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REPORT OF THE WFP EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS ON THEIR VISIT TO MALAWI AND ZAMBIA

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for information.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal point indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact Ms C. Panlilio, Administrative Assistant, Conference Servicing Unit (tel.: 066513-2645).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. The team would like to thank Mr Domenico Scalpelli, Ms Karla Hershey and the WFP country team in Malawi; Messrs David Stevenson and Peter Rodrigues and the WFP country team in Zambia; and Mr Amir Abdulla and the WFP regional team in South Africa for their outstanding administrative and logistical support in organizing, welcoming, and accompanying the Board visit in January/February 2007. The team would also like to thank the Governments of Malawi and Zambia, including district- and provincial-level representatives, for their gracious hospitality and generous assistance in the granting of access to Government officials, as well as in the organization of security and protocol matters. Interactions with counterparts from both countries – whether official, United Nations or non-governmental – was enlightening and the team is grateful for the most valuable experience. Finally, the team would like to pay tribute to all the beneficiaries and partners of WFP whose availability, genuine responses and inspiring examples have made such an impressive impact on the team's understanding of WFP programming.

INTRODUCTION

2. Board members from Angola, Canada, the Republic of the Congo, France, Haiti, Indonesia, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the United States as well as a delegate from the European Commission visited Malawi and Zambia from 28 January to 7 February 2007. They were accompanied by Mrs Claudia von Roehl, Secretary to the Board based in Rome, as well as Mr Thomas Yanga, Deputy Regional Director based in Johannesburg. Mr Domenico Scalpelli, Country Director and Ms Karla Hershey, Deputy Country Director, both based in Lilongwe, and Mr David Stevenson, Country Director, and Mr Peter Rodrigues, Deputy Country Director, both based in Lusaka, accompanied them to meetings and field visits in their respective countries. On their return to Rome, Board members stopped in Johannesburg for a two-hour briefing by Mr Amir Abdulla, WFP Regional Director for Southern Africa, and his staff as well as the FAO Regional Emergency Coordinator.

3. The purpose of the visit was to observe WFP field operations and partnerships with United Nations agencies, host governments, and other cooperating agencies as well as to study the approaches adopted, including decentralized field management and programme implementation/delivery, in light of the adoption of one new development project in Malawi and one country programme (CP) in Zambia.

4. In both Malawi and Zambia, the team was briefed by the WFP Country Offices; had stimulating discussions with the United Nations country team (UNCT) as well as with non-governmental and civil society organizations (NGOs/CSOs); met bilateral donor representatives; and had meetings with a number of Government officials including: the Permanent Secretaries and/or their deputies for Health, Education, HIV/AIDS, Nutrition, Gender, Transport, Agriculture, Irrigation, Finance and Economic Planning as well as the Commissioner for the Department of Poverty and Disaster Management Affairs in Lilongwe; and the Ministers and/or their deputies for Health, Education, Agriculture and Cooperatives, Community Development and Social Services, Home Affairs, and National AIDS Council in Lusaka.

5. In Malawi, the team began its travels in Blantyre and environs, where Board members observed nutritional rehabilitation, at both the field level and in the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, school feeding and food-for-assets (FFA) activities of which some were

being implemented jointly with other United Nations partners. The team then travelled to Mwanza to view an innovative wellness centre dispensing information and supplies to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS along Malawi's borders amongst Malawi's truck drivers; to Kasungu and Dzaleka to view FFA projects and protection-like activities in a refugee camp; to Likuni to observe work supporting vegetable gardens and HIV/AIDS activities; and ended in Lilongwe where the team interacted with community leaders and school children as well as beneficiaries partaking in FFA irrigation development projects.

6. In Zambia, the team began its travels in Chipata, where Board members visited several home-based care facilities providing assistance to HIV/AIDS sufferers and their families; the team then proceeded to Mfuwe to observe FFA activities being implemented jointly with the Wildlife Conservation Society which are aimed at preventing environmental degradation while providing revenue-generating activities; the team ended its journey in Lusaka, where visits were made to several sites, including the University Teaching Hospital and anti-retroviral treatment clinics to observe nutritional rehabilitation activities for HIV/AIDS and malnourished patients, home-based care projects targeting HIV/AIDS sufferers, and community schools implementing school feeding programmes.

CONTEXT

7. In addition to being geographic neighbours, Malawi and Zambia are ranked side-by-side in the 2006 Human Development Report, with the former ranked 166 and the latter ranked 165 on a list of 177 countries. The countries' ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) is a struggle, as witnessed by the select sampling of additional statistical similarities and contrasts noted in the table below:

Human Development Report 2006: Indicators	Malawi	Zambia
HDI rank out of 177 countries	166	165
Life expectancy (years)	39.8	37.7
Total population (millions)	**12.6**	**11.5**
Total fertility rate	**6.1**	**5.7**
GDP per capita (US$)	646	943
Total debt as a % of GDP	**3.2**	**7.9**
Total ODA received (US$ millions)	**476.1**	**1,081**
Human Poverty Index	83	87
Population without sustainable access to improved water source	27%	42%
MDG % under 5 of children under weight for age	22	23
% under 5 of children under height for age	49	47
MDG % population below income poverty line <$1/day	41.7	75.8
MDG % population below income poverty line <$2/day	76.1	94.1
LBW infants	16	12
IMR per 1,000 live births	110	102
<5 mortality per 1,000 live births	182	175
% HIV/AIDS prevalence ages 15-19	14.1	17
Combined Gross Enrolment for primary, secondary and tertiary schools	64%	54%

8. The economic development of both Malawi and Zambia is impacted by the effects faced by most of the countries in Southern Africa: the "triple threat" of food insecurity, HIV/AIDS, and weak government capacity. Both countries continue to suffer from chronic food insecurity as a result of many structural and economic hindrances, including limited effective access to domestic, regional and international markets and vulnerability to recurring droughts, floods and other natural disasters, and both are highly dependent on external aid.

9. The Malawi CP 2002–2007, which encompasses supplementary feeding and school feeding in 28 districts, is set to expire in December 2007. The total cost to WFP is approximately US$52.5 million for 93,315 mt of food to cover the needs of 29,000 beneficiaries. At its June 2007 session, the Executive Board is expected to approve the Development Project 10581.0 (replacing the CP) for Malawi for the period 2007–2010. The total programme funding for that period is US$40 million, including the McGovern Dole grant of US$19.5 million. It is expected that the new Development Project 10581.0 will be developed in line with the 2006–2011 Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), which focuses on five thematic areas including (1) sustainable economic growth, (2) social protection, (3) social development, (4) infrastructure, and (5) good governance. These thematic areas include activities in the following areas of intervention: agriculture and food security; irrigation and water development; transport infrastructure development; energy generation and supply; integrated rural development; education, prevention and management of nutrition disorders, and HIV/AIDS.

10. At its February 2007 session, the Executive Board approved a CP for Zambia for the period 2007–10. The CP was developed on the basis of the:

- Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP) of the Government of Zambia (2006–2010), which aims to reduce poverty by promoting pro-poor economic growth, supporting infrastructure development, improving governance, improving access and quality in social public services and mainstreaming HIV/AIDS. The United Nations and other cooperating partners helped develop the FNDP through participation in government-led sector advisory groups;
- The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which focuses on HIV/AIDS, basic social services, governance and food security; and
- Findings of a joint government-WFP evaluation.

11. The total programme funding for that period is US$28.9 million for 52,201 mt of food to cover the needs of 936,178 beneficiaries; however, WFP will seek contributions from other sources in the amount of US$5.5 million to address the needs of an additional 20,000 beneficiaries. The CP, whose goal is to strengthen the institutional and technical capability of the Government of Zambia to provide social safety nets to assist hungry poor households, particularly those affected by HIV/AIDS, has three main outcomes:

- enhanced national capacity to institute and manage national food-assistance programmes for school feeding, improved health and nutrition, and disaster management and mitigation;
- improved health and nutrition practices and a reconstituted asset base to increase the capacity of households and communities to rehabilitate or create and maintain assets; and

- enhanced future income-earning capability for children from poor food-insecure households through improved eligibility for further education and vocational training.

FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

12. "Delivering as One UN": Overwhelmingly the team agreed that there appeared to be good cooperation among United Nations agencies in both countries. The UNCTs held particularly energizing discussions with members and highlighted areas where there is strong cooperation and identified areas of deficiencies. In some field visits the team witnessed positive and close collaboration with FAO. For example, several school feeding programmes also included, as part of the Junior Farmer and Field Life School curriculum, school gardens, which taught students how to grow crops, and in Phalombe, Malawi, had the added value of growing diversified crops for additional nutritional dietary benefits. The current process towards achieving a "One UN" approach appears to be on the right track and team members believe it will continue to do so because:

- both UNCTs are led by serious and dedicated coordinators and the different members are very committed – WFP is in both countries a very active member and has a leading function in the different thematic clusters;
- there is a strong host government-led process in each country, with clearly identified priorities; and
- due to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and its impact on beneficiaries, particularly rural communities who rely so heavily on subsistence farming, the key output of achieving food security requires a strong coordinated action by the international community.

13. Notwithstanding the above, the team did learn of weaknesses in the current process. Some key United Nations partners are not participating in the UNCT. For example, UNCT members vocalized their disappointment with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) which, without any internationally-staffed field presence, cannot be fully part of the UNCT and, therefore, has little contact with WFP (in fact local IFAD staff met the WFP country office staff for the first time on 28 January 2007 but localized contact had been made in late 2006), and highlighted the weak field presence of others such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). As such, WFP, with its significantly larger field presence, appears to be partaking in activities that transcend its (or encroach on others') mandate(s): in Malawi, WFP was seen as often carrying an unusually large agriculture-related workload in lieu of FAO. Also, some United Nations agencies reported a lack of support from their headquarters offices (FAO). The team believes that cooperation in the field should not be hampered by the diverse policies, strategies, and disparities in programmes and funding of the various United Nations institutions. In order to effectively deliver as "One UN," an integrated approach would be the ideal; but as a first step, clearer, delineated competencies of each organization to effectively lead in respective sectors would help to avoid mission creep. Lastly, a larger field presence of other United Nations agencies in both Malawi and Zambia would prevent the automatic default to WFP of development activities.

14. HIV/AIDS. Southern Africa is the epicentre of the global HIV/AIDS pandemic, home to nine of the ten countries with the highest prevalence in the world and host to 3.1 million orphans and other vulnerable children (OVCs) – the highest number in the world. No one questions the detrimental effect HIV/AIDS has had on the region and in Malawi and Zambia in particular. According to the Malawian Department of Nutrition and HIV/AIDS,

an estimated one million people are living with HIV/AIDS; 640,000 have already died of the disease; annually 30,000 children are born HIV positive; new infections are highest in young people aged between 15 to 24 years with 60 percent among girls and 40 percent among boys; and HIV/AIDS contributed to 900,000 orphans across the country. In meetings with Zambian Government officials, the team learned of the loss of technical capacity in education, health and other sectors due to HIV/AIDS (e.g., the Ministry of Education reports that, annually, twice as many teachers are lost to HIV/AIDS as are trained).

15. Visits to numerous home-based care and community-based nutritional rehabilitation programmes providing relief to HIV/AIDS sufferers on anti-retroviral (ARV) treatments and their families, as well as interaction with many of the cooperating sponsors (e.g. the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Malawi and the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ) in Zambia which WFP uses to implement its HIV/AIDS-related food assistance programmes), reinforced in the team members' minds the importance that nutrition plays in permitting beneficiaries to regain strength and become contributing members to society again. However, questions arose among team members on the general development and programming of WFP HIV/AIDS activities. In particular, it is not yet clear whether, from a WFP perspective, HIV/AIDS should be seen as a structural issue to be addressed through development activities and programmes (and under this hypothesis how far WFP should integrate its activities under national Governments' plans funded or not by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria or UNAIDS); or, as an emergency situation that threatens the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in the short term (and then to be dealt with by WFP as such under for instance a protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO). Thus, bearing in mind that many donors are restricting their support to humanitarian assistance and the fine line that PRROs cross between emergency and development, the question posed is what is the most suitable vehicle for HIV/AIDS-related activities within WFP? In this respect, the team members took note with great interest of the regional guidance issued by the WFP Johannesburg office in January 2007 that lays out a conceptual framework for dealing with chronically food insecure populations in highly prevalent HIV/AIDS countries.

16. The participation or presence of key players such as the World Health Organization (WHO) or the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria was not immediately obvious to the team in efforts to stave off the debilitating effects of HIV/AIDS in either country. Again, this could be due to a weaker field presence. In Zambia, for example, the team learned that WHO is only funding projects at the district level, thus inputs are not always felt at the community level, while UNICEF programmes target community schools, but its campaigns are not as widespread as WFP's due to lack of resources. WFP's efficiency and cost effectiveness in dealing with this issue would certainly benefit from other partners taking on a stronger, more proactive role in longer-term strategies to counter the debilitating effects of HIV/AIDS.

17. Chronic versus Acute Food Insecurity. The team witnessed various interventions that deal with both chronic and acute food insecurity. Food-for-work (FFW) and FFA projects to build irrigation systems, build up fish stocks, and create dams outside Phalombe, Malawi, and conservation farming projects in and around Mfuwe, Zambia, were very impressive. Rural beneficiaries were quite appreciative that, instead of solely receiving a handout, they were contributing to projects that would reap long-term benefits for entire communities to help them withstand future shocks. The team was also pleased to hear that WFP was closely working with the disaster preparedness and mitigation entities of both Governments, but particularly Malawi, which sees an added value for WFP in providing

support in monitoring and evaluation, logistics, procurement, and disaster mitigation. As the food aid arm of the United Nations, team members agreed that WFP indeed has a role to play in the transition phases between emergency relief, rehabilitation and development. And indeed, as formulated by WFP officials, WFP could have a critical role in assisting a country during the transitional phase between chronic food insecurity to one where the necessary safety nets have been put in place to take care of those facing a food shortage. In this regard, many team members opined that WFP should not be the lead in long-term chronic situations nor have a stronger role than the more natural lead – FAO. Furthermore, several team members questioned WFP's presence in countries that have experienced recent significant food grain surpluses, which are now being exported.

18. A series of concepts/approaches could be more precisely defined, in their relation to the specific competencies of WFP, FAO and other United Nations partners in the areas of, inter alia: FFA programmes; supplementary feeding (nutrients); cash transfer programmes; and safety nets.

19. National ownership. In most activities visited, team members recognized that the programming strategies WFP deployed were to meet short-term food needs while contributing at the same time to longer-term food security. Both country offices support Government efforts to respond to acute food shortages, and both are active in Government-led Vulnerability Assessment Committees; however, even though team members witnessed UNDAF truly taking into account national development policies, both Governments stated that, at this stage, they are far from being capable to deal with their respective current chronically food insecurity situations on their own. It was emphasized by both country teams that, in view of the still weak safety nets of the Governments, capacity building activities – such as in Disaster Prevention and Preparedness –are crucial.

20. Innovative programming approaches to combat chronic food insecurity can be furthered through stronger partnerships with government entities, the UNCT and donors.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

21. There is no question that beneficiaries in both Malawi and Zambia welcome and need WFP's assistance. WFP activities, however, expand beyond emergency food aid towards nutrition and food security. In addition, WFP's role in 'cross cutting issues' like HIV/AIDS would benefit from further discussions within the WFP Executive Board, but also within other relevant international institutions. Its de facto scope of work covers chronically vulnerable populations and encompasses livelihood issues. Thus, careful consideration needs to be given to some development settings and how they correspond to WFP's core competence versus that of other United Nations agencies. Both country offices have recognized the declining development portfolio and the need to focus and prioritize programming.

22. In the medium to long term, a fundamental question remains how sustainable WFP programmes are in the absence of an "exit strategy": in both countries visited, it is quite evident that local authorities are not expecting these actions to continue indefinitely (as Zambian officials stated they "do not intend to cling to WFP forever"); however, these authorities also do not expect these activities to come quickly to an end. It appears that the recently concluded PRRO did not highlight capacity building; however, the new development project and CPs (should) have capacity building at the heart of their objective. Also, it is worth noting that exit strategies might require a different set of costing structures, including perhaps cash.

23. In both Malawi and Zambia, all United Nations agencies work as one country team, and have developed well-prepared UNDAFs. The cooperation in the field should not be hampered by the diverse policies, strategies, and disparities in programmes and funding of the various United Nations institutions. Bearing in mind the inevitable transactional costs, a first step should be to better articulate United Nations agencies' interventions through national food security strategies fully owned by the Governments. In this respect, the three Rome-based institutions could discuss with national Governments a common food security strategy, as suggested in the High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence. A common food security strategy calls for donors and recipient countries, as members of the three Rome-based United Nations agencies, to overcome a piecemeal approach to the issues at stake. It might be appropriate to address these issues (relief, rehabilitation and development) globally, and then to assign to each of these agencies, considering both their institutional and their field capacities, the tasks at hand, rather than arguing about what is their specific constitutional mandate.

MISSION ARRANGEMENTS

24. The team was both impressed and grateful for the effort and quality of logistical arrangements by the WFP country offices and the Governments of Malawi and Zambia. Both WFP country offices as well as the Johannesburg regional office are to be commended.

25. Notwithstanding smoothly run field visits in both countries as well as in Johannesburg, several team members reflected on one area requiring improvement:

- The two-hour transit in Johannesburg did not allow sufficient time to appreciate the interesting and very informative presentations by regional staff, including a representative of FAO. When planning the next field visit, in addition to allotting more time in Johannesburg, the Secretariat should consider making this the first stop before visiting the field, in order to provide the regional context in which WFP country offices work. This would permit Board members to comprehend better the regional component of WFP programmes.

26. Overall, team members found this field visit to be a valuable learning experience that deepened their understanding and appreciation of WFP field operations.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
ARV	anti-retroviral
CIDRZ	Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia
CP	country programme
CSO	civil society organization
FFA	food for assets
FFW	food for work
FNDP	Fifth National Development Plan
GDP	gross domestic product
HDI	Human Development Index
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMR	infant mortality rate
LBW	low birth weight
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OVCs	orphans and other vulnerable children
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
WHO	World Health Organization