessment is far from complete. Methodological improvements have yet to be consolidated and applied, capacities are fragile and institutional acceptance is still only partial. In the absence of clear incentives and policy guidelines the new and more ambitious assessment approaches it has set out to introduce may wither. Therefore the nascent efforts of SENAIP need to be nurtured and fully integrated.

499. In the short term greater sustainability will depend on transitioning budgetary responsibility from extra-budgetary funds to the PSA budget. WFP have demonstrated a commitment to engineer this change. However, the evaluation notes that this is occurring during period of extreme budgetary pressure within WFP. It would therefore be in the mutual interest of donors and WFP to consider extending the current period of extra-budgetary support if the momentum from SENAIP is to be protected and sustained.

500. Finally it is concluded that sound assessment practice depends on more than methodological rigor. Other factors which need to be considered to nurture this process include:

- Hiring and retaining skilled technicians within the organization
- Establishing a supportive environment at the country level through the buy-in of managers and greater ownership at the country level.
- Strengthening the an incentive system to reward sound assessment performance

501. The main recommendations of the evaluations as well as the Management response are available in annex of the report.

## 7.2 Recommendations

502. The evaluation provides a substantial number of *suggestions* to WFP management and a smaller number of formal *recommendations*. Suggestions are made where the conclusions are either not fully substantiated by the evidence, outside the immediate scope of the ToR or relatively minor in nature. These suggestions have not been consolidated in this chapter. Instead the focus is kept on a relatively small number of formal recommendations. The evaluation team believes these to be substantive, well supported by evidence and worthy of management attention.

503. The overall conclusion of the evaluation was that the SENAIP initiative was necessary and appropriate, although somewhat ambitious. In conjunction with efforts elsewhere in WFP, SENAIP has successfully enhanced capacities for needs assessment, has had an observable impact on the quality of assessment and the credibility of the results. In a relatively short time span it has a noticeable impact on transparency and accountability at the institutional level. It has demonstrated the relevance and importance of improved analysis as a basis for the design of programmes that can potentially meet needs more proportionately and appropriately.



504. Inevitably there have shortcomings in both the design and implementation – and these are discussed in detail in the report. The process of strengthening needs assessment is far from complete. Methodological improvements have yet to be consolidated and applied, capacities are fragile and institutional acceptance is still only partial. In the absence of clear incentives and policy guidelines the new and more ambitious assessment approaches it has set out to introduce may wither. Therefore recommendations are offered to suggest how this effort can be nurtured and fully integrated.

505. Recommendations are presented below and have been grouped under five headings:

- Financing of continuing support to needs assessments and food security analysis
- Strategic approaches to improving food security analysis
- Institutional arrangements and staffing issues
- Improving linkages to decision making
- Further technical improvements to ENA quality

Table 7-1 Evaluation Recommendations

<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>1. Financing</b>
a) The objective of mainstreaming SENAIP activities within the PSA is commended. However, continued short term extra-budgetary may be justified during 2008 to ensure key activities are sustained and transitioned to PSA funding.
<b>2. Assessment strategy</b>
a) A strategy should be developed to strengthen food insecure population participation in food security baselines, monitoring and needs assessment activities.
b) SENAIP activities should be integrated within a framework for food security analysis that services decision makers needs for both relief and resilience building related information.
c) The capacity to design, implement and analyze needs assessments and other food security studies should be further enhanced at the country level. Budget control should be developed to the lowest competent level.
d) Guidelines should be developed for supporting national FSMS, drawing on both SENAIP funded and other ODAV supported monitoring systems. WFP should allocate significant additional resources to initiating and institutionalizing food security monitoring systems in line with this guidance, either from PSA and / or extra-budgetary sources.
<b>3. Institutional and staffing</b>
a) The two units of ODAV and ODAN should be combined into a single unit under ODA. This new division should provide a single source of direction and guidance on food security analysis, including baseline, early warning, needs assessment and monitoring functions.



<b>Recommendations</b>
b) The RBs should consider establishing a food security analysis unit that brings together ODAV, ODAN, M&E and nutritional staff under unified management to support WFP's informational needs in a coordinated manner.
c) It is imperative to maintain adequate skilled assessment staffing at the regional level to backstop assessments and continue lesson learning activities. Specific priority should be given to retaining the five RAO market analyst positions. The primary function of these RAOs should be on developing and mainstreaming market assessment tools and skills in analytical staff.
d) The attrition rate of other WFP staff trained as assessors should be monitored. If excessive, WFP senior management and those who develop and review agency personnel policies should find ways to retain ENA-related VAM and other needs assessment officers who have been made more productive and useful to WFP as a result of the large WFP investment in their training.
e) The AG should be maintained for the duration of the SENAC project. After this similar, but much smaller group(s), to assist in research and innovation should be considered. Possible areas of support would be a market analysis group, response analysis group, a CFSVA and FSMS group and/or the measurement of food insecurity group.
<b>4. Linkages to decision making</b>
a) As soon as possible seminars should be organized for senior field managers to build awareness of the benefits of further improving needs assessment processes; clarify responsibility of managers in facilitating timely needs assessment (and reassessment); provide an overview of assessment best practices; and the appropriate use of assessment findings in programme formulation and implementation.
b) In order to enhance timeliness and utility to decision making, guidance is needed on the <i>minimum</i> reporting requirements for different levels of assessment (initial, rapid and in-depth). This should clarify expectations for reporting (i) the number, location, severity and duration of needs (ii) the contextual analysis, and (iii) the specificity and scope of response recommendations.
c) Measures should be taken to ensure that assessments clearly differentiate between assistance necessary to save lives and assistance necessary to save livelihoods.
d) The EMOP and PRRO proposals should include a one page annex transparently demonstrating the specific recommendations taken from the assessments, together with an explanation for any discrepancies in the programme proposal.
e) ODAN/ODAV and the unit responsible for food aid procurement should actively collaborate on market analysis and the utilization of ensuing recommendations.
<b>5. Technical quality of ENAs</b>
a) Progress with the SENAIP thematic research should be reviewed. On the basis of this review, and the findings of this evaluation, future resources should be allocated to themes where the most pressing needs coincide with the highest



<b>Recommendations</b>
probability of being able to produce applied products with direct relevance to field assessment methods. Other research themes should be officially concluded.
b) Corporate guidance on the measurement of food insecurity should be developed for the field. This should include a “toolkit” with a small number of alternative methods, advice on selecting the appropriate method (or combinations of methods) in a specific context and guidance on how to triangulate methods and reach comparable conclusions on the severity of different crises.
c) Simple decision tools should be developed to assist in selecting between alternative response interventions, building on existing models developed by other organizations and researchers.
d) The evaluation team concurs with the stated intention to integrate market analysis into CFSVAs, FSMSs and ENAs. In order to maximize progress RAO Market Officers should prioritize this activity during the remainder of 2007.
e) The primary purpose of a CSFVAs should be acknowledged as supporting the design of programmes to build resilience to food insecurity – whether in EMOPs, PRROs or CPs. The comprehensive learning strategy proposed by ODAV should develop methods, models, guidance and training to enhance the capacity of country offices to conduct an analysis specifically for this purpose.
f) An external assessment of the Laos CFSVA should be organized. This should examine the degree to which both the technical and process limitations, identified by the AG and DISI report, have been adequately addressed. Furthermore, routine external technical advice to, and reviews of, future CFSVAs should be invited.
g) A study should be commissioned to compare the relative utility and cost efficiency of CFSVAs and FSMSs in providing data to support a subsequent ENA.
h) Additional guidance, or a companion volume of the handbook, should be developed that is shorter, simpler and directed at a less specialized audience. This version should focus on initial assessment for generalist staff and provide rapid assessment tools that are easy to use.
i) From technical perspective, consideration should be given to delaying the production of a second edition of the EFSA handbook until ‘new’ methodological tools are adequately tested and proven.
j) A robust ENA training programme should be continued and supported with an adequate budget and training staff resources.