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ENABLING DEVELOPMENT



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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document contains recommendations for review and approval by the Executive Board.

Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session of 1996, the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented. The meetings of the Executive Board are to be conducted in a business-like manner, with increased dialogue and exchanges between delegations and the Secretariat. Efforts to promote these guiding principles will continue to be pursued by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat therefore invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document in the plenary.

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INTRODUCTION

1. In 1996 the World Food Summit set the objective of halving the number of chronically undernourished people in the world by the year 2015. Realization of this objective is far beyond the capacity of any one government or organization. It will require massive investments, appropriate policies, and the combined efforts of governments, civil society international organizations—and hungry people themselves—to alleviate poverty and build sustainable food security.
2. Food aid is a relatively small proportion of overall development assistance. Even if it were available in much larger quantities, food aid alone would not be the solution for the approximately 830 million hungry people in this world. Food aid has its own niche and distinctive role and will contribute to achieving the goal of the World Food Summit¹ not as a “stand alone” resource, but in combination with other measures. WFP will work in partnership with national and international partners, combining its resources and expertise with those of others, for the benefit of the poor and hungry. National strategies will provide the framework for coordinated action and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) will facilitate enhanced collaboration within the United Nations family.
3. To take full advantage of its potential, it is necessary to understand and build upon the qualities that make food aid different from other kinds of assistance. It is equally important to understand its limitations, manage its potential disadvantages and consider how it may best be used in combination with other development interventions. The starting point is a consideration of who are the hungry and how their food insecurity hinders their ability to participate in the development process.

FOOD AS AID

4. Hunger is concentrated in areas of low economic growth, low food supply, low spending on health and education, low female literacy, low access to safe water and adequate sanitation, high population density on fragile natural resource bases, and vulnerability to natural disasters. There is a lack of both “hard” infrastructure such as roads and “soft” infrastructure such as credit, information, and social services.² These areas, and the people who live in them, are out of the mainstream. Marginalized people, and isolated areas, are the most likely to be cut off from the early benefits of economic growth, government services and efficient markets. They are frequently given low priority in the allocation of government and donor resources.
5. In some countries, malnutrition in the poorest areas of cities and peri-urban areas already rivals that in marginal rural areas.³ Projections are that within the next 20 years, more poor and undernourished people will be living in cities and towns than in the countryside.¹

¹ See Annex II.

² Isolating Hunger: Reaching People in Need Beyond the Mainstream, Background papers, WFP consultation, October 1998.

³ Ibid.



6. Most development measures are designed to foster mainstream economic growth. But poor, marginalized people are the least likely to gain access to these development activities and participate in the growth they foster. They benefit much later, if at all. If they are not to be left out of the development process, special measures designed for their needs are required. This is the “challenge of inclusion”, in the words of the World Bank.
7. Food aid has a role to play in enabling marginalized, food-insecure people to participate in the broad process of development. This is the case, first, because food is a form of assistance which meets one of the most basic needs of poor families, who typically devote 65 to 70 percent of their income to food.² Food is essential to health, growth and productivity. Nothing can replace it. And the prospect of food security in a few years cannot compensate for inadequate nutrition today.
8. Moreover, targeted food aid is a fast track to the poor. It reaches their communities directly and immediately in a way much other assistance does not, providing help until the benefits of economic growth and increased productivity can relieve food insecurity.
9. Assistance in the form of food has a different impact on a family than an increase in cash income. When a food-insecure household receives food, it will consume all or most of it; when it receives a corresponding increase in cash income, expenditure is more widely spread, leading to less impact on family food consumption and nutrition.³
10. The impact of food aid on family nutrition is enhanced when it is placed in the hands of women, for they are more likely than men to use it to benefit the household and meet children’s needs.⁴ Moreover, in most societies women are able to retain control of food resources, whereas cash and other resources tend to be appropriated by men, even if they are initially directed to women. Transferring food aid directly to women places a valuable, and potentially empowering, resource under their control.⁵
11. Effective use of food aid involves building on these features. It is the assistance of choice when and where inadequate food consumption threatens the health and productivity of poor households; it is an appropriate resource to bring immediate help while poor, marginalized people await the benefits that other investments will bring—some day. But, the potential drawbacks of food aid as well as its strengths need to be taken into account.
12. The potential for **dependency** is always of concern when assistance is provided. The intention is to support, not substitute for, appropriate action on the part of recipients. But there is no simple way to strike the right balance between helping recipients to do what they can, and expecting them to do all they can. This is true whether the recipient is believed to be the government or the communities and families that are the beneficiaries.
13. It is not always assistance that saps initiative. Hunger itself limits energy and constrains productivity, making it extremely difficult for a household to help itself. For hungry people, the food aid that WFP offers them is not an easy way out. It is linked to an obligation and through the obligation to an opportunity.

¹ Urban Challenges to Food and Nutrition Security, IFPRI, 1997.

² Poverty Reduction Handbook; World Bank, 1992.

³ The Food Factor, *Background papers*, WFP Consultation on Food Aid and Development, October 1998.

⁴ Intrahousehold Resource Allocation in Developing Countries: Models, Methods, and Policy, Haddad, Hoddinott, Alderman, IFPRI, 1997.

⁵ Women in Food Aid Interventions: Impacts and Issues, *Background papers*, WFP Consultation, October 1998.



14. The likelihood of dependency is further lessened by the fact that it is generally only in humanitarian emergencies that WFP provides enough to feed a family. In other situations, food aid is linked to a few weeks of labour on a works project, for example, or limited to the child that attends school. This is not enough to enable a family to cease its own efforts.
15. That said, the possibility of dependency cannot be ignored. It can be avoided, most importantly, by providing food aid only where and when it is truly needed. The indicators that signal a need for food aid to help a community through a seasonal shortage or a particularly bad year should also be used to trigger a timely withdrawal.
16. Early intervention is another way to avert dependency. In particularly difficult times, help should be offered early to avoid a slide into destitution, for it is the totally destitute who are most likely to become dependent.
17. The risk that local and national governments will count on food aid or other assistance to replace, rather than support, their own efforts also calls for consideration, both to avoid dependency and to lay the foundations for sustainability.
18. Good project design can, to some extent, increase the likelihood of sustainability. Community participation in the selection and management of activities increases the likelihood of continued maintenance; a World Bank study of “workfare” projects¹ uses direct local-level involvement in the proposed activity as an indicator of longer-term sustainability. When communities understand the benefits of girls’ education, the prospects for community support increase.
19. In many cases the sustainability of benefits is inherent—the child that goes to school and learns well because he/she has received a nutritious meal retains the education throughout life; the pay-off for good nutrition in early childhood is lasting. The greater worry has to do with the continuation and maintenance of WFP-supported activities. At some point, WFP support for the project will come to an end, and sustainability will depend largely on political commitment.
20. There is no substitute for recipient government commitment, and no lasting success without it. At the same time, resources are scarce. The need is to make a distinction between commitment and capacity, to make a realistic assessment about what recipient governments can do—if reducing hunger is truly a priority—and to expect that governments will do their utmost to fulfil the commitments they made in endorsing the World Food Summit Plan of Action.
21. First, WFP assistance is most likely to be effective in the context of an enabling policy environment, particularly one which is consistent with the following elements of the World Food Summit Plan of Action:
 - makes the eradication of hunger and attaining sustainable food security at the household and national levels a top policy priority (commitment 2.1 (a));
 - promotes access for all, especially the poor and members of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, to basic education and primary health care (objective 2.4);
 - ensures gender equality and empowerment of women (objective 1.3);
 - develops well targeted social welfare and nutrition safety nets to meet the needs of the food insecure (commitment 2.2(c));

¹ Appraising Workfare Programs, M. Ravallion, Policy Research Working Paper 1955, World Bank, 1998.



- provides for the monitoring of the availability and nutritional adequacy of food supplies and reserve stocks, giving particular attention to areas at high risk of food insecurity, to nutritionally vulnerable groups and to areas where seasonal variations have important nutritional implications (commitment 2.3(a));
 - fully takes into account the need to sustain natural resources in pursuing food production (objective 3.1).
22. Secondly, national governments show political will to assist the most vulnerable when they collaborate with WFP to target food aid to those who need it most and to use participatory approaches to assist in activity selection.
 23. Thirdly, commitment is demonstrated when governments provide staff and financial resources in accordance with their agreed responsibilities for programme implementation.
 24. Finally, effective co-ordination within and among recipient government Ministries is practical evidence of commitment to make best use of WFP food aid.
 25. Policies and measures of this kind, taken together, should dispel concern that WFP assistance is a substitute, rather than a support, for the efforts of a government committed to improving the situation of the hungry poor. They are also the best indications that activities supported by WFP are likely to be sustained.
 26. In providing food aid, it is also important to avoid the risk of disincentives. The volume of food aid which WFP delivers and targets to the very poor is unlikely to have a price impact at the national level. Indeed, in some developing countries, WFP is a buyer rather than a supplier of food, thus stimulating the market demand for local production. Subject to the availability of donor resources for this purpose, WFP should expand the use of local purchases.
 27. Concerns are sometimes raised also about the effects of WFP food aid on local markets. The worry is that food brought into a region by WFP might compete with local production, lowering prices and discouraging farmers from maximizing production. This is a potential danger—one which WFP is aware of—but one which need not become a reality.
 28. Much WFP food is made available when and where food is in shortage, typically in the lean season or in bad years; to individuals whose nutritional requirements are not normally met through the market; and when and where the market does not bring in sufficient food at prices people can afford to pay. In such circumstances, WFP food is additional to current consumption and a disincentive effect is unlikely.
 29. Greater attention is required when food is available on the local market and inadequate consumption is caused by lack of access. Ideally, WFP should help purchase at least part of the food basket (the commodities readily available) locally, if the market can handle an intervention of this size. Another possible approach could be the use of vouchers, strictly tied to the purchase of food on the local market. This would retain the advantages of assistance in the form of food rather than cash, while supporting local production and markets.
 30. In short, the analysis of and response to potential disincentive effects needs to be situation-specific and local. The only generic prescription can be to take account of market realities, and proceed with care. And most importantly, potential risks can and should be managed; they are not a reason for inaction.



ENABLING DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF WFP FOOD AID

31. Families facing chronic food insecurity are caught in a hunger trap. The very inadequacy and uncertainty of their food supply make it difficult for them to improve their situation.¹ Development opportunities may exist, but poor families often cannot take advantage of them. For them, there is no long-term solution without a short-term solution.
32. This is where food aid can help. Assisting a poor household with food consumption in the short term can enable it to invest time or resources in a better future. Food aided projects should give poor people scope for their ingenuity and efforts, leveraging their access to the benefits of development. This should be the special niche of WFP food aid.
33. By some definitions, this is not “development”. Certainly, it differs from the kind of contribution that capital projects, technical assistance or structural adjustment lending can make to mainstream development. WFP food aid should play a different role, which is not to promote development in the same ways as other organizations but to enable marginalized people to be a part of it, and share in its benefits. Food aid is an enabler, a pre-investment which can free people to take up development opportunities which increase human capital or acquire assets. Whether this is called “development”, “pre-development”, “pre-investment” or something else, it fulfils a vital role in enabling millions of families to escape their hunger trap.
34. A poor household often has to make trade-offs between additional food consumption and necessities such as shelter, clothing, health and education. These trade-offs often have negative consequences, both in the short and in the long term. Consider, for example, the long-term effects of the most common way of coping—to reduce or modify consumption. The number of meals eaten by the family is reduced, or meals are smaller, or there is a shift to cheaper, less nutritious foods. While the household maintains itself above starvation level, the capacity of adult family members to work and earn is compromised, and children are affected in a lasting way.
35. When food is insufficient to feed the whole family adequately, preference is given to the family breadwinner. In the short term, this seems to make sense; the household needs the income gained through the family member’s physical labour. However, this trade-off often means that women and children, especially girls, are deprived. The damage to health is both serious and lasting.
36. Another coping strategy is to reduce expenditure on health and education. When the supply of food is short, children are frequently taken out of school in order both to help with the time-consuming tasks involved in fulfilling food needs, and to avoid paying school fees and other costs. Children’s school attendance is very often seasonal and their drop-out period corresponds to periods of food shortfalls.
37. Food-insecure households are highly risk-averse; they hesitate to adopt improved agricultural technology if the downside risk places their food security at stake. Households cannot afford to gamble the security of their immediate subsistence for the promise of increased yields and higher income in the future.
38. Millions of people who depend on low-potential land for their families’ food security meet immediate food needs in ways which undermine their longer-term food security. Faced with growing population pressure and poverty, and little or no capacity to make

¹ The Hunger Trap, WFP, 1997.



improvements in their land or other employment opportunities, they are left with no choice but to over-exploit their natural resources. This undermines their capacity to meet future food needs, much less improve their situation.

39. Moreover, poor natural resource management, with a focus on today, paves the way for future food crises. Degraded natural resources tend to suffer more from recurring droughts or floods than well managed areas.
40. For people living on the edge, it does not take much to accentuate hunger. Fluctuations in crop yields or shifts in market prices, wage rates or employment opportunities can push people who live on the margin over the edge into hunger. The setback may be relatively modest but it may be more than these people can manage without jeopardizing their long-term prospects. If setback follows setback, their capacity to cope is gradually eroded.
41. Eventually, the household is forced to sell productive assets—tools or livestock—or mortgage their land or present or future crops to provide subsistence. This further erodes their productive capacity. The household will be in an even more precarious situation the following year.
42. For the very poor, there is an intimate link between hunger—inadequate food consumption—and investment. Until they have help with the problem of consumption, hunger will continue to block their prospects for investment.
43. The close connection between consumption and investment offers opportunities to help. WFP should use improved food consumption to enable the poor to gain assets, ensuring in each case that interventions make possible investment in human capital or in an asset of lasting value.
44. Using food aid to bring poor households to development opportunities means working in partnership. By working in cooperation with national governments and other organizations which fund development activities, WFP can make the link between enhanced food consumption and these opportunities, helping the poor to take advantage of them.

PARTNERSHIP

45. Partnerships are of different kinds. Sometimes, the partnership will involve the combination of WFP resources with technical expertise provided by national authorities, perhaps with support from technical agencies such as FAO, WHO, ILO or UNESCO. In other cases, partnership involves using programme resources in a complementary manner. WFP's collaboration with IFAD is a good example. IFAD and WFP have had an "extensive and rich" collaboration since 1979, and together the two organizations have gained valuable experience in combining food aid and IFAD poverty projects.¹ In still other situations, partnership may be sequential. In Bangladesh, for example, WFP provides food to enable poor women to undertake skills training. This prepares them to take advantage of microcredit made available through a national NGO, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC).
46. First and foremost, WFP's partnerships are with national authorities. Consistency with national strategies and objectives, and genuine involvement and support from national authorities, are prerequisites to effectiveness. But especially in the poorest countries,

¹ Statement by Fawzi H. Al-Sultan, President, IFAD at the WFP consultation of 23-24 October, 1998.



capacity to manage and complement external assistance—from WFP or other agencies—is a practical constraint.¹

47. Both national and international NGOs have much to contribute as partner organizations within the broad framework of national policy.² Increasing the involvement of local government authorities and, with government agreement, of national and international NGOs, can expand national capacity for partnership.
48. Often government initiatives are supported by international agencies. In the past, there has been too little coordination among them. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), collaboration fostered by the UNDG, and the Comprehensive Development Framework concept elaborated by the World Bank, provide opportunities to change this.
49. WFP has committed itself to be an active UNDAF participant in the countries where it supports development activities. Together with other United Nations agencies, it will take a similarly constructive approach to the emerging Comprehensive Development Framework. This will need to involve not only willingness to work with partners, but active efforts to seek them out and identify practical opportunities to collaborate.
50. WFP needs to be a good partner as well as seek appropriate partners. It will need to accommodate the interests and concerns of other organizations. This will mean making some compromises and relinquishing some degree of “control” over design and implementation. In addition, WFP needs to be realistic about the demands of partnership, especially on staff time and the slowing of design and approval processes.³ Finally, WFP must be a dependable partner, just as it expects dependability on the part of its collaborators.

THE FOCUS OF FUTURE WFP PROGRAMMING

51. The challenge for WFP is to concentrate its efforts on meeting the urgent needs of people largely by-passed by the conventional processes of development. It will do this by using food aid in ways which enable poor, food-insecure households and communities to make investments which will help them in the longer term. This will often mean working with people in remote locations of limited institutional capacity yet enormous human demands; acting in areas that pose logistical and administrative problems; managing interventions which may sometimes be higher in cost than “easier” measures, but which bring help to people who will otherwise be marginalized.
52. WFP would focus on the five activities proposed below, and these only. It is unlikely that any country programme would involve all five. Areas of activity would be selected in accordance with the particular situation of the recipient country and its food security strategy. There is no order of priority among the five areas of focus.

¹ Measures to Enhance WFP’s Programming in the Poorest Countries, WFP/ EB.3/97/3-A, 1997.

² Partnership with NGOs, WFP/EB.1/99/3-A, 1999.

³ Establishing Effective Partnerships for Food Aid Projects, *Background papers*, WFP consultation, October 1998.



One: Enable young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related health needs

53. Throughout life, adequate nutrition is essential to health and productivity. However, expectant and nursing mothers, and young children, have special nutritional requirements. Simply stated, they need not only a sufficient quantity of food but the right quality food to provide the nutrients needed for growth and intellectual development. A woman's nutritional status during pregnancy has important effects on foetal growth and birth weight; good nutrition during the nursing period offsets the energy costs of nursing, enables the mother to maintain normal levels of activity and ensures an adequate flow of breast milk which provides the micro-nutrients needed by the infant. In the case of young children, nutrition has an important impact on growth, severity and duration of illness, mortality, activity levels, and cognitive and psychological development.
54. If the special nutritional needs of young children, and expectant and nursing mothers, are not met, the consequences are serious and lasting. The damaging effects on physical capacity, vulnerability to illness and intellectual development are felt throughout life.
55. Even under optimal conditions, only some of the growth failure caused by hunger during childhood can be made up for later. Most damage during the first few years of life cannot easily be undone. Taking this into account, the Executive Board decided in 1997 that WFP should increase its focus on measures to tackle early malnutrition.¹
56. The design of such measures should take into account that early malnutrition is as much a health issue as a food problem. Approximately 31 percent of pre-school children in developing countries are exposed to sickness and possible death because they are undernourished² and an estimated 50 percent of disease-related mortality among infants could be avoided if infant malnutrition were eradicated.³ At the same time, disease or poor child care can result in malnutrition even if the child receives adequate food. The presence of certain intestinal parasites, for example, will limit the capacity of the child to absorb and use nutrients. WFP will need to establish in each situation whether lack of necessary quantity and quality of food is truly an important cause of the problem.
57. WFP should routinely and consistently ensure that interventions targeted to expectant and nursing mothers, and to children, utilize food which has been optimally fortified. Moreover, WFP should make greater use of blended foods to tackle the greatest challenge of supplementary feeding programmes—ensuring that most of the nutritional benefit is captured by the family members who most need it. Recent experience shows the advantage of utilizing blended foods in nutrition interventions for young children; while these foods are ideal for the intended beneficiaries, they are unfamiliar to and unappreciated by adult family members. As a result, good targeting can be achieved even when blended weaning foods are provided on a take-home basis. This is effective and less costly than traditional practices. The targeting of expectant mothers also appears to improve by using fortified foods which are different from, and easily separable from, the regular family food. New approaches along these lines should be tested for wider application.

¹ Reaching mothers and children at critical times of their lives, WFP/EB.3/97/3-B, 1997.

² ACC/SAC. 1996. Latest Developments in the World Nutrition Situation.

³ D. Pelletier *et al.* The effects of malnutrition on child mortality in developing countries, Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 1995.



58. WFP should continue its practice of supporting local capacity to produce appropriate blended foods whenever this is feasible; the technical advice and equipment involved can, with a relatively small investment, enable the country to meet its needs for blended foods at reasonable cost. Advocacy and information about the advantages of fortified and blended foods can also make an important contribution at low cost.
59. WFP should routinely provide food in association with health care and/or nutrition education measures to maximize the impact of all these interventions. This will mean working in partnership with the national health authorities and very often with WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA. Technical (health) expertise will be required in each case and very often supplementary feeding should be provided in conjunction with health interventions. In areas and times of food insecurity, the availability of supplementary feeding can, in addition to its nutritional impact, enable women to seek pre-natal care and take advantage of other health services.
60. At the same time, the effectiveness of the Integrated Child Health Services programme in India underlines the fact that a clinic setting is not always necessary. An effective combination of supplementary feeding, nutrition and health education, and health referral services can be delivered through women's groups and NGOs working with women. In future, WFP should more actively explore the possibilities of doing so. This may assist WFP to provide more support to expectant and nursing mothers and young children, in the least developed countries as well as in relatively better-off countries, where such projects have been concentrated in the past.
61. Nutrition and health education should virtually always be associated with WFP-supported activities targeted to pregnant women and mothers. Sometimes these information activities may be funded by WFP's national or international operating partners; when they are not, a relatively modest amount of Direct Support Cost funding could make an important contribution to effectiveness. Such information need not always be provided in the context of supplementary feeding projects; other activities which reach women, such as skills training, could also be the vehicle for nutrition and health education, and in some cases supplementary feeding.
62. Similarly, WFP should seek opportunities to integrate de-worming treatment in school feeding activities as well as in programmes directed to younger children. This is a relatively simple and inexpensive way of removing a significant factor contributing to child malnutrition as parasites inhibit absorption of nutrients. Whether this is defined as a health measure or nutrition intervention, the result is a child with a better start in life.



Two: Enable poor households to invest in human capital through education and training

63. Basic education brings important benefits not only to individuals and their future families but to society as a whole.¹ Moreover, the education of girls has a direct impact on child malnutrition. A recent study by the International Food Policy Research Institute concluded that 44 percent of the reduction in child malnutrition between 1970 and 1995 is attributable to increases in women's education. When women's education is combined with an improvement in their status, these factors account for over 50 percent of the reduction in child malnutrition.²
64. Food aid cannot provide the schools, train the teachers, design the curriculum, or make sweeping changes in the status of women. But, when household food insecurity is an obstacle, food aid is effective in:
- ◇ reducing the opportunity cost of sending children, especially girls, to primary school;
 - ◇ ensuring that short-term hunger does not inhibit their capacity to learn;
 - ◇ freeing time for poor people, especially women, to learn new skills, acquire basic literacy or gain access to other development activities.

School attendance

65. WFP will use food aid to enable poor families to send their children to school and help them learn once there. This support should be focused on geographic areas which show both food insecurity and low overall rates of elementary school attendance or low attendance of girls. The indicators used to select these areas should be monitored and used to indicate when the situation has improved and phasing-down can begin.
66. Particular attention will be given to girls' access to schooling. In some situations, food aid will lead to a family investment in girls' education only if supportive conditions—the availability of girls' hostels and appropriate latrines, to give the most obvious examples—are present. This needs to be assessed and appropriate arrangements made with national or international partners before proceeding.
67. Assistance to offset the opportunity cost of sending a child to primary school need not always be an all-year-every-year undertaking. It is common and predictable for attendance to dip during the agricultural lean season and in bad crop years or times of heightened unemployment. Food aid to keep children in school may be needed only until the difficult period is over. WFP should be prepared to extend its support for school attendance activities to such situations in a flexible and timely manner.
68. WFP should consider approaches other than traditional school feeding, though this an important programming tool. WFP should consider on a case-by-case basis an approach already tested in Malawi, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan and Yemen. In these cases, WFP provides a ration of food to the family when the daughter attends school, rather than assisting by feeding the child at school. A potential advantage of this approach is that it permits targeting directly linked to the attendance of girls when this is the objective. If the enabling effect of food assistance is needed only seasonally, or in particularly bad years,

¹ World Development Report 1998/99, Knowledge for Development, p.40–42.

² Overcoming Child Malnutrition in Developing Countries: Past Performance, Future Possibilities (draft 2020 discussion paper), IFPRI, 1998.



this approach may be more flexible and easy to manage. In other cases, it may simply be more cost-effective.

Concentration and learning

69. Enabling school attendance is the first step, but children who arrive at school without eating, often after a long walk, are not going to derive the maximum benefit from their presence in school. Their short-term hunger inhibits concentration and learning. Something to eat early in the school day enables children to learn better and lays the cognitive base for future learning.¹ This use of food aid enables the child to increase his/her benefit from attending school.
70. The connection between school feeding and learning is clear. This is why many countries have chosen to support such programmes with their own national resources. As approved by the Executive Board in 1997, WFP can play a useful role by sharing its experience with school feeding and by facilitating the exchange of expertise and experience among countries which are investing in their children in this way.²

Training and literacy

71. Using food aid to enable poor people to take advantage of training opportunities is not new for WFP. But increasing emphasis should be given to enabling women, who shoulder most of the burden for household food security, to take advantage of opportunities to gain new income-generation skills and non-formal education. Work with women's groups in both rural and urban areas needs to be a major mechanism of WFP's programming. This is consistent with WFP's commitment to improve women's access to assets and to full participation in power structures and decision-making.
72. Activities should be designed in light of other demands on women's time, so that women may participate without being overburdened. An analysis of gender roles and relationships needs to be firmly embedded in the design of WFP-supported activities from the very beginning.³

Three: Make it possible for poor families to gain and preserve assets

73. In the words of the 1997 Human Development Report, "a people-centred strategy for eradicating poverty should start by building the assets of the poor."⁴ Enabling people to develop assets—roads, fruit trees, irrigation structures, storage facilities, livestock and skills, to give but a few examples—is giving them an opportunity to invest in their future.
74. WFP has much experience in using food aid for the generation of assets, especially through rural works. But in future WFP will place more emphasis on ensuring that the assets truly are for the poor and that the poor do not lose their assets during temporary setbacks. The focus in helping the hungry poor has to shift from the mechanism—temporary employment—to the asset. At the completion of every WFP intervention of this kind, the poor community or family should have a lasting asset.

¹ The Economist, September 19, 1998, p.98.

² WFP support to countries in establishing and managing national food assistance programmes, WFP/EB.2/97/3-A, 1997.

³ Women in Food Aid Interventions: Impacts and Issues, *Background papers*, WFP consultation, October 1998.

⁴ Human Development Report, UNDP, 1997.



75. The food-insecure should gain the long-term benefits of a WFP intervention as well as the short-term consumption benefit. In future, WFP will support the creation of assets which will bring benefits to the targeted beneficiaries; if an activity does not meet this criterion, it should not be selected for WFP support. Construction of a simple bridge to link villages with a market town may help the poor more than the construction of a major road; a community-managed fish pond may be more relevant to their needs than a large irrigation scheme.
76. The design of interventions which meet this standard will not always be an easy task. Benefits are highly dependent on a family's situation, the type of infrastructure in question, and the design of the activity. WFP will need to learn from experience and gradually evolve effective procedures for selecting the asset to be created. In addition, issues of sustainability, attention to maintenance, and environmental implications will need more explicit attention, as these considerations have a direct impact on the benefits to be derived.
77. An innovation that will assist in this is the wider use of participatory approaches in the selection and design of activities. In future, WFP will be more systematic in involving target groups in the selection and design of the asset. The Programme will need to interact with local government authorities, local NGOs and community groups as well as with national Ministries.
78. Poor households need not only to build their stock of assets, but to preserve them during difficult times. This requires early intervention to prevent the distress sale of crucial household assets such as tools, land or livestock as well as to prevent the erosion of human capital, for example by enabling the family to keep children in school.
79. To act early, WFP needs to plan ahead. Off-the-shelf projects need to be available for implementation at the earliest signs of trouble. These projects need to be simple in design, modest in size and limited in duration. Familiar activities such as community water tanks, social forestry, feeder roads, and education-based activities can help to reduce the severity of setbacks—though not eliminate them—if they are planned in advance and rapidly implemented.
80. Early intervention is dependent upon a capacity to monitor closely economic and production fluctuations in vulnerable areas. WFP's VAM Units will provide the capacity to identify particularly vulnerable populations. And partnerships with local governments and NGOs, together with participation in FIVIMS activities and the knowledge that comes with continuing field presence, will enable WFP to better identify communities at risk.
81. In areas where fluctuations in the availability of or access to food are common, pre-preparation of measures to intervene early to enable households to preserve their meagre assets should be an inherent part of country programming.

Four: Mitigate the effects of natural disasters, in areas vulnerable to recurring crises of this kind

82. Natural disasters are a major factor affecting food insecurity in areas prone to flooding, drought, and pest and disease outbreaks. Some of the countries where WFP works experience a drought or a flood as often as three years out of five. This is enough predictability to justify the planning and funding of measures to moderate their effects.
83. WFP has sometimes supported measures which have contributed to disaster prevention and mitigation. But this has not been done systematically. In future, measures for disaster



prevention should be systematically assessed as part of WFP's country programming in nations vulnerable to recurring natural disasters.

84. Mitigation activities could include measures to prevent or moderate the potential threats from occurring, from escalating or from affecting productivity into the next season. Prevention may involve constructing or restoring rural infrastructure to limit the damage of flood water or slow the advance of desertification, for example. A physical structure such as a sea dike, gabion or small dam may prevent damage from a flood or a shelterbelt along a coastal beach would help to reduce loss from a hurricane. The use of food aid for such purposes will, of course, be appropriate only in areas where food consumption is a problem.
85. A second set of activities would be those intended to help people through the crisis. Activities of this kind would have to be pre-planned and then brought into effect, and funded, when a problem actually arises. Often such activities would be oriented toward the preservation or protection of assets, and would be similar to those designed to help people through setbacks without losing their assets or jeopardizing access to education and health facilities.
86. There will be situations when this will not be enough. In recent months we have seen exceptional levels of flooding in Bangladesh, China and Somalia and a devastating hurricane that hit Central America. In such cases, it is WFP's rapid response capacity, its information systems and the local knowledge it has gained through its regular country presence, that enable the Programme to act effectively. WFP must be ready and able to respond to the immediate food needs of affected people and then quickly put in place activities that will allow these people to rebuild their lives.

Five: Enable households which depend on degraded natural resources for their food security to make a shift to more sustainable livelihoods

87. People living in low-potential areas continually manage trade-offs between short-term food supplies and longer-term sustainable production. They typically have little choice but to meet immediate needs at the expense of the natural resource base and future production. In most cases food-insecure farmers themselves cannot bear the cost of shifting to an alternative approach. Unless they have assistance to develop other ways to provide for food security, they will continue to fall back on strategies which lead to the exhaustion of productive bases.
88. Food assistance can enable people to take steps which increase sustainable yields from their natural resources. But it will be important to always keep in mind that the role of WFP is to assist the people, not to invest in natural resources *per se*. In future, the focus of natural resource management programmes would be the food-insecure people. Improved natural resource management would sometimes provide a means for improving their chance for longer-term food security. If a project will not bring benefits to hungry families and communities, then WFP will not get involved.
89. WFP should intervene while there is still potential to improve productivity and prevent further degradation of the resource base and the families' food security. In some cases interventions will be preventive in nature. In other cases they will support shifts from unsustainable to sustainable practices before resources have been degraded to the point of exhaustion. WFP will also intervene to ward off the "silent natural resource emergencies"—those occurring from the almost invisible but gradual deterioration of the



resource base—for example, the steady moving of sands and encroachment upon arable land. Unless these areas are stabilized, people's livelihoods will be swept away.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

90. WFP should provide assistance **only** when and where food consumption is inadequate for good health and productivity. If there is no problem of food consumption, then food aid is not needed.
91. Each and every WFP development intervention will use **assistance with food consumption to encourage investment, and leave behind a lasting asset**—a physical asset or human capital—which will help the community or household after the food is gone.
92. These **lasting assets, as well as the short-term consumption effects of food aid, should benefit poor, food-insecure households.**
93. WFP will limit its development activities to the following objectives which will be selected and combined in Country Programmes in accordance with the specific circumstances and national strategy of the recipient country:
 - ◇ Enable young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related health needs
 - ◇ Enable poor households to invest in human capital through education and training
 - ◇ Make it possible for poor families to gain and preserve assets
 - ◇ Mitigate the effects of natural disasters, in areas vulnerable to recurring crises of this kind
 - ◇ Enable households which depend on degraded natural resources for their food security to make a shift to more sustainable livelihoods
94. **Geographic targeting** should be used to concentrate resources on food-insecure areas within recipient countries. Generally speaking, these will be low-productivity rural areas, areas prone to recurring natural disasters, and areas vulnerable to wide fluctuations in production and periodic food shortages. WFP will also work, as appropriate, in urban and peri-urban areas with high concentrations of malnutrition. In many cases, **further targeting** will be undertaken to identify intended beneficiaries within these geographic areas. Anthropometric and other indicators will be used as appropriate to identify potential participants. In other situations, other appropriate indicators, household food economy surveys, group-based targeting or self-selection will be utilized.
95. **Timeliness** will be treated as an aspect of targeting, as effectiveness involves providing assistance at the right time—and phasing out when food aid is no longer needed. More specifically:
 - ◇ WFP will endeavour to intervene early—providing assistance before food-insecure households have sold their assets; contributing to good nutrition for young children because good nutrition is particularly important in early childhood; using food to help children attend primary school and learn; assisting the poor to use natural resources in a sustainable manner before these are irretrievably degraded.



- ◇ Seasonality will be explicitly taken into account during the design of all development interventions.
 - ◇ In areas prone to wide fluctuations in food security, WFP programming will take into account the fact that assistance is needed some years but not others.
96. WFP will make greater efforts to understand participants' problems and needs and to use clear and objective **indicators to signal when help is needed, and also when it is time for phasing out.**
 97. WFP will normally make use of **participatory approaches** to understand beneficiaries' needs, involve beneficiaries in identifying activities suited to their situation, and obtain feedback on results.
 98. The special role of food aid is to bring poor people to development opportunities. **Accordingly WFP will be proactive in seeking out partnerships.**
 99. In all its activities WFP will emphasize **cost-effectiveness**, to be considered in terms of the development results to be achieved rather than delivery costs. There will be a **focus on results**, in line with these programme objectives. Monitoring and reporting will be made more results-oriented.
 100. **New approaches** will be tried and monitored, and the results integrated into wider programming more systematically and promptly.
 101. The emphasis on innovation will be accompanied by the application of more **rigour in design to raise the quality** of WFP-assisted projects.
 102. The adoption of these policy recommendations will concentrate WFP resources on the activities where food aid will be most effective. But WFP will need to put in place practices and systems to support and facilitate these recommendations and priorities and then ensure that they are consistently applied to the design and implementation of its activities. The following sections outline how this would be done.

STRENGTHENING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

103. Information is the starting point for quality programmes. Identifying information needed by decision-makers in order to formulate, implement and manage good programmes, and ensuring that systems support and complement each other, is crucial. Monitoring, targeting, problem analysis, activity design and programme management are linked. By strengthening information, monitoring and evaluation, and developing new diagnostic and assessment tools, WFP will be better placed to ask and answer the right questions.

Reaching the right people

104. Reaching the right people depends on identifying who they are, where they live, and when and why they are food insecure. It also requires understanding food insecurity at both national and local levels; responding with appropriate activities to reach the right people at the right times; developing clear programme objectives, sound activity selection and design; and monitoring to ensure that targeting is consistent with overall programme objectives and activity design. VAM units, in consultation with FIVIMS, are helping country offices develop information bases, using existing national data as a starting point, to determine where WFP assistance can be most effective.



105. WFP generally relies on three targeting methods: 1) individual assessment mechanisms based on criteria such as gender or size of landholdings; 2) group-based targeting that grants benefits to all members sharing a common characteristic (e.g. targeting all people living in a watershed); and, 3) self-selection, relying on individuals' decisions to participate in development activities supported by food aid. Community participation helps refine the methods, all of which require tools to easily identify where people with key traits are located. For example, the effectiveness of WFP programming depends on the capability to target people practicing unsustainable coping activities, selling assets, and subject to seasonal and transitory food insecurity—people often missed in more generalized targeting practices.
106. WFP will need to invest more in establishing baselines and ensuring capacity in country offices to effectively utilize quantitative and qualitative data. This requires more systematic information collection procedures; stronger partnerships with local, national and international institutions; and mechanisms to ensure that information reaches decision-makers.
107. WFP will review current targeting practices to develop stronger links among vulnerability analysis, needs assessment and programme design, and to ensure that targeting methods are consistent with community-based approaches. Food insecurity, vulnerability criteria and standard output indicators—for example, nutritional and agro-ecological indicators—will be further defined. Tools and methods thus developed will allow WFP to move from general food insecurity analysis to a more precise understanding of vulnerability and to identify where food assistance can be most effective.

Knowing participants

108. By understanding how people use the few resources they have, how they cope with food insecurity and make trade-offs to meet basic needs, short-term food benefits can be linked with longer-term developmental objectives. WFP will assemble a package of qualitative and quantitative techniques and tools, for example rapid rural appraisal (RRA), participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and participatory poverty assessment to better understand the needs of people in poor communities.
109. To reach the right people with the right amount of food at the right time, the starting point is to know how much and what kind of food women, men and children can access, how much they need, how they obtain food, and when and why gaps occur. The next, more difficult task is to decide which activities will narrow the food gap over time in order to construct a package of community-based activities timed to coincide with food shortfalls. NGOs could play an important role in working with communities to develop plans and “trigger mechanisms” that indicate when food is needed, and when help is no longer required.

Participation

110. With participatory approaches and tools, WFP can better locate hungry vulnerable people and understand their problems. The poor also benefit from participation by acquiring new skills and knowledge, and increased self-reliance. Participatory processes also support the Programme's people-centred approach and its Commitments to Women.
111. Both partner and WFP must be firmly committed to the participatory approach and have the knowledge, time and skill to implement it in order for it to be effective. FAO, IFAD, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, the World Bank, NGOs and other partners have a recognized



capacity in community-based participation. WFP will analyse its own considerable experience with participation, and that of its partners, to identify best practices and techniques, and learn from them.

112. WFP is working with FAO to select a set of participatory diagnostic tools focusing on a narrow set of themes that can be integrated into various assessment methods, for example, understanding participants' coping mechanisms and the appropriate timing of food distribution. The tool kit will also emphasize adapting standard tools to local situations through community participatory appraisals, household visits and semi-structured interviews, and involvement of participants in monitoring and evaluation to jointly assess results. Participatory elements will also be incorporated in training plans, guidelines, reporting and agreements with partners.

Good activity design—a key to quality

113. Quality activities are well-targeted, meet community-identified needs, match local implementation capacities, and are technically sound, properly timed and sequenced to link into wider development assistance programmes. Technical appraisals, one of the most valuable steps in ensuring effective activity design, must become a more systematic part of programme formulation.
114. Strengthened arrangements with organizations such as FAO, IFAD, ILO, UNESCO and WHO are key. Arrangements will also be sought with national institutions to support delegation of authority to WFP country offices, which must be able to access available resources in a timely and efficient manner, and easily draw on national expertise. The technical support required by WFP, the means of gaining access to it and the implications for staffing levels in regional and country offices, will be further defined. The plan would also set minimal technical support criteria for designing different categories of activities and identify simple mechanisms to ensure technical quality.

Cost-effective activities

115. Cost-effectiveness involves more than just assessing the cost per ton of delivering food and should include the cost, per beneficiary, of providing a development opportunity. What counts is selecting the right people and then deciding on the most cost-efficient way to achieve desired results.¹
116. In accordance with the Executive Board's decisions, WFP works in the poorest areas of developing countries, which usually have the weakest support mechanisms. In general, it will be more costly to achieve desired results in these areas than in areas with higher potential, but which need WFP less. Sometimes difficult judgements must be made as to whether the intended result is worth the cost.
117. Cost-efficiency assessment is especially relevant when considering support for activities in isolated or particularly difficult areas—the areas where WFP is most needed. It is important to consider transaction costs, timely arrival of commodities, storage costs,

¹ WFP has demonstrated that cost-effective food strategies can be developed which address early malnutrition using alternative approaches. The paper, *Reaching mothers and children at critical times of their lives*, also emphasizes that a given benefit should be achieved with the least cost and that non-traditional approaches can often achieve this. In India, WFP and its partners provide rations of some 20 kilograms of blended food per year per person to over two million people at a cost of less than 10 dollars per person, as the project is working outside of a traditional clinic setting (WFP/EB.3/97/3-B).



commodity shelf life, time cost to participants and capacity-building requirements. These efficiency considerations are technically difficult to assess; knowing how to apportion between imports and local purchases, within the limits of cash available to WFP for purchases, is central. But guidelines and associated training plans will be prepared to enable country offices to better incorporate these dimensions into programme design.

Demonstrating results

118. Information about results is fundamental to knowing how participants benefit from WFP food and the development activity. WFP typically gathers two main types of information to measure progress and outcomes: process information for monitoring; and, effectiveness and impact information for evaluation.
119. Process information concerns inputs, activity mechanisms and progress towards outputs; it enables WFP to assess whether the designed process is working effectively, according to the agreed timetable and at what cost.
120. Information gathered for evaluations covers the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact (both expected and unexpected) of interventions, and outcomes in relation to objectives. Evaluation findings may provide lessons that can be generalized and assist in implementing or designing other projects.
121. Initiating monitoring and evaluation steps at a project's outset allows both quantitative and qualitative information to be collected over time from a wide range of sources, especially from partners and participants. This involves building monitoring and evaluation into the programme cycle during the design phase, and defining a set of performance indicators to track both progress and outcomes that can be aggregated for all WFP programme activities.
122. At the programme level key performance indicators will be developed for starting and exiting an activity, and for measuring achievements against objectives. For example, physical and human capital assets created are a useful indicator for looking at outputs and outcomes. Anthropometry (weight for height which is a measure of thinness or wasting and thus an indicator of malnutrition) could be used at the objective level to assess nutritional status.
123. The combination of process monitoring, and assessment of effectiveness and impact, will support results-based management, enabling WFP to demonstrate achievements and providing the basis for improved decision-making and timely changes to implementation plans. The results framework should be the basis for reporting formats, reporting frequency, common data for aggregation across activities (such as beneficiary numbers), common definitions and a comprehensive system of performance indicators.
124. Introduction of results-based management will require new practices and related training. Before introducing new features to ongoing systems, a study will be undertaken of monitoring and evaluation systems at WFP. Some of the areas on which the study will focus include the following:
 - **An analytical framework** to ensure that linkages and causal relationships associated with the intervention and its environment (social, political, economic, cultural, geographical and ecological) are taken into consideration.
 - **Objectives and indicators** to measure quantitative and qualitative evidence of both implementation progress and achievement in attaining those objectives and, therefore,



the baseline information that is required. The indicators best suited for use with different types of activity will be explored.

- **Baseline information** essential for measuring the impact of an intervention. Various methods of obtaining baseline information, including surveys to measure changes in beneficiaries' situations, in-depth interviews and informal surveys will be explored.
 - Feedback tools: a **recommendation tracking system** to track whether recommendations from an evaluation report have been implemented and whether the desired impact is being achieved; and a **lessons-learned system** to provide staff designing and planning interventions with information on what does or does not work under certain conditions.
125. The planned monitoring and evaluation study will also focus on reporting issues: timing, frequency, formats, appropriate reporting levels and information requirements. It will identify how to integrate monitoring and evaluation data with other information sources in order to respond effectively to participants' needs, more effectively provide services and assess benefits. An important element of the study will be to examine existing staff and counterpart capacities, and the technical backstopping required by country offices. On this basis, training needs will be identified.

BUILDING ON ACHIEVEMENTS

126. WFP's experience in the areas of gender, VAM, country programming and building partnerships provide a good basis for the new policy directions. A number of other initiatives will help WFP incorporate its activities within national frameworks and develop synergy with other United Nations-supported activities. WFP will continue to participate in Common Country Assessments (CCAs) and UNDAFs.

Gender—Key to food security

127. WFP's Commitments to Women set a bold agenda to "ensure women's access to, and full participation in, power structures and decision-making". WFP's gender commitment has moved beyond that of most agencies by putting in place a number of mechanisms—the Gender Action Fund, the Gender Task Force—and the adoption of a gender-¹in-development approach rather than a women-in-development approach.
128. While it is too early to measure the impact of the Commitments on participants, a recent study by WFP's Office of Evaluation² suggests that since the inception of the Commitments, WFP has achieved mainstreaming of gender, improved gender analysis skills and a broader understanding of the issues and constraints in gender programming.
129. The study also suggests that WFP undertake a number of initiatives to move the gender agenda to a deeper level. These include strengthening baseline data to better measure progress, and increasing capacity in gender analysis at the field level. WFP will continue to work towards gender equality and the achievement of the Commitments by working with

¹ A gender approach takes a wider view that looks at the relations between women, men and children and the need for case-by-case understanding of these relations.

² The Mid-term Review of the Commitments to Women, 1996–2001, (WFP/EB.A/99/4-B)



partners, who have an increased role in implementation, to adopt gender-specific planning, targeting and food distribution mechanisms.

Country Programming

130. The Country Programme, guided by the UNDAF, will continue to provide the framework for designing WFP-supported activities consistent with national development strategies and other development partners' activities.
131. WFP has taken steps to provide stronger guidance to the field but a number of issues require further work. WFP is still grappling with how to achieve greater coherence and complementarity among activities in a Country Programme and between development, and the emergency and rehabilitation activities which now comprise about two-thirds of its work. Guidance on activity selection and appraisal, in line with policy directives, needs to be provided.
132. A past weakness has been the untimely arrival of non-food items. The *Resource and Long-term Financing Policies*, endorsed at the Executive Board's First Regular Session of 1999, should place country offices in a better position to secure needed technical inputs and complementary non-food items, as these costs will be included in the budget for approval.

Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Unit

133. The VAM Unit permits WFP to improve the effectiveness of its programmes by accurately identifying food-insecure areas and hungry populations, and targeting them for food assistance. To improve understanding of vulnerability and food insecurity, and to ensure their effective integration into WFP's programming, VAM has refined and regularized the collection and management of secondary data on vulnerability. An important aspect of the Unit's work is to strengthen and create the institutional and human capacities required to sustain data collection and analysis in WFP and host government institutions. By the end of the year 2000 all WFP regional cluster offices and major stand-alone offices will be covered by VAM activities.

Partnerships

134. WFP needs to be selective to ensure that partnerships are effective. Often this means seeking out partners with similar mandates to assist the very poor. For example, IFAD and the World Bank can contribute additional resources and design capacity; FAO can bring skills and technical support; UNDP and UNICEF can fund other project inputs; large international NGOs can contribute technical and socio-economic skills; and national NGOs can offer implementation capacity at the grass-roots level and a wider range of development opportunities from which participants can benefit.

In order to implement these policy directions, the following products will be developed:

- *inventory of best practices and lessons learned;*
- *adapted tools and methods; and*
- *training programmes.*



ACTION GUIDELINES

135. WFP is committed to implementing the policy recommendations in a practical and sequenced manner, reflecting the reality that all systems and Country Programmes cannot be changed at once, and that WFP does not have an unlimited number of staff to develop and implement new working methods. The changes will receive high priority but will nonetheless take time, as the necessary adjustments are not minor.
136. WFP's commitment is real and measurable. Over the next two and a half years WFP will strengthen major programming design, implementation and monitoring systems, applying it to review most (in value terms) of the development portfolio in line with the policy directives; and will develop and operationalize a partnership strategy.
137. To maintain momentum WFP will appoint a task force responsible for ensuring timely implementation of the Action Guidelines, and for reporting on the progress.

The Action Guidelines commit WFP to:

- *develop a detailed implementation plan following the decisions of the Executive Board in May 1999;*
- *immediately introduce the measures most needed to strengthen systems;*
- *review by the Executive Board, by the end of 2001, of more than 75 percent (in value terms) of the development portfolio to ensure that operations are in line with the new policy directives; the Executive Director will review with equal care those activities which she will amend or approve under her delegated authority;*
- *allocate adequate human and financial resources to this undertaking; and*
- *set milestones and report on progress against them at the Executive Board's Annual Session in 2000.*

TIME FRAME

138. The policy decisions endorsed by the Board will take effect 1 January 2000, giving WFP about six months to effectively organize implementation of the Action Guidelines in a rapid but durable way, and to monitor the change process. WFP's approach will be based on : 1) simultaneously strengthening essential support systems, for example targeting and monitoring; 2) recasting the development portfolio; and 3) establishing effective partnerships and working within the UNDAF framework. The activities related to those elements are described in the following section.
139. An interim assessment of progress would be presented to the Board at its Annual Session in 2000, with a fuller progress report presented to the Executive Board's Annual Session in 2001.



The schedule is:

FIRST STAGE, ACTION GUIDELINES JUNE 1999–OCTOBER 2001

ACTION	DATES
Preparatory period	June 1999–January 2000
Interim progress report to Executive Board	Annual Session (May) 2000
1. Strengthening systems	
undertake reviews	June 1999–February 2000 (9 months on average for each review—all to be undertaken during this period)
develop methods and tools	June 1999–June 2000 (to be initiated during the inventory period)
develop guidelines	to be finalized by January 2001
begin training	to be phased in as of January 2000
2. Review Country Programmes (CPs) and recast development portfolio	
Executive Board review of over 75 percent of value of development portfolio; recasting of other development activities	by EB.3/2001
3. Partnership strategy	
	to be finalized by May 2000

PRODUCTS AND OUTPUTS

Strengthened systems

140. System improvements will provide foundations for the new generation of Country Programmes, and will build on existing guidelines and ongoing improvements. They will be developed in consultation with country offices, and then piloted and tested in country offices working on the next generation of Country Programmes. WFP's partners such as FAO, ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, NGOs and national research institutes will also be actively involved in helping to develop tools and methods. These system improvements include:

- ◇ Inventory of best practices and lessons learned:
 - ***programme design manual and activity design process review***: including procedures to strengthen the country programming process, a review of the programme activity cycle, design and appraisal procedures, and support required by regional and country offices.
 - ***targeting, needs assessment and vulnerability analysis practices review***: strengthening of current targeting practices and information management, including use of existing data bases and development of new data collection and analysis procedures and targeting tools.



- **participatory approaches review:** inventory of participatory practices and approaches, participatory tools set and additional measures to support WFP's Commitments to Women, approaches, and development of new participatory tools.
 - **technical support needs:** a technical support plan would be developed, identifying: measures for strengthening technical support for regional and country offices; building stronger relations with the United Nations specialized agencies (FAO, ILO,WHO,UNESCO) and local institutes and organizations.
 - **cost-efficiency guidance:** identify procedures and methods to assess transaction costs, analyse cost-efficiency issues and incorporate efficiency analysis into programme design.
 - **monitoring and evaluation review:** assessment of current monitoring and evaluation processes; identification of features to improve information collection, analyses and feedback mechanisms, including elements of results-based management.
- ◇ Methods and tools adapted for field use:
- targeting methods;
 - qualitative and quantitative methods for needs assessment and household food security analysis;
 - participatory tools set;
 - cost-efficiency assessment guidelines;
 - monitoring and evaluation methods, including key indicators and results-based elements.
- ◇ Training programmes on the above methods, tools and guidelines: WFP will:
- develop a training plan to enhance staff capacities and accelerate implementation of the new policy directives;
 - assess core skills to ensure that they are available in country offices and refresh skills through periodic refresher training.

Recasting Country Programmes

141. The new approaches will be introduced during the preparation of new Country Strategy Outlines (CSOs), Country Programmes, mid-term reviews of Country Programmes and evaluations of Country Programmes and development projects. WFP will discuss with recipient governments the strategies to phase out some activities, which may no longer conform with the new policies and the phasing in of new activities which would conform.

142. By the end of 2001, over 75 percent of WFP's development portfolio will have been reviewed by the Executive Board. Immediately following the Executive Board's decision on this document, the forward pipeline of CSOs, Country Programmes and development projects will be reviewed to ensure conformity with the new development directions. Of the Country Programmes now scheduled for consideration by the Executive Board up to the end of 2001, 11 of the countries are presently scheduled to undertake UNDAF exercises; others may be added.



Partnership strategy

143. Where it is in place, the UNDAF process will facilitate the development of the partnership strategy; experience to date has shown that it affords WFP country offices a unique opportunity to better coordinate United Nations system resources, and to synchronize United Nations system country programmes with each other and with government plans.
144. WFP needs to select partners on the basis of their expertise and potential to contribute complementary resources and technical support. It will also have to take other matters into account. Some partners such as IFAD have no country offices while others such as FAO and UNICEF have an extensive network of offices. In the case of those potential partners without country offices, WFP headquarters would need to take a leading role in driving the partnership arrangements. In the case of those with country offices, however, WFP headquarters might negotiate a broad framework agreement but the driving force would be at country level, under UNDAF. The major determinant of WFP's choice of partner will be the country specific requirements. The same partner will not be appropriate in all countries. Where UN specialized agencies do not have appropriate programmes then there would be a different relationship, one of service provision to WFP, with WFP paying the specialized agency.
145. The table in Annex I illustrates the range of partners with which WFP might work, some areas of potential collaboration, and the immediate steps proposed at field and headquarters levels. It recognizes WFP's change management initiative that has altered the relationship between headquarters and country offices through decentralization and increased delegation of authority to the field. The table also reflects WFP's commitment to upgrade the technical quality of its development activities, in particular by revitalizing its collaboration with the United Nations specialized agencies, both at headquarters and in country offices.

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Training

146. WFP will train staff and counterparts in the use of approaches, tools and practices upon which quality development programmes rely. To the extent feasible, new training modules will be attached to ongoing training programmes, and selected staff will be sent for longer-term training at development institutions. Regional offices, in particular the regional programme advisers and their counterparts in stand-alone country offices will help lead an intensive effort to test new approaches and develop new CSOs and Country Programmes.

Staffing capacity

147. To guide the integration of the Action Guidelines in WFP programming, a task force will be established for a period of two to three years. The lead for implementing necessary changes will rest with the Operations Department, but support from all parts of the organization will be essential. The initial concentrated push will be accomplished by assigning the task to a group of key staff, including Regional Programme Advisers, and staff from OEDE and SP.



FINANCIAL SUPPORT

148. The improvements to be effected by the Action Guidelines, many of which build on or expand existing work, will have equal benefit to the Programme in its Development, Emergency Relief and Protracted Relief and Recovery activities. For example, a results framework will need to encompass all of the Programme's work, not just development. Also, the changes to monitoring and evaluation approaches will be applicable across programme categories. A cost which is not attributable to any one programme category and is necessary to implement the Programme's activities, is an indirect support cost (ISC). It could therefore be met from the PSA budget. Accordingly, financial provision for implementing the policy proposals would be incorporated in the PSA budget for 2000–2001 which is to be considered by the Executive Board at its Third Regular session in October this year.
149. The incremental increases associated with "start-up" could be met within the PSA or by a one-off allocation from the un-earmarked portion of the General Fund. As the PSA and Direct Support Cost (DSC) needs of field offices and headquarters are currently being assessed in the budget setting process, it is not possible to provide in this paper a definite and substantiated incremental cost. Even if it were to be as high as five million dollars, and using the projections in the Strategic and Financial Plan 2000–2003, these start-up costs would constitute about 0.2 percent in the ISC rate used to recover the PSA. Once the start-up costs were met, the updating of materials, refresher courses and the routine training of new staff members would be considered part of an ongoing PSA-financed programme of work.
150. Changes to the existing country programmes and activities/projects are not ISC but DSC under the cost categorization approved by the Executive Board. It may be necessary to augment country office capacity with local expertise for a limited period, for example to refit the monitoring system with results-based elements. The cost of introducing these systems into country programmes and activities would normally accrue to the activities concerned and be met by increasing the provision for DSC through activity-budget revisions. Again, the alternative would be to meet the incremental cost through an allocation from the General Fund. A combination of increased DSC and a General Fund allocation could be considered. Until all budgets are revised, the incremental cost can not be reliably estimated. As future country programmes and development projects are presented, the Board will have the opportunity to examine the balance between the level and composition of the Direct Support Cost budget in relation to the size and complexity of the country programme to be delivered and appropriate standards of performance and accountability.



MILESTONES

Action	Milestone	Date
Executive Board decisions on policy paper	WFP adopts new development policy directions	May 1999
Interim progress report	Progress report to Executive Board	May 2000
Review	Report to Executive Board	May 2001
Develop partnership strategy	Partnership strategy operationalized	Dec 2000
Strengthen systems	Completion of reviews, plans, tool packages and guidelines	Dec 2000
Recasting development programmes	More than 75 percent of development portfolio reviewed by Executive Board	EB3/2001
Training initiated	Training plan prepared and initiated	March 2000

CONCLUSION

151. The decisions that the Executive Board takes on these proposals will bring to closure a long-standing debate about the best uses of food aid to support development. WFP is firmly committed to introducing the new policy directions and has developed challenging but realizable Action Guidelines to do so. This will enable WFP to use food aid, in combination with other development measures, when and where it will be most effective, through well-designed and monitored activities. WFP is thus laying the foundations for a secure and increased flow of development resources to help the hungry poor along the path to sustainable food security.



ANNEX I





ANNEX II

WORLD FOOD SUMMIT PLAN OF ACTION AND WFP POLICY DIRECTIONS: WORKING TO REDUCE HUNGER

1. WFP's policy directions, outlined in this paper, address important issues raised at the World Food Summit (WFS). These contribute to the achievement of the Commitments set out in the Summit's Plan of Action and focus WFP's development actions so that they work towards halving the number of undernourished people in the world by the year 2015—a major objective of the Summit. WFP will capitalize on those qualities that set food aid apart from other kinds of assistance, using food aid to meet a consumption need while enabling food-insecure families to take advantage of development opportunities, thereby promoting their food security.
2. The Summit's Plan of Action emphasizes that eradicating poverty is essential to ensuring access to food. Taking direction from the cornerstones of the Plan of Action, WFP aims to create an enabling environment for poverty alleviation and food security, and facilitate the participation of poor people in the development process.
3. Recognizing that “food aid is one of many instruments which can help promote food security,” the WFS Plan of Action sets seven commitments which form a framework for collaboration to meet the objectives of the Summit. WFP's new policy directions strengthen the overall WFS Plan of Action by contributing to all the commitments. The following section summarizes key elements of the proposed policy directions as they relate to the individual commitments.

Commitment One: Creating an enabling environment

4. Hunger is a cause of poverty as well as a symptom—it is a trap that makes it extremely difficult for people to help themselves. The new policy directions will better place WFP in enabling poor families to break out of this trap. The directions stress the creation of an enabling environment for poverty alleviation by reaching those for whom lack of adequate food is a constraint to their development.
5. The hungry live in rural areas and urban slums. Hunger is entrenched in areas of concentrated poverty, resource degradation and recurrent food shocks, and among people who are marginalized from mainstream development. Wherever they live, women and children, especially girls, are disproportionately represented among the poor and hungry. WFP's new policy directions strengthen an enabling environment for poverty alleviation by:
 - ◇ targeting the poorest countries, and marginalized people within those countries;
 - ◇ continuing to meet the special needs of expectant and nursing mothers and young children to prevent hunger from being passed from one generation on to the next;
 - ◇ seeking partners who are also committed to assisting the very poor, and can provide development opportunities to link with WFP interventions;
 - ◇ building on the Commitments to Women made at Beijing—especially by placing food in the hands of women which better benefits the household, especially children, and is potentially empowering for women; and



- ◇ making more use of participatory approaches to involve communities in the selection and design of activities, and to better reach the very vulnerable in a community.

Commitment Two: Improving access to food

6. The marginalized often cannot benefit from opportunities which may be available through development programmes. WFP's new directions address the challenge of inclusion by influencing the trade-offs households make and tilting the balance in favour of investment—in themselves and in improving their food security.
7. By working in collaboration with development partners, WFP-supported activities will both provide help with immediate food consumption to those that need it, and leave behind a lasting benefit for the food-insecure household. Food aid provided in this way will allow people to search out and participate in development opportunities, leading to broad-based growth, and improving food security—specifically by:
 - ◇ helping families gain assets, be they human capital—such as skills or better health—improved technology, or physical assets;
 - ◇ protecting assets during setbacks, by intervening early to help prevent families from selling their assets or mortgaging their land;
 - ◇ preserving assets, by encouraging sustainable modes of development; and
 - ◇ investing in the future by providing nutrition to young children and supporting school attendance, especially by girls.

Commitment Three: Encouraging sustainable use of resources

8. People living in low productive areas must reconcile their ability to acquire food in the short term with sustainable livelihoods in the long term. For WFP, helping families preserve natural resources for tomorrow is of crucial importance: poor natural resource management reduces the productive capacity of the land and paves the way for future food crises.
9. Many people are left with no choice but to degrade their natural resources in order to feed their families. Their vulnerability becomes structural rather than transitory. The solution is to find appropriate technologies and other sources of livelihoods. But before a farmer can adopt new methods or undertake training, he/she must first feed his/her family. WFP's new focus on marginal areas and resource management will support the sustainable use of natural resources by:
 - ◇ intervening early before natural resources are degraded;
 - ◇ keeping the focus on people by supporting only those natural resource management activities which bring benefits to hungry people and communities;
 - ◇ using participatory approaches to help communities develop solutions which are best for themselves in the long term;
 - ◇ timing activities to ensure that food assistance coincides with gaps in family food supplies, reducing the pressure to overexploit resources; and
 - ◇ being prepared to provide periodic assistance until families begin to benefit from improved management practices.



Commitment Four: Developing markets

10. WFP's new policy directions pay particular attention to providing food aid in a manner which works in step with local markets. For example, WFP's commitment to local and regional purchases will help provide market outlets for farmers able to produce a surplus, and can help build trade infrastructure within and between countries.
11. Food markets are often weak in marginal areas and do not supply sufficient food at prices people can afford to pay. Also, food may genuinely be in shortage, but only at certain times—typically in the lean season or in bad harvest years. In addition, some markets cannot provide special foods such as weaning foods that meet the nutritional requirements of young children. WFP will continue to support food market development while reaching those who fall outside the market by:
- ◇ continuing to purchase locally and regionally where feasible;
 - ◇ intervening in areas where there is insufficient food available at affordable prices;
 - ◇ planning activities and supplying food only during periods of food shortage;
 - ◇ providing special foods such as blended weaning foods and fortified foods for expectant mothers to ensure that those who need extra nutrition receive it; and
 - ◇ using VAM to provide a sharper focus on where and when food inadequacy and poverty coexist.

Commitment Five: Disaster mitigation and crisis recovery

12. The recovery from crisis is a transition, a fluid situation requiring a mingling of traditional relief and longer-term responses. For people living on the edge, it does not take much to accentuate hunger. Trouble is far more likely to appear in the guise of a bad crop or loss of off-farm employment than in famine conditions. There is often no clear line between relief and development, between an emergency and a setback that could be managed with a modest amount of help. In both cases WFP food aid can act as an enabler: preserving assets and keeping open the potential for partners to undertake development investments. WFP's new policy directions will support crisis management through:
- ◇ intervening early, to save assets;
 - ◇ strengthening the linkages between relief operations and development programmes;
 - ◇ linking communities in the grey area between crisis and normalcy with development opportunities provided by partners;
 - ◇ paying systematic attention to disaster mitigation in areas prone to natural disasters, including pre-planning to ensure early intervention and off-the-shelf projects; and
 - ◇ carrying out careful monitoring to identify communities where coping strategies are beginning to endanger productive assets.

Commitment Six: Facilitating investment in marginal areas

13. For the poorest families, the trade-off between food consumption and meeting other basic necessities usually results in too little food and no capacity for investment. With no capital, no time for training and no buffer against risk, these families have little scope for escaping poverty. As outlined in this paper, WFP will make a difference by supporting consumption while helping people to adopt new technologies, more sustainable cropping patterns or diversifying their sources of income.



14. The World Food Summit acknowledged that investment, especially in low-potential areas, is crucial for future food security. But food-insecure farmers often cannot bear the cost of making necessary investments or take the risk of a new method failing. For the poorest families there is no long-term solution without a solution to their short-term problem: inadequate food for the family. WFP's new approach is particularly directed towards supporting investment in low-potential areas by:
- ◇ linking consumption to investment, using improved food consumption as leverage to enable the poor to gain and preserve assets;
 - ◇ with careful attention to seasonality, intervening early and knowing when to end interventions; and
 - ◇ achieving more sequential partnerships, especially to encourage other international agencies to direct greater support to marginalized areas.

Commitment Seven: Working in Partnership

15. Many development opportunities exist quite independently of WFP. Typically, the very poor find it difficult to benefit from such opportunities. For WFP, bringing poor households to development opportunities requires working in partnership: food aid is almost never used alone and is most effectively used when it enables food-insecure people to take advantage of opportunities. This is WFP's niche, and the organization is well placed to help achieve the goals of the World Food Summit.
16. Key to the new policy direction of WFP is the need to seek partners. No activity will be formulated without a suitable partner: to provide complementary programme resources or technical assistance and inputs; and, most importantly, to provide development opportunities from which activity participants can benefit. In addition, WFP will ensure that it is a dependable partner, delivering food at the right time, in the right quantity. WFP will work in partnership with:
- ◇ national authorities—WFP's first and foremost partners—to ensure political will and commitment in support of WFP's activities;
 - ◇ civil society, by working with local NGOs, the private sector and local governments as well as strengthening collaboration with international NGOs;
 - ◇ other international agencies, including strengthening the collaboration with long-standing partners, and using UNDAF to explore new opportunities for complementarity and the mutual reinforcement of activities; and
 - ◇ FAO, to help achieve the goals and commitments set out in the WFS Plan of Action.

ACTIONS TO REALIZE PARTNERSHIPS

Category of institution	Areas for partnership	Collaborative programming (primarily through CDF/UNDAF)	National/ sectoral analysis; needs identification and assessment	Project/activity design and appraisal	Project/activity implementation management, monitoring and evaluation	Special studies	Action required	
							Headquarters	Field
							United Nations Development Group Agencies	Yes, within context of UNDAF (or CDF) or other programme coordination arrangements.
FAO	Yes, mainly through Special Programmes (e.g. Special Programme for Food Security)	At national, sub-national, sector and sub-sector levels	Technical expertise paid by WFP	Technical support paid by WFP and inputs/resources through Special Programmes	Yes	Formalize arrangements to strengthen technical support for WFP's development work both for HQ and Country Offices Strengthen relationship through a set of MOUs on key areas	Engage Specialised Agencies in CCA/UNDAF etc. processes Seek out ways to ensure technical support to all phases of project/activity cycle Explore ways of collaborating on Special Programmes	
IFAD	Yes, within context of UNDAF (or CDF) and in sector/activity context	At sub-national, sector and activity levels	Yes	Technical support/ complementary financing	Yes	Initiate discussion on possible framework MOU	Collaborate with IFAD missions; and ensure IFAD given opportunity to engage in processes leading to CSOs/CPs	
WHO, UNESCO, ILO	Yes, mainly through Special Programmes	At national, sub-national, sector and sub-sector levels	Technical expertise paid by WFP	Technical support paid by WFP and inputs/resources through Special Programmes	Yes	Formalize arrangements to strengthen technical support for WFP's development work both for HQ and Country Offices Explore ways of collaborating on Special Programmes	Engage Specialised Agencies in CCA/UNDAF etc. processes Seek out ways to ensure technical support to all phases of project/activity cycle Explore ways of collaborating on Special Programmes	

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							Headquarters	Field
							International Financial Institutions	Yes
Non-Governmental Organizations								
National	Yes, some in the context of UNDAF but may be limited .	Yes, especially at local/activity levels through RRA and identification of needs through participatory approaches	Yes	Technical expertise and support and activity inputs	Yes, but usually of limited scale	Encourage Country Offices	Initiate/strengthen partnerships with NGOs both in context of CCA/UNDAF and in subsequent project/activity work	
International	Some, preferably within context of UNDAF	As above, but also including needs assessment method	Yes	Technical expertise and support and activity inputs/possible complementary financing	Yes, including impact studies	Expand existing MOUs with major operational partners to cover development Use annual WFP/NGO consultation to advance action	Country offices will initiate	
National Institutions	Not normally	At national, sectoral and local levels	Technical specialization	Technical expertise	Yes, including impact studies	Support Country Offices to extend contacts/collaboration	Country offices will initiate	