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SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE SECOND REGULAR SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, 1999

In accordance with the methods of work of the Executive Board, the present document reflects the main points of its deliberations to be taken into account by the Secretariat in the implementation of the Board's decisions and recommendations, contained in document WFP/EB.2/99/10.

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EVALUATION REPORTS

Evaluation Reports (1999/EB.2/1)

PRO Mali 5804.00—Protracted Food Assistance for Malian Refugees, Returnees, Internally Displaced Persons and Those Affected by Conflict in Northern Mali

1. The Board commended the openness and usefulness of this and the other two evaluation reports under consideration. It welcomed this evaluation's identification of the need for better collaboration between WFP—providing food—and other donors—providing technical assistance. A number of representatives commented on the need to provide for better project design, clearer objectives, and sound monitoring and evaluation systems. Others recommended that special attention be given to ethnic groups traditionally reluctant to accept food aid, such as the Tuareg. The Secretariat confirmed that the country office was actively looking for project partners who could help improve technical performance and contribute complementary funding.

Burkina Faso 4959.00—Assistance to Vulnerable Groups

2. The Board found the evaluation report very critical, revealing numerous difficulties encountered during implementation, but also stressed that many of these were due to the fact that the project was working in a challenging development setting. It expressed concern over shortcomings reported, but the Secretariat reassured the Board that all of the recommendations made were being implemented. The need for sustained management attention to the report's recommendations was highlighted. In this respect, it was suggested that future evaluations be accompanied with an updated information sheet indicating what management action had been taken on the evaluation's recommendations.
3. A number of representatives indicated that the evaluation report should have been available prior to the discussion and approval of the Country Programme for Burkina Faso at the First Regular Session of 1999. The Secretariat responded that although the timing of the evaluation had not allowed presentation to the Board prior to the discussion of the Country Programme, the recommendations and lessons learned had been fully reflected in the Country Programme, as well as in the current design phase of the Country Programme's health and nutrition component. The Board was assured that the recommendations were being followed up and that there was improved coordination at the country level with major donors, United Nations agencies and NGOs. The Secretariat further assured the Board that in future efforts would be made to improve the sequencing whenever possible.

Ecuador 4463.00—Primary Health Care and Improved Basic Sanitation

4. Several representatives commended the critical approach adopted by the evaluation and noted with satisfaction that the Ministry of Health had started to take corrective measures as recommended by the mission. The evaluation's findings and recommendations were viewed as constituting a good starting point for future WFP interventions in the area of mother and child health (MCH). In discussing the need to prioritize food aid, one representative noted that, since Ecuador was a lower-middle income country, it should be accorded lower priority in terms of receiving food aid. Other representatives referred to the serious socio-economic problems facing the vulnerable groups targeted by the project,



which justified WFP food aid. The Secretariat was urged to ensure more appropriate re-targeting of WFP food aid, as recommended by the mission. In targeting WFP assistance, the vulnerability of beneficiaries in terms of food security should be considered together with geographic and macro-indicators. Government contributions (e.g. health personnel) should be more detailed and quantified.

5. The Secretariat noted the comments made by representatives, agreeing that more attention should be paid at the design stage of a project, adopting clear objectives, performance indicators and an appropriate exit strategy. Baseline data should also be in place in order to properly evaluate whether stated objectives had actually been met. The suggestion to include an overview of measures taken following an evaluation, as presented in the case of the evaluation report under consideration, was accepted. The Board was informed that future WFP interventions in the area of MCH would be in accordance with the Ecuador Country Strategy Outline and the conclusions of the Enabling Development policy discussion planned for the Annual Session.

OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Country Programme—Uganda (1999–2004) (1999/EB.2/2)

6. The Board reviewed the Country Programme for Uganda (1999–2004), taking account of Uganda's low ranking in the UNDP Human Development Index and the widespread poverty prevailing, especially in the northern part of the country. The Board expressed strong support for the Country Programme and expressed appreciation to the Government for providing an enabling environment. It also commended the geographical focus on the poorest people in northern Uganda, support to the Government's Poverty Eradication Plan, targeting of women and children, and channelling of resources through NGOs. The Board supported the Country Programme's strategic focus on education and literacy, agriculture and marketing support and vocational training. However, it suggested a more balanced distribution of Country Programme resources between development of human resources and agricultural activities. A few representatives emphasized the importance of collaboration between Country Programme activities and bilateral development programmes in northern Uganda. Several representatives noted with satisfaction the attention to local purchases as a means to support small-scale agriculture. One representative noted that contributions to stability in northern Uganda could also have a positive effect beyond Uganda's borders.
7. One representative requested clarification from the Secretariat on WFP's exit strategy and the level of contribution by the Government of Uganda to the Country Programme. A few representatives inquired how WFP would incorporate into the Country Programme issues arising from the ongoing discussion on Enabling Development.
8. The Board recommended that within the geographical focus of the Country Programme attention be given to ensuring further targeting of the most needy. One representative suggested that, before commencement of activities, WFP should develop quantifiable success indicators and baseline data in order to measure impact on beneficiaries. One representative hoped that the Country Programme would help build human capital and physical assets. Another called for further strengthening of gender strategies in order to ensure lasting impact on girls and women.



Development Project for Executive Board Approval: Chad 3499.02—Assistance to Primary Schools and Education (1999/EB.2/3)

9. Some representatives questioned whether food aid was the appropriate resource to address education problems in Chad, and whether cultural and socio-economic constraints to development required other kinds of interventions. The Secretariat and the National Expert responded that food aid played an important role in increasing attendance rates in schools, particularly when coordinated with other inputs and when assistance was concentrated in food-insecure areas.
10. One representative requested the Secretariat to be more vigilant in ensuring proper management and monitoring of food aid resources, and questioned WFP's 100 percent coverage of internal transport, storage and handling (ITSH) costs. The Secretariat responded that because Chad is a land-locked least-developed country, and the Government was covering other project costs, in accordance with the established policy, the full amount of ITSH costs would be covered by the Programme. As regarded food losses, the Board was informed that the Government had given WFP responsibility for logistics, and that the Programme's monitoring capacity had been increased.
11. The Secretariat informed that currently 37 percent of girls attended school; the objective was to attain an attendance rate of 50 percent for girls.

Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation for Executive Board Approval: Azerbaijan 6121.00—Relief and Recovery Assistance for Vulnerable Groups (1999/EB.2/4)

12. One representative noted that WFP support to recovery of the food sector in Azerbaijan contributed to stability in the region.

Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation for Executive Board Approval: Georgia 6122.00—Relief and Recovery Assistance for Vulnerable Groups (1999/EB.2/5)

13. The Board noted that the protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) would greatly contribute to the country's economy and improvement of agricultural production, in particular with food-for-work activities in irrigation and drainage schemes. One representative added that a 1998 FAO assessment mission made it clear that Georgia needed food assistance.
14. Responding to a question regarding whether the PRRO would concentrate on specific geographical areas, the Secretariat referred to the ongoing vulnerability analysis and mapping exercise that had not identified major differences among regions. The Secretariat also clarified that the annual per capita cost for both Azerbaijan 6121.00 and Georgia 6122.00 was similar.

Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation for Executive Board Approval: Iran 6126.00—Food Assistance and Support for Repatriation of Iraqi and Afghan Refugees in Iran (1999/EB.2/6)

15. The Board commended Iran's support of over two million refugees residing in the country for the past two decades. It acknowledged the heavy burden of those efforts on the local economy, and encouraged WFP to continue its assistance.



16. The Secretariat confirmed that a revised wording of the document would be issued. In response to queries regarding transport costs, it was noted that WFP followed regular tender procedures to calculate landside transport, storage and handling (LTSH) costs.

**Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation for Executive Board Approval:
West Africa Coastal Region 4604.07—Targeted Food Assistance for Relief
and Recovery (1999/EB.2/7)**

17. In discussing the PRRO, the Board expressed concern about the difficult humanitarian and security situation in the region and endorsed a proposal by the Secretariat to reduce the level of food aid to 186,000 metric tons from the 211,000 originally proposed and the number of beneficiaries to approximately 1,870,000 from 2,120,380, a result of a revised estimate completed during a recent visit to the region. It commended the flexibility and cost-effectiveness provided by the regional approach to targeting food assistance, the increased proportion of women among beneficiaries and the focus on the most vulnerable. The Board requested that an oral presentation be made to the Third Regular Session of 1999, summarizing the findings of an assessment mission, to be undertaken by the end of September 1999, to better ascertain the number of beneficiaries in the sub-region.

**Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation for Executive Board Approval:
Tajikistan 6087.00—Food Assistance to Vulnerable Groups and Recovery
Activities (1999/EB.2/8)**

18. Representatives commended the activities proposed under the PRRO, the efforts of WFP in shifting the emphasis from relief to rehabilitation, and especially those activities supporting indigenous efforts for reconciliation and peace. One representative praised the land-lease scheme activities, requesting increased cooperation with NGOs implementing agricultural development activities.
19. The Secretariat noted that WFP's recent efforts in the area of training would improve targeting, thereby increasing food security at the household level, and that the land-lease scheme would be expanded in order to increase local food production in the short term.

**Development Projects Approved by the Executive Director,
1 July–31 December 1998 (1999/EB.2/9)**

Angola 6020.00—Food Assistance to the Community Infant Programme

20. One representative pointed out that consideration should be given to expanding the project to the primary school level because it was performing well. The Secretariat explained that the possibility would be explored, security permitting.

Bhutan 3734.02—Support to Primary Education

21. One representative commended the project and requested that the proposed phasing out be monitored closely in order to minimize the number of school drop-outs. Another representative requested the Secretariat to periodically update the Board on the status of the Government's financial contribution and management performance.

Bhutan 5822.00—Construction and Rehabilitation of Roads

22. One representative commented on the poor housing and living conditions in Bhutan and expressed the hope that improvement of housing for road construction workers was not a



minor component of the project. Another representative requested the Secretariat to provide, by the end of 1999, criteria for payment of wage/salary supplements to public-employed workers.

Congo, D.R. 6008.00—Support to Women’s Initiatives and Sanitation in the City of Mbuji-Mayi; and Congo, D.R. 6009.00—Social Reintegration of Vulnerable Groups in the City of Kinshasa and Outskirts

23. Several representatives underlined the challenge WFP faced in implementing development projects given the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Two representatives mentioned the need to improve and strengthen collaboration at the field level and referred to the need to strengthen staffing in support of WFP’s operations in Kinshasa, particularly senior staff. Noting that the current situation did not permit implementation of the project in Mbuji-Mayi (ZAI 6008.00), one representative questioned why it was not possible to commence the Kinshasa project (ZAI 6009.00) where security was better. The Secretariat acknowledged the difficulty in implementing rehabilitation and development activities in the rapidly changing environment in DRC, and informed the Board that WFP international and local staff in Congo had diligently continued relief work under difficult conditions, and that the Government’s clearance was sought for the appointment of the WFP Representative/Country Director, who had already been designated by the Executive Director.

Guinea 5994.00—Community Public Works and Sanitation

24. One representative queried whether the project would be sustainable after WFP’s withdrawal, noting that his delegation would prefer rural activities that could absorb more resources than activities in urban areas. In reply, the Secretariat commented that where infrastructure was weak, it was especially important to have WFP support for interventions. In this instance, cooperatives of unemployed people were being created, resources were being invested in the important area of sanitation infrastructure, the intervention was targeted to the poorest parts of the neighbourhoods, and helping girls in poor areas of cities was considered a good investment.

Nicaragua 4571.01—Support for Improvement of Household Food Security for Poor Rural Families in Areas Affected by Drought and Flood

25. Replying to a suggestion by several representatives that WFP establish an institutional mechanism to coordinate the sizable number of international and local NGOs distributing food aid, the Secretariat informed the Board that there was good coordination among



WFP, IFAD, the European Union, World Vision and Catholic Relief Services. With reference to a comment by one representative that food-for-work activities should be monitored carefully and not extended to other areas, the Secretariat replied that the activities were designed for a restricted geographical area based on past experience, and vulnerability analysis. Two representatives suggested that because poverty rather than production was the basic problem, WFP should closely coordinate with the national food policy; local food purchases should be favoured over imports. The Secretariat replied that Nicaragua was a food-deficit country and imported over 100,000 metric tons of wheat a year, including food aid. WFP shipments were programmed in close coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and local purchases were effected whenever possible.

Budget Increases to Development Projects Approved by the Executive Director, 1 July–31 December 1998 (1999/EB.2/10)

26. One representative queried whether the increases for El Salvador 3886.01, Gambia 2729.01 and Gambia 5931.00 exceeded the Executive Director's delegated authority for approval of increases of up to 10 percent of the original food value of the operation. The Assistant Executive Director explained that in the case of El Salvador, the Board had approved the Country Programme; the increase was in line with the approved Country Programme. Both Gambia budget increases were due to donors having made available products which were of a higher value than what had been budgeted originally, thus requiring a commodity substitution without a change in project design or strategy.

Basic Activities within Country Programmes, Approved by the Executive Director, 1 July–31 December 1998 (1999/EB.2/11)

Bangladesh 2197.10—Rural Development

27. One representative queried why livestock development was not part of the Rural Development schemes. The Secretariat referred to Vulnerable Group Development, in which poultry rearing was a major component benefiting women. Regarding a query about technical inputs to road schemes, the Secretariat advised that they were provided by the Local Government Engineering Department.
28. Replying to questions about possible advantages of cash over food in rural development activities, the Secretariat informed the Executive Board that the European Commission was conducting a study on the subject. With particular attention to this issue, the Government of Bangladesh had introduced a cash component in the Rural Development activity, which could not be increased at this stage.
29. Regarding one representative's concern about national food security, the Secretariat advised that WFP works closely with the Government and key development players to develop safety net programmes and food security strategies.

Bangladesh 2226.07—Vulnerable Group Development

30. The Board appreciated the activity's focus on women. One representative noted that lessons learned from this activity could be applied elsewhere.



India 5569.01—Improvement of Food Security through Forestry Activities in Tribal Areas

31. One representative inquired about the State Forestry Department's commitment to the WFP-assisted activity. The Secretariat confirmed that there was full commitment at the state level, which was expected to trickle down to village levels. Another representative recommended an increased percentage of funds to be channelled through NGOs working with tribal communities, and asked if NGO legal advisory services had been incorporated in the project's approach. The Secretariat noted that a nodal NGO approach had been adopted and that 20 percent was a realistic target considering the remoteness of most of the project areas. The Board's advice on legal services would be communicated to the country office.

Zambia 4756.01—Urban Food for Work

32. A few representatives recommended caution in food-for-work interventions in urban areas. One representative requested information on coordination with NGOs and recommended stronger cooperation with other United Nations agencies. Another representative recommended that in the mid-term evaluation of this activity the relationship between food for work and capacity-building in particular be addressed.
33. The Secretariat acknowledged the complex implications of food-for-work interventions in urban areas and pledged to exercise necessary discretion while implementing the project activities, which were decided upon at the community level with high participation by women. Coordination among NGOs was also improving.
34. The Secretariat acknowledged one representative's suggestion that WFP's visibility at the country level be enhanced, and pledged to act upon it.

Zambia 5937.00—Supplementary Feeding Programme

35. One representative recommended that nutritional education and systematic training of health staff be enhanced. Another representative suggested extending coverage of the project to include female and child-headed households and in view of the increasing needs of orphans and children affected by AIDS. The Secretariat noted that, although the project had foreseen strengthened training and capacity-building, it had thus far suffered from low cash funding to cover non-food costs, compared to the level approved within the framework of the Country Programme.

Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations Approved by the Executive Director, 1 July–31 December 1998 (1999/EB.2/12)

Algeria 4155.08—Assistance to Sahraoui Refugees in Algeria

36. Several representatives requested information about the continuation of WFP assistance following the current operation. The Secretariat replied that a new one-year PRRO was being processed, and confirmed that the European Union was also providing food assistance to the Sahraoui refugees; regular coordination meetings were taking place in Algiers. Replying to another representative, the Secretariat confirmed that an emergency



operation had already been approved by WFP to support the repatriation process scheduled to commence in February 2000. While one representative expressed satisfaction with implementation of the PRRO under review, another queried the change in numbers of beneficiaries between PRO 4155.07 and PRRO 4155.08. The Secretariat referred to the report of the Third Regular Session of the Board in October 1997, which recorded that the Programme would immediately increase food deliveries if assistance from other donors proved insufficient, as was the case.

Country Programme Mid-term Review—Bangladesh (1999/EB.2/14)

37. The Board commended the findings of the mid-term review and recommendations for the Country Programme's future orientation, including increased focus on nutrition, enhanced role of women in decision-making, and strengthened coordination among Government, bilateral donors and key development partners. Considering the large amount of resources provided to Bangladesh, implementation of the recommendations was encouraged.
38. The Secretariat informed the Board that harmonization of United Nations system programmes within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework was foreseen in 2001. The Board suggested that future reviews could include a one-page statistical annex on progress against specified benchmarks. The representative of Bangladesh, emphasizing the usefulness of both Country Programme activities, especially regarding disaster mitigation and food security, informed the Board that the Government was taking steps to ensure that Country Programme objectives were fully met, including strengthening the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs and developing a ten-year National Nutrition Programme. He also welcomed the visit of Board members to Bangladesh planned for May 1999.
39. The Secretariat confirmed that steps to address the problems mentioned in the report were already being taken prior to the preparation of the next CSO.
40. As to cash versus food in rural development activities, the Secretariat informed the Board that a study would be conducted, but that the Government had recently introduced a cash component of the rural development activity. The representative of Bangladesh stressed that food aid plays a key role in his country.

Progress Reports on Approved Projects (1999/EB.2/15)

Nicaragua 4515.01—Assistance to Pre-school and Lower Primary Schoolchildren in Depressed Areas of Nicaragua

41. Some representatives requested information on the depressed areas and the need to include in progress reports the amounts or other types of assistance provided by the host government and other implementing partners. The Board requested a more in-depth analysis of the phasing-out process in terms of sustainability.



REPORTS BY THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Reports by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) Relevant to the Work of WFP and the Executive Board (1999/EB.2/16)

42. As regards the “oversight indigestion” referred to in the document, it was felt that this could be avoided by the Secretariat by adopting procedures which render the preparation of budgets and reports clear, transparent and responsive to the needs of the members. It was also confirmed that the JIU report on common services among the Rome-based agencies had not yet been received.

