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**Executive Board
Second Regular Session**

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COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINES

Agenda item 4

For consideration

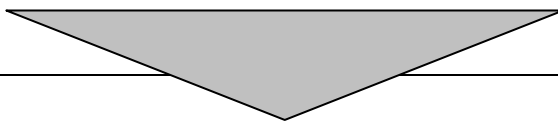


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COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINE— INDIA

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Note to the Executive Board



This document is submitted for consideration to the Executive Board.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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Executive Summary

Despite strong economic growth (approximately 6 percent) and the achievement of self-sufficiency in cereals at the national level, human development indicators in India have shown little improvement. India accounts for one quarter of the world's undernourished people. Around half the children in India are undernourished and stunted. Micronutrient deficiencies such as anaemia and vitamin-A and iodine deficiencies are prevalent among expectant mothers. About every second child under 5 is malnourished. Thirty-three percent have a low birth weight and 69 out of 1,000 die before the age of 1. While female literacy at the national level stands at a poor 43 percent, in the most food insecure areas it is a distressing 16 percent. India's Human Development Index (HDI), Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) scores are 0.55, 0.53 and 0.24, respectively, well below the averages for developing countries. Moreover, India remains a low-income, food-deficit (LIFDC) country, with an annual per capita income of US\$430.

India already has a unique set of national food assistance programmes. However, these programmes often do not reach the vulnerable sections of the population and are not very effective in the most food insecure areas. In response, WFP's country strategy for April 2003 to March 2008 will focus on the vulnerable groups, especially women and girls, who live in the most food insecure districts in the least-developed states of India. WFP will adopt an area-based strategy that can effectively address the weaknesses in the local-level delivery of food assistance programmes. This is in line with the Government's and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework's (UNDAF's) agenda of decentralization. By demonstrating successful development models, WFP aims to leverage policies and resources for hungry people and assist the Government in making its food assistance programmes more effective. Efforts will be made increasingly to match WFP food aid with national resources, both food and non-food, so that WFP inputs can gradually be scaled down.

The strategy as a whole is designed to address the specific socio-economic discrimination women and girls face (the other priority area identified within UNDAF). It will build on the national food assistance programmes in support of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS): the National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education; poverty eradication and rural development programmes; and disaster mitigation schemes. In accordance with decision 1999/EB.A/2 of the Executive Board, WFP focuses its development activities on five objectives. The India Country Programme will address objectives 1, 2 and 3: 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; and make it possible for poor families to gain and preserve assets (especially in areas prone to recurrent disasters). Partnerships with NGOs and other United Nations agencies such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) will strengthen the interventions through provision of non-food inputs and technical support.

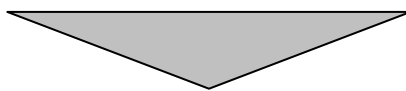
Given India's relatively strong policy, programme and resource environment, the primary goal of WFP in the next Country Programme (CP) is to play a catalytic role by developing innovative approaches. Through a set of synergistic food-based interventions, WFP, in



partnership with community organizations, the local government and NGOs, will promote immediate and longer-term food security. This approach of developing models of enabling food interventions will serve as the basis for advocating for the hungry poor and strengthening ongoing and new programmes.

WFP's new country strategy evolved over a two-year period of extensive vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) and special sector reviews of food for education, nutrition support for women and children and food security in tribal and natural disaster-prone areas. This was followed by a policy review mission that looked into the strategic role of WFP in India. This CSO also addresses the findings of the mid-term evaluation of the India Country Programme (April 1997–March 2002). The process of developing this Country Strategy Outline (CSO) has been synchronized and harmonized with the UNDAF and the Government of India's Five-Year Plan.

Draft Decision



The Board endorses the Country Strategy Outline for India (WFP/EB.2/2001/4/2) and authorizes the Secretariat to proceed with the formulation of a Country Programme, which should take into account the comments of the Board.



FOOD SECURITY AND THE HUNGRY POOR

Food Insecurity at the National and Household Level

1. Over the past few decades, India has made significant progress in foodgrain production and great strides in reducing food insecurity. Yet, it still has 208 million undernourished people.¹ India alone accounts for one quarter of the chronically food-insecure people in the world. The worst affected are infants, girl children and women; people belonging to scheduled tribes and castes; the landless; marginal and small farmers; agricultural labourers and those whose coping mechanisms are seriously affected by recurring disasters. The presence of chronic hunger means that mothers are more at risk (maternal mortality rate of 410 per 100,000 live births), are more likely to give birth to underweight babies (low-birth-weight baby rate of 33 percent) and are more susceptible to disease and death (infant mortality rate of 69 per 1,000 births; under-5 malnutrition rate of 47 percent). School-age children may not go to school, or if they do go, they have a reduced ability to concentrate (primary school net enrolment of 64 percent for girls and 78 percent for boys; primary education drop-out rate of 40 percent); and adults may lack the energy for a productive working life (adult chronic energy deficiency of 48.5 percent).

📌 **Regional Food Shortages Despite National Surpluses**

2. At first sight, food *availability* seems less of a problem in India. Foodgrain production has grown steadily over the past decades. However, the high growth rate of 3.5 percent in the 1980s could not be sustained in the 1990s. With 1.8 percent annual growth, food production was only marginally higher than the population growth rate of 1.7 percent. Today, India's macro-availability dimension of food security is premised on self-sufficiency in wheat and rice, and on net imports of pulses and vegetable oil. However, the current policy of aiming at self-sufficiency in cereal production has its downside. Government-held food stocks are large, and their carrying costs represent a considerable budgetary burden. Twice over the past ten years, stocks overshot buffer stock norms, first in 1995, by more than 10 million tons, and recently in 2000, by about 20 million tons (for rice and wheat). Many analysts trace the excess stocks to a price regime that on the one hand offers floor prices to producers that are too high, and on the other hand does not provide enough subsidies for the country's Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) to charge affordable prices and improve outreach to the poor.
3. National-level gains in cereal production are not easily translated into adequate food availability for all Indians. Even the average 2,470 calories per capita available for daily consumption today, when inequalities in income distribution within the country and inequity within households are taken into account, are not sufficient for ensuring adequate nutrition for all. Moreover, considering the likely demand for foodgrains in the future, current national-level food surpluses could revert back into a cereal import gap. Factoring in population increases and changing consumption patterns resulting from rising incomes and urbanization, several analysts predict that, by 2010, feeding a population of around 1.2

¹ FAO, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*, 2000.



billion people will require a continued strong growth in foodgrain supply, increasing from the current 200 million tons to anywhere between 250 and 360 million tons.²

4. Food availability is by no means the same in all parts of the country. Foodgrain production is concentrated in only a few of India's 28 states. Around 70 percent of the area under crops remains dependent on good rains. Infrastructure constraints, market imperfections and government regulations affect the free movement of food across state borders. Thus, variations across states in levels of food intake are distinctly influenced by levels of foodgrain production, independently of variations in levels of income and in prices.³
5. In low-potential areas, to keep up food production, fallow cycles are shortened, leading to loss of soil fertility, poor harvests and the expansion of the cultivated area on to more and more marginal lands. The shortening of fallow cycles leads also to increased dependence on forests for an alternative livelihood. The result is that surrounding populations often rely on forest products for subsistence use and sale and, particularly in tribal areas, as a source of agricultural land—uses of forest areas that are not sustainable. This development mirrors the increasing marginalization of small-scale agriculture: Currently, 31 percent of rural households fall into the category of near-landless families, more than twice as many as three decades ago.

☞ **Poverty and Gender Disparity Affect Access to Food**

6. Even where food is available in the local market it does not mean that all people have adequate *access* to it. Food access is determined by people's purchasing power in relation to the price of food. With 35 percent of the population below the (calorie-based) poverty line, there are hundreds of millions of Indians who by definition are not able to procure their minimum food requirements. India's National Sample Surveys on household expenditure suggest that the pace of poverty in the 1990s was sluggish, particularly in rural areas. During that decade, rural poverty rose by 3.4 percent and urban poverty declined only marginally, by 1 percent. Scheduled tribes (STs) and scheduled castes (SCs) were distinctly poorer than the general population. Moreover, poverty reduction varied greatly between states. Despite higher gross domestic product (GDP) growth (some 6 percent per annum), poverty levels in the 1990s did not change significantly from those in the late 1980s.⁴
7. Evidence is overwhelming that access in India is closely tied to gender. Indian women's access to goods and services and to productive assets and markets is closely linked to the social construction of gender. Low incomes and inadequate safety nets leave people, and particularly women and children belonging to poor female-headed households, vulnerable.

☞ **Lasting Consequences of Poor Food Utilization**

8. Most food-insecure people not only have poor access to food but also suffer from poor food *utilization*. Utilization of food has three aspects: nutrition practices, intra-household distribution and physiological absorption. Perhaps more than any other dimension of food

² International Food Policy Research Institute, *Prospects for India's Cereal Supply and Demand to 2020*, Washington, D.C., 1999.

³ Krishnaji N. & Krishnan T.N., *Public Support for Food Security: Strategies for Human Development in India—Vol. I*, New Delhi, 2000.

⁴ World Bank, *India: Policies to Reduce Poverty and Accelerate Sustainable Development*, New Delhi, 2000.



insecurity, inadequate food utilization contributes to the high prevalence of child malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies among expectant and nursing mothers. Among young children (the figures are very similar for boys and girls), 47 percent are underweight, 45 percent are stunted and 16 percent are wasted (weight-for-height). Micronutrient deficiencies such as anaemia affect 88 percent of expectant mothers in India, and vitamin-A and iodine deficiencies are highly prevalent among women there.

9. India's malnutrition is clearly linked to inappropriate caring and feeding practices, including lack of micronutrient intake. Poor food utilization caused by gender discrimination tends to be correlated with the low level of female literacy and women's status. Not even half of adult women in India are literate (43 percent for women compared with 67 percent for men). Literacy is worst among tribal women in rural areas (16 percent).
10. Gender inequality at birth perpetuates a vicious circle. Girls are either not "permitted to be born" or when they are born they are then neglected. Eighteen percent more girls than boys die before their fifth birthday. In the most vulnerable states of India, 57 percent girls are married before the age of 18. Undernourished girls who are married young give birth to low-birth-weight babies, thus perpetuating the problems of malnutrition. Gender discrimination leads to high rates of malnutrition, morbidity and mortality in India. Persistently low levels of education and health, exacerbated by social and structural barriers, severely reduce women's opportunities for escaping poverty. The poor social status of women may best be expressed in the number of women to men, which has been steadily declining over the past years (927:1,000).
11. Poor physiological absorption of food is closely related to access to safe water, sanitation and health facilities. While 81 percent of the Indian population have access to "improved water sources", only 16 percent have access to sanitation.

📌 *The Food Security Effects of Recurrent Disasters*

12. Many poor people are very vulnerable to food shocks resulting from a variety of disasters, including floods, drought, cyclones and earthquakes. Between 1988 and 1997, disasters affected an average of 40 million people every year.⁵ Such disasters can wreak havoc on household livelihood systems and turn transitory food insecurity into chronic poverty and undernutrition. Nineteen percent of India's total area, with 12 percent of its population, is considered drought prone. While the most drought prone states are found in the northwest of India (Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan), the states most affected by floods are those in the northeast (Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal).

⁵ Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters database, 2000.



Target Population

13. Based on the above analysis, the most food insecure districts in the least-developed states were identified. The food insecurity map of India ranks Bihar (including the new state of Jharkhand), Madhya Pradesh (including the new state of Chhattisgarh), Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat as the most vulnerable states (Annex I). The multi-indicator-based analysis was then applied within these states in order to derive a district-level picture (Annex II). As a result, 134 districts were identified as the most food insecure.
14. Populations in rural areas are generally more vulnerable than those in urban areas. Rural areas are home to over 75 percent of below-poverty line (BPL) households, a more than proportional share of India's poor. Food insecurity is worst and food assistance is needed most in areas where all dimensions of food insecurity are prevalent. This is the case in many rural areas, whereas in urban areas, food availability and vulnerability to drought and floods are much less of an issue.
15. The food security and vulnerability analysis provides profiles of WFP's target groups. The most vulnerable are: (i) those belonging to STs and SCs; (ii) landless, marginal farmers/agricultural labourers; and (iii) people living in areas affected by recurring disasters and whose coping mechanisms are weak. Within these food-insecure households, women and especially female children and infants are the most vulnerable, as reflected by the unfavourable sex ratio, high maternal mortality rate, high prevalence of anaemia and high prevalence of malnutrition.
16. These vulnerable sections of the community use various coping mechanisms (especially during crisis) that in the medium and longer term adversely affect their livelihoods and lead to permanent household vulnerability. The primary coping mechanisms employed in rural areas include: the overexploitation of common property resources and forests (especially among tribal groups), labour migration, child labour, the distress sale of livestock and other productive assets and increasing "debt bondedness".

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND POLICIES ADDRESSING POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY

Overall Policies

17. Recognizing the problems of the poverty, malnutrition and vulnerability of the Indian population, the Government's current Five-Year Plan places great emphasis on poverty alleviation and human and social development as well as on agriculture and food security. In the 1990s, investments in the social sector increased fourfold to their current figure of around US\$70 billion per year. Expenditure on social services is around 11.6 percent of the total government expenditure. As a ratio to the GDP at current market prices, the central government expenditure on social services increased from 1.5 percent in 1993–1994 to 1.7 percent in 1999–2000. The social sector includes education, health and family welfare, water supply, sanitation, housing, rural development, social welfare, nutrition and minimum basic services.⁶

⁶ Ministry of Finance, *Economic Survey 1999–2000*, New Delhi, 2000.



18. India's agricultural development strategy aims at ensuring food security by doubling food production to make India hunger free within ten years; raising farm productivity; providing gainful supplementary employment through poverty-alleviation schemes; and distributing foodgrains at concessional prices through the public distribution system.
19. India's anti-poverty programmes consist of three main types: (i) wage employment through rural works; (ii) self-employment programmes; and (iii) food subsidy programmes. In recent years all three have been subject to reform aimed to improve targeting and involve local governments more in implementation, beneficiary selection and monitoring.
20. The Government of India considers education the most crucial investment in human development. Overriding priority is given to the eradication of illiteracy and providing access to schooling for children aged 6–11 years, with a special thrust on girls' education and improving the quality of education at all levels. Public expenditure on human resource development such as education and programmes for women and children, including ICDS, amounts to 0.4 percent of the GDP. Major strategies for improving the health status of the population include increased access to health, family welfare and nutrition services. Expenditure on health is 0.3 percent of the GDP.
21. The two overarching objectives for the operation of the United Nations system in India, which have received the endorsement both of the Government and civil society, are: gender equality and decentralization. India's Five-Year Plan includes specific strategies for providing women with equal access to and control over factors contributing to their empowerment, in the areas of health, education, vocational skills and income-generating opportunities. Special training packages aim at sensitizing women members and chairpersons of *panchayats* (local governance bodies) in order to support India's legislation mandating that at least one third of all positions at the village, town and district levels are to be held by women. Decentralization is also an important concern in the Government's Five-Year Plan. Under it, services that are localized in nature must now be decentralized so that the delivery system becomes accountable to the people.

Food Security Policies and Programmes

22. India's food and nutrition security strategy encompasses the essential components of availability, access and utilization but does not consider vulnerability to recurrent disasters.

📌 **Enhancing Food Availability**

23. Apart from policies to promote domestic foodgrain production to maintain self-sufficiency in cereal production, India's basic food security system consists of government-provided minimum support prices, public distribution, open-market sales and the maintenance of buffer stocks. While this system has resulted in surplus production at the national level, food availability in food-deficit and remote regions remains a long-term goal. In places where agricultural productivity is low owing to water scarcity, emphasis will be placed on efficient water harvesting and conservation methods, suitable irrigation packages and the adoption of a watershed approach and appropriate farming systems that economize on water use.⁷
24. In promoting food security in and around forests, the Government's approach recognizes the symbiotic relationship between tribal groups and the forest. The strategy aims at evolving the rights for common property resources; encouraging the participation of

⁷ Planning Commission, *Highlights of the Mid-term Appraisal of the Ninth Five-Year Plan*, New Delhi, 2000



people, particularly women, in plantation projects; and managing and sharing usufruct through joint forest management (JFM).

📌 **Improving Food Access**

25. Realizing that self-sufficiency in foodgrain production does not guarantee food security for the poorest segments of the population, the Government seeks to integrate production with food distribution systems and link these with employment and income-generation programmes. India has probably the most sizeable food assistance programmes in the developing world (see Annex III). All of them aim at improving access to food and, except for TPDS (which simply offers a monthly transfer of 20 kg of subsidized cereals to below-poverty line families), the longer-term food security of their participants.
26. Employment and income-generation programmes are increasingly being linked to the creation of rural assets such as irrigation and drainage channels, wells and tanks, check dams, bunds and roads. The Government also aims at making more use of food payments in employment programmes. However, targeting of the poor and local-level participation in programme delivery remain serious challenges for these activities.
27. The Mid-day Meal Scheme (National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education) seeks to ensure school access and retention for, and improve the nutritional status of, all primary-school-age children. Funded entirely by the Indian Government, the programme provides a daily meal or a monthly take-home ration during the school year. However, there is widespread agreement that “on-site feeding”, and not the provision of “dry rations”, yields greater benefits. Moreover, it is believed that to obtain maximum educational results, the feeding programme should consist of a mid-morning breakfast rather than a mid-day meal.
28. The Government is also addressing child labour, which is certainly a reflection of inadequate food access and poverty. In an effort to fulfil the national commitment to eliminating child labour, the Government provides access to education to child labourers through functional literacy and vocational training programmes held after working hours.

📌 **Strengthening Food Utilization**

29. India’s National Nutrition Policy and its Action Plan aim at: reducing by half the incidence of moderate and severe malnutrition and chronic undernutrition among pre school children; reducing to less than 10 percent the incidence of low birth weight; eliminating blindness resulting from vitamin-A deficiency; and reducing the incidence of iron-deficiency anaemia among expectant mothers to 25 percent. High priority is also accorded to improving reproductive health care services.⁸
30. Programmes such as ICDS are central to this effort. ICDS seeks to provide supplementary food rations, pre-school education, nutrition/health messages and health services. Its target groups are children under 6 and expectant and nursing mothers. Food assistance to the programme is provided by the state governments, CARE and WFP. There is a plan to expand the ICDS programme to cover the entire country. However, evaluation studies have shown that if the programme is to make a more significant impact on the nutritional status of young children, more attention needs to be given to reaching children under 3 and improving complementary feeding practices.

⁸ Department of Women and Child Development, *National Plan of Action on Nutrition*, New Delhi, 1995.



31. Management of micronutrient deficiencies is another strategy for addressing the food utilization problem. Programmes designed to control and eliminate micronutrient malnutrition include the popularization of low-cost nutritious foods, the fortification of foods and the provision of micronutrient supplements. The Department of Health and Family Welfare has initiated programmes for the prevention of anaemia, iodine-deficiency disorder (IDD) and blindness resulting from vitamin-A deficiency. Its current approaches include the provision of oral iron folate prophylactic therapy to all expectant mothers and massive doses of vitamin A to children 1–5 years. However, the outreach for this approach is reported to have been insufficient, ranging, in the case of the iron folate therapy, from as low as 20 percent in Bihar to 75 percent in Andhra Pradesh.
32. The Government of India has a long history of *mitigating natural disasters*. Although it does not emphasize this in its Five-Year Plan, and although natural disaster mitigation is not linked conceptually to food insecurity, there are several government natural disaster-mitigation programmes in place. Planned expenditure on these programmes amounts to US\$174 million for 2000–2001. Major schemes include: an integrated wasteland development programme, a drought-prone areas programme, a desert development programme and flood-management schemes.
33. The Government routinely prepares contingency plans on a district basis for areas prone to floods, drought, cyclones and earthquakes. Responsibility for these plans lies with district administrators, who coordinate disaster-mitigation and disaster-response activities. Disaster contingency plans are updated on an annual basis.

Food Aid Policies

34. Although India does not have a food aid policy, it has been the recipient of international food assistance since the latter half of the 1950s. Practically all food aid is classified as developmental aid and is used in targeted projects to enhance food security for the poorest sections of the population. Emergency and relief food needs are met mainly from national resources. Official Development Assistance (ODA) to India declined from US\$2.430 billion in 1992 to US\$1.595 billion in 1998. Food aid flows remained relatively constant during the 1990s, with the provision of 300,000 to 400,000 tons per year.
35. Development assistance from United Nations agencies and bilateral donors amounts to no more than 1.5 percent of India's annual development budget. Therefore, according to the Government, agencies such as WFP should help ensure that the remaining 99 percent of development expenditures within the country are well spent. This can be best achieved through lessons learned from best practice in other countries, impact studies, new ideas and policy advocacy.⁹
36. The Government of India is committed to addressing food insecurity and hunger through its policies and programmes. However, although they are well conceived, these policies and programmes have weak synergies among them and often reveal weak implementation, particularly with regard to ensuring outreach to the poor. Insufficient targeting, lack of community involvement and not enough focus on creating developmental opportunities may explain why India's anti-poverty programmes have often failed to shield the poor against food insecurity.

⁹ Saxena, N.C., Remarks made at the Joint Session of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/WFP, New York, 2000.



ASSESSMENT OF WFP'S PERFORMANCE TO DATE

37. WFP's current India Country Programme seeks to address malnutrition and food insecurity through three components: (i) nutrition and nutrition-related support for women and children; (ii) improved food security through forestry activities in tribal areas; and (iii) irrigation and command area development through food for work. The last component was terminated not only owing to resource constraints but also in order to strengthen the area and sector focus of the CP. Using Country Programme resources, WFP has responded to the needs of its target population in times of natural disaster. Under the current CP, WFP annually provides some 3.8 million food insecure and vulnerable people with 80,000 tons of food at a cost of US\$25 million. Ninety-five percent of the CP food aid beneficiaries are women and children, while 55 percent of CP participants are women and girls.

Summary of Programme Components

📌 *Nutrition for Women and Children*

38. About 55 percent of WFP's assistance is directed to 2.7 million women and children in selected districts in six states—Assam, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Within these areas, WFP supports and strengthens India's nationwide ICDS programme. The Programme places particular emphasis on providing micronutrient-fortified blended food (Indiamix) and seeks to improve the effectiveness of this scheme through special initiatives, such as training in nutrition and health education, capacity-building and small-scale production of blended food by local community groups.

📌 *Food Security for Tribal Groups*

39. The second core activity of the India Country Programme (45 percent of food resources) aims at improving the food security of some 600,000 people (120,000 households) who belong to scheduled tribal groups and scheduled castes in isolated forest areas in the six states of Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Under this activity (which takes place in the context of the Government's JFM approach), food rations are provided to daily wage workers engaged in Forestry Department development activities. Savings from forest workers' wages are then used for the creation of community assets through a participatory planning approach.

📌 *Irrigation Development through Food for Work*

40. Up to March 1998, WFP offered food-for-work opportunities to landless construction workers on the Indira Gandhi Canal in Rajasthan, and in similar schemes in Karnataka. Settlers were provided with free rations for 24 months or until their first harvest, whichever occurred first. Generated funds were used to create assets that accelerated the pace of settlement. WFP inputs helped in improving the immediate food security of workers and settlers.

📌 *Response to Disasters*

41. WFP has been able to establish and effectively demonstrate its strength in responding to natural disasters (e.g. drought in Rajasthan, floods in Madhya Pradesh and Assam or a cyclone in Orissa). The flexibility within the Country Programme has allowed WFP to accelerate its activities to meet the urgent food needs resulting from natural disaster. In the case of the super cyclone in Orissa in October 1998, WFP established a network of NGO



partners to assist in the distribution of 11,000 tons of rice, pulses, oil and Indiamix/corn-soya blend (CSB).

Performance Dimensions

📌 *Targeting*

42. The India Country Programme by and large has focused on the poorest states and the most vulnerable segments of the population. Within the states, the CP's nutrition component is targeted to malnourished children and expectant and nursing mothers in poor rural villages. However, because standard enrolment numbers are fixed by state governments, the eligible population is sometimes larger than the ICDS programme is able to cover. The CP's tribal development component successfully targets food-insecure communities in areas that are difficult to access, and it has exceeded its goal of distributing 30 percent of its food directly to women. Only in a minority of cases have both the ICDS and the tribal development components been active in the same areas. When this occurs, there are managerial difficulties, and important dimensions of people's food insecurity remain unaddressed. Increasingly more synergy among the programme components has been sought. The VAM exercise has given WFP a clearer understanding of the levels of food insecurity in the various states.

📌 *Effectiveness and Impact*

43. There is considerable variation in both the quality of services provided and the impact of ICDS. Nevertheless, WFP pilot initiatives in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have brought major improvements in ICDS implementation. State governments have replicated WFP's initiatives, such as the production of Indiamix and its nutrition and health education programmes. Supplementary food has facilitated beneficiary access to the other nutrition and health services of ICDS, such as growth promotion, nutrition and health education and prophylaxis against vitamin-A deficiency and anaemia. The demonstration effect of fortification has encouraged state governments to provide fortified food from their own resources. The tribal development component has resulted in substantial contributions to the long-term food security of those communities that participated in short-term employment opportunities and the creation of community assets (including close to 1,500 water-harvesting structures and small irrigation schemes) through investments from the generated funds.



44. There have also been community enhancement benefits from the CP, particularly with respect to women. The CP's participatory approach to design and to the implementation of "micro-plans" under the tribal development activity has increased the communities' ability to make informed decisions based on their needs. Women now hold one third of the positions on the village development committees. Women's groups have gained experience in managing micro-finance projects and other income-generating activities. Around 42 percent of the generated funds have been targeted to activities that directly benefit and empower women. The tribal development activity, through extensive partnering, has also enhanced the relevance and capacity of NGOs in areas where government implementation capacity had been weak. Female social development officers have been appointed to oversee the gender concerns of the programme. The proportion of women officers at the senior management level has also been increasing in the Forestry Department. Finally, the tribal programme directly addresses many of the eco-restoration problems that have a tendency to exacerbate poverty and natural disaster impacts.

Monitoring and Evaluation

45. Various missions have pointed out that while WFP successfully monitors beneficiary coverage, feeding days and commodity utilization, it has not reported on important outcomes such as the reduction in malnutrition prevalence and trends in undernutrition (except in pilot initiatives). The Country Programme evaluation mission (2000) recommended a review of monitoring priorities and stressed the importance of measuring the performance of the CP overall. Consequently, preparation of baseline surveys and secondary data collection have been intensified. This, together with the planned decentralization of the country office, provides the basis for introducing a results-based management (RBM) approach. In the meantime, WFP has been able to strengthen the monitoring capacity of government counterparts at the district level and has created state-level monitoring cells. Gender-disaggregated monitoring data have helped to increase the share of activities benefiting women.

Cost-efficiency

46. Developing the capacity to produce Indiamix locally has resulted in considerable savings for WFP and the Government, in terms of external transport and procurement costs. At a cost of only US\$0.024 per meal, WFP is able to provide a nutritious food that supplements about one quarter of a child's food requirements.
47. WFP's food operations in India are inexpensive because of a generally good transport infrastructure and competitive markets. In addition to Indiamix, most of the distributed cereals are procured locally based on tender arrangements. Pulses and edible oil are imported through bulk shipments, with international market prices that are usually lower than domestic prices.
48. The funds generated under the tribal development activity aim at strengthening the food security impact by creating lasting community assets. However, timely absorption of generated funds has been a concern in recent years and has led WFP to reconsider the design of this component. In future, utilization of cash funds and food intervention should increasingly be directly linked and be limited to areas where partner funding for complementary inputs is inadequate.



✧ *Impact on Markets and Domestic Production*

49. The food commodities imported by WFP for the current CP have rarely been more than 50,000 tons per year. Compared with a domestic production of over 200 million tons, this figure is far too small to have any disincentive effect. Though distributed in thousands of locations in 11 states, the food is received by only those whose purchasing power is insufficient to fully meet their family food requirements. Moreover, Indiamix, which represents about one third of all commodities distributed, is manufactured with locally procured raw materials and hence has a stimulating effect on the domestic market.

✧ *Implementation and Design Issues*

50. Many aspects of the current Country Programme are working well: efficient commodity management; flexibility in shifting allocations of food within states (for example, in response to urgent requests for rehabilitation assistance); coordination with partners; outreach to the most remote areas and the most disadvantaged groups; and the use of state-level innovations through joint initiatives with NGOs.
51. While recognizing such achievements, both the policy review mission (1999) and the Country Programme evaluation mission (2000) recommended that programme efforts focus more on bringing about behavioural changes among the beneficiaries. In the case of the nutrition component, this should involve: strengthening of training, supervision, case management of malnourished children, outreach to children under 3, linkage with the Health Department, investment in nutrition and health education, and community participation.
52. A special concern in the tribal development component has been the Forestry Department's uneven performance in implementing socio-economic activities at the village level. A broader base of implementing partners to execute the intervention will be necessary for the programme to be more effective. Intra-community distribution of benefits and of the long-term maintenance costs of the assets created will also require greater attention.
53. Because the current CP is spread out over 11 states (including the three new states) and within states in non-contiguous districts, its management and monitoring are difficult. Moreover, although the CP is already broadly consistent with WFP's Enabling Development policy, a more thorough understanding of the food insecurity dimensions in India suggests that a synergistic and "people and places"—specific approach is needed. Food assistance programmes are most valuable when they respond to the multifaceted aspects of food insecurity.

FUTURE ORIENTATION OF WFP ASSISTANCE

54. In the next India Country Programme, the primary goal of WFP will be to play a catalytic role in the country's efforts to eliminate hunger and food insecurity. Through its interventions, WFP will strive to leverage policy and resources. For example, the Food Insecurity Atlas of India that is currently under preparation should encourage the Government and aid agencies in strengthening their efforts to address hunger in the most food insecure districts and the poorest states. WFP's design and implementation of novel institutional models, such as "hunger-free zones", is expected to result in a demonstration effect, not only for ongoing national food assistance programmes but also within the prevailing aid environment.



55. The top priority for WFP operations in India will remain addressing the specific hunger problem of malnourished children and women. Consistent with government and UNDAF priorities, and within the framework of WFP development policies, the Country Programme will focus on nutrition, education for girls and women and asset creation, in states and regions with high food insecurity and low levels of human development. The new CP will aim at 65 percent of the programme participants and food aid beneficiaries' being women and girls. About 95 percent of the food aid beneficiaries will be women and children.
56. The UNDAF priority of promoting decentralization and gender equality will be the underlying principle for WFP's future interventions. Decentralization will be promoted by working through local-level *Panchayati Raj* institutions, through strong reliance on participatory design and through the implementation of activities. The micro-planning concept in tribal communities, involvement of women's groups in ICDS and collaboration with village education committees will be key elements of the participatory approach.
57. The CP as a whole will be designed to address both the discrimination faced by women and girls and the harmful impact it has on malnutrition and vulnerability. In line with WFP's Commitments to Women, the programme will seek to ensure that women are included in needs assessments, targeting, activity identification and implementation. Moreover, WFP, with its government and NGO partners, will adopt gender-specific planning, targeting and food distribution mechanisms.
58. Areas for WFP interventions will be selected on the basis of their concentration of food-insecure people, i.e. food assistance will be targeted to those people for whom food consumption is a problem. Selection criteria will include: under-5 malnutrition, level of food production, dietary energy supply (DES), poverty, gender bias (e.g. literacy gaps), micronutrient deficiency (e.g. anaemia rates), frequency and magnitude of recurrent shocks (e.g. natural disasters) and capacity to implement and monitor food assistance interventions. Local-level assessments of people's food security needs will determine the activities and direction of the Country Programme.

Target Groups and Geographical Targeting

59. WFP has conducted a systematic identification of the most food insecure areas and people and the dimensions of their problems. This exercise in itself is seen as a critical component of the envisaged area-based approach.
60. The food security analysis was based on a three-level VAM approach to identify and describe the target population for food assistance. Expert consultations were conducted at all stages of the process by the WFP VAM Unit, in close collaboration with the Swaminathan Foundation (a renowned Indian research institute) and with the backing of a steering group of technical experts from the Government (central and state level), universities (including Tufts, Boston and Jawaharlal Nehru, New Delhi), NGOs and United Nations agencies.
61. The first level of analysis identified 8 of the 28 states of India as the most food insecure. (The indicators used are listed in Annex IV.) The next step was to identify the most vulnerable districts within those eight states. The third level of qualitative analysis was based on a participatory food insecurity and vulnerability profiling (FIVP) exercise. The FIVP identified the most food insecure communities and households within a sample of districts and provided information regarding the dynamics of food insecurity. Gender concerns were considered in identifying the food insecure.



62. Future WFP assistance will operate where consumption is a problem. Based on VAM, a reduced number of states and districts will be selected from the identified 134 districts in the most food insecure states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. These districts are home to just over one fifth (218 million) of India's population, but have a disproportionately high share of hungry and food-insecure people, including:
- 14.8 million malnourished children under 5;
 - 25.5 million primary-school-age children not enrolled in school;
 - 2.2 million mothers with low-birth-weight babies annually;
 - 5.2 million female-headed households;
 - 10 million households belonging to scheduled tribes and castes;
 - 18 million households of landless labourers and marginal farmers; and
 - 9.3 million households that are vulnerable to recurrent disasters.
63. Although hunger and food insecurity will be of prime consideration, other factors such as scope for partnerships, decentralized governance, unique opportunities for food assistance and geographic concentration and contiguity will also influence WFP's targeting decisions. Moreover, with its current level of resources and staff capacity, the Programme will have to be selective. Choosing of target districts will be done in close collaboration with the Government. To test the new area-based approach, three districts have already been jointly selected. This should assist WFP in replicating the model in a greater number of districts. Successes under the Country Programme should become models for improved government food assistance programmes.
64. The VAM exercise shows that there are several categories of food-insecure people in a given geographical area. While it would be inappropriate simply to add up these often overlapping categories, it becomes apparent that food insecurity has multiple dimensions that require a multi-pronged response. Based on the VAM exercise and the vulnerability profile, WFP's future strategy will reflect objectives 1, 2 and 3 of WFP's Enabling Development policy (EB.A/99/4-A), responding to: (i) the malnourishment among women and children by taking care of their special nutritional needs; (ii) the low primary school enrolment and high drop out rates through school feeding and incentive rations for girls; and (iii) the food shortages and poverty among vulnerable households through the creation and preservation of assets.

Identification of Key Areas for Assistance

📁 *Improving the Nutritional Status of Women and Children*

65. The ICDS scheme has proved to be a unique tool for reaching women and children suffering from malnutrition. WFP will continue to provide nutritious supplementary food rations to approximately 2 million women and children per year. It will also strongly promote the regular provision of the complementary inputs (such as training and the delivery of health and nutrition services) that are required to bring about behavioural changes. Special attention will be given to reaching children under 3. Growth-monitoring will be better linked with the counselling of mothers. WFP will continue to tackle the issue of micronutrient deficiencies by promoting the use of fortified food and by supporting sustainable initiatives to enhance the local production of enriched food. The non-formal pre-school education component of ICDS will be strengthened so that it will contribute to the universalization of primary education by providing the necessary preparation for



primary schooling. Community participation and strengthened partnerships with concerned government departments, United Nations agencies and NGOs will be key programmatic features. Partnerships created with NGOs in the past have resulted in significant improvements in the quality of ICDS services.

📌 *Investing in Human Capital, with Special Emphasis on Girls*

66. WFP will use a variety of food-based approaches to support children's enrolment and retention in schools. A mid-morning snack initiative will aim at providing a model for improvement on the existing national Mid-day Meal Scheme. Combined with the provision of appropriate micronutrient-fortified food (for example, Indiamix) and with school health activities (such as deworming), the mid-morning snack initiative should result in improved learning ability among children (both girls and boys). A take-home ration scheme (exclusively for girls) will enable food-insecure families (for whom girls' labour is an essential household coping strategy) to send their girls to school. WFP would also consider providing technical support to strengthen government capacity to plan and implement school feeding activities. For this, the Programme will seek to make use of the newly created facility under the global Food for Education initiative. This school feeding activity will benefit some 300,000 girls and boys per year.
67. The Country Programme will also provide food support to non-formal education for women (normally linked with income-generating projects promoted by NGOs and government departments).

📌 *Improving Food Security through Creation and Preservation of Assets*

68. WFP will assist poor and vulnerable households in gaining access to food through food for work, and thus benefit some 500,000 people (belonging to 100,000 households) per year. The activities undertaken will provide employment for 90 to 120 days, especially during periods when households require food incomes most, thus saving them from the stress of unemployment and migration. The seasonality aspect of food insecurity will receive priority attention. All activities will be identified and executed after a thorough community needs assessment. It is expected that the assets created with people's participation will assist beneficiaries in strengthening their livelihoods and will enhance their ability to cope with recurrent shocks and crises.
69. WFP recognizes that the creation of assets alone will not ensure longer-term food security and hence the Programme will place greater importance on strengthening people's ability to maintain and preserve the assets created. In order to carry out capacity-building activities, WFP will team up with agencies that already have field presence and are implementing community-based programmes. WFP's emphasis will be on working with village development committees, women's groups and community-based organizations in managing not only food for work but also generated funds. Greater collaboration with NGOs such as the women-managed Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA) will assist in strengthening village community groups, with an emphasis on creating sustainable women's groups. Appropriate partnership arrangements with United Nations partners such as IFAD and UNDP and NGO partners such as CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), ActionAid and the International Confederation of Catholic Charities (CARITAS) are already under way and will provide a model for the community management of assets created. Whenever possible, WFP will also provide non-food resources to strengthen capacity-building activities. The Programme will continue to support the JFM approach, which involves communities in the management of forestlands and helps them to meet their fuelwood, fodder and non-timber needs on a sustainable basis.



70. Activities that will be considered under food-for-work interventions include: the creation of irrigation structures to increase food production and water-harvesting and grain banks to decrease the impact of droughts; and eco-restoration to stabilize yields and mitigate floods and drought. To ensure that women benefit equally from WFP-supported activities, special emphasis will be placed on changing unequal power relations. Several steps are required to achieve this longer-term goal. Among these, WFP will: ensure equal access to food-for-work employment and control over the assets it creates; promote greater participation in management and decision-making (with at least one third of community group members being female); and offer special training and support in attaining functional literacy.
71. A primary objective of WFP interventions will be to build the capacity of communities and households to respond effectively to environmental and natural disasters. WFP's development assistance in these areas will focus on activities that reduce the vulnerability of poor families, enhance their preparedness for coping with disasters, and support speedy recovery measures after a disaster has struck. WFP will use district disaster contingency plans as the entry point for its emergency preparedness and response arrangements. This will be the basis for pre-designed plans for scaling up food-for-work and vulnerable group feeding activities.

Modalities of WFP Assistance

72. India is currently self-sufficient in rice and wheat at the national level. Therefore, WFP will need to have flexibility in carrying out commodity swaps. This would imply its importing commodities such as edible oil and pulses, which are not produced in adequate amounts in the country.

Operational Implications

73. The envisaged transition to the new Country Programme will require adjustments in several key areas. Strategic changes will include:
- maximizing synergies among programme components;
 - strengthening partnerships with state governments, United Nations agencies and NGOs to improve the provision of complementary inputs and technical expertise;
 - building capacity at all levels for enhanced competencies to deal with the participatory approach of the Country Programme;
 - decentralizing the WFP office structure and adjusting staffing profiles to strengthen area-based programme management and effective monitoring;
 - introducing the concept of RBM in all programme activities to improve management effectiveness and enable the measurement of progress against the set Country Programme objectives;
 - continuing use of VAM to update and analyse information that characterizes the target population; and
 - systematically advocating programme results to inform national food assistance interventions and policies.

Harmonization Implications

74. The Executive Board approved the current programme in January 1997 for a period of five years (April 1997 to March 2002). The CP will need to be extended to the end of March 2003 so as to be in line with the planning time frames of the UNDAF and the



Government of India. The India Country Programme resource level approved in 1997 will be sufficient to cover the 12-month extension period.

Partnerships and Scope for Joint Programming

75. Although the Government continues to be the primary partner and plays a support role especially in strategic planning and project formulation, other partners could play a greater role in the implementation stage.

✧ **Strategic Planning**

76. The Ministry of Agriculture plays a nodal role, while WFP works in close collaboration with the Department of Women and Child Development and the Departments of Forestry and Environment at the state level. WFP has initiated discussions to extend this collaboration to include the Ministries of Rural Development, Education, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution, and to the Planning Commission.
77. Through departments that have a capacity to support food-assisted activities, the Government will coordinate with WFP on these activities' best use. A strategic framework with each department is being developed, and the means of implementation are being identified. These partnerships will provide not only complementary inputs to the future programme but also technical support. WFP and the Government will periodically review the strategy and make modifications as needed.

✧ **Harmonization with the United Nations System**

78. WFP has been an active partner in the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and UNDAF process and was instrumental in establishing UNDAF's focus on the two priority areas of promoting gender equality and supporting decentralization. WFP has demonstrated leadership in promoting joint and coordinated programming. Presently, joint programming plans are under way with IFAD in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. A joint project with UNDP on primary schooling for out-of-school children started in December 2000. As the United Nations programming harmonization exercise continues over the next year, WFP will look for additional opportunities to collaborate with United Nations partner agencies, especially UNICEF and UNFPA.

✧ **Implementation Partnerships**

79. WFP has created strategic partnerships with nodal NGOs and strong local NGOs. The nodal NGOs have identified smaller NGOs to assist with implementation while providing the technical and training support required at the start of the project. The strategy of partnering with nodal NGOs has worked effectively in those areas where the local NGOs have not had sufficient implementation capacity. Under the partnership modality established for rehabilitation activities following the cyclone in Orissa, WFP was able to respond quickly to community-based needs by working directly with NGOs. This mechanism tested in Orissa is a model that may be replicated in all states. The decentralized system of government (*Panchayati Raj*) will also be explored as a possible channel for programme implementation.



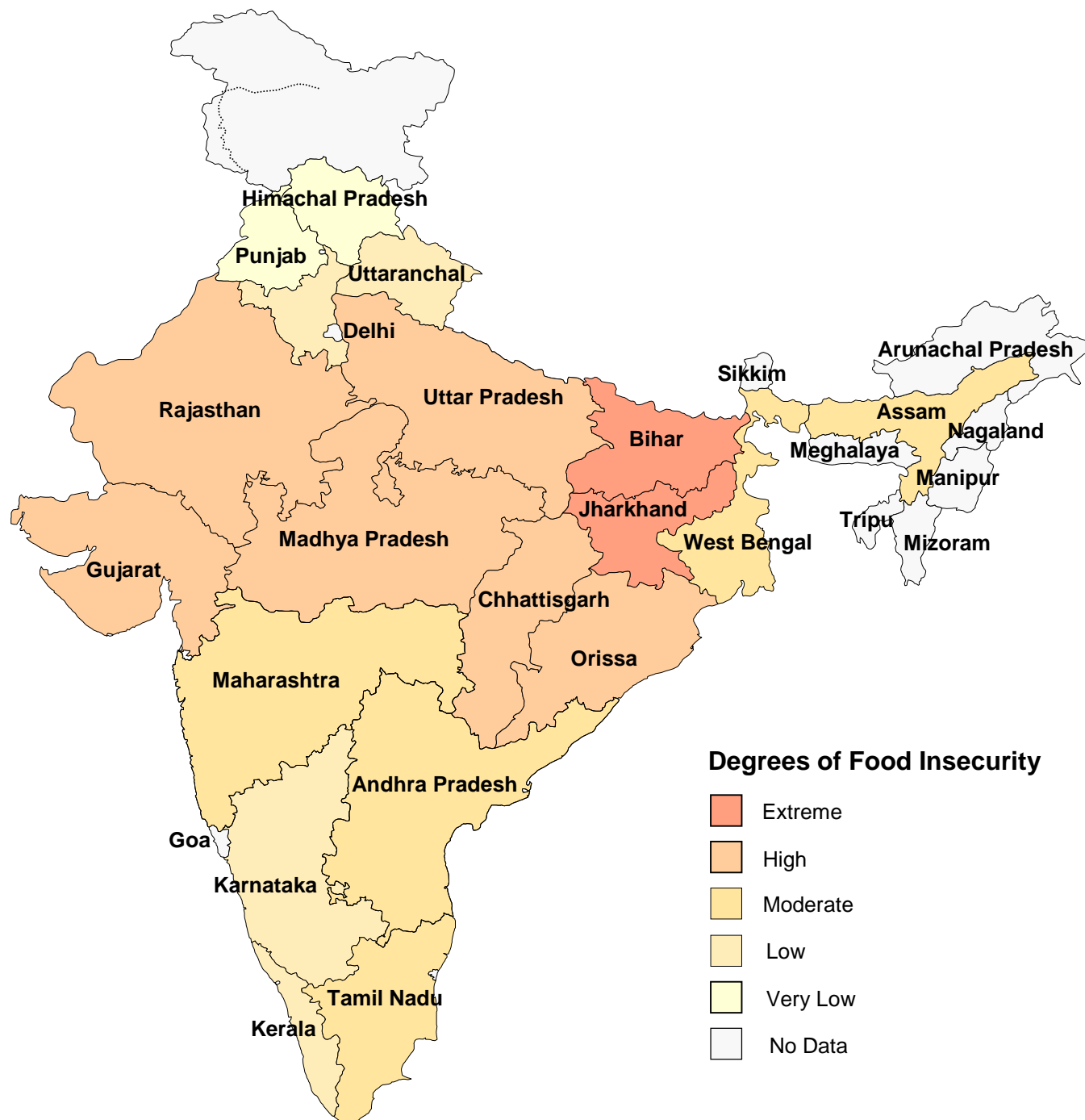
KEY ISSUES AND RISKS

80. Deepening WFP assistance by concentrating resources and combining a set of activities in fewer districts and states will challenge the *absorption capacity* in the target areas. This may well represent an area of risk, especially where the selected areas and people are indeed the most poor and food insecure. Temporary assistance with capacity-building and essential non-food inputs may become necessary on a case-by-case basis.
81. Another key issue will be whether or not WFP will be able *to demonstrate the results* of its new strategy. This will not be achieved without the setting of clear and realistic objectives and without a practical but energetic monitoring effort. Demonstrating results will be crucial for achieving the overarching goal of the new Country Programme: *to advocate and demonstrate effective use of targeted food assistance for replication in national programmes and by other agencies*. The success of this approach will depend on *inter alia* the resource availability for monitoring and evaluation.
82. Finally, *reliability of WFP funding* will be critical in order not to risk progress. WFP's success will depend to a great extent on establishing relationships with partners, the investments made by the Government in terms of posting of staff, implementation capacity and allocating sufficient funds for handling WFP food.



ANNEX I

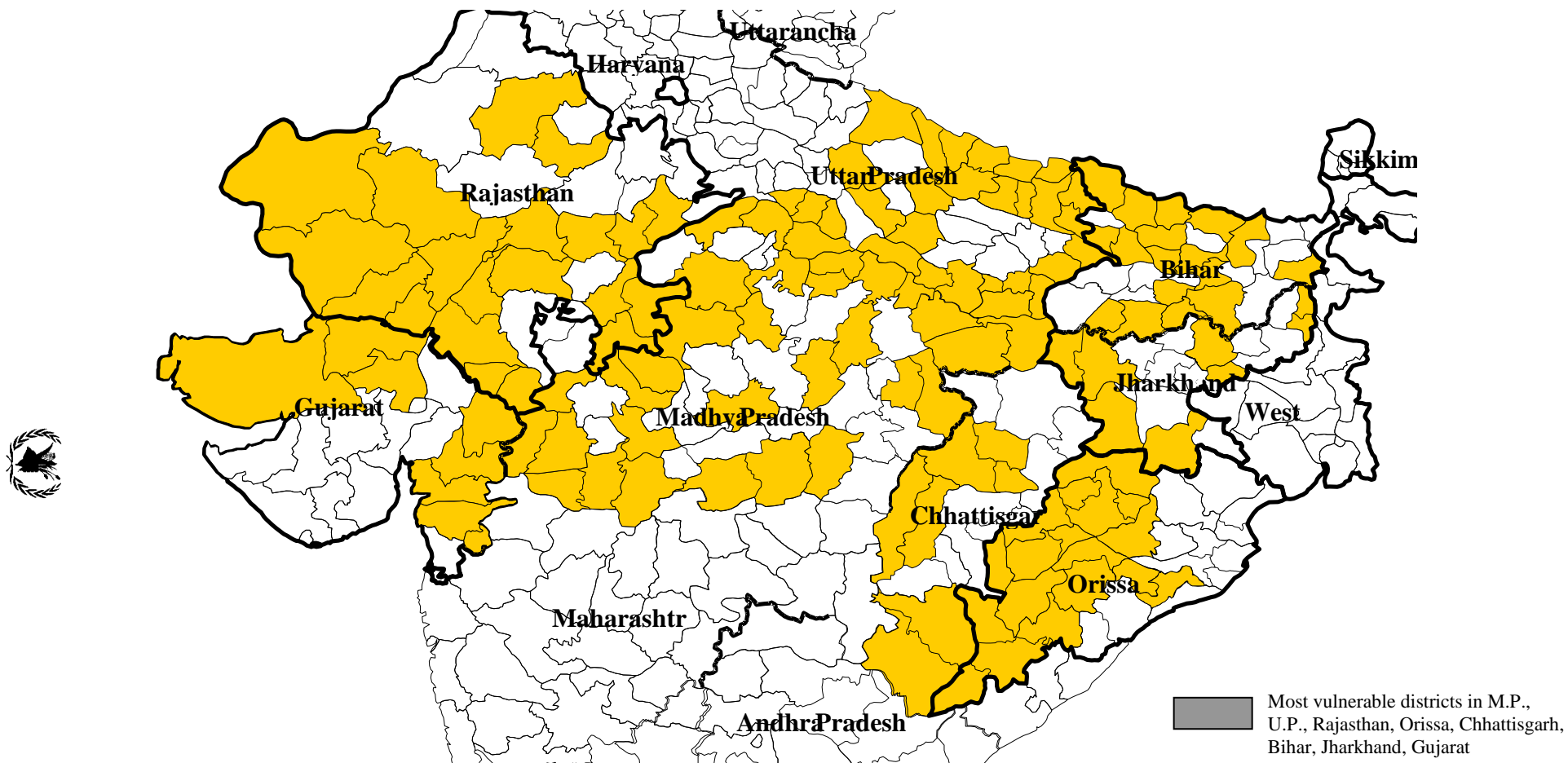
FOOD INSECURITY MAP OF INDIA



The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Food Programme (WFP) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its frontiers or boundaries.




FOOD-INSECURE DISTRICTS IDENTIFIED THROUGH VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS



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MAJOR FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES IN INDIA							
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Name of programme	Type	Cost per year (in million dollars)	Food per year (in 1,000 tons) by commodity	Start year	Target population	Targeted per year	Funding agency
Targeted Public Distribution System (PDS)	Subsidy	900	6 000 rice and wheat	1997	People below poverty line	60 million households	Ministry of Food
Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)	MCH	176	550 cereals (Government), 54 blended food (WFP) 141 blended food	1975	Expectant and nursing mothers; children 6–60 months	23.5 million people	Ministry of Human Resource Development, CARE, WFP
Mid-day Meal Scheme	School feeding	246	1 797 cereals	1995	Primary-school-age children	97.5 million students	Ministry of Human Resource Development
Forestry activities in tribal areas	FFW	N/A	30 wheat and pulses	1996	Vulnerable and tribal castes	1.2 million people	WFP/Ministry of Agriculture
 <i>Jawahar Rozgar Yojana</i> (village asset-creation scheme) and Employment Assurance Scheme	FFW/ CFW	1 232	N/A	1989/93	Unemployed below poverty line in rural areas	326 million workdays	Ministry of Rural Development

ANNEX IV

INDICATORS USED TO FORMULATE FOOD INSECURITY MAP OF INDIA

- a) Deficit in food production
- b) Sustainability index:
 - deforestation and wasteland as a percentage of total geographical area
 - area under no forest with 40 percent canopy cover as a percentage of total geographical area
 - percentage of groundwater exploitation, percentage of net draft to available groundwater resources
 - percentage of area under non-leguminous crops to total gross cropped area
- c) Inter-annual variation in cereal production
- d) Flood/cyclone-affected population per 1,000 people
- e) Percentage of drought-prone area to total geographical area
- f) Percentage below poverty line
- g) Percentage of persons in labour households to the total population
- h) Percentage of scheduled tribes and scheduled castes in rural population
- i) Children's sex ratio (0–9 years old)
- j) Per capita unit/day calorie intake of the lowest decile
- k) Population consuming less than 1,890 kcal/per day
- l) Rural infrastructure index:
 - road length
 - rail link
 - institutional credit
 - institutional marketing
- m) Percentage of female literacy
- n) Percentage of population with low Body Mass Index (BMI)
- o) Infant mortality rate
- p) Percentage of severely stunted children under 5
- q) Percentage of severe wasting of children under 5
- r) Health infrastructure index:
 - percentage of children not immunized, among children 1–2 years
 - percentage of population without access to safe drinking-water
 - number of persons per bed in rural areas
 - number of persons per primary health centre in rural areas
- s) Life expectancy at age of 1 year



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

BPL	Below poverty line
CARITAS	International Confederation of Catholic Charities
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CP	Country Programme
CRS	Catholic Relief Service
CSB	Corn-soya blend
CSO	Country Strategy Outline
DES	Dietary energy supply/person/day
DWCD	Department of Women and Child Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFW	Food for work
FIVP	Food insecurity and vulnerability profiling
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GNP	Gross national product
HDI	Human Development Index
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
IDD	Iodine-deficiency disorder
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
JFM	Joint forest management
LIFDC	Low-income, food-deficit country
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PDS	Public Distribution System
RBM	Results-based management
SC	Scheduled caste
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
ST	Scheduled tribe
TPDS	Targeted Public Distribution System
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VAM	Vulnerability analysis and mapping

