



**Executive Board
Second Regular Session**

Rome, 22 - 24 May 1996

COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINES

Agenda item 7

COLOMBIA CSO

ABSTRACT

It is estimated that in Colombia about 6.2 million people live in absolute poverty despite the sustained economic gains of the last two decades. These people cannot meet their basic food energy requirements and are often located in isolated rural areas, subject to violence and without access to basic facilities. WFP assistance to Colombia has shown tangible results in employment and income generation, and creation of basic rural infrastructure. Food aid has also served to attract added resources from the Government for programmes directed to reach indigenous groups and other rural communities. The need for WFP assistance has been established by the comparative advantage of project food aid reaching isolated communities, thus enabling them to deal with short-term consumption needs and, at the same time, invest in longer-term development. WFP food aid will be in line with government priority plans for the reduction of poverty, and will focus on projects targeting the rural poor, in particular those families living in absolute poverty. Targeting and selection of beneficiaries will be on the basis of specific surveys undertaken by the National Statistics Department, and utilizing identification of geographical areas with unsatisfied basic needs. Monetization of WFP-supplied commodities for the purchase of local foods will continue to be the modality for support to the food-for-work schemes. Around 25 percent of these commodities will be monetized to fund credit schemes on a co-sharing basis with the Government.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Colombia has achieved sustained rates of economic growth in the last three decades. In spite of repeated instances of political instability and violence, the economy has grown at an average rate of 4.5 percent since the seventies. Population growth declined from more than 2.8 to 2.2 percent during the period 1985-94. This evolution also resulted in a steady increase in annual income per capita, which, according to the National Planning Ministry of Colombia, reached 1,400 dollars by 1994. However, consumer price inflation remains over 20 percent, which compromises the purchasing power of the needy and erodes the effect of per capita GDP increases. The positive economic performance has not translated into a major reduction of poverty. By 1994, out of a total population of 33.5 million persons, 17.9 million lived in poverty. Among these, 6.2 million existed in conditions of absolute poverty, without sufficient means to obtain a minimum diet and unable to satisfy their minimum food energy requirements. Colombia continued to be classified as a LIFDC (low-income, food-deficit country) in 1994 and 1995. The challenge in the short to medium term for Colombia and for WFP will be to focus efforts on how best to achieve durable solutions for that population.

FOOD INSECURITY AND THE HUNGRY POOR

The macro-economic context

2. During the period 1991-93 Colombia witnessed economic growth of 3.6 percent a year, but with a per capita income growth of only 1.4 percent. Although impressive at first, closer investigation reveals that the higher income levels remain concentrated in the hands of a few. This has led to increasing pressures on land in food producing areas, to environmental degradation, and to increasing inequity. A sustained migratory movement from the rural areas to urban centres, as the rural poor attempted to improve their situation by seeking employment in the cities, has only served to exacerbate these problems. While in 1951 the urban population was 40 percent of the total, by 1993 it was estimated that over 70 percent of the population lived in the urban areas, with 30 percent in the four largest cities of Bogotá, Medellín, Cali and Barranquilla.
3. The positive growth performance of the Colombian economy was originally based on high levels of foreign investment, an expanding internal market, and import substitution policies. Export income has depended heavily on price variations and international market conditions for coffee, which experienced periods of bonanza in 1974, 1986 and 1994. As a general trend, however, coffee exports decreased as a share of total exports, from 45.5 percent in 1972 to 26.8 percent in 1990 and 15 percent in 1993. A worrying factor is the persistently high rate of inflation, which has remained at 20 - 25 percent since 1986.
4. Another significant factor affecting the economic and social condition of the country has been the pervading and chronic levels of violence, both politically-induced violence and common criminality. In the last 50 years, one million people have been murdered in



Colombia. The poor are the main victims of violence, as there is a higher incidence of poverty in rural areas. Moreover, beginning in the eighties, groups associated with drug traffickers have begun to take over ownership of agricultural lands causing the displacement of a large number of persons from these areas because of violence and fear. The cost of the violence has not only been social dislocation, but amounts to the equivalent of 10 percent of GDP, without counting the cost of replacing infrastructures damaged by warfare.

Incidence and extent of poverty and indigence

5. Poverty and absolute poverty continue to afflict large numbers of Colombians in spite of the sustained economic gains of the last two decades. This reflects the unequal distribution of wealth and income with which the country entered the second half of this century, and the relative lack of success of efforts to correct these inequalities. In 1992 approximately 20 percent of the households received more than 53 percent of total family incomes; and land is concentrated in larger holdings. In 1988, 71 percent of agricultural land was absorbed by farms of more than 50 hectares. By 1994 the situation had not improved: according to the National Cadastre Office of the National Geographic Institute of Agustín Codazzi (IGAC) seven percent of the total number of landowners held 80 percent of rural lands. In fact, less than one percent (0.07) of the biggest landowners, with average holdings of more than 2,000 hectares, owned 42 percent of rural lands.
6. The extent of poverty in Colombia has been measured using two methodological tools. The poverty line (PL) method is calculated by the National Statistics Department, as a factor of the indigence line, i.e., the level of income needed to purchase a minimum diet or a minimum food basket. The indigence line measures those incomes inadequate to meet minimum food energy requirements. For urban areas, the PL is 2.3 times the indigence level, while for rural areas it is twice the indigence line level. The Index of Unsatisfied Basic Needs (UBN) is calculated on the basis of four indicators: a) substandard, precarious housing (walls, roofs, floors); b) people living in crowded conditions (more than three persons per room); c) lack of access to basic services, potable water, sanitation, electricity; d) school-age children not attending school. A household is defined as living in poverty if it meets any one of the above criteria, although some programmes use two factors as a qualifying criterion.
7. Poverty measured by income and access to food. By measuring the degree of poverty using the PL method, on the basis of family incomes, it was found that in 1992, 53.6 percent of the population had incomes below the poverty line. There were 17.9 million poor. Compared to 1978, this meant an increase of 3.5 million persons in absolute terms. When estimating absolute poverty or indigence, it was found that around 18.5 percent of the total population, or 6.2 million, did not have access to a minimum diet and could not meet their basic food energy requirements. In general, their annual incomes per capita did not exceed 200 dollars.
8. Absolute poverty or indigence is found primarily in rural areas, which account for over 70 percent of the total number of indigent. By regions, the rural eastern and rural Atlantic regions contain 39 percent of the total number of absolute poor. The rural central and rural Pacific regions account for 31 percent. The urban areas of large and medium-sized cities constitute 31 percent of the remainder living in absolute poverty.



Vulnerability to poverty is strongly related to several factors: size of household; number of children under 10 years of age; number of wage-earners in a household; and level of education and age of household members. Of all households living in absolute poverty, 34 percent are headed by women.

9. Poverty measured by unsatisfied basic needs. The UBN Index, on the other hand, estimated that in 1993, 32.2 percent of the population (10.9 million persons) were poor. This compared to an estimated 70.5 percent in 1973 and indicated a substantial reduction in the number of people whose basic needs (adequate housing, access to basic services and to basic education) were not satisfied.
10. Women in Colombia have achieved significant gains in absorption into the labour force and employment levels. Between 1970 and 1990 the increase in the female economically active population was 68 percent, while that of the male population was 62 percent. From 1976 to 1991, out of the total number entering the labour market, women represented 54 percent of new workers. The growing participation of women in the labour force has not been accompanied by changes in the division of labour within the household, resulting in a longer working day for women compared to men, and it has meant lower comparative pay and low social security coverage. Furthermore, unemployment rates for women are twice those affecting men.
11. Women's illiteracy varies considerably between rural and urban areas and between poor and non-poor families. Some 17.2 percent of rural women have no education, while the corresponding percentage for urban women is 5.7. Among non-poor women, 5.3 percent are illiterate while 14.4 percent of poor women are illiterate. For poor men the percentage of illiteracy is 13.9 percent; for non-poor men the rate is 4.9 percent. These indicators point to a need for ensuring that programmes aimed at reducing poverty include gender planning from the design stage.

Food security and nutritional status

12. During the last 25 years, there have been improvements in most major nutritional deficiencies. The striking gains in reduction of infant mortality are to be noted, decreasing from 73 deaths per 1,000 in 1975 to 30 deaths per 1,000 in the period 1990-95. Life expectancy at birth has increased 18 years since the fifties. According to recent surveys, chronic malnutrition (height for age) which affected 35 percent of children under five in 1965, was reduced to 15 percent by 1995. Acute malnutrition (weight for height) decreased to 1.4 percent and global malnutrition (weight for age) affected 8.4 percent of all children under five in 1995, down from 21.1 percent in 1965. However, these averages show deep regional disparities. In rural areas, chronic malnutrition affects 20 percent of all children. Twenty-five percent of those of parents without education suffered stunting. Acute malnutrition in children is five times more prevalent in the Pacific region, while chronic malnutrition is more prevalent in the Atlantic and Pacific regions.
13. Colombia faces food deficits in cereals (wheat and barley), pulses, and a moderate deficit in dairy products, fats and oils. Twenty percent of food requirements are imported. In 1994 imports of these commodities reached a value of 665 million dollars (dairy products 147 million dollars, pulses and roots 55 million, cereals 386 million, and fats and oils 77 million). Cereals imported during 1994 were: 761,000 tons of wheat, 18,000



of rice, 193,000 of barley and 413,000 of yellow/white maize. During the eighties and early nineties, maize was not imported. As an indication of future trends, the Agricultural Studies Mission in Colombia has estimated that for the period 1990-2010, large deficits will occur in wheat (2.5 million tons by 2010), meat (300,000 tons by 2010), and maize (one million tons by 2010), which will require corresponding levels of hard currency for imports. Surpluses in rice, potatoes and plantain could be expected.

14. The overall contribution of the agricultural sector to GDP decreased from 25 percent in the seventies to 16 percent at the beginning of the nineties. Agricultural production grew at an average rate of five percent during the period 1986-90 as result of expansion of lands under cultivation rather than productivity gains. Colombia then privatized or restructured certain institutions - the Colombian Institute of Agricultural Marketing, the Agrarian Bank, the Colombian Agricultural Institute, the Colombian Agrarian Reform Institute. This decreased role of the State in agriculture was part of a market liberalization trend.
15. After 1993 the Government introduced measures to promote agriculture by curtailing imports, exempting agricultural services from VAT, adjusting price bands, fixing minimum prices, and reintroducing some subsidized credit for small farmers. The World Bank has suggested that there be a transition period, during which emergency rural employment programmes should be implemented, ensuring labour intensive techniques, targeting through self-selection, and direct implementation by community groups.
16. Food security in the rural areas continues to remain an intractable, serious problem. While one of the basic causes is a highly skewed distribution of land, food insecurity has increased as a result of a loss of income and employment opportunities among rural families. Therefore, WFP strategy should continue to focus on income, employment generation and the creation of assets.

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND POLICIES ADDRESSING POVERTY AND FOOD SECURITY

17. Since 1994 the Government has based its development strategy and policies on the national development and investment plan for 1995-98, also called the "social leap". The plan has a moderate approach, calls for the adoption of an alternative model of development and reiterates the need to obtain significant advancement in social development, competitiveness, the environment and institutional development. In this regard, the plan has three basic strategies: a) a social strategy, with a drive to equity by focusing public investment on the creation of employment among the poorest families; b) a competitive strategy - a broad effort at combining both the public and private sector in order to increase and utilize efficiently available productive resources and generate sustained comparative advantages; and c) progress towards sustainable human development, defined as increasing opportunities and capabilities of the population through the formation of social capital and management of the natural patrimony.



Decentralization

18. Decentralization has been one of the policy corner-stones of past and present Governments since the eighties. The main purpose has been to share revenue and responsibilities with local governments in order to obtain a more efficient allocation of public funds, and render more transparent and verifiable the implementation of government programmes. A new law on local government functions and financing (ley de compensación y recursos), and the creation of three social funds which operate on a "matching-grant" basis form the framework for transferring the responsibility for poverty reduction to the municipalities, which are obliged by law to deliver water, sewerage, primary health and education services. In 1991 transfers to the municipalities from the central Government were 4.3 percent of GDP, and it is expected that by 1998 these transfers will reach 7.8 of GDP. Implementation by municipalities has been uneven, as their capacity to design and implement development projects aimed at the reduction of poverty is limited. At the same time, it is becoming evident that the local governments would also prefer to have flexibility to finance employment and income-generating schemes besides the priority health and education projects.

Priority programmes in the national development plan

19. Social solidarity network (RSS). RSS was designed by the Government as a set of programmes for the poorest communities to improve their income and living conditions. It gives priority to unemployed youth and women, malnourished children, women heads of household, and elderly destitute. RSS currently implements the following programmes: a) employment within the RSS, which includes an emergency rural employment scheme planning to generate 110,000 jobs in labour-intensive infrastructure works; b) food assistance, including a mother-child programme in health and nutrition with a target of 400,000 beneficiaries, food supplements to 890,000 pre-schoolchildren, and food coupons (bono alimentario) for reaching 140,000 children in community homes in rural areas; c) support to women heads of household, aiming to provide a subsidy for education costs (about 60 dollars a year) for children six to 11 years old, benefiting 150,000 children; d) assistance to 240,000 elderly indigent; e) a rural housing improvement programme in the poorest communities, reaching 300,000 families; and f) urban housing, aiming at the distribution of 500,000 subsidies to benefit one million families. RSS has been assigned funds equal to 0.9 percent of the GDP. However, initial assessments of the network's performance have indicated a slow disbursement rate, low coverage and relatively high overheads.
20. National programme for assistance to the displaced population. The objective of the programme is to assist the population displaced by violence with a view to their voluntary return to or resettlement in their original communities. It is estimated that over 600,000 persons have been displaced by violence in the last 11 years, with Santander, Antioquia, Meta, Cordoba, and Boyaca accounting for 54 percent of the displaced population. The groups most affected are women and youths, representing 58.2 percent of the total.
21. Programme for support to the indigenous population. This programme provides support to the 600,000 indigenous persons belonging to 81 peoples, representing two percent of the total population. The main activities are in education, health, land and agrarian reform, production and quality of life and protection of ecosystems and natural



forests. Investments for the period 1995-98 amount to 290 million dollars.

22. Protection of strategic ecosystems and buffer zones around national parks. This programme is in line with the role of the State in protecting the bio-diversity and integrity of the environment; conserving areas of particular ecological importance; and promoting education and awareness of the environment. For the buffer zones around national parks, it is of extreme importance that the community surrounding the parks, which has usually been forced to live in these areas because of demographic pressure or violence, should be aware of the benefits they can obtain from living in a buffer zone of a properly managed national park.
23. WFP assistance will be granted within the framework of these priority programmes, in particular those benefiting the poorest populations, i.e., indigenous groups and families living around the national parks and in ecologically fragile areas.

Food security policies

24. The opening up of the economy, liberalization of trade and the decreased role of the State have brought significant changes in the approach to food security. In previous years, policies on food security placed reliance on self-sufficiency and protection of certain crops considered essential. Now, liberalization targets achievement of higher growth in those areas of the economy where the country has real comparative advantages even if this means reorientation of investment in certain sectors. Thus, the objective of self-sufficiency has lost relevance or validity. Current policy still establishes some levels of protection for a few items by means of tariffs and the price band mechanism, although these measures are increasingly coming under close scrutiny.
25. Because of its concern for food security, the Government is developing a national food and nutrition plan with the objective of contributing to the improvement of the food and nutritional status through activities that other sectors and institutions are already implementing. The plan relies heavily on the supplementary feeding programmes of the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF), including the production of Bienestarina for distribution to vulnerable groups. It should be noted that most major external food aid programmes were phased out at the end of the seventies. In this context, the Government views WFP food aid as a valid tool to reach poor families with chronic undernutrition, who spend a large part of their budget on food and therefore are attracted to food-for-work schemes.



ASSESSMENT OF WFP'S PERFORMANCE TO DATE

Evolution of WFP assistance to Colombia

26. WFP began its cooperation with Colombia in 1969, and since then has mainly supported the implementation of development projects for vulnerable groups and rural development. The focus of attention and allocation of WFP resources has shifted markedly during these 27 years. In the seventies, WFP resources were concentrated almost exclusively in mother-child, nutrition-related, primary health projects in marginal urban areas where food was used as an incentive for attendance at health centres and as a supplement to daily diets. By 1978, and in conjunction with a policy decision to phase out external assistance to these programmes, WFP food aid was reoriented to other sectors.
27. During the eighties, WFP-assisted projects were mainly in the form of food-for-work projects, with an integrated approach to rural development, concentrated in poor rural areas with the objective of generating temporary employment and the creation of assets. Gradually, in the implementation of these projects, pilot credit schemes (with funds generated from beneficiaries' savings) were successfully tested in recognition of the need of beneficiary groups to have seed capital for productive activities and micro-enterprises. Since the beginning of the nineties, the projects have continued to have rural development as an objective, with the emphasis on generation of income and capital assets to increase productivity and improve food security. Moreover, community participation plays a key role, and the monetization of WFP resources was introduced as a mechanism to enable the purchase of local, more suitable commodities and to simplify logistic operations.

Resources contributed by WFP

28. WFP has contributed 110.9 million dollars from the beginning of its operations in support of 23 projects: 18 development projects with a value of 109.4 million dollars and five emergency operations valued at 1.5 million dollars. From the total resources allocated by WFP, 54.3 percent have been used for supplementary feeding of vulnerable groups and 45.7 percent for rural development projects. Fifteen development projects and five emergency operations have terminated, and three development projects remain operational, with a total cost to WFP of 25.5 million dollars.
29. During the initial phase of WFP cooperation, a food basket consisting of six commodities (wheat flour, powdered milk, pulses, oil, canned meat and canned fish), was shipped direct by the Programme. Since 1992 when monetization began, WFP has supplied only wheat. A total of 55,590 tons has been supplied since 1992. An additional 9,800 tons were supplied in 1995 for monetization in Colombia, with the proceeds destined for implementation of projects in the Eastern Caribbean countries. Two thirds of the funds generated from monetization have been utilized for the purchase of local commodities (pulses, rice, oil, fish and noodles) and one third to promote income-generating activities through credit modalities co-financed by the Government.



Cost-effectiveness and management of WFP resources

30. Monetization of commodities for utilization in WFP-assisted projects in Colombia has been cost-effective. The process has been managed by the Agricultural Marketing Institute (IDEMA), which receives the commodities at the port and handles the sale. With respect to c.i.f. costs incurred by WFP, the funds obtained from the sale of the wheat supplied by WFP have been uniformly higher. The management of the funds has also been satisfactory. Food commodities are purchased in an efficient manner. Post-c.i.f. losses are almost entirely eliminated, internal logistic operations are simplified significantly and there is a notable stimulus to local food production. Food purchases are made on the basis of bids and decided by special purchasing committees.
31. One of the improvements in the monetization process has been more exact information on c.i.f. costs for each shipment, which allows establishment of a base c.i.f. price. A further improvement has been a modification to the contract with IDEMA, establishing penalties for late deposit of the generated funds once monetization is completed.

Achievements and impact of WFP assistance

32. Development of human resources. WFP activities in this sector were formulated in support of the Government's drive to reduce drastically the high rates of malnutrition and morbidity in vulnerable groups, using community health centres and schools as distribution points. Spearheading this drive and the main coordinating agency was the newly-created Colombian Institute for Family Welfare. During the period 1969-81, over 1.7 million expectant or nursing mothers and pre-school and schoolchildren received food rations through supplementary feeding projects. In general terms, the projects appear to have reached their main objectives. Studies carried out in 1971 on a sample of 9,200 pre-school children receiving the nutritional supplement found increases in weight and height and improvement in nutritional status: the total percentage of malnourished children decreased from 48 to 34 percent, and children with second and third-degree malnutrition from 30.5 to 18.7 percent.
33. Further studies conducted in 1973 with 356 pre-school children and a control group showed a significant reduction in the number of children classified as malnourished from 73 to 22 percent. Another main benefit from supplementary feeding, as evidenced by sample testing in 1972, was a drastic reduction in the percentage of children born weighing less than 2,500 grams. An intangible benefit from this assistance was the support provided to the Government and institutions at a time when it was recognized that the alarming rates of malnutrition of vulnerable groups had to be dealt with decisively. The Institute for Family Welfare, with government resources and technical advice funded from World Bank loans, is continuing its efforts to reduce malnutrition.
34. Rural incomes and employment. Rural development projects benefited around 116,000 poor families during the period 1988-95. These families received food rations valued at 67 percent of the minimum wage in the project areas for each day of work in the project, representing an effective income transfer of up to 150 dollars a year. Apart from the direct income transfer from the food rations, beneficiaries also received a net transfer from government funds in the form of construction materials, inputs and technical assistance valued at 160 to 1,200 dollars per family, depending on the activity.



Thus, WFP and government resources have had a direct impact on family incomes of about three to six times the income level of the absolute poverty line. The projects have been implemented in the poorest areas of those departments most affected by unsatisfied basic needs.

35. WFP assistance has had an increased impact due to the catalytic role food aid has played in attracting counterpart funds. Furthermore, the communities and regional authorities testify to the positive effect of WFP projects as well as the fact that they are effective transfer mechanisms.
36. Credit schemes funded from government resources, beneficiaries' savings or from monetization of WFP commodities have been a feature of WFP-assisted projects. According to evaluation reports, the credit fund established with the Integrated Rural Development Fund of the Ministry of Agriculture enabled the consolidation of enterprises of 251 associations and cooperatives of small food producers with over 9,350 members, for a total of 4.8 million dollars. Similarly, in Cucuta the Northern Development Corporation (CORPONORTE) promoted the successful development of over 100 micro-enterprises with credits from WFP, benefiting 8,000 families. Within project Colombia 2740, over 1,400 loans have been disbursed with a total amount of 1.5 million dollars for micro-enterprises run by men and women. Some 22.4 percent of these are run by women alone. Women's groups will receive more priority in future work plans. Loans have been approved on the basis of feasibility studies and on commercial interest rates. Because of the technical assistance provided with the credit, loan default rates have been relatively low (less than 10 percent). Some of the credit schemes have experienced delays or difficulties in the allocation of loans because it has not always been possible to prepare the feasibility studies on time. These delays can mean waiting for the next agricultural season, six months or later. Further, the link between food-for-work projects and the initiatives financed by the credit schemes has not always been clear.
37. Creation of productive and social assets. Evaluation missions have found that assets created through the food for work activities (roads, bridges, small irrigation, soil improvement and conservation, dwellings, community centres, aqueducts, sewerage) have improved the productive capacity and the living standards of poor rural communities. Project No. 2740 in its original phase emphasized the construction of social and economic infrastructure, which absorbed over 45 percent of the 3.2 million workdays programmed. Priority was given to the construction of access roads, bridges, electricity supply systems, aqueducts, livestock production, schools and community centres, and much less to reforestation and soil conservation activities. Also, the works undertaken were not always planned within a coherent plan for development of the communities. The quality of the works was appropriate and achieved the objective of regaining the confidence of the indigenous communities, many of which had been affected by violence.
38. Project No. 2368 in support of the integrated rural development programme generated positive and tangible effects on poor rural communities, particularly in infrastructure that improved their quality of life (potable water, access roads, health and education infrastructure), as well as productive and natural resource conservation activities (irrigation systems, fruit tree plantations, forestry improvement). Thus, over 4.1 million workdays were utilized through food-for-work schemes. Moreover, the operations of the credit component disbursed loans for a total of 4.8 million dollars in order to finance activities in production, processing and marketing of food crops. However, evaluation



missions noted the lack of a clear strategy to integrate the two main components of the project, food for work and credit, with technical assistance. This resulted in dispersion of activities and difficulties in monitoring and evaluating project impact. In fact, an evaluation mission which visited the project in 1994 estimated that definite possibilities of sustainability existed only in the nurseries, water supply systems, water wells, housing and storage centres built by the project. It was also noted that the project did not have a clear strategy to take into account gender considerations, or establish appropriate modalities to facilitate the access of women to project benefits. It was recognized, however, that in actual practice and particularly in the conservation of natural resources, nurseries, reforestation, and creation of infrastructure, women had assumed a "deciding" role and their participation in those activities was massive.

39. Community organization and development. One of the major effects and indeed an essential element for the success of project implementation has been the increasing level of community organization and participation in the design and monitoring of project activities. A main part of this process has been the identification of development constraints and needs by the community and the realization that by joining efforts and resources it is possible to overcome those limitations. WFP-assisted projects have often operated in areas and with beneficiaries who were affected by violence and neglect, and establishing contact and regaining their confidence has been a necessary preliminary step.
40. In the implementation of project No. 2740, the national rehabilitation plan (PNR) facilitated the participation of communities through the Municipal Councils for Rehabilitation, and the planning of activities, scheduling and monitoring of completion of works and food aid administration were in the hands of the communities, through specific work committees and village leaders. The self-management capacity of the communities was thus strengthened. On the other hand, it has been observed that although the training targets have been reached, the contents and impact of the training activities, particularly the technical training undertaken, have been weak. This may be due to the short duration of the courses and the lack of preparation of the trainers. For project No. 2368, the evaluation mission found that there had not been sufficient consultation at the local level for the selection of works, and although there had initially been considerable promotional activity in the communities, this was not followed up and the works were often programmed from the top down. However, there were marked regional differences.
41. Monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring the progress of project activities and the degree of achievement has been difficult given the geographical coverage of the projects and the many activities included in the work plans. Generally, the current monitoring systems provide sufficient information on the workdays utilized, number of rations distributed and units of work completed, although for some projects this information was sometimes incomplete and delayed. Gender-disaggregated data will be collected from 1996 in all projects. For projects No. 2740 and No. 4237, sufficient staff and resources were available for technical backstopping and monitoring, and the flow of information has been more timely and complete. Assessing impact has not been done in a systematic manner. Specific studies are being undertaken for projects No. 2740 and No. 4237 in order to determine with more precision the effect of the credit operations on the beneficiaries' income and employment levels and the effectiveness of the targeting procedures. It is expected that focusing project implementation on priority geographical areas and key activities will enhance the implementing agencies' capacity to monitor and assess impact properly. For project No. 2740 in particular, the high degree of community



participation has meant that from the design of the project, the role of food aid is viewed as a finite intervention with specific parameters for beginning and terminating an activity. This has facilitated assessment of the effect of food aid. A study will be carried out on the loans made to women's groups.

42. In conclusion, WFP assistance has served to provide poor families with improved access to primary health services, has created rural infrastructure, and has been particularly effective in helping to develop poor rural communities, many of them indigenous groups affected by violence, who have not been easily reached with other forms of technical or financial aid; food aid covered part of their consumption requirements and enabled them to invest in their future. Further, food aid as an incentive to participate in income-earning activities has been provided to women who otherwise would not have access to other projects offering cash or technical aid.

FUTURE ORIENTATION OF WFP ASSISTANCE

43. The need for WFP assistance to Colombia has been established by the comparative advantage of project food aid in reaching isolated groups. The additional food enables the communities to deal with short-term food consumption deficits and, at the same time, invest in longer-term development. WFP food resources have also had a proven catalytic value in attracting government resources.

Target groups and areas to be focused

44. The target population for WFP assistance will be the rural poor, in particular rural women and women heads of household and groups living in absolute poverty. In spite of recent gains in macro-economic terms, the benefits have not trickled down to these people and will not do so automatically given the inequalities in income distribution and access to productive assets such as land. Thus, absolute poverty has not decreased and remains an intractable problem. In recognition of this, the Government has placed strong emphasis on the reduction of poverty in its development plans. WFP will support these efforts by linking its assistance directly to the priority programmes identified in the national development plan.
45. In terms of the characteristics of the various population groups affected by absolute poverty, and in line with the priorities established in the development plan, WFP assistance will give priority to indigenous groups and new settlers living in buffer zones around national parks and ecologically sensitive areas. Women will be a priority target for: a) training; b) soil conservation; c) nurseries; d) seed cultivation; e) tree planting; and f) tree maintenance in the projects focused on sustainable management of the environment. Targeting in project formulation focuses on the hungry poor in marginal areas such as buffer zones adjacent to natural reserves, in watersheds and on indigenous lands. Targeting of these priority groups, and specific selection of beneficiaries will be based on the survey and indirect information on income developed by the National Statistics Department, in order to determine prevalence of absolute poverty by department and community. This will be complemented with the information on unsatisfied basic needs used by RSS to locate geographic areas with the highest poverty indicators. A result of this exercise will be the development of poverty and food insecurity maps.



46. Furthermore, taking into account the relevant information on localization of absolute poverty, and given the positive experience already gained from previous WFP-assisted projects in those areas, future WFP assistance as a first priority will be concentrated in the rural eastern, central and Atlantic regions.

Strategic considerations in the utilization of WFP resources

47. WFP resources in Colombia are to be used almost exclusively for development purposes, including support to persons affected or displaced by violence. Food aid supplied by WFP will be integrated into a strategy for reaching poor rural families. The main objective of WFP food aid will continue to contribute to programmes of income and employment generation, creation of assets and community development of the poorest families in rural Colombia. In order to achieve this objective, a strategic approach has been developed and adapted by the implementing agencies, both government and private.
48. This approach will continue to be applied in future WFP assistance and has the following main elements:
- a) Community participation. Considering the emerging role of women in the labour force, WFP projects will focus on full involvement of indigenous women in projects targeted to their areas and on extending the income-generating activities already created to more women's groups. Women will be involved with men in project design, implementation, monitoring and food distribution at the local level. This will further ensure that the community as a whole will work with a gender balance and that benefits will go to those most affected by poverty and food insecurity. The male-female community will exert a vigilant role over the resources made available to them since they, in turn, enter into a commitment with the project to provide their labour, materials or other resources.
 - b) Food aid as a catalyst. This stems from the realization that food by itself is not sufficient. In virtually all development projects, food aid has been able to attract financial and technical inputs from other sources.
 - c) Technical assistance, considered an essential element for the proper design and execution of the activities.
 - d) Monetization and credit, as a mechanism which allows the flexibility to effect local purchases on a cost effective basis, simplifies logistic operations eliminating the risk of large food losses, and provides a food basket to the beneficiaries fully compatible with their dietary preferences. Credit schemes have been co-financed with the Government as a response to specific needs expressed by beneficiaries who do not have access to regular credit channels. The main objective is both to make credit available on a commercial rate basis, but more importantly to educate the communities on the benefits and risks of credit with a view to their using commercial credit channels in the future with the seed capital generated from productive activities. Colombia has provided its own technical assistance to assure good administration of credit in WFP projects.



Programming of WFP assistance

49. WFP assistance will be programmed in the context of the priorities set by the development plan for the period 1994-98 and in line with the priorities established by the Government for international cooperation, in particular with the Programme of Alternative Development (PLANTE) - programmes for protection of the environment, improvement of agricultural competitiveness and support to indigenous communities.
50. During the process of design and formulation of new activities and projects, WFP and the implementing agencies will consult with the prospective beneficiary groups, and the projects will comply with two specific requirements agreed with the Government: a) gender planning and analysis of expected benefits will be included so as to ensure that women will benefit equitably from the activities planned. Targets for women's participation in design, implementation, monitoring and distribution will be set. The objective is not to design projects for women but rather that the constraints faced by women for participation in project activities be addressed in a systematic manner; and b) the project will not have a negative impact on the environment. Ongoing activities will be revised accordingly.
51. In order to achieve concrete results in reducing absolute poverty and in consideration of the root causes of poverty in Colombia, WFP assistance will support activities which have specific development objectives and targets, i.e., a) improvement of incomes; b) generation of temporary or permanent employment; and c) capitalization of rural households by creation of assets or access to credit schemes for productive activities.

Scope of joint cooperation with other agencies and Country Strategy Note (CSN)

52. There has been interagency cooperation in the implementation of WFP-assisted projects, mainly with UNDP which provides management services for the technical units of projects No. 2740 and No. 2368. UNDP approved projects UNDP/COL/92/007 - "Support to development of indigenous communities", in order to manage 6.5 million dollars supplied from government counterpart funds, and UNDP/COL/93/011 - "Support to integrated rural development", to manage 977,700 dollars for a similar purpose. These activities will continue as they have proved to be an efficient way to manage the counterpart obligations that the Government committed for project implementation. WFP will begin to formulate a Country Programme Document in 1996 to focus further its cooperation with other agencies.
53. In addition, cooperation has been discussed with ILO for training in management of cooperatives and enterprises, following experience with project No. 2740 where leaders were trained in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour, at a cost of 20,000 dollars.
54. WFP will continue to liaise closely with NGOs operating in the project areas, as has been the current practice. NGOs such as Antioquia Presente, the Indigenous Cooperative Centre El Cauca (CENCOIC), the Tierra Adentro Foundation, and the Corporation for Support of Associative Enterprises (CORFAS), among others, have been co-executors of projects, and this will continue in the future.
55. The preparation of the CSN for Colombia will provide the framework for joint



cooperation with other agencies, government institutions and private associations. It is being formulated by the Special Division for International Technical Cooperation of the National Planning Department, and should be finalized by June 1996 in consultation with United Nations agencies. These met in Cartagena for one week in 1995 to formulate this common strategy. Interagency cooperation has been sharpened and common goals focused. The National Planning Department recommends donor and interagency collaboration. Draft documentation has been prepared in consultation with the United Nations system and the Government, and places emphasis on the reduction of poverty, protection and development of the environment, and on combating illicit drugs through alternative development. WFP has fully cooperated with many partners in the formulation of the CSN.

Level of resources required

56. There are currently three ongoing WFP-assisted projects in Colombia:
- a) Colombia 2740, with a total cost to WFP of eight million dollars, started operations in January 1995 and is expected to end by December 1998,
 - b) Colombia 2368, with a total cost of 13.2 million dollars, is expected to end in June 1996;
 - c) Colombia 4237, with a total cost of 4.7 million dollars, started in September 1992 and is expected to end in September 1997. By the end of 1996, there will be two operational projects in Colombia.
57. At present, there is one project being formulated for community conservation of natural resources in mountain ecosystems and in buffer zones around national parks. This project (with a preliminary cost to WFP of 8.4 million dollars) may be presented for approval by the Executive Board in 1996 and would begin implementation during the second semester of 1997. Thus, it is planned that annual WFP allocations to Colombia during the period 1996-2000 should be around two to three million dollars, depending on the availability of WFP resources in a given year. At an allocation level of 2.5 million dollars a year, WFP would complete its obligations to Colombia for the above-mentioned projects by the year 2000.

KEY ISSUES AND RISKS

58. The persistent levels of violence and instability in Colombia, from paramilitary, guerrilla and drug-trafficker groups, particularly in the areas where WFP-assisted projects are being implemented, may affect the feasibility of conducting operations or place added pressure on the beneficiary population to abandon their homes.
59. Government counterpart allocations have been optimal. However, with the onset of financial constraints, funds may become limited. The Government was already forced to reduce social spending significantly during 1995 by 167 million dollars, so that social spending is reduced to 11.4 percent instead of 13.3 percent of GDP. This may also affect the future rate of project implementation. In any case, it has been observed that the management capacity of government agencies already seems to be affected.
60. The long-term management of the revolving funds should be clearly determined, so that once WFP participation in the project terminates, these funds should revert to the



communities and be managed by the beneficiary groups. Need for a clear definition of this aspect is a key issue.

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