



Rome, 21 - 24 October 1996

EVALUATION AND TERMINAL REPORTS

Agenda item 5 a)

PROTRACTED REFUGEE AND DISPLACED PERSONS
PROJECT: RWANDA/BURUNDI

Desk Evaluation of the Rwanda-Burundi Emergency Operation

ABSTRACT

The major donors of the Rwanda-Burundi relief operation conducted an in-depth evaluation of the response to this unprecedented crisis. The purpose of the OEDE desk evaluation was not to repeat or second-guess the multi-donor effort, but to take the Rwanda-Burundi case as an example for examining the process of WFP's response to complex emergencies. The desk evaluation concluded that WFP reacted quickly and efficiently to the crisis, thereby confirming its logistical capability to deliver rapidly huge amounts of food. The regional approach was a good strategic choice. However, it was felt that some measures could have been taken to make the response even more effective. These measures include: early establishment of an appropriate development portfolio in a country which has a weak economic and social infrastructure and is prone to internal conflicts and resulting disaster; a more structured approach to planning and monitoring of emergency operations in order to facilitate efficient communication of operational objectives among implementing partners; and preparing from the onset of the operation for the transition from relief to development, both in the country of origin and in the host country.

This document is produced in a limited number of copies.

Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring it to the meetings and to refrain from asking for additional copies.

NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for consideration to the Executive Board.

Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session, 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.

The WFP focal points for this document are:

Director, OEDE: W. Kiene tel.: 5228-2029

Senior Evaluation Officer: J. Boisclair tel.: 5228-2027

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Documents Clerk (tel.: 5228-2641).

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1. In July 1994, a massive influx of refugees arrived in Zaire from neighbouring Rwanda. The international community was ill-prepared to respond to a crisis of such dimensions and started to react hastily in order to save the lives of thousands of people who were fleeing their country. This unprecedented crisis in the Rwanda-Burundi region called for an exceptional response. WFP mobilized all its resources and capabilities, and within 48 hours from the mass influx into Zaire, the first food distribution was carried out. Since then, the Programme has provided food to millions of displaced people inside Rwanda and Burundi and to refugees in the neighbouring countries of Zaire and Tanzania. The effort was tremendous. Many lessons can be drawn from this engagement and since similar catastrophes can occur again, it is important to ensure that these lessons be integrated into future responses. This evaluation addresses mainly WFP procedures. However, several of the recommended changes can be implemented only if donors provide the required resources.
2. Considering that an in-depth donor evaluation has just been completed, this desk evaluation focuses primarily on process issues regarding the WFP intervention. The principal objective of this desk evaluation is, therefore, to examine whether strategic decision-making and operational planning of this regional relief operation were carried out as efficiently and effectively as possible, and to propose improvements for future large, complex emergencies assisted by WFP. Within this context, the evaluation concentrates on the following points:
 - a) the WFP preparedness for the crisis;
 - b) the logic and coherence of the WFP response; and
 - c) the evolution of the implementation strategy in relation to the situation.
3. This desk study is based on the following sources of information:
 - a) secondary data;
 - b) information received from WFP field staff directly and indirectly involved in the operation at its onset or at a later stage; and
 - c) discussions held with staff at headquarters who have dealt with or are currently dealing with the operation.

REVIEW OF THE OPERATION

Operations design: Structuring objectives

4. The desk evaluation revealed that - although everybody seemed to know the operation's objective - there does not exist a clearly spelled out structure of objectives guiding this particular emergency (as is the case in most emergency operations). Also, the various Letters of Understanding did not include specific objectives and indicators against which one could evaluate the operation's performance in a methodologically accepted way.



5. WFP staff in the field and at headquarters as well as the files available at headquarters were consulted to define objectives in retrospective. This exercise demonstrated that it would have been possible to structure the planning, implementation and monitoring of this operation more consistently.

Conclusion

6. Since complex emergencies require an inordinate amount of communication among various partners, it can be concluded that decision-making could have been improved if early in the operation a more structured planning framework had been established, shared among the executing partners involved and regularly updated.

WFP preparedness

7. One of the conclusions of the multi-donor evaluation was that the response would have been more efficient if United Nations agencies had a contingency plan to react to the mass exodus within and outside Rwanda in July 1994. There are two ways to get prepared for a crisis. The first one is to put in place the mechanisms that will avoid the crisis. In a war-prone situation, this involves setting in motion appropriate political/diplomatic negotiations, but it also should involve the strengthening of development programmes that more directly support conflict prevention. The second one is to foster response-preparedness measures in the event that the conflict turns into violence. How well did WFP manage these strategic options? The following analysis is divided into two periods: before and after 6 April 1994, date of the deaths of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi.

Before 6 April 1994

8. WFP does not have the mandate to promote political solutions but it can support the development efforts of a country. In the case of Rwanda, before 6 April 1994, WFP's development portfolio for Rwanda amounted to 23,115,270 dollars,¹ consisting of three active development projects, as well as one in the pipeline. There was also an ongoing emergency operation for 350,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 50,000 Burundese refugees.
9. At the beginning of 1993, the staffing of the office did not allow the adequate monitoring of existing development projects and the preparation of the new projects aiming at reducing the mounting tension. At the same time, the logistics team was being reinforced substantially (from 0 to seven between February and October 1993) to deal with the increasing numbers of refugees from Burundi and the IDPs.

¹ All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars.



Conclusion

10. It appears that the international community was better prepared to deal with the crisis than to contribute to avoiding its outbreak. Although food aid resources were used for development purposes, these resources were not specifically managed towards objectives of conflict prevention.

After 6 April 1994

11. Immediately after 6 April, WFP, together with the other United Nations agencies (DHA, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO) established a strategy to respond to the deepening of the crisis in Rwanda.
12. As early as 14 April, WFP's Executive Director emphasized the need for a regional approach in order to better address the problem, and requested the relevant divisions to set up stock reserves in Burundi and Tanzania, via the port of Dar-es-Salaam, and the immediate transfer to Kenya, Burundi and Zaire of WFP staff who had been evacuated from Rwanda. At this point in time, some Burundi refugees were already crossing the border to Zaire, and a United Nations Disaster Management Team for Rwanda was established in Nairobi.
13. WFP started building reserves in Burundi and Tanzania in order to respond effectively to increasing needs and collaborated with other United Nations agencies in creating a United Nations Advanced Humanitarian Team which was to go to Rwanda as soon as minimum security conditions permitted. As of May, it was possible to distribute some food in Rwanda through cross-border operations by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). For reasons of efficiency, ICRC and WFP agreed on a division of tasks for these border operations from Burundi and Uganda into South and North Rwanda, respectively.
14. WFP also prepared a contingency plan in the event that the crisis in Rwanda should deepen even further. Most of the preparatory resources were transferred into Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda, while only limited resources were pre-positioned in Zaire which subsequently turned out to be a major area of mass influx of refugees.

Conclusion

15. In spite of the difficulties of prediction, it can be argued that a more thorough analysis of the socio-political situation by all concerned actors of the international community, could have led to a larger transfer of resources to Zaire in spite of the obstacles posed by the poor logistic infrastructure.



The response

Early response

16. Notwithstanding the unprecedented scale and rapidity of the Rwanda crisis, WFP responded promptly and efficiently to the massive needs. In Tanzania, maize was borrowed from government stocks to cover immediate needs. In Zaire, the Goma influx started on 14 July and already on 15 July WFP announced the following: the approval of an emergency operation for 500,000 beneficiaries (on 21 July, these figures were increased to 1.7 million people - 1.2 million in Goma and 500,000 in Bukavu and Uvira); the reassignment of six emergency/logistics officers to Goma; and the imminent arrival of food consignments in Dar-es-Salaam and Mombasa. Within 48 hours of the influx of refugees into Goma, the first WFP chartered plane arrived and two cross-border operations to Rwanda were launched from Uganda into Northern Rwanda and from Burundi into the south of the country. A week later, the first truck convoy arrived in the Katala camp, outside Goma, with 850 tons of food. This enabled the airstrip to be freed for other less bulky commodities, thus reducing air freight costs. Most of the food which reached Goma and Bukavu at the onset of the crisis was borrowed from WFP-assisted development projects and relief operations in the region.
17. In Bukavu, WFP started feeding refugees who were accommodated in camps three days after the influx of 18 July. This was possible because WFP was already assisting a small operation in this area and had some food stocks, a small storage infrastructure and implementing partners. WFP was also in a position to purchase cereals, beans and palm oil locally.

Conclusion

18. WFP's reaction was swift, but judging from available records there did not exist an internally consistent and clear approach to the planning of this intervention. WFP could have been more structured and pro-active in planning different scenarios rather than being essentially reactive to the situation.

Consolidation of the response; the regional approach

19. In 1994, 32 percent of total WFP relief assistance was targeted to the Great Lakes operation. WFP food commodities represented over 70 percent of the total food distributed.
-) Regional approach
20. As during the 1991 Burundi emergency operation, a regional concept was adopted for the Rwanda crisis. It was applied to: a) the food aid appeals; b) communications between the different WFP offices concerned and the camps in Zaire; c) utilization of the food and cash resources; and d) logistics.
21. The regional food aid appeals increased the flexibility of the operations and permitted a more rapid response. A key feature of WFP's strategy in the region since mid-1994 was that food follows people in need across international borders. The use of Tanzania as the point of transshipment of food to the refugees was instrumental to this strategy.



Conclusion

22. The regional approach worked. After some initial hesitation, the majority of donors confirmed their support to this policy by giving WFP full regional flexibility in the programming of their contributions.
-) Lines of authority
23. A clear definition of the role of all staff involved needed to be established to achieve maximum efficiency. This took some time. At the field level, difficulties were initially encountered as the regional approach was not understood in a uniform manner by all country offices and much had to be left to individual capability and creativity. In Zaire, at the beginning, too many people were trying to micro-manage the Goma operation from a distance. Instructions or suggestions were given directly to staff by persons who did not have a clear picture of what was happening on the ground, and decisions, seemingly contradictory to what had been discussed and agreed upon previously, were taken. It was, however, a correct decision (in terms of efficiency) that Bukavu and Goma report directly to headquarters. By keeping these operations independent from Kinshasa, it was possible to make decisions immediately as needs arose. During crucial times, some decisions were authorized by headquarters in less than 24 hours.
24. At the onset of the crisis, the regional operation was dealt with by three regional bureaux: East Africa, West Africa and Southern Africa. This division created procedural difficulties. It was impossible, for example, for the East Africa Bureau to borrow commodities intended for refugees in Tanzania, part of the Southern Africa Bureau at that time. The centralization of the responsibility under the East Africa Bureau for the entire regional operation at the end of 1994 improved coordination, communications and procurement procedures.

Conclusion

25. After some initial difficulties and delays, WFP managed to adapt its organization and the corresponding lines of authorities to the needs of the operation.
-) Communications
26. WFP country offices of the Great Lakes region had to exchange information on activities undertaken and coordinate their response. It was therefore important to improve communications between them. This took time, as very little was done at the onset of the operation in terms of standardization of equipment and material. The whole task was left entirely to local initiative in the country offices. As a result, country offices and field sites in the region did not operate at the same standard with the same system. This deficiency was subsequently corrected. To solve communications problems in the region, WFP led an initiative to establish a telecommunications network across the Horn of Africa with priority being given to the Rwanda-Burundi region. The AFRINET project is designed to provide standardized, reliable voice and electronic-mail communications facilities to WFP country and sub-offices, logistics bases and deep-field operational sites. Given the strong link between communications and the flow of logistics information, the management of the AFRINET project was placed in WFP's regional information unit



(TCU) in Kampala. In spite of these improvements, it took WFP over a year to put the standardized reporting system in place to obtain timely and correct information, i.e., where the food was and where it was going at any time. The evaluation also confirmed that the system for honouring the ITSH commitments was inadequate and that the lengthy bureaucratic procedures were not simplified to facilitate the urgency of the situation.

Conclusion

27. Although finally successful, more efficient contingency planning from the beginning would have avoided delays in the implementation of a regional communications and information system and reduced costs in the setting up of coordination mechanisms.

Cooperation between agencies

28. In April 1994, a coordination mechanism was established between United Nations agencies leading to regular regional meetings held in Nairobi. Although cooperation among the implementing partners improved during the course of the operation, there were some difficulties in coordination with UNHCR and NGOs that continued to persist due to the division of tasks between WFP and UNHCR in responding to feeding needs. As per the current (1994) Memorandum of Understanding between WFP and UNHCR, WFP launches the appeals for essential commodities, delivers the food to the Extended Delivery Points (EDPs)/final distribution points and reports to donors on the utilization of food commodities provided, while UNHCR, which often sub-contracts the distribution process to other agencies (generally NGOs), is responsible for the food distribution and monitoring. Some NGOs were reluctant to provide information on distribution to WFP or to collaborate with WFP food monitors. Donors did not seem to be aware of established food distribution arrangements. This was confirmed recently when WFP was requested by a major donor to report on and redress some alleged problems with food distribution which have not been under the control of WFP. The Programme was responsible for the reporting of food provided, but not for its distribution. It would be more efficient if one agency would be responsible for the overall process.
29. Efforts by WFP to become more involved in the distribution process has improved the distribution system and reduced post-c.i.f. losses. At WFP's request, a more recipient-oriented distribution system was introduced in July 1994 involving women beneficiaries in Ngara. As a result, losses were minimized and households received a more complete ration. This distribution system was also successfully introduced in camps in Zaire at the end of 1994. WFP's partners (UNHCR and NGOs) are now gradually extending this system to other locations and are exploring ways to increase women's participation in the distribution process. The introduction of the WFP Food Monitors increased the collaboration between the partners involved in food distribution and control, and improved the distribution system.
30. Responsibility for repatriation rests with UNHCR. WFP is not invited to tripartite meetings between governments of host and originating countries and UNHCR to discuss repatriation. WFP has, however, an important support role to play: providing food packages to ensure that the refugees have sufficient food upon their arrival. In this operation, as in many others, WFP assisted voluntary repatriation by establishing stocks in transit centres in Rwanda which received the repatriated on the road to their home town. However, WFP's participation in repatriation can only be efficient if there is close



collaboration between WFP and UNHCR.

Conclusion

31. The sometimes unclear lines of responsibilities for food assistance to emergency victims caused some loss in the efficiency of managing food aid resources. The available evidence suggests that efficiency increased when WFP became more involved in the distribution process and in related monitoring activities.

Rehabilitation/reconstruction

-) Country of origin

32. The transition between relief and rehabilitation is not a continuous process, and WFP acknowledges this. A clear example of this is the case of Burundi, where the rehabilitation programme was well under way when the April 1994 crisis erupted. During 1994-95, WFP adopted a strategy of continuing food for work for the reconstruction programme, in addition to relief assistance for internally displaced persons and refugees returning to Burundi.

33. In Rwanda, the first phase of a rehabilitation programme started in August 1994. During 1995, the WFP strategy focused on food security at the central, community and household levels and on strengthening the institutional capacity of the Government. It provided short-term budgetary support in the form of a salary supplement or food for work for the public sector and in support of community rehabilitation through small-scale projects and vocational training programmes for youth groups. The part-payment of wages was successfully phased down when the Government could resume payment of its civil servants. For the first quarter of 1996, 68 percent of the total WFP food distribution to Rwanda was allocated to recovery and rehabilitation activities. During this period WFP supported 200 different food-for-work and income-generating schemes involving 78,000 workers and their families.

Conclusion

34. Sufficient attention was paid to post-emergency rehabilitation efforts in the countries of origin and WFP, with strong donor support, moved very rapidly from relief to development.

-) Host country

35. While WFP had a strategy to move from relief to rehabilitation in the country of origin, there was initially no provision for supporting the countries and populations hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees. In general, when an emergency starts no contingency plan is drawn up to support the host government and its population, because there is always hope that the situation will be normalized quickly and that the refugees will return rapidly to their home countries. Reality is often different in man-made crises, as refugees need time to rebuild confidence in their country's new government.

36. In the Rwanda-Burundi regional crisis, the initial lack of strategy to support the host countries has meant that these countries have had to pay a high tribute for their



hospitality. In North-Western Tanzania, severe damage has been caused to the environment, due to the prolonged presence of significant numbers of refugees who were obliged to cut wood for cooking and to fetch water for drinking and domestic needs. It was not until the end of 1995 that WFP and the Government of Tanzania launched a joint mission to formulate a programme to assist the host populations of Ngara and Karangwe, severely affected by the large influx of refugees.

37. The presence of well over a million refugees in Eastern Zaire has had a major impact on the environment and the local population of North and South Kivu. Deforestation has occurred on a major scale in all refugee areas and significant damage has been done to the Virunga and Kahuzi-Beiga national parks. The presence of refugees has also led to a dramatic increase in the crime rate, ranging from petty thefts to the murder of Zairian citizens. The high incidence of cattle thefts by refugees has depleted the assets of farmers in the area. FAO predicts that the livestock sector in Eastern Zaire may need many years to recover.
38. Local markets and prices have also been affected negatively by the immense refugee population. Prices have fluctuated wildly, depending on the amount of food distributed in the camps. Since the arrival of the refugees, the prices of basic commodities have become prohibitive for the local population and wage levels of the casual labour have been significantly reduced. Many refugees are willing to work for much less than the local population.
39. United Nations and bilateral agencies are striving to redress some of these problems, although interventions are primarily concentrated on alleviating environmental damage. The lack of a strategy in support of the host populations of Tanzania and Zaire will, in the future, necessitate large-scale rehabilitation plans to restore the host population to their pre-crisis living standard.

Conclusion

40. Post-emergency rehabilitation and development efforts in host countries were insufficiently planned and implemented too late. The international community did not pay sufficient attention to the burden of large numbers of refugees on the host population.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

41. Emergency operations need to be clearly planned and managed. While it might not be feasible to come up with a detailed plan at the beginning of an emergency, it should be possible to develop and update a structured planning framework within a few days or weeks.
42. The objectives of WFP's interventions should, from the first phase of a relief operation, always be included in the Letters of Understanding. These Letters should be formally amended whenever necessary. This would enable all actors involved to know exactly what WFP is intending to do.



43. It is recommended that in tense situations, as was the case in Rwanda since 1990, WFP devote special attention to its development portfolio. The objectives of these projects should be oriented towards conflict prevention, and staff qualifications and numbers should match the complexity of the task at hand.
44. In fluid situations, such as in the Rwanda-Burundi region, WFP should continue to establish contingency stocks. Stocks should not only be placed where it is convenient, but also in areas which present serious logistic and operational difficulties and where - according to socio-political analyses - massive needs might arise.
45. WFP should be proactive in planning its response to regional complex emergencies. A global strategy should be established from the onset of the operation, and the role and division of tasks between headquarters and field staff determined in order to maximize efficiency and ensure proper coordination. This is particularly important for regional operations covered by more than one Regional Bureau at headquarters. In headquarters, responsibilities should be clustered under a single management from the beginning, to avoid confusion in the role of the bureaux involved in the operation.
46. To mitigate the negative impact of the influx of refugees on the local population, activities such as environmental protection, water provision, feeder roads, etc. should be planned, their funding ascertained, and initiated as soon as possible after the arrival of refugees.
47. A redefinition of WFP's working relationships with UNHCR and implementing NGOs and their responsibility with regard to each other, as well as to different categories of refugees, is crucial. It is essential that WFP check food distributions and redesign distribution systems for accountability purposes. Furthermore, gender and social factors need to be taken into full account.



ANNEX

