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STRENGTHENING EMERGENCY NEEDS ASSESSMENTS: PROGRESS TO DATE AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for consideration to 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 point indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Secretariat presented a Policy Issues paper to the Executive Board at its First Regular Session in 2004 on “Emergency Needs Assessment” (WFP/EB.1/2004/4-A) that reiterated WFP’s commitment to improving its emergency needs assessments and identified measures to achieve this through increased accountability and transparency, reinforced partnership and refined methodologies. The Board requested the Secretariat to present an update on progress and an implementation plan that included collaboration with other agencies, a timeframe and budget implications at its Third Regular Session in October 2004.

The purpose of this document is to report to the Board on the actions taken and the activities to be implemented in a 30-month timeframe that will enable WFP to strengthen its competencies and capacities to ensure the quality, credibility, comparability and transparency of emergency needs assessments.

The actions and objectives of the implementation plan relate to: (i) accountability and transparency, including the 2006 target that all emergency operations will be supported by assessment documentation; (ii) strengthened methodologies and guidance, including new and revised assessment handbooks; (iii) improved crisis information for selected emergency-prone priority countries; and (iv) augmented assessment capacities through partnerships, and a learning programme. A timetable and indicators provide the basis for monitoring and reporting progress. The institutional and financial requirements during the 30-month period include new partnership arrangements and US\$6 million in anticipated extra-budgetary funding for 2004–2005.

DRAFT DECISION*

The Board takes note of the update on progress made in strengthening WFP’s emergency needs assessments and the implementation plan, as set out in document WFP/EB.3/2004/4-E.

* 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.



BACKGROUND

1. Donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have raised concerns about WFP's ENA methods and capacities, questioning in particular estimation of needs, adequacy of targeting, the use of food as a systematic response to humanitarian crises, coordination between sector assessments, transparency of methods and processes, and minimum information standards. The humanitarian community also recognized the need for more credible needs assessments overall, not only in the food aid sector. The Good Humanitarian Donor initiative refers to needs assessments as the basis for humanitarian funding allocations.
2. The Strategic Plan (2004–2007) acknowledged these shortcomings and identified priority activities such as refining assessment techniques, building comparability of assessments between organizations, revising ENA guidelines and strengthening partnerships and capacities. The challenges in the Management Plan for 2004–2005 specify that WFP's credibility is to be re-established in ENA by improved guidance that will also address issues of response options, chronic and transitory food insecurity and the efficiency of ENA arrangements.
3. This document provides an update on the progress of activities carried out by WFP and outlines the actions planned in a 30-month timeframe with clearly established objectives relating to transparency, methodology, crisis information and enhanced capacities.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES

4. WFP's commitment to address the issues of its assessment credibility, the confidence of the humanitarian community and the aid-response options is reflected in the increased regular budget allocated to strengthening ENA competencies and capacities. Funds amounting to US\$2.3 million have been allocated from the WFP regular budget to the Emergency Needs Assessment Unit (OEN) for the 2004–2005 biennium. Significant shares of the budgets of units such as the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Unit and the Nutrition Service (PSPN) are also directly relevant to the quality of needs assessments. Previously, Headquarters guidance and support to ENA activities in the field had been mainly financed by direct support costs (DSC) and extra-budgetary funds from project budgets, including a significant contribution of approximately US\$1 million by the Department for International Development (DFID) in 2002–2003. OEN, established in February 2003, has been reinforced with two additional senior programme advisers; it is now fully staffed and entirely financed by the Programme Support and Administrative (PSA) budget. OEN is therefore in a position to enhance its support to country offices and regional bureaux through technical guidance, training, feedback and consultancies. It also assumes responsibility for improved assessment processes through mission planning and quality control, the application of standards for assessment and independent reality checks by collaborating with VAM, the Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit (OEP) and PSPN. Additional funds have been obtained for complementary activities that could not be covered by the regular budget.



ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

5. According to the priorities established in the Strategic Plan and Management Plan, steps were taken to operationalize WFP's commitment to transparency. Senior management instituted a systematic review of the assessment reports through the Project Review Committee (PRC), reiterating the accountability of country and regional directors in ensuring quality ENAs and the advisory role of OEN, VAM, and PSPN. WFP country offices will typically produce ENA reports jointly with partners for the preparation of all emergency operations (EMOPs) and protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs). A tracking system has been established to monitor preparation, submission, clearance and quality control of the reports and to compile information on partners' involvement in and contribution to ENAs.
6. To respond to the priority for increased transparency identified by the Board, WFP has built dedicated web pages for easy access to ENA reports and sources relevant to helping WFP partners and stakeholders to understand food-security emergency needs. Donors can already access the latest ENA reports, the basic policy and technical documents, and the guidance material. This website will be further developed to include the protocols for the systematic release and posting of ENA reports, an ENA web forum and on-line training manuals. By the end of the strengthening process in 2006, all EMOPs and PRROs will be supported by assessment or VAM documentation unless the requirement is waived because of the urgency of the situation. In such cases, the ENA report will be made available within 12 weeks of the PRC review.

STRENGTHENED ENA METHODOLOGIES AND GUIDANCE

7. Two in-house consultations attended by partners and various technical meetings with experts and stakeholders in the last 18 months have resulted in a shared understanding of major concerns and consensus on objectives, guidance and courses of action. Guidelines for joint assessment missions (JAMs) by WFP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were translated and disseminated by October 2004.
8. A broad-based review of the joint Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)/WFP *Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission Guidelines* was initiated, focusing on the methodology and process issues such as checklists, guidelines for observers, preparatory actions and report outline. The revised guidelines will be available in October 2005 after further field research, testing and consultation. The provisional version of the WFP *Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) Handbook* is in its final stage of review and will be published in December 2004. The financial support for its finalization was provided by DFID.
9. The EFSA handbook will be field-tested and adapted to country contexts. Special studies will be undertaken on market analysis and the effect of food interventions, non-food response options to crisis situations and chronic versus transitory food insecurity. Further studies on assessments in urban settings of population estimates and collection of mortality data have been planned but would require additional funding. The geo-referencing of assessment data will be investigated with a view to improving integration of crisis information. A funding proposal for these activities has been submitted to the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO).
10. The refinement of methodologies will complement DFID-funded activities, including setting up the capability to provide regular estimates of emergency food aid needs, conducting occasional independent assessments in countries without a WFP presence or



relief operation, and carrying out in-depth needs assessments in protracted food-insecurity situations. The methodologies, tools and lessons learned from these papers will then be integrated into the EFSA handbook before finalization by the end of 2006.

CRISIS INFORMATION

11. To improve the availability, management and quality of crisis information for countries exposed to recurrent food-security emergencies, the VAM unit will undertake ten food-security baseline studies and establish five associated food-security monitoring systems in emergency-prone priority countries in 2004–2005. These are activities included in the proposed project for strengthening competencies and capacities in assessing emergency needs in food-security crises submitted to donors for additional funding, particularly ECHO. They are part of a broader effort aiming to produce 20 crisis baselines and ten monitoring systems during a 24-month period.
12. Steps to strengthen linkages between food-security information systems have also been initiated in-house on the basis of an established set of indicators. Additional activities are planned to create and develop models for conceptual integration of crisis information on early warning, vulnerability analysis, ENAs, nutrition and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). These models will be developed on the basis of case studies in five countries.

AUGMENTED CAPACITIES OF ENA

13. ENA training needs have been assessed and analysed; a strategy and programme for learning have been finalized to develop basic assessment and analytical skills for WFP and partners in collaboration with the VAM Unit and PSPN. The draft learning modules are based on the EFSA handbook; the first pilot training sessions will take place in December 2004. The training will be conducted in 2005 and 2006, reaching up to 350 WFP and partner/counterpart staff in over 60 countries. It will be complemented by awareness training for country directors, thereby contributing to enhanced accountability. Building national assessment capacity in selected priority countries is also being considered.
14. Two major initiatives will ensure that efforts in enhancing basic skills will be accompanied by reinforcement of technical-support capacities. Technical assistance has been funded by the German Government for specialized training of 50 WFP advanced assessors. This support will reinforce the response capacity and the availability of expertise in undertaking ENAs.
15. The second major initiative will be posting specialists in market analysis and emergency food security assessment in the WFP regional bureaux. They will provide technical guidance for country offices on improved methodologies and tools, support training activities and participate in all in-depth assessments. They will be associated with the WFP Emergency Response Team and will collaborate with the Economic Analysis Unit. Some of these specialists may also be seconded or contracted from other agencies or institutes. This initiative, for which funding has been sought from ECHO, will contribute to ensuring the quality of ENAs.
16. In addition to the joint activities on methodologies and guidance, WFP is formalizing agreements with various partners. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)/WFP Global Framework Agreement is being developed to establish arrangements in various technical areas, including ENAs. The International



Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and WFP have updated their exchange of letters and an aide-mémoire for field agreements that include mechanisms for increased collaboration in assessment activities. The letter of understanding with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is being reviewed to strengthen collaboration in nutrition and other areas. The partnerships with FAO and UNHCR have been further developed, as reflected in joint review and drafting of common guidelines.

17. WFP's strategy to improve ENAs has integrated the results of parallel initiatives such as the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) study of assessments and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE) guidelines, to which WFP contributed significantly. The strategy further benefits from WFP's participation in activities managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in particular preparation and testing of multi-sector guidance such as the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP)/Coordinated Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) ENA matrix initiated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). This matrix includes pilot testing in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in the framework of Good Humanitarian Donorship. WFP collaborates in the post-conflict needs assessments guidelines initiated by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG)/Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) — an additional task for OEN, which was not initially part of its workplan. New collaborative arrangements with bilateral agencies, such as Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission and the Famine and Early-Warning System Network (FEWS-NET) are also being explored.
18. Baseline information was collected on the status of partnership in ENA. A partnership strategy has been developed that includes strengthened partnership modalities and possible arrangements such as operational partnerships, formal and stand-by agreements, secondments and programmatic partnerships. A human-resource base is being developed with a roster of ENA experts, including in-house, external and partner-agency specialists.

PROGRESS MONITORING AND INDICATORS

19. The implementation plan for strengthening ENAs includes four components with activities funded by WFP's regular budget and supported by DFID, the German Government and possibly other donors such as ECHO. A technical committee will be established with the stakeholders to appraise progress and provide guidance and strategic orientation. It will examine the workplan, the links between components and with outside initiatives in related fields, involvement of partners and stakeholders, and initiatives at the country level. Achievements will be monitored through regular progress reports; the workplan will be revised according to recommended adjustments in the implementation strategy.
20. Strengthening ENAs is part of WFP's corporate management priorities to reinforce partnerships, enhance the knowledge base and increase operational support. The two core indicators used to monitor the activities strengthening ENAs are (i) the percentage of needs assessments carried out with partners and (ii) the number of EMOPs and PRROs that are supported by needs assessment, and VAM documentation. Initiatives submitted for donor funding include detailed indicators and means of verification, which are monitored at the outcome and output levels. A tracking system and database have been set up to collect information for measuring progress.





TIMETABLE OF ACTIVITIES FOR STRENGTHENING ENAs

	2004						2005												2006											
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Transparency and accountability																														
ENA website including remote access	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																			
ENA report tracking and quality control	■	■	■	■																										
Global emergency food aid needs	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																			
Crisis information																														
10 baselines and 5 monitoring systems (first phase)				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																
10 baselines and % monitoring systems (second phase)																■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
Information linkages				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																
Methodologies and guidance																														
WFP/UNHCR provisional and final guidelines	■	■	■	■																			■	■	■	■				
EFSA provisional and final handbook	■	■	■	■	■																						■	■	■	■
Refined WFP/FAO guidelines	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																
Research and field testing of refined assessment methodologies				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■						
Software package for data management	■	■	■	■	■	■																								
Support to multi-sectoral guidance	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																			

TIMETABLE OF ACTIVITIES FOR STRENGTHENING ENAs

	2004						2005												2006											
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Capacity-building																														
ENA training needs/modules	■	■	■	■	■																									
ENA training of WFP/partners				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■									
Assessment specialists				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Training of 50 WFP advanced assessors							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
National assessment capacity-building							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■



PARTNERSHIP AND FUNDING

21. The role of partnerships in ENAs is to improve capacities and quality by ensuring expertise, multi-sectoral approaches and more integrated response options. WFP partnerships with governments, United Nations agencies, donors and NGOs include various types of collaboration, which are already operating efficiently. They include operational arrangements at the field level with United Nations agencies such as FAO and UNICEF, and NGOs such as Save the Children (UK), Oxfam, *Action contre la faim* (ACF) and *Médecins sans frontières* (MSF) in food security, agriculture, health, sanitation and nutrition. These joint efforts contribute to reinforcing synergies by exploiting comparative advantages and ensure comprehensive assessments and responses.
22. More formal agreements exist with FAO, UNHCR and OCHA that provide a framework for joint and multi-sectoral assessment exercises. Programmatic arrangements with (i) donors such as the United Kingdom under their Institutional Strengthening Programme (ISP), (ii) academic institutions such as Tufts University, (iii) organizations such as FEWS-NET, the South African Development Community (SADC) and the *Comité permanent inter-états de lutte contre la sécheresse dans le Sahel* (CILSS), and (iv) NGOs such as Oxfam have also been established or are planned. WFP coordinates with the Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) initiative launched by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States Department State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the wider humanitarian community to ensure consistency in methodologies for assessing needs based on nutritional status, mortality rates and food security. These partnerships strengthen assessments in life-threatening situations and facilitate more integrated responses by the humanitarian community.
23. WFP aims for systematic reinforcement of its partnership and collaboration arrangements. All efforts will be tracked and adjustments will be made on the basis of lessons learned. Programmatic partnerships will build on agreed methodologies and tools, and make best use of comparative advantages, sectoral expertise and experience. In order to enhance the scope for standby agreements, profiles of assessment specialists were shared with potential partners. At present, approximately 50 percent of WFP's assessments are conducted with partners. By the end of the strengthening process, this figure should have increased to 75 percent, leaving only some initial and rapid assessments being carried out by WFP alone.
24. Investing in ENA capacities and competencies jointly with partner support calls for approximately US\$6 million over 12 months in 2004–2005. Some activities have not yet been funded (see Annex). Similar financial requirements will have to be met during the subsequent phase of the programme for further investments in pre-crisis information and associated monitoring systems, technical expertise, additional specialized studies on identified issues, roll-out of the training programme in basic and advanced assessment skills, and national assessment capacity-building.
25. Most of the funding for the more than 100 ENAs that WFP undertakes every year is covered by DSC in the project budgets. Additional independent financing is required to augment WFP's capacity to conduct impartial ENAs and ensure adequate coverage of assessment requirements without the need to recoup the expenditures. WFP will seek money for a fund that would enable such independent ENAs. ISP funds are already being used to pilot financing of assessments in selected countries where WFP is either not



present or has no ongoing relief operation and where protracted relief needs would benefit from an independent reality check.

26. Once enhanced, strengthened ENA and competencies will be mainstreamed and maintained by WFP's regular budget.

EXECUTIVE BOARD REVIEW OF PROGRESS

27. The Executive Board may wish to review progress in strengthening ENA capacities at its Third Regular Session in 2005, when achievements can be further demonstrated. Further steps will be defined for the remaining period of this initiative. The enhanced capacities will then be mainstreamed in WFP core functions.



ANNEX

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN STATUS OF STRENGTHENING ENAs 2004–2006			
Themes emerging from EB.1/2004 policy document/discussion	Activity	Timeframe	Funding source (US\$)
Transparency and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fully developed ENA website, intranet and public, including protocols for remote access and maintenance of data archive for use by the humanitarian community. ➤ Accountability of WFP managers through protocol of quality control and monitoring: ENA report-tracking system and internal quality-control mechanisms are being established. ➤ Development of global emergency food aid needs tracking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ June 2005 ➤ Nov. 2004 ➤ Mid-2005 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donor support anticipated PSA ISP
Crisis information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establishment of pre-crisis baselines and monitoring systems in selected priority countries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ 10 baselines and 5 monitoring systems (first phase) ◇ 10 baselines and 5 monitoring systems (second phase) ➤ Linkage models for crisis-information gathering and management developed and field-tested. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Oct. 2004–Sept. 2005 ➤ 2005–2006 ➤ Oct. 2004–Sept. 2005 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donor support anticipated TBI Donor support anticipated
Methodologies and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ WFP/UNHCR JAM guidelines translated and disseminated in provisional version. ➤ WFP EFSA handbook incorporating partner/donor/in-house comments issued in provisional version. ➤ Refinement of WFP/FAO CFSAM approach through technical review, field testing and consultations, leading to issuing of revised guidelines. ➤ Research and field testing of refined assessment methodologies for selected issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ role of markets in emergencies, including effects of food aid interventions; ◇ non-food responses and multi-sector approaches; ◇ chronic food insecurity; ◇ in-depth and independent assessments; ◇ population estimates; and ◇ ENA in urban settings ➤ Develop and disseminate WFP software package that supports assessment data management and analysis. ➤ Issuing of final version of JAM guidelines and EFSA Handbook. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Oct. 2004 ➤ Dec. 2004 ➤ Oct 2005 ➤ Sept. 2005 ➤ June 2005 ➤ End 2005 ➤ Mid-2006 ➤ End 2004 ➤ Mid-2005 and end 2006 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PSA ISP TBI Donor support anticipated ISP TBI PSA PSA/TBI



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN STATUS OF STRENGTHENING ENAs 2004–2006			
Themes emerging from EB.1/2004 policy document/discussion	Activity	Timeframe	Funding source (US\$)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support to preparation and testing of multi-sectoral guidance such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ CAP matrix, including pilot testing in Burundi and DRC within framework of Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative; and ◊ post-conflict assessments guidelines initiated by UNDG/ECHA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mid-2005 	PSA/TBI
Training, partnerships and capacity-building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Training needs assessment and design of ENA learning strategy. Implementation of ENA training for WFP staff and partners in collaboration with VAM Unit and PSPN. ➤ Building cadre of assessment specialists in-house and through partnerships/secondments with expertise in market analysis, food security, nutrition, ENA capacity building. ➤ Development and pilot testing of training strategy for 50 advanced assessors. Capacity building for advanced assessors. ➤ National assessment capacity-building in selected priority countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dec 2004 ➤ March 2006 ➤ Oct. 2004–Sept. 2005 ➤ Oct. 2005–Sept. 2006 ➤ Oct. 2004–Dec. 2005 ➤ 2006 ➤ 2005–2006 	PSA PSA/TBI Donor support anticipated TBI German Gov. TBI TBI



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ACF	<i>Action contre la faim</i>
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CHAP	Coordinated Humanitarian Action Plan
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CILSS	<i>Comité permanent inter-états de lutte contre la sécheresse dans le Sahel</i>
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DSC	direct support costs
ECHA	Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
EMOP	emergency operation
ENA	emergency needs assessment
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEWS-NET	Famine and Early Warning System Network
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	internally displaced person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ISP	Institutional Strengthening Programme
JAM	joint assessment mission
JRC	Joint Research Centre (European Commission)
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MSF	<i>Médecins sans frontières</i>
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OEN	Emergency Needs Assessment Unit
OEP	Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit
PRC	Project Review Committee
PRM	United States Department State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
PSA	Programme Support and Administrative (budget)
PSPN	Policy and Nutrition Unit



SADC	South African Development Community
SMART	Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transactions
SPHERE	Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response
TBI	to be identified
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAM	vulnerability analysis and mapping

