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ENDING CHILD HUNGER AND UNDERNUTRITION INITIATIVE

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for approval by the Executive Board.

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 points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The current strategies of the global community have failed to make adequate progress in tackling hunger and undernutrition. Without urgent focused efforts, many developing countries will not reach the target of halving hunger by 2015 as set out in the First Millennium Development Goal. Focusing on child hunger prevents irreversible damage to human development and helps achieve the goal of halving extreme poverty and hunger as well as the Millennium Development Goals related to child mortality, maternal health, primary education, gender equality, and HIV/AIDS. A focus on child hunger will also bring the needed cohesion and critical mass to the various initiatives and efforts on nutrition, children, education and health. A broad-based global campaign will reinforce and multiply the impact of these initiatives and create the leverage needed to have a deep and lasting impact on hunger.
2. The World Food Programme (WFP), the World Bank and the United Nation's Children's Fund (UNICEF) are working together to launch a global initiative to end child hunger and undernutrition. The initiative aims to garner broad-based, global partnerships in order to focus and support national efforts to eradicate child hunger and undernutrition. The three agencies have developed a Concept Note that sets out the technical and institutional framework for the initiative. This note presents the Concept Note for the Ending Child Hunger and Undernutrition Initiative, describes WFP's role in the initiative, and seeks the Executive Board's support for WFP's participation in the design and development of this initiative.

THE CONCEPT NOTE

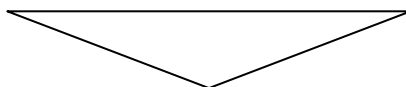
3. The full text of the Concept Note for the Ending Child Hunger and Undernutrition Initiative is annexed to this document.

WFP'S ROLE IN THE INITIATIVE

4. WFP aims to contribute substantively to the design of the Plan of Action and to continue to play a catalytic role in creating the partnership efforts required to end child hunger. The initiating partners' shared role will be to define the parameters of the initiative and be a catalyst for national action and international support. The cost to WFP of supporting this initiative will not exceed \$1.5 million and can be funded through existing savings from the Programme Support and Administration Budget.



DRAFT DECISION*



Having considered the document on the "Ending Child Hunger and Undernutrition Initiative" (WFP/EB.2/2005/3-B), the Board:

- i) **takes note** of the Concept Note on Ending Child Hunger and Undernutrition as agreed by WFP, the World Bank and UNICEF; and of the Executive Director's intention to allocate up to US\$1.5 million from existing resources to support WFP's participation in the development and launch of a Plan of Action for the initiative;
- ii) **welcomes** the objective of designing a common Plan of Action for the elimination of child hunger in line with efforts to achieve the First Millennium Development Goal;
- iii) **emphasizes** the importance of partnership to ensure inclusiveness and avoid duplication among partners in supporting national efforts;
- iv) **emphasizes** that the initiative should be harmonized with other complementary initiatives and actions;
- v) **looks forward** to a discussion on the Plan of Action once it is produced, including its potential implications for WFP actions and activities.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.



ANNEX

VISION

1. This Concept Note sets out a technical and institutional framework for a global initiative to achieve the elimination of child hunger and undernutrition.
 - a) **The initiative focuses on addressing undernutrition among children.** The target is to achieve the First Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving by 2015 the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and undernutrition.
 - b) **The initiative requires strong, broad-based, global partnerships.** In order to give direction, impetus and visibility to this effort -- the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Bank, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have agreed to come together with a common focus and a common commitment, as initiating partners in a global effort.
 - c) **The initiative will focus on practical actions at all levels, and on achieving real and sustainable progress on the ground.** The emphasis will be on how to help countries identify, assess, analyze and meet their hunger and undernutrition related needs. Priorities will include cost-effective programme and policy design; efficient and effective implementation; and strong public advocacy and public awareness — including at community and household level.

RATIONALE

2. The consequences of the global community having failed in past decades to make adequate progress in tackling hunger and undernutrition are evident. Poverty reduction has been hindered, human development has been retarded, and many developing countries are failing in their efforts to reach the target of halving hunger by 2015 as set out in the First Millennium Development Goal.
3. Reversing these trends requires that hunger be addressed as an urgent development priority by developing countries and by their international development partners. Nutrition needs to be integrated more effectively into larger development efforts to spur wide ranging economic and social improvements that depend on improved nutrition. Focusing on child hunger not only addresses the goal of halving extreme poverty and hunger, but is also strongly linked to progress on the Millennium Development Goals related to child mortality, maternal health, primary education, gender equality, and HIV/AIDS by 2015.
4. The preconditions for making progress in many countries exist, but governments often falter with implementing these plans when determining priorities and allocating resources. Globally the means and the resources exist to address the problem. Global and national advocacy is needed to turn these missed opportunities into effective national results.
 - a) **Hunger and undernutrition have an enormous negative impact on development, and eliminating undernutrition in children would help to achieve the first Millennium Development Goal.** Undernourishment helps to define poverty, while undernutrition is both the devastating outcome and the perpetuating cause of poverty in poor countries. Hunger has serious short term consequences for national budgets, and substantial -- and often masked -- long term costs for social development and economic growth. While most developing countries are on track to achieve the income component of the first MDG (halving the proportion of people whose income is less



than one dollar a day); only about a quarter of developing countries are currently on track to achieve the non-income target of halving the proportion of people “who suffer from hunger” as measured by under-weight rates among children under five. Improving nutrition is essential to reduce extreme poverty, and to achieve the first Millennium Development Goal.

b) **In addition to MDG1 on Poverty and Hunger, child hunger and undernutrition has a direct impact on five other Millennium Development Goals:**

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.	Malnutrition erodes human capital through irreversible and intergenerational effects on cognitive and physical development.
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education.	Undernutrition reduces the chances that a child will go to school, stay in school, and perform well. Conversely, well educated children are better equipped to prevent nutritional problems among their spouses and children and communities.
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.	Barriers to women and young girls in gaining access to food, health, and care resources may result in malnutrition, not only among women, but also among their children. Empowering women in society improves their children's nutrition.
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality.	Undernutrition is directly or indirectly associated with most child deaths, and it is the main contributor to the burden of disease in the developing world. Likewise, reducing the burden of diseases among future mothers will enhance their nutritional status, overall health during pregnancy and likely lead to the prevention of undernutrition amongst their children.
Goal 5: Improve maternal health.	Maternal health is impaired by malnutrition which in turn is associated with most major risk factors for maternal mortality. Maternal stunting, anemia and a lack of iodine pose serious problems. Maternal health is also threatened by health problems, including by diseases related to inadequate access to safe water and sanitation facilities.
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.	Undernutrition may increase risk of HIV transmission, compromise antiretroviral therapy, and hasten the onset of full-blown AIDS and premature death. It increases the chances of tuberculosis infection resulting in disease, and it also reduces malarial survival rates. Similarly, the prevention of HIV, malaria and other diseases will contribute significantly to the nutritional status of mothers and young children, and the reduction of under-five mortality.

c) **Poor nutrition in pregnancy is a key factor in the persistence of low birth weight babies – thus perpetuating child malnutrition.** Pregnant women, infants and young children are especially vulnerable, with the impact of undernutrition especially heightened for these groups. Undernutrition is an underlying cause in more than half of all deaths of children under the age of five. In addition, some 146 million pre-school age children (under age 5 in the developing world) are under-weight and 173 million are stunted. Because of the disproportionately strong impact that nutrition has on early childhood development -- the window of opportunity between pregnancy and the first two years of life yields the highest rate-of-return for nutrition-related investments and should therefore be prioritized for action.



- d) **Hunger's impact on school-age children is severe and cross-cutting.** Hunger and undernutrition limits the learning of school-age children (5 to 18 years old), by reducing attendance, reducing attention spans and impairing mental capacity through micronutrient deficiencies. It keeps children out of school, and even when children make it to the classroom, they cannot concentrate on lessons. For those with micronutrient deficiencies, their intellectual capacity may be permanently reduced.¹
- e) **The reduction of child hunger and undernutrition is achievable but it requires specific, accelerated and targeted action.** Increases in economic growth have not in the past translated into corresponding decreases in hunger and undernutrition. For example, while the GDP of the developing countries increased by 2.8% per annum during the 1990s — the number of undernourished people only decreased by 0.1% per annum. Income growth alone, while vital, is not enough on its own to improve child hunger and undernutrition, and some developing countries have made more rapid progress in fighting hunger and undernutrition by adopting specific measures.

OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

5. The initiative to eliminate child hunger has three operational objectives:
 - a) **To stimulate, enable and assist national governments to mainstream the elimination of child hunger and undernutrition within national policies and programmes.** The focus will be on ensuring that there is strong country ownership and responsibility for action at all levels; that there is sustained political will to prioritize and implement results-driven policies and programmes; and that there is monitoring and accountability for results. This requires an emphasis on national ownership of programmes and frameworks such as poverty reduction strategies and action plans, and national budgets and investment plans.
 - b) **To ensure that adequate policy support and expert policy guidance are available, supported by clear, consistent and well informed advocacy.** The focus will be on providing enough technical and financial support to national governments to enable them — working with national and international partners — to design and to implement integrated and effective solutions for addressing child hunger and undernutrition; and on providing the best knowledge and technical expertise available for them to draw on.
 - c) **To ensure that sufficient resources are made available to support national efforts, and that national and international resources are targeted in a cost-effective, consistent and coordinated manner towards the elimination of undernutrition among children and pregnant women.** The initiative is not to be regarded as a fundraising vehicle for the participating agencies, but will be designed to help countries attract and leverage the necessary resources for effective action and results. Concerted global action — both public and private — is necessary, and accountability and monitoring are essential. Advocacy, awareness and public information will be important.

¹ Ongoing joint analytical work being done by the World Bank and WFP to assess the costs and benefits of various school nutrition interventions will inform the exact nature of the interventions recommended for this age group under this initiative.



6. The initiative will focus on one explicit target of the first Millennium Development Goal on poverty:
 - **To halve by 2015 the proportion of people who suffer from hunger (compared with 1990).**
7. Accordingly, the indicator of achievement will be the same indicator adopted for Target 2 of the Millennium Development Goal One, namely:
 - Prevalence of underweight among children under five years of age (UNICEF-WHO);
8. As noted above however, eliminating child hunger also strongly benefit outcomes in at least five other Millennium Development Goals, including those in gender, education, maternal and child mortality, and HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria.
9. Hunger and undernutrition have various causes, and eliminating child hunger will require concerted interventions in number of different sectors. Lack of food may be one cause of hunger, but hunger persists even in environments where access to food is not the primary concern. To eliminate hunger, a multi-sectoral approach across sectors such as food security, agriculture, health, water and sanitation, education, community development and trade is required. In pursuing a multi-sectoral approach, it is essential to ensure that such efforts span the gamut of situations from relief, to recovery, to development; that efforts focus on achieving long-term gains for maximizing human capital; and that everything is done to ensure that the progress is made sustainable.

A PARTNERSHIP

10. No single agency can implement an initiative of this importance and scope on its own; the initiative requires a global partnership. The initiating partners (the World Food Programme, the World Bank and UNICEF) will help to provide leadership at the global level, but the initiative will only succeed with country-driven leadership from the governments and their local partners, together with the participation of other regional and international stakeholders. The initiative will also be designed to complement other existing global partnerships and alliances (in health, education, agriculture and other sectors) whose aims are complementary and interlinked.
 - a) **Role of the initiating partners.** Each of the initiating partners brings complementary expertise to the initiative. The World Bank is the largest source of development resources, expertise and convening power across many sectors; UNICEF is the lead United Nations agency for children; and WFP is the largest humanitarian agency and has a special hunger focus. Their shared role will be to define the parameters of the initiative; and catalyse leadership and direction in countries.
 - b) **Preparation of a plan of action.** A key task of the initiative will be to draft a plan of action to eliminate child hunger and undernutrition, in accordance with the targets set out in the First Millennium Development Goal. It is intended that work on the Plan of Action would begin no later than 1 November 2005), and that this work will be completed by 30 April 2006. The initiating partners will establish an inter-agency working group to develop the plan of action, and help ensure the timely and successful completion of its tasks.



- c) **An inclusive approach.** While the role of the initiating partners is critical, the initiative needs to be based on a broader partnership in order to be successful. National governments, regional bodies, international institutions, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other UN agencies will all have important roles to play. The initiative must be broad-based and inclusive in approach, while at the same time maintaining its core focus, its sense of urgency, and its results-based approach.
- d) **Links with other initiatives.** The initiative is not intended to develop in isolation from other global efforts, such as the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, the International Alliance Against Hunger, Stop TB, UN Girls' Education Initiative, the Children and AIDS Initiative, and others. Instead, it should attempt to reinforce and multiply the impact of these initiatives by being part of a broader global campaign that unites concerns for health, education, agriculture, poverty and nutrition to improve human development.
- e) **Organizational support.** The detailed plan of action to be prepared jointly by the initiating partners will consider how best to support the leadership, coordination, and day-to-day work of the partnership, and how to establish effective mechanisms for country-level participation, ensuring accountability, and measuring and reporting on results.

NEXT STEPS

- a) Agreement on the Concept Note, and signing by the three Agency Heads (October 2005).
- b) Establishment of an inter-agency working group to develop a detailed plan of action (October/November 2005).
- c) Launch of the Initiative and the Plan of Action (May 2006).
- d) Presentation of the detailed action plan at the next G8 summit to raise resources for countries (June/July 2006).

