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SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT ON EMERGENCY OPERATION TAJIKISTAN 5253.00

Emergency food aid for vulnerable groups¹

Total food cost	8,549,975 dollars
Total cost to WFP	16,037,736 dollars
Date approved	16 May 1997
Duration	One year (1 April 1997–31 March 1998)
Date of evaluation ²	October/November 1997

All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars, unless otherwise stated. One United States dollar equalled 830 Tajik roubles in November 1997.

¹ The full report is available on request, in English only.

² The mission consisted of a Senior Evaluation Officer, WFP (team leader) and a Development Economist (WFP consultant).

ABSTRACT

The WFP-assisted operation has been successful in providing food aid to needy people during a time when civil war and the dramatic transformation of the socio-economic system have pushed large strata of the population below the poverty line. The system for beneficiary targeting has been comprehensive but needs further efforts for refinement as phasing-down efforts may be initiated. However, the mission considered that the need for continued WFP food assistance was still there in the absence of a marked improvement of the economy that would also produce benefits for the most vulnerable groups and a re-start of a functioning social welfare system. Among the food-for-work activities, the land-lease programme deserves particular attention in view of the various levels of benefits it has produced and can continue to produce. However, the situation in the country has to be particularly well monitored in order to request in due course, as the situation improves, an increasing sense of ownership, responsibility and contribution on the part of the Government and the communities towards the current beneficiaries of WFP assistance.

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for consideration to the Executive Board.

Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session of 1996, the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented. The meetings of the Executive Board are to be conducted in a business-like manner, with increased dialogue and exchanges between delegations and the Secretariat. Efforts to promote these guiding principles will continue to be pursued by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat therefore invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document in the plenary.

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BACKGROUND

1. With the demise of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Tajikistan, traditionally one of its poorest member countries, faced economic and political collapse. In addition, civil war brought about the displacement of close to one million people and the death of 20,000 to 40,000. Rising food prices and food scarcity have resulted in widespread malnutrition. Eighty percent of the population were estimated to be below the poverty line in 1997.
2. Since the end of the civil war in 1993, periods of peace have alternated with renewed outbreaks of fighting. However, 1997 was the first post-independence year in which industrial and agricultural production stabilized, and a fragile peace accord was reached.
3. By the end of 1993, most internally displaced persons (IDPs) had returned to their areas of origin, where they found very difficult conditions: the destruction of homes, severe economic recession and harassment. The most vulnerable groups have been those who formerly depended on state welfare payments and who therefore had very limited coping mechanisms to begin with.
4. Following a United Nations appeal, WFP began food distributions in mid-1993 in Khatlon, the area most severely affected by the civil war. Returnees, IDPs and seriously war-affected people totalled 500,000.
5. In response to the overall dramatic deterioration of social conditions in the country in late 1993, WFP—in agreement with the Ministries of Education and Health—changed the targeting approach away from one that was geographically based and focused on the war-affected population as such, to a country-wide programme for vulnerable groups.
6. WFP's food-supply situation in 1995 allowed an expansion into additional high-priority areas (such as Garm and Gorno-Badakshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO)) and additional activities (e.g., food for work (FFW) for the reconstruction of war-damaged houses).
7. WFP's appeal for Expansion 3 was to cover the supplementary food needs of 485,000 people, out of a total vulnerable population estimated at 705,000.

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

8. The purpose of the evaluation was to analyse the achievements of the emergency operation (EMOP)—particularly of Expansion 3—including WFP's contribution towards normalization in terms of rehabilitation and resettlement. On the basis of past achievements, positive and negative factors and lessons learned, the evaluation was to make recommendations to strengthen the current operation and outline a future strategy for providing food aid to the country.
9. Apart from assessing the appropriateness of WFP's food assistance within the special socio-economic and political context of the country, particular attention was to be paid to the effectiveness of targeting and other key issues such as implementation capacity (including direct implementation by WFP as compared with implementation through NGOs and other partners), and effectiveness of coordination and collaboration between WFP and other aid providers.



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Intervention strategies

10. WFP's main intervention strategy in Tajikistan has been free distribution through vulnerable group feeding (VGF) and food for work (FFW) projects. At the time of the evaluation, Expansion 3 had been operational for seven months and covered 87 percent of the original number of beneficiaries planned; 98 percent of this refers to VGF (89 percent of the original target) and only two percent to FFW schemes (50 percent of the planned objectives). Annex I provides details. The operation had therefore been quite successful in quantitative terms for VGF, less so for FFW as this was a new undertaking and required additional inputs.

Vulnerable group feeding

11. The number of VGF beneficiaries (some 437,000) was 89 percent of the original target of Expansion 3. Overall, the mission considered that WFP assistance in VGF has been a transparent and fairly well targeted programme (with some qualification for the latter observation). The contribution made by food aid to the population's survival and resettlement has been evident in a country not only devastated by civil war, but also affected by a dramatic socio-economic transformation which has pushed large strata of the population below the poverty line. Localized nutrition surveys indicate that the incidence of acute malnutrition has been low. This can be attributed, at least in part, to WFP's regular food supply, but the incidence of stunting and wasting was still widespread. Socio-economic studies found that VGF was still necessary as a stop-gap measure in order to strengthen people's coping capacity.
12. However, there is a risk of dependency because the country previously had a well functioning social welfare system and it might be perceived that WFP (and other aid providers) would take over that role without a definite time frame. To prevent this, WFP, in conjunction with the Government and communities, would have to introduce as early as possible the notion of the need for contributions from both beneficiaries and local authorities.
13. As to the intra-household use of WFP rations, little information was available regarding the extent to which rations were directly consumed by the individual beneficiaries, shared inside the household or bartered. Interviews with beneficiaries indicated that the sharing of WFP rations with non-beneficiary neighbouring households was common (again a coping mechanism). Therefore, in the absence of specific data, it was not possible to quantitatively demonstrate the effects of WFP food aid on the households in terms of direct dietary support or income transfer.



Food for work

14. Despite the very limited share of FFW in the overall operation and the fact that only 50 percent of the target under Expansion 3 has been achieved, the importance of activities supported by FFW as an instrument towards recovery and the long-term development in the Tajikistan context should not be underestimated. These promote self-help and initiative—important attitudes in a country that had previously relied on State initiative.
15. Of the 72 projects operational in 1996 and 1997, 57 were land-lease and 15 canal cleaning and other projects. The land-lease projects are at the forefront of land privatization and empowerment of vulnerable groups, whereas the rest are pilot examples of how small-scale local economic activity can be achieved through cooperative behaviour.
16. WFP food monitors have been taking the lead—given the country's lack of experience with this type of food assistance—in proposing FFW activities in discussions with beneficiaries, and by seeking additional support (technical inputs and non-food items), from other organizations as well as the active involvement of local authorities. Stimulated by way of examples, population groups and local authorities have been approaching WFP for assisting such schemes, for instance for canal rehabilitation and clearing, which suggests further scope for exploring FFW opportunities.
17. FFW support—sometimes requested—for activities which would in any case be carried out by the community without external assistance (such as the routine collection of garbage) would have to be avoided in order to build up the community's sense of responsibility, which they need in future when they have to rely on themselves.

Land-lease projects

18. Land-lease projects, in which collective state farmland (Kolkhoz) is leased for a defined period to beneficiaries identified and assisted by WFP, were a relatively small component of the EMOP, involving in 1996 some 95 participants on 47 hectares and in 1997 about 300 participants on 150 hectares of land. However, they have been innovative and beneficial as beneficiaries have produced food and gained experience in privatization. These undertakings benefit people in a more sustainable way who would otherwise be net recipients of aid. At the same time, they are examples of how, with some assistance, people can gradually be integrated into the economy.
19. These undertakings are also remarkable as they involve people who have no experience in managing smallholdings. The participants' agricultural knowledge is usually limited to a garden vegetable plot, or Kholkoz tasks such as weeding, cotton-picking, hauling and tractor-driving. WFP monitors—untrained as managers or agronomists—seek to advise on both individual farm management and collective action. However, they are assisted by Tajik and expatriate agronomists through an agreement between WFP and the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED).
20. During the first 12 months land-lease beneficiaries also receive VGF rations, after which they are taken off the beneficiary list. In addition, each participant receives a daily FFW ration of three kilograms of wheat flour for up to six months, after which he or she is expected to have reaped the first harvest. WFP has been careful to tie food distribution to the completion of certain key activities of each of the groups (e.g., ploughing) and the need to purchase inputs. The FFW rations are often used to barter for inputs (seed, fertilizer, hire of machinery, maintenance of irrigation and pumps). However, in practice WFP has provided rations beyond the agreed period in the case of 1996 participants; this might defy the concept of self-reliance.



21. In spite of a generally prevailing positive view about land-lease projects, some local authorities fear losing power and influence by allowing private land use, even though the central Government has committed itself to the process and has created the legal framework. Others have more legitimate concerns about land not being properly used or about project participants sometimes being reluctant to correctly report their yields to Kolkhoz authorities (the lease is paid on the basis of yields). This attitude of distrust can be considered part of the legacy inherited from the former economic system. Given the pilot nature of this type of project, it is important that experiences are carefully documented as lessons for the future when WFP's assistance is phased out.
22. In any event, basing the lease on yields is difficult to manage in terms of predictability, transparency and other factors. In order not to jeopardize the success of the land-lease projects and to protect well understood interests of the Kolkhoz (which still have certain responsibilities for the economic situation of an oblast or a district), the Kolkhoz should be able to reclaim the land when agricultural yields are lower than foreseen because the land is not properly used.
23. Some irrigation canal cleaning through FFW is undertaken in the project areas, in part to support the land-lease projects and in part to satisfy the interest of the Kolkhoz, and therefore convince it to provide the land for the project more freely.

INSTITUTIONAL FEEDING

24. The mission shared the concern of the WFP country office of not becoming too deeply involved in these types of activities (nursing homes, orphanages, schools, hospitals and soup kitchens), as it is budgetary support which in the longer run has to be taken on by the Government. Another approach—favoured by the WFP country office—is that of encouraging the communities to take, to the extent possible, responsibility for these institutions directly, or involving these categories of beneficiaries in community-based projects. Nonetheless, WFP has occasionally provided food as a bridging measure through other organizations working with these institutions, in order to avoid possible breaks in their pipelines.
25. Land has traditionally been provided to some institutions for the purpose of supplementing staff salaries and kitchen purchases. However, the land is now often either used by others or abandoned. FFW schemes can make a contribution—albeit rather limited—to the rehabilitation of these plots for the benefit of both staff and inmates.

THE ROLE OF FOOD AID

26. Food aid has provided a safety net to some of the most needy population through vulnerable group feeding, and empowered these groups through innovative FFW projects which produce direct benefits (food in the case of the land-lease projects), but also serve as examples of how a new economy can work through a combination of self-initiative and cooperative behaviour. It has strengthened poor people's coping mechanisms which have been under considerable strain as the transformation of the economy is still going on.
27. The justification for food aid and the benefits produced have been evident. Social welfare cases are allocated an average of 1,000 Tajik roubles per month, and professionals such as teachers and doctors receive monthly salaries of 2,000–3,000 Tajik roubles (which



they have rarely received during the last five years). The monthly value of the daily WFP ration of 7,590 Tajik roubles represents eight times an average pension and 2.5 times a professional salary. In 1996, the market value of the food basket amounted to 4.30 dollars, whereas in November 1997 it was nine dollars. This is an indicator of the real inflation the population has to face in purchasing basic food items. Thus, it is clear that households cannot live on formal-sector earnings. The situation was aggravated by the fact that numerous militia/military check points hamper the free transit of people and goods (including WFP commodities), which does not encourage the population to engage in economic activities.

28. By assisting social welfare cases WFP, together with others, has actually taken over an important role of the Government. The WFP country office is aware of the risk of dependency. However, in the absence of a functioning social safety net system, at present there has been no alternative to food aid for well targeted cases.

Food versus cash

29. Interviews with beneficiaries indicated that owing to the continued erosion of purchasing power, they generally preferred food to cash. Food rations have an advantage over cash because even where the food items that make them up are generally available in the market (Khathlon), they are not accessible to poor people. In other areas (Gorno-Badakhshan) wheat flour is continuously lacking. Bartering economies, such as the one in Garm, make food commodities more interesting than cash. However, some NGOs have, with mixed results, favoured cash in barter areas in order to inject money into the economy.
30. The drivers hired by local authorities for the transport of WFP food from the warehouses to the final distribution points have been paid in kind since 1996, which they preferred. The mission had some concerns that payment in food was an easy way out of the Government's cash constraints and that more efforts had to be made not only to ensure that the authorities would honour their financial obligations, but also to better control road blocks (where food "payments" had to be made in order to get the WFP commodities through).

PROSPECTS FOR PHASING OUT

31. Seventy-four percent of WFP's VGF beneficiaries are not able-bodied people. They represent a group who will never be able to look after themselves adequately. The Government has been unable (organizational problems, lack of resources, inadequate tax system, etc.) to address the problem and the political environment might not allow the Government to prioritize social welfare in the near future. While the assistance of WFP and its partners is therefore still necessary, careful monitoring of the situation by WFP is essential to ensure that the Government and the communities are gradually taking over a higher share of responsibility (e.g., as regards commodity transport costs).
32. While the FFW experience has been positive overall, it is obvious that this modality cannot contribute much to a phasing-out process from free "relief" distribution through VGF, as VGF and FFW reach very different people. The neediest people are usually those who are unable to work. In addition, there is a capacity limit for increasing FFW as these projects are very supervision-intensive, which is one of the reasons why only 50 percent of the FFW target was achieved. Given a vacuum of implementation capacity on the side of the Government and the communities (which have to be rebuilt), WFP has to identify strong partnerships.



BENEFICIARIES AND TARGETING

Geographical targeting

33. WFP's geographical targeting for VGF was based on accessibility, need, and coverage by other organizations; this seemed to be a sensible approach. WFP focused mainly on Khatlon Oblast, the most war-affected and at the same time most accessible area. Given its strong sub-office and the presence of a considerable number of monitors, WFP began its pilot FFW projects in this Oblast; up to November 1997 all FFW activities were located there.
34. Coordination efforts among the various aid providers to avoid over- or under-supply might not have always worked in an ideal way, as accessibility and security concerns might have prompted them to concentrate on the same areas while neglecting others. Thus, there were concerns that Garm Oblast, which had been off limits to the international community for a long period, would receive too much assistance now that it had opened up with eventual negative consequences for the mechanisms the isolated population may have found to cope with economic difficulties.

Beneficiary targeting

35. At the beginning of its operations in 1993, WFP specifically targeted internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees. However, this approach created tension with the local populations, many of whom were in very precarious situations themselves. Therefore, starting in late 1993 WFP addressed the socio-economic vulnerability of the general population rather than focusing on war-affected populations. In specific geographical areas IDPs and returnees would be assisted not as categories on their own, but whenever they fell into WFP's established target categories.
36. WFP's target categories for VGF and FFW (see Annex II) were based on the USSR model for social welfare cases (updated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection). WFP's beneficiary list is actually a sub-set (taking into account WFP's narrower criteria of vulnerability) of the Government's list of individuals who are entitled to social welfare payments.¹ Some beneficiaries who are not the neediest of the needy are invariably included and some vulnerable people are excluded. For example, women over 50 with five or more children are considered social welfare cases by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, even if they or their spouses are working—but are not a WFP category. There has been some debate on whether or not these multi-children families automatically qualify for WFP as especially vulnerable.
37. The question remains whether the cost of fine-tuning the existing system outweighs its potential benefit in terms of detection of substantial numbers of undeserving cases. While careful monitoring of eligibility can provide some indications (ideally also at the household level), the answer to that question will be known only after surveys are completed. A survey conducted by the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) in 1997 suggests that of all the food-insecure households surveyed, only 16 percent are being adequately assisted; 27 percent are assisted but do not receive enough; and 57 percent are not assisted at all.

¹ However, payments are rarely made by the Government.



38. All levels of the Government indicated satisfaction with the criteria applied by WFP to define the most vulnerable people. However, this could be understood to mean that WFP's assistance covers a larger group of beneficiaries than theoretically intended, including some people who are not the neediest, while some deserving ones would be left out.
39. The mission considered that the risk of deficiencies in targeting would justify efforts in rationalizing, i.e., reducing the rather confusing number of beneficiary categories to focus on the neediest. This would affect particularly the categories of invalids, the deaf and the blind, as households with members of these categories are not automatically more food-insecure than others (the 1997 ECHO survey supports this).
40. As regards the refinement of criteria, there is interest in further assessing the relative needs of the individual target beneficiary and in monitoring continued eligibility. The mission considered that this could be done during distribution by utilizing brief and simple qualitative and quantitative questionnaires which would be elaborated on the basis of existing studies and surveys. This would facilitate fine-tuning of the beneficiary lists. It is clear that under the current circumstances it is not possible for WFP to further involve the community in the selection of areas (with the possible exception of Gorno-Badakhshan).
41. However, apart from raising some doubts about the feasibility of filling in questionnaires in an environment that lacks privacy (beneficiaries being in a queue), this method would continue to target individuals only, as very little is known on the household incomes and consumption. A comprehensive nutrition and socio-economic survey would be required to determine vulnerability at the household level.

Internally displaced persons and returnees

42. Although WFP had earlier on stopped considering IDPs and returnees as specific target categories, it agreed to proposals by the International Organization for Migration (IMO) and UNHCR, to re-include such categories. In order to support the peace process, WFP had teamed up with UNHCR to provide a four-month assistance package of WFP food, blankets and plastic sheets to the 6,000 refugees expected to return during November/December 1997. It was clear that food aid would be vital for these beneficiaries as a short-term relief measure and as support for settling in.

GENDER ISSUES

43. Tajikistan is characterized by an uncommon degree of gender equality, as compared with neighbouring nations. This is largely attributed to the policy of the former USSR which included the widespread provision of social infrastructure and education. However, with the civil war resulting in the break-up of many households, men killed in the war and many households headed by women, women have been particularly affected.
44. The EMOP documents stated that households headed by women were to be given particular attention. The mission noted that WFP has been successful in applying this policy with a balance in favour of female beneficiaries.
45. However, not all female beneficiaries of FFW represent households headed by women. When the two components of a couple are both eligible for FFW they are both on the VGF list. In an attempt to redress the gender power balance within the household, whenever possible, the male is kept on the VGF list and the female is placed on the FFW project.



What this actually implies within the household in terms of the roles of the male and female beneficiaries has not been followed up by WFP.

46. WFP's operation in Khatlon is "gender-correct" by recognizing the vulnerability of single-parent households in general. Wherever resources permit, this includes households headed by men. The mission found that FFW projects included households headed by both women and men. As regards VGF, Gorno-Badakhshan included both types of households; however, the lack of resources forced the Khatlon VGF to exclude households headed by men. The mission considered that in Tajikistan, where men working in the formal sector receive extremely low real wages, male-headed, single-parent households are also likely to be vulnerable and should be included on the (Khatlon) beneficiary list.
47. The mission noted that in some areas the women and men would not congregate in public (notably Uzbek and some Garmi ethnic populations). With VGF this was resolved in a practical way by women and men queuing up separately during food distribution. In FFW activities, women seemed less vocal in group decision-making. Gender-segregated work groups have been introduced; this is a practical but not very gender-proactive solution to enable women to participate in FFW activities.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Coordination and cooperation

48. WFP works closely with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), donors, United Nations sister agencies and NGOs. Practical cooperation was evident when WFP helped NGOs during an interruption in their food pipelines. In addition, a number of interventions are jointly undertaken by WFP and other partners. WFP has played an important role within the aid community: it was the first agency to distribute relief food and has kept its position as the single largest food aid provider. Credibility was further enhanced as WFP was able to continue distribution during the three-month withdrawal of United Nations agencies from the country (February to April 1997).
49. WFP and the other players have maintained a constructive dialogue through WFP-hosted and well attended food aid coordination meetings as well as through meetings hosted by OCHA, the World Bank and FAO. However, there is still a lack of concerted coordination among different donors and implementing partners. This situation is not unusual in a complex environment of unpredictable movements back and forth between emergency and rehabilitation. However, it has to a certain extent affected the capacity of the donor community to respond to opportunities for shaping up longer-term strategies for recovery and development.
50. The Government of Tajikistan recognizes that it has lacked coordination efforts owing to the civil war and institutional weaknesses. However, starting at the time of the peace agreement, and with the aim of strategic planning, the Government created an Aid Coordination Unit nominated under the Prime Minister's office and directly supported by UNDP. The unit is mandated to address coordination issues and all matters pertaining to refugee as well as military issues where the international community is concerned. Its priorities are national reconciliation, followed by post-conflict economic reforms. The unit has yet to gain a reputation regarding its working capacity.



Government and community involvement

51. WFP has played an important role in securing the credibility of the Government by working closely with local authorities in the definition of vulnerable groups, food distribution and monitoring. The mission considered this cooperation as positive, although problems have increasingly arisen regarding organization and payment of commodity transport by these authorities. The breakdown in the transport system, lack of spares and fuel and the Government's decentralization have affected government contributions. Food commodities are often utilized as payment in kind for local authorities' services, eventually at the expense of the beneficiaries which is not an acceptable situation. The mission considered that efforts could and should be stepped up to gradually increase the Government's stake in caring for the vulnerable population. However, the task of involving the Government and local authorities is not an easy one in a politically delicate environment, in which the local authorities outside of Dushanbe hold considerable power; these authorities answer directly to the President's office, largely bypassing the rest of the Government structure.
52. As regards community involvement, Khatlon, WFP's main operating area, had been heavily collectivized with much forced movement of populations from other parts of Tajikistan and the USSR. This has contributed to a crumbling of the community and, when looking for implementing partners in a society that has broken down, it is very difficult to find any remnant of a community other than that imposed on the population through State structures. One of the more promising efforts is the UNDP-supported programme of community development centres aimed at national peace and reconciliation among the different ethnic groups of the population and building on the previous youth clubs. Fifteen of these are already registered as Tajik NGOs and are currently WFP partners in FFW projects.
53. Apart from this strategy, there was a limited potential for WFP, at the time of the mission, to work in partnership with Tajik NGOs, given their limited experience and their location mainly in Dushanbe (instead of being active at the local level).

Implementation capacity

54. The mission found discrepancies between the planned and actual start of the various phases of the EMOP. This would suggest that the supply needs and implementation capacity were over-estimated. Expansion 1 started 24 months late; Expansion 2 started four months late, because of sufficient carry-over stocks from the previous phase. This implied that, if the distribution was reasonably on target, the pipeline of Expansion 2 would have been exhausted 15 months after the first distribution, i.e., in November 1997.
55. WFP has consistently reached an average of 75 percent of its target beneficiaries, with carry-over commodities being used during the subsequent phase. The country office argued that this was a form of guaranteeing that the commodity pipeline would not be disrupted. While the mission had sympathy for the argument, "de-phasing" has created some confusion, as certain features such as the level of landside transport, storage and handling (LTSH) have been different for the various phases in order to take account of changes in the emergency operation.¹
56. Expansion 3 had contemplated 100 percent direct implementation by WFP. In reality, 62 percent of VGF beneficiaries were covered directly by WFP and 38 percent through the

¹ The mission has not been able to clarify the situation on the basis of records available in the country.



NGO German Agro Action. Seventy-nine percent of the 72 FFW projects were implemented directly by WFP. Direct implementation by WFP was found to be more cost-effective. However, the country office's limitations were recognized, in terms of the heavy managerial inputs required and its wanting to stretch out WFP's assistance.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

Monitoring

57. There was evidence that WFP has periodically revised the beneficiary lists and has been able to remove some non-eligible cases. WFP monitors request clarifications on beneficiary lists if additions or deletions are found. In cases where over five percent of visits reveal non-eligible beneficiaries, authorities have to produce a new list and meanwhile distribution is withheld. WFP monitors check all beneficiaries during distribution together with local authorities and neighbours, who are called upon to assist in identification where the necessary identity documents are missing, allegedly because of the war. Post-distribution monitoring was carried out by the WFP monitors in some 10 percent of randomly selected beneficiary households. The fact that persons had been found erroneously on the list and removed, and that some monitors had been relieved of their duties in the past, leads the mission to consider that routine monitoring has worked fairly well under difficult conditions.
58. By contrast, little effort seems to have gone into systematic monitoring (and documenting) of the impact of food aid after commodity distribution. The mission found that the monitors in the field were too busy with day-to-day operations to give high priority to this task. The same lack of priority for this endeavour was found in the WFP country office.

Reporting

59. The country office compiles monthly reports on commodity movements and the general situation based on contributions by the sub-offices. Unlike Gorno-Badakhshan, qualitative information from Khatlon (the largest sub-office) is good and includes results of monitoring socio-economic indicators, including food prices and information on other agencies' operations.
60. Reports after completion of a given FFW activity were of disappointing quality (as was observed also by the country office). This is a lost opportunity, given the pilot nature of the activities. The fact that most of WFP's monitors are highly qualified professionals (although not in monitoring) should enable them to express and document project experience adequately for future reference of WFP and any other interested party.
61. As to WFP's NGO implementation partners, the mission found it difficult to locate reports on distribution and the progress of activities monitored by them. The country office had been monitoring the NGOs on an informal basis. There was little emphasis on reporting arrangements in the contracts with implementing partners.
62. As regards the regular provision of information to WFP headquarters, no Food Availability Status Report (FASREP) was produced by the country office. The mission considered this to be a shortcoming, as regular preparation would have helped to shed light



on the somewhat confused pipeline and stock situation of the different phases of the operation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General

63. The international community has reached a consensus—and the mission concurred—that in order to support the still fragile peace and consolidation process, continuation of emergency assistance and food aid along the current lines would be important. However, a gradual transition from relief to rehabilitation and development should be planned and attempted after the elections scheduled for the third quarter of 1998.
64. The evaluation's major specific recommendations are:

On the different intervention strategies

- a) VGF will have to be continued; however, sustained efforts to refine beneficiary targeting should be considered;
- b) In the interest of strict prioritization in targeting WFP's resources to the neediest geographical areas, WFP's expansion into Garm should be weighed carefully, given that numerous agencies might provide assistance to the area. As progress is being made on recovery and rehabilitation towards development, coordination efforts within a strategic planning framework should be stepped up within the donor community and with the Government. WFP should play an active role in this.
- c) FFW, although not a definite solution for phasing down free distribution, has proven to be a useful strategy in rehabilitation and through land-lease projects. Efforts should be continued to identify activities that would gain from FFW support.
- d) There is a need to pay more attention to sustainability issues including viability in the context of land-lease projects, as evidenced by certain "short-term gain" attitudes of beneficiaries. By the same token, contracts with Kolkhoz should specify that if agricultural yields are lower than foreseen, two months' notice should be given. In addition, the Kolkhoz should have the right to reclaim the use of the land if it is not properly used by the lessee.
- e) WFP should continue to assist returnees in close cooperation with UNHCR with a four-month food ration package. Settling-in assistance, eventually by way of FFW (rehabilitation) should be considered.
- f) WFP should assist in the demobilization process (assistance in demobilization camps and settling-in packages).
- g) As far as internally displaced persons (IDPs) still represent a group of beneficiaries, given the ethnic tensions within communities the practice of not considering them as a specific category should be continued, but they should be assisted only if they fit WFP's vulnerability criteria applied for the EMOP.

On targeting and beneficiary criteria

- a) Criteria should be more logical and be streamlined; while improving the transparency of the operation, this will not influence the number of beneficiaries.



- b) A number of existing surveys provide a wealth of information that would enable vulnerability mapping, to be based on socio-economic criteria as opposed to the criteria of the social welfare lists. Follow-up analyses of household food economies in target areas would further help to refine criteria of eligibility for food aid.
- c) The lack of a comprehensive nationwide nutrition survey has been an impediment to moving the debate on targeting problems and deficiencies on more solid ground. WFP should encourage the implementation and analysis of such a survey.

On implementation capacity and collaboration

- a) In the programming of a future phase of the EMOP, commitments and stock situations of the previous phases should be clarified; the absorption capacity of the country as well as the implementation capacity of the WFP country office (direct and indirect implementation) should be carefully considered.
- b) The Government should be encouraged to take more responsibility of the WFP-assisted activities and increasingly shoulder a greater burden of the costs (particularly internal transport from extended delivery points to final distribution points).
- c) Efforts should be made to involve communities at all levels. Where there are no communities WFP should continue to cooperate with local authorities while seeking possibilities to support community development centre initiatives.
- d) In FFW, efforts should be maintained to work in partnership with other organizations in order to increase WFP's intervention capacity, and secure non-food inputs and eventually technical inputs.
- e) Increased efforts should be made to work with embryonic local NGOs.



On monitoring and reporting

- a) WFP should continue close monitoring of the beneficiary screening process (establishing the beneficiary lists, particularly in VGF) as well as the distribution process.
- b) In the interest of eligibility monitoring, WFP monitors should keep track of beneficiaries showing up without proper documentation. Likewise, they should follow up on cases of non-eligible persons who consistently turn up at distribution sites, and cases of beneficiaries who do not show up and do not send anyone in their place.
- c) In the interest of keeping track of the results and benefits of WFP assistance, WFP and its partners should step up documenting the successes and failures of all VGF and FFW interventions regardless of their size; this documentation should be disseminated.
- d) Local government should be encouraged to participate actively in the monitoring process in the interest of transparency and increased sense of ownership.
- e) By the same token, WFP should encourage (and stipulate clearly in the agreements) its implementing partners to provide more analytical information in their reports, as current reporting on monitoring often has been informal.

Other considerations

65. There is a lack of clear and comprehensive statistics on non-emergency assistance to Tajikistan; improvements (eventually with support from WFP) would have to be made in order to facilitate strategic planning of future assistance, particularly in the transition from relief to recovery and development.
66. The above and a number of additional recommendations have been generally accepted by WFP and the Government.



ANNEX I

EXPANSION 3: NUMBER OF PLANNED VERSUS ACTUAL BENEFICIARIES

	PLANNED (a)		ACTUAL (b)		b/a %
	Number	%	Number	%	
Total	500 000	100	436 965	100	87
VGF	485 000	97	429 441	98	89
FFW	15 000	3	7 524	2	50
VGF per Oblast	485 000	100	429 441	100	89
Khatlon	355 000	73	238 714	56	67
Gissar (GAA)	80 000	16	129 320	30	162
Dushanbe (various)	20 000	4	34 004	8	170
Garm (GAA)	3 000	1	0	0	0
GBAO	27 000	6	27 403	6	101
VGF	485 000	100	429 441	100	89
Direct	485 000	100	300 121	70	62
Indirect	0	0	129 320	30	
Total	500 000	100	436 965	100	87
Direct VGF	485 000	97	266 117	61	55
Indirect VGF	0	0	163 324	37	
FFW	15 000	3	7 524	22	50

Note: Direct VGF: VGF implemented by WFP.

Indirect VGF: VGF implemented by partners on behalf of WFP.



ANNEX II

WFP TARGETING CATEGORIES AND PERCENTAGE OF VULNERABLE GROUP FEEDING BENEFICIARIES IN EACH CATEGORY

	Category	Criteria	Beneficiaries	% WFP
1	Old-age pensioners	Women over 55 and men over 60	Individual ration	56
2	Single pensioners	Women over 45 and men over 50 who are single, with no breadwinner and unemployed	Individual ration	1
3	Invalids	Includes invalids of war, labour and through sickness	Individual ration	9
4	Families without a bread winner	Single parent family with children from 3 to 15 years old	Parent + max 5 children	24
5	War widows and orphans	Widows and children (3–15 years) of military staff killed during the war	Mother + max 5 children	2
6	Orphans	Children (3–15) without parents but with an economically and legally responsible guardian	Orphan + 1 guardian	1
7	Deaf and blind	Invalids from birth or childhood	Individual ration	7

Source: WFP, October 1997.

