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PRO CAMBODIA 5483

Programme for rehabilitation

Total cost to WFP	65 702 488 dollars
Date first approved by the CFA	December 1994
Duration of project	Three and a half years
Official termination date	June 1998
Date of evaluation mission	10 - 29 March 1997

All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars.

ABSTRACT

The evaluation mission found that WFP's Programme for rehabilitation in Cambodia has been quite remarkable; the special reputation it has had since its inception is well deserved. The programme has combined emergency/relief elements and rehabilitation/development activities within the same operation. It may be viewed as a pioneer programme in linking relief with development in a post-war situation—albeit that tension and insecurity remain serious in many parts of the country. The programme has developed a distinct targeting system, based on experience gained during three years of emergency assistance in rural areas, and involving vulnerability assessment, poverty mapping exercises and crop surveys.

Exceptional efforts have been made to overcome weak initial formulation. The original phase was overambitious in scope and substance, and lacking in well conceived technical inputs. The evaluation found that the programme had made commendable progress in improving the original design of the operation. Significant efforts have been made by the country office to promote collaboration with technically sound development projects.

Lessons learned include the need to clearly distinguish between emergency/relief assistance and support to rehabilitation/development activities, as well as the obvious, fundamental requirement of proper initial design. This differentiation is essential when targeting beneficiaries, as well as when selecting activities and necessary technical inputs.

The evaluation considered that, to date, no satisfactory systems for monitoring the effects of the programme were in place. This was in part a reflection of the (still) weak Government.

The quasi-emergency nature of the programme, and the continued insecurity, require that even more attention is given to ensuring that food aid reaches the people most in need.

Extrapolating from the case of Cambodia, this evaluation recommends that future protracted refugee operations (PROs) of this kind follow more explicitly a dual support strategy, namely: a) targeted emergency/relief assistance with the stated purpose of enabling beneficiaries to help themselves, to the extent that they are able; and b) infrastructural rehabilitation which should be limited to the high-need/high-priority areas where other assistance partners can ensure complementarity. PRO 5483 demonstrates that such a dual approach is feasible. It also demonstrates some of the difficulties of finding the essential distinction, as well as the appropriate balance, between the two approaches.

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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 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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THE WFP-ASSISTED OPERATION AS PLANNED AND DESIGNED

1. The costs of the original PRO 5483, its various expansions and the planned number of beneficiaries for each, are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: COSTS OF PRO CAMBODIA 5483

Phase, date started and duration	Cost to WFP (dollars)	Total cost (dollars)	Beneficiaries (No)
Original PRO from 01.01.1995 (for 12 months)	4 53		971 20
Expansion 1 from 01.07.1995 for 6 months	4 16	36 99	1 99
Expansion 2 from 01.01.1996 (for 12 months)	19 42	32 79	1 60
Expansion 3 from 01.01.1997 (for 18 months)	37 57	37 79	1 71
Total	65 70	134 30	6 26

¹ Sources: Project and expansion summaries submitted to the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes (CFA) and the Executive Board.

OBJECTIVES

2. The stated longer-term goal of the project has been the same for each phase, namely, to improve food security at the village and household level in selected, poorer, food-deficit rural areas. The medium-term objectives to reach this long-term goal, and the activities undertaken to achieve them, have also remained similar. Food aid was to be used to support rural infrastructure rehabilitation works, such as the construction and repair of secondary and tertiary roads, small dams/dikes and irrigation canals; the excavation of ponds and wells; the clearing of agricultural land; and the construction of communal facilities. The project also included: grassroots' training initiatives (vocational and literacy training, in primary health and child care); rural credit schemes including rice seed banks; and assistance to the public social-service sector (hospital feeding, support to tuberculosis victims, and the feeding of orphans, children in day-care centres and street children). A proportion of resources (10 to 30 percent) has been allocated in each phase as an emergency response capacity to provide stability to communities recently displaced by military or natural disasters, and for the maintenance of an emergency information network.

Roles and functions of food aid

3. Food aid plays several different, but distinctive, roles within the different components of this project. Food aid acts as an incentive for people to participate in rehabilitation, credit schemes and training activities; provides budgetary support to certain public institutions; and supplies nutritional support to relief victims.



Innovative features

4. Since the proposal of its first phase, the project has had a special reputation for several reasons. Firstly, the programme has combined emergency elements and rehabilitation/development activities within the same project. Secondly, the project has developed a distinct targeting system, which involves vulnerability analysis and poverty mapping exercises, as well as harvest surveys. Thirdly, until 1995 the programme was funded by bilateral donations; this funding has been increasingly augmented by WFP-supplied multilateral resources; and as of January 1997 the programme has been entirely supported by commodities channelled multilaterally through WFP. Fourthly, the project has adopted a decentralized approach to identifying, approving, monitoring and reporting on village-level activities, as well to executing emergency assistance.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

5. The purpose of the evaluation was to seek clarification on some critical questions concerning the role and targeting of food aid, and the likely effects on beneficiaries, particularly as the programme of assistance moves from a relief situation to one of rehabilitation and development. Certain key issues were identified and are listed below.
 - a) Validity/value of the intensive assessment and targeting exercises. Do they work? Are the exercises transparent and consistent? Can they be, or are they linked with needs assessment exercises? If such exercises are useful, are they replicable within Cambodia? Is the concept “self-targeting” valid, particularly in the context of rehabilitation/development programmes?
 - b) Monitoring of the effects of project assets on “beneficiaries”. Have the project outcomes led to increased food security for the hungry poor? What are the actual benefits/assets created? Who actually benefits? On the issue of equity—who among the poorest are benefiting and what systems/processes are in place to monitor these issues?
 - c) Replicability and sustainability of processes/institutions. The weak Government and the history of generous inputs for implementation of the emergency activities from WFP, other United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and from bilateral donors’ implementation of the emergency activities raise questions about replicability and sustainability, particularly as the programme moves into rehabilitation/development works from emergency/ rehabilitation activities; and as responsibilities are being moved from the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) to the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD).
 - d) Quality and sustainability of assets created. As above, with emphasis on the appropriateness of the activities/assets in terms of the availability and quality of technical assistance. Given the likely dearth of other inputs, were the activities/assets created well-chosen?
 - e) Transferability of approach. From the conclusions of the evaluation and the lessons learned, it is anticipated that guidance may be drawn for the planning of the Country Programme, as well as for the design of similar projects and programmes, particularly those that are attempting to move from relief to rehabilitation/development.



ASSESSMENT OF THE OPERATION

Appropriateness of the programme/project approach

6. The main emphasis of the WFP programme has been the rebuilding of the war-damaged rural infrastructure, against a background of continuing tension and volatility, following two decades of an devastating civil war. The highest incidence of poverty is in the rural areas, where 85 percent of the population live, and where 20 percent of households are headed by women. Agriculture is largely rainfed and suffers low inputs, with the result that yields are poor. Irrigation facilities and the transport infrastructure are still in disrepair. The weak marketing system compounds the problems of the small farmers. Hence, the WFP operation may be considered well designed, to the extent that the primary aim has been to assist the poorest rural communities, mainly through village-based food-for-work (FFW) rehabilitation activities, leading to increased food security. The participatory approach developed during project implementation, whereby village leaders and villagers are encouraged to identify priorities, is leading to the better focusing of needs and better selection of activities and participants. Initial targets of the operation were over-ambitious given the available technical and managerial skills, and reflected an optimism for future security and stability, which regrettably has proven to have been misplaced. Notwithstanding these issues, the overall thrust and focus of the operation have been quite satisfactory and continue to improve.
7. The risk of indebtedness and the vicious cycle of debt are real fears for those families on the margins of food security, and who are obliged to borrow food or cash at interest rates of between 100 to 250 percent. The provision of credit through rice banks makes food-loan repayments more manageable. Needs, in terms of human resources development, are immense and it is inappropriate for WFP to initiate a large intervention in this area. There are recognized problems of open-endedness and lack of replicability. However, support to small-scale grassroots training (e.g., in women's income-generating activities) is appropriate, as is well focused assistance to the health sector (e.g., the tuberculosis programme).
8. As new areas of insecurity (and hence cases of displaced persons) arise, the programme can address the short-term humanitarian relief needs through maintaining an emergency response capacity, until resettlement or returning home becomes a feasible option. This window of emergency aid within the programme well reflects the fluidity of the security conditions and allows the affected communities to manage to achieve a certain degree of stability. According to the project design, it also allows for beneficiaries to move relatively easily from an emergency/relief food aid situation (involving receiving free food handouts) to one of development assistance and rehabilitation (involving FFW activities).

Needs assessment and targeting exercises

9. The first phase of the project was "targeted towards the neediest population, primarily in rural areas", and, according to the project document, this was to be achieved through the "three years extensive experience in rural Cambodia, WFP surveys on agricultural production, monitoring of the status of returnees and internally displaced-persons, and, most importantly, the undertaking of a poverty-mapping exercise." The latter became known as the Village and Commune Targeting Exercise (VCTE).
10. The project became a leader in experimenting with a variety of assessment and targeting instruments. Many of the experiences gained have been used not only in implementing this



project, but have also contributed to WFP's global needs assessment exercises. The evaluation mission appreciated the considerable efforts made to date and recognized the contribution made by the VCTE: for example, several Phnom Penh-based agencies and NGOs seek information on targeting from the WFP country office. In addition, data from the targeting exercises are being used by other international and United Nations agencies in the compilation of national databases on nutrition and poverty.

11. Identification of relief needs continues to be based on the rather well established local networks. WFP staff, decentralized at the provincial and commune levels, have built up sound relationships and information networks with local authorities and leaders, as well as with NGOs. Furthermore, it is through these quite loose, but most effective structures that urgent emergency needs have been immediately identified and quickly addressed.
12. The evaluation mission advised the WFP country office on some of the less successful elements of the VCTE, several of which are already recognized, and plans for improvements are now underway. It seems that the targeting exercise, while it has become increasingly complex and somewhat cumbersome, could not be sufficiently structured or detailed to identify the poorest of the households or those most food-insecure. This is a serious limitation in regard to achieving the overall (albeit sometimes only implicitly stated) objective of reaching the most needy. Although the crop-cutting exercise was introduced to measure actual yields, the limited number of cuts and the considerable inter- and intra-province variabilities obviously reduce the statistical validity of the findings.
13. The rehabilitation strategy called for targeting small discrete geographic areas, as opposed to specific types of beneficiaries or individual households. The method assumed that "self-targeting" would work at local levels. This concept of "self-targeting" rests on the theory that only those who are sufficiently poor, willing and available will seek short-term employment for a food wage or part-food wage. Yet, as in many other poor countries, the evidence suggests the contrary. FFW jobs are very popular. There seems to be no problem with the acceptability or self-respect involved in taking a food wage, or part-food wage, in rural Cambodia. And, perhaps more significantly, there are very few alternative opportunities for wage employment in the still relatively undiversified economy. In addition, the value of the food wage, or part food-part cash wage, being offered is extremely attractive. In fact, FFW is attractive to most people in the selected areas of Cambodia.
14. The almost universal appeal of FFW seems to be recognized by project authorities, who have limited the quantity of rice that can be earned by one family per FFW season to 150 kilograms. However, the evaluation mission found that it was not possible for the authorities to limit participation to one member per household and so, for example, three people from one household may together earn some 450 kilograms of rice, which is a considerable contribution to household food security. However, a woman household head with young children would only be able to earn one full wage. It is more likely that she would be unable to work full time and so her contribution to household food security would be correspondingly less; and in any case, she would be unable to earn as much as other already potentially better-off families.
15. There is nothing so technical or complicated in these exercises that would preclude the decentralized MRD staff operating the VCTE. But, given the limited numbers of staff available at provincial and district levels, such an exercise may not be a priority for the inexperienced and underfunded MRD.



16. The evaluation recognized that the project should, and does, give the highest priority to targeting food to those areas where there are emergencies affecting internally-displaced persons (IDPs) (and in the past, returnees). However, WFP's network of decentralized staff at provincial levels is now well able to identify such needs without time-consuming survey work. In addition, after four years experience of targeting exercises, it should be possible to make them simpler and faster. It may also be possible to substitute the crop-cutting exercises with earlier visual inspection of standing crops, as is commonly done throughout South Asia.
17. The WFP country office is well aware of the cumbersome nature of the current targeting exercises and of their tardiness. The country office also recognizes inherent methodological weaknesses; for example, indicators have been identified and ranked on an annual basis, making comparisons between years quite difficult. Plans are underway to revise this approach; proposed revisions include the use of secondary data for the selection of a manageable number of districts, and thereafter to select individual villages and even households for priority in the allocation of food resources.
18. Notwithstanding the above proposals for revision of the targeting exercises, WFP would seem to be in a dilemma concerning overall focus or absolute priority. Should the focus be on channelling food aid as an input into those areas or into existing development projects where there exist sufficient supplies of other inputs, including technical assistance? Or should the project focus on reaching the neediest people? The first option is problematic: focusing on well conceived and executed infrastructure projects in preference to the poorest people would contravene the basic mandate of WFP. However, the second option involves the risk that in many of the areas in which the poorest people live, the necessary non-food inputs (i.e., well conceived projects, trained staff, technical assistance) are quite absent.
19. WFP clearly wishes to target the poorest and ablest people and avoid supporting development projects that lack complementary inputs, since these would necessarily result in poor-quality outputs and structures. The onus on WFP, therefore, would be either to ensure that the necessary technical, material and financial resources are available to complement the food aid; or to acknowledge that such resources would not be forthcoming and adapt the project and proposed activities accordingly—possibly to the extent of providing relief/sustenance to enable people to take more responsibility for themselves and their own development.



EFFECTS OF PROJECT ASSETS ON BENEFICIARIES

Composition of outputs

20. The component shares of rice allocations for 1994 to 1996 are given in Table 2 below.

Table 2: COMPONENT SHARES OF RICE ALLOCATIONS, 1994-96

Component	1994		1995		1996	
	Rice (tons)	Share (percent)	Rice (tons)	Share (percent)	Rice (tons)	Share (percent)
FFW Ponds	7 105	33.2	12 82	20.9	8 11	17.8
FFW Wells	42	0.2	137	0.2	51	0.1
FFW Water control	4 375	20.4	12 41	20.3	5 74	12.5
FFW Roads	8 427	39.3	34 28	60.0	30 79	66.8
FFW Other	1 465	6.9	1 61	2.6	1 28	2.8
Subtotal FFW	21 421	100.0	61 27	100.0	46 01	100.0
FFW	21 421	77.0	61 27	92.2	46 01	89.0
Credit	2 837	10.2	1 52	2.3	396	0.8
Institutional feeding	3 045	11.0	3 05	4.7	2 71	5.3
Human resource development	498	1.8	546	0.8	749	1.4
Emergencies	n.a.	-	n.a.	-	1 79	3.5
Total	27 807	100.0	66 44	100.0	51 71	100.0

Some totals may not add up owing to rounding off.

Summary data for 1996 are the first to show allocations for emergencies as a separate item. Previously, emergency activities were included in the relevant component.

Source: WFP country office.

21. As Table 2 shows, there have been wide variations in the resources available over the three-year period, which underlines the need for flexibility in project planning. The table also shows that within the FFW component, road works have become the dominant activity. Some of the pull factors behind this trend are: the high employment potential of roadworks; the apparent relative technical simplicity of road rehabilitation works; and the collaboration between WFP and the Labour-Based Appropriate Technology Project (LBAT) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Tertiary Roads Improvement Project (TRIP) of (KfW)—despite these covering only a very small minority of the works. Push factors have included: the acknowledged technical complexity of planning and implementing irrigation and drainage schemes and of water management systems; and the lack of attention to investigating a wider range of activities.

22. In fact, it is not apparent that the selection of activities has at any time been based on a real understanding of people's priorities. Rather, it seems to have been a process of looking at what could be done, and what externally-available technical, financial and equipment back-up could be used. In this context, it may be salutary to note the preliminary results of the effects of the UNDP project in participatory planning among some 73 villages in Siem Reap Province, which show that people give a very high priority-ranking to irrigation/water-control schemes.



Benefit monitoring

23. Monitoring efforts have been made, but there is a disappointing lack of data on benefits derived from the project components. This is primarily because WFP staff, particularly in the context of weak Government counterparts, are involved almost exclusively in day-to-day project implementation, and could not devote time to examining questions of the magnitude and distribution of benefits, including even short-term benefits. Since the project is a PRO, it has not been subject to WFP's minimum reporting requirements, such as the provision of data on number of workdays, gender breakdown in the workforces, or other simple indicators of immediate benefits.
24. Those outputs of the project which may have a direct effect on longer-term food security are irrigation and water-control schemes. However, these are the more difficult schemes to undertake well. Community ponds offer an efficient water supply and the potential for the production of fruit, vegetables and fish. The latter should be encouraged and appropriate technical inputs found.
25. Roads do have a significant economic role to play, although they only indirectly enhance productivity. The evaluation found that when a low-grade track or trail is upgraded to provide year-round access, vehicles quickly take advantage of any opportunities to bring goods into, and to take surplus commodities out of, rural settlements. Road improvement can be an important "kick-start" to the resumption of economic activity. As in many countries, people in Cambodia report that one of the major benefits is easier access to health facilities, particularly during the monsoon season.

Equity in the distribution of benefits

26. It has not been possible to answer the question of equity, in terms of the magnitude and distribution of benefits. The main reason for this is that there seem to be no processes/systems in place to monitor these issues. As already noted, the WFP/MRD targeting exercises do not indicate—because they cannot—which category or which categories of rural households may deserve special attention in being offered FFW-employment. Moreover, the relatively high wages offered in FFW have led to quite broad interest in and competition for jobs among many people, including the "not-so-poor".

REPLICABILITY/SUSTAINABILITY OF PROCESSES AND INSTITUTIONS

27. In view of Cambodia's tragic experiences over more than the last 20 years, the current weak Government structures are not surprising. The evaluation noted that the First Socio-Economic Development Plan of the Kingdom includes a section entitled 'Reforming State Institutions', which involves reforming the administration. However, there is little analysis of what is currently wrong and the proposals for change are expressed in the most general and unassailable manner. The evaluation team judged that, if WFP project assistance were withdrawn, few (if any) of the processes it had introduced and developed would be sustained or replicated. This is not due to any technical difficulty imposed, but due to the institutional environment in which the processes have been introduced. The team predicted that MRD staff would continue to attach themselves to externally-financed programmes implemented through their particular ministry; in other words, they would adapt themselves to the processes developed to suit individual projects. It is external assistance that gives the ministry any operational presence at all in rural areas.



28. In the case of MRD, one specific factor to consider is its recent creation. It is therefore understandable that the ministry should be weak and should still be considering its own mandate and approach, operational methods and procedures. In this context, it might be helpful if MRD could draft a statement along the lines of a five-year corporate plan setting out: a) where it is now; and b) where it would like to be, in terms of role and capacity, in five years time.
29. Collaboration with a range of national and international NGOs has been a major facilitator in the implementation of PRO 5483. CRC is the largest national NGO with which WFP has collaborated. Yet, some observers question whether CRC is in fact an NGO. One reason for this, perhaps, is that prior to the creation of the new MRD, CRC was characterized as working "on behalf of the Government". There seemed to be no obvious institutional 'home' for the project in the Government and CRC stepped in to provide one.
30. If PRO 5483 is to continue in trying to support rehabilitation activities in Cambodia, it may be possible to collaborate extensively in the future with the NGO, Cooperative for Relief Everywhere (CARE). CARE could become a major new implementation partner. Perhaps an outstanding issue will be what sort of decision WFP makes with respect to the priority to be attached to good quality development infrastructure, as distinct from the targeting of the hungry poor.
31. A potentially useful initiative taken by the MRD was the preparation of guidelines for a new rural development management structure at different levels. At the heart of this structure is a series of committees from the national level through to the provincial, district, and commune level, and through to the village-level development committee.
32. The specification of the structure for rural development, and the roles and responsibilities of different committees and levels within it, incorporates much of what has become accepted wisdom in rural development planning. Direct elections at the lowest level of the structure (e.g., "bottom-up" planning, inter-agency coordination) all fit well within the current orthodoxy. However, the evaluation could find no evidence of this working in practice. The reasons are quite obvious. Firstly, the structure itself is still very new, dating from the very end of 1994. Secondly, although the MRD and its decentralized officers are clearly expected to play a pivotal role, they themselves are still new to their positions, lack funds, and are not yet established among the better-established agencies.
33. The evaluation found that the chairmen of village development committees were able to speak clearly, articulately and the least equivocally about development priorities. Above this level, the two main overriding questions are: a) Where are the technical staff resources to help translate village aspirations into specific plans and projects?; and b) Where are the financial resources to implement them? These are salutary questions for WFP to address if it is genuinely seeking to help install infrastructure for development. Food aid is just one type of resource. On its own, however, it can do little.

QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF ASSETS CREATED

34. PRO 5483 is a project that was conceived in the context of a continuing human emergency, yet with the aim—to the extent possible, and 'beneath' the emergency—of using food aid for the construction of useful, durable physical assets. As such, PRO 5483 should provide lessons for other projects attempting to move from relief to rehabilitation, in terms of what might or might not work, and under what conditions.



35. Experience within PRO 5483 has shown that collaboration with such projects as the ILO/UNDP-LBAT, the KfW-financed TRIP, the European Commission Technical Assistance (ECTA) project, the UNDP-assisted project, and, particularly for rice banks, PADEK and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) has been an indispensable condition even of approaching developmental outputs. To its credit, the WFP country office took a pro-active role in promoting the formation of the GTZ and ECTA projects with which it has collaborated. It appeared that the country office played this role after the approval and start-up of the project, i.e., when it realized that such additional assistance was essential if the proposed activities were to have a chance of making an impact on the rehabilitation/development process.
36. It does seem remarkable that PRO 5483 should have had to learn this lesson on its own, while trying to work with Government and quasi-government agencies of outstanding weakness and with development projects separately-funded by international development assistance agencies. To its credit, WFP's Internal Projects Committee rejected the original proposal for the project to be treated in the same (or similar) way as a developmental project. For this reason it was re-cast as a PRO. Yet, in retaining its developmental objectives, the project still did not seem to take into account WFP's global institution-wide experience of the conditions to be met when using food aid for rehabilitation; i.e., the need to view food aid as one of several complementary inputs.
37. Most planners and designers of labour-based infrastructure development projects never restrict themselves to ensuring adequate resources to pay the labour costs. Indeed, they recognize that labour is just one of many resources needed. Given WFP's strength in food for wages and weakness in respect of other necessary inputs, it is surprising that while wanting to use food aid for the construction of useful and durable physical assets, the planners of this PRO failed to prepare it at a much earlier stage and in a more comprehensive manner.

POLICY AND OPERATIONAL LESSONS LEARNED

38. Although the mixing of continuing emergency response and developmental objectives into a single project allows for commendable flexibility, it does complicate the targeting process and does not always allow for a clear distinction between emergency and rehabilitation needs. Emergency response is the less complicated to target. Decentralized WFP staff and their information networks seem well able to identify new, localized IDP emergencies. However, it is only possible to undertake well-planned and well-supported development activities where there is a coincidence in the presence of complementary inputs from other development assistance agencies. The case of Cambodia shows that qualified national institutions exist in a post-emergency situation.
39. For the targeting of development assistance to people particularly at risk of, or actually suffering, from food insecurity, PRO 5483 seems to have cast its net too early and too wide in terms of the number of provinces covered. The project cannot undertake the level of detailed survey necessary to assess precisely where needs are the greatest; and in the selection of individual communes, there are problems in prioritizing villages and the households within villages in the greatest need of: a) food for immediate subsistence, to be provided through short-term FFW employment; and b) infrastructure capable of offering improved food security in the longer term.
40. If WFP objectives with respect to the post-emergency provision of developmental infrastructure are to be taken seriously, it may be necessary to revise the approach, including



the targeting system. The starting point might be to recognize that WFP can only genuinely contribute to developmental infrastructure when it can collaborate with projects financed by other qualified development assistance agencies. In this context, there are two options:

- a) to negotiate with other projects at a sufficiently early stage to ensure that their activities will be concentrated in areas identified by WFP as being in greatest need of assistance; or
 - b) to accept the physical boundaries of other projects and adjust targeting so as to identify individual villages where physical infrastructure might reduce food insecurity, and individual households in need of the income from short-term employment.
41. If such lessons cannot be learned, WFP may face the prospect of continuing to employ people to build/rehabilitate the physical infrastructure which has been inadequately selected and planned, and will be built to low-quality standards. This will therefore be of dubious use in overcoming food insecurity specifically or promoting development in general. On the other hand, WFP may elect to provide relief/sustenance food aid to people, and to allow them to better undertake their own selected rehabilitation/development activities.

Benefit monitoring

42. WFP staff in Cambodia, as in many other countries, are too “busy” and too concerned with transforming food-aid supplies into activities on the ground, to be able to make objective assessments of either: a) whether those who benefit from FFW employment are those in greatest need; or b) the likely longer-term effect of what is being done, including the effects on food security. PROs of this type need to be equipped with mandates and resources to better deal with benefit monitoring.

Replicability and sustainability of approach

43. At present, the prospects of WFP being able to contribute to the development of processes, systems and procedures for infrastructure development that are likely to be replicated and sustained by national institutions, are slim. This is a lesson which is not unique to food aid or WFP. It is one that is shared with the great majority of internationally-financed initiatives. However, WFP can provide well-targeted relief/sustenance food, which may help to set people on their own paths to development—independently of well-developed national institutions.

Quality and sustainability of assets

44. Food aid cannot be expected to produce infrastructure or adequate quality without adequate implementation partners—mainly in the form of other development assistance, but also in the form of capable national NGOs. The higher-priority issue of the sustainability of physical outputs is also problematic when government capacity in terms of human, physical and financial resources is as weak as in Cambodia. Again, this is a lesson that is not at all unique to WFP or to food aid. It is shared by all stakeholders trying to rebuild infrastructure at the local level.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT LESSONS LEARNED

45. It is a huge task to restore the rural economy of Cambodia, and then to enable its full potential to be realized. Provision of the “right” infrastructure in the “right” places to the “right”



technical standards is essential to meeting both of these objectives. It includes rice/seed banks to make short-term food insecurity more manageable; irrigation and water-control infrastructure to bring reliable increases in agricultural yields and production; and roads to integrate markets. However, WFP is not appropriately placed, funded or staffed to meet these needs alone.

46. It may be concluded that there is a choice to be made between two extremes. WFP could either a) use food aid only for developmental purposes; or b) be satisfied with a role of “plugging the gaps” of food insecurity when and where experienced, leaving development work to other agencies.
47. However, it would also be plausible and consistent with WFP’s mandate to strive to provide well-targeted food relief to people with insufficient sustenance, and so enable them to participate in their own development activities. This has been achieved in Cambodia, which is commendable.

