

EB.2/2011: WEST AFRICA REGIONAL PRESENTATION

1. New trends:

Map slide 2:

As I address you today, I would start with highlighting the numerous challenges which the region has been experiencing during the first half of the year, namely the Cote d'Ivoire crisis and the displacement of populations caused by violence, the return of laborers from Libya, the HFP mainly affecting urban areas of coastal countries, and finally the post drought situation in the Sahel.

Cote d'Ivoire Crisis

- The crisis in Cote d'Ivoire led to the displacement of about hundreds of thousands within Cote d'Ivoire, to Liberia, as well as to other neighbouring countries including Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo and Guinea. Although normality is slowly returning in most parts of Cote d'Ivoire, the security situation remains unpredictable in Abidjan as well as western Cote d'Ivoire.
- Since the onset of the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire, WFP has been implementing an emergency operation, initially providing emergency food assistance to displaced people; following increased needs on the ground WFP scaled up its operations and is now planning to support up to 628,000 through emergency food assistance, supplementary feeding, emergency school feeding as well as cash/voucher transfers in Abidjan until mid-September. Current priorities are to secure enough resources to implement all planned activities; given the limited pipeline, currently implemented activities are limited to IDPs as well as nutritional assistance.

Impact of Libya crisis:

Affecting many countries in the region but particularly Niger and Chad

In Niger, the return of migrants from Libya might worsen the vulnerability of their already vulnerable communities of origin. Most of them originally came from regions which have suffered particularly severe agricultural deficits in 2009 and 2010. Moreover the economy of these communities relied on remittances, which have now reduced. In Chad, the Libyan crisis seems to impact the markets supply particularly in Faya, a town which is dependent on other areas for food items and where the prices of the millet and the rice (coming from Ndjamena and Abéché) have increased by 50%. Here, too, high food prices have affected the households' purchasing power. [Refer to Map slide 2](#)

Food security situation: marked by the High Food Crisis

- Today, three years after the 2007/2008 food crisis global food prices are at new record levels again and are becoming extremely volatile. The steep increases in prices of basic commodities, such as cereals, are harmful for the poorest consumers who spend a large part of their incomes on food.
- Wheat and maize have increased sharply and fuel prices are on the rise in West African coastal countries from Mauritania to Liberia, contributing to higher transport costs. This might create a further deterioration in the access to food and other basic supplies. [Refer to Map slide 2](#)
 - ✓ In Mauritania the international price of wheat has passed through and the commodity's retail price has increased by 40%. Due to local factors (i.e government setting prices), an unusual increase in maize price as well as in imported rice price is observed in Guinea where a recent assessment identified around 218,000 people in need of assistance; WFP is currently considering which response modality is the most appropriate, including the possible use of cash/vouchers.
 - ✓ In Liberia, the results of a recent assessment conducted in partnership with the Government and UN agencies show that the influx of Ivorian refugees (to date 182,000 refugees) has put pressure on resources and led to reduced trade opportunities. Moreover, the assessment showed that food consumption has deteriorated and the share of food expenditure has increased (from 50 to 61% in the urban area) leading people to resort to negative coping strategies.

2. Roll-out of the Strategic Plan:

I am now going to briefly outline the regions efforts made in the area of cash and vouchers, nutrition (right food at the right time) and P4P:

Cash and Vouchers

In 2010, WFP implemented cash/voucher programmes in 4 Westafrican countries including Senegal, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone and Niger and undertook preparations for implementation in Liberia.

In 2010 during the Sahel crisis, WFP Niger reached 240,000 beneficiaries who were categorized as highly food-insecure in the most vulnerable areas. Families received 15,000 CFA (US\$30) per month for two months. [Photo from Niger slide 3](#)

Currently in 2011, WFP and partners are working on plans to implement cash/voucher activities in Guinea, Mauritania, Liberia and Gambia in response to the recent HFP crisis. Cash transfers in response to the recent crisis in Cote d'Ivoire will be implemented in Abidjan as soon as possible.

Nutritious foods:

- The West Africa region is host to more than 10 million stunted children under 5 and up to 3 million children with acute malnutrition.
- Tackling undernutrition is a priority for WFP in West Africa, and more and more countries are now investing in the prevention of undernutrition focusing on the critical 1,000 day period to ensure that all children are able to grow to their full physical and mental potential, thus positioning them well for healthy and productive lives. **WFP is currently drafting its regional nutrition strategy. This regional strategy will presents the framework for scaling-up the prevention and treatment of undernutrition in the region.**
- The use of new and improved products such as improved fortified blended foods (FBFs) and nutritionally enhanced, specialized food products such as ready-to-use supplementary foods (RUSFs) and therapeutic foods (RUTFs), along with micronutrient powders (MNPs) are now aggressively promoted in all operations as appropriate and to date, a 10 out of 17 countries in the region with nutrition interventions as part of WFP operations are using or planning on using these foods to prevent and or treat undernutrition in pregnant and lactating women and young children.
- In Niger, WFP is implementing a study to test the effectiveness of different malnutrition prevention strategies on the nutrition status of children 6-23 months. This study we hope will improve our knowledge of how best to combine the most appropriate products together with other food assistance modalities including cash transfers, to ensure that the most cost-effective strategy for preventing undernutrition in different food security contexts is chosen.
- To date 6 countries in the region - Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Sierra Leone have prepared official request indicating their intentions to Scale Up Nutrition (SUN)

and requesting for support from development partners to support these efforts. The countries are at different stages of implementation.

- WFP is also supporting the extension of the REACH approach into other countries in the region; the initiative is already implemented in Mauritania and Sierra Leone. Ghana and Mali have received CIDA funding for this purpose, and in Niger WFP has recently endorsed a national consensus to launch the process.
- WFP in the region is supporting the local production of nutritionally enhanced foods in Senegal and Burkina Faso working with both large and small scale food processing plants.

Purchase For Progress (P4P):

- Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali and Ghana are among the countries implementing the initiative. For the CIV crisis for example, WFP purchased 6500mt of rice in Mali, of which one third was purchased through the farmers association Faso Jigui involved in the P4P initiative. Challenge experienced in some cases, particularly in Sierra Leone: Price fluctuation in the course of the contract life time.

Capacity building:

- WFP is putting strong efforts in capacity building; we are for example closely working with ECOWAS, CILSS and NEMA for strengthened capacity in the area of emergency preparedness and response, assessments etc. In addition, more and more projects in the region have an integrated capacity building component.

3. Cut-down, phase-out and hand-over:

- WFP in West Africa is actively searching for opportunities to enable governments to take over WFP programmes and integrates this vision in all country strategies. Elements of capacity development are integrated since inception in the formulation of new projects or in revision of programmes. This is done in a constant manner for school feeding programmes in particular where the policy for partnership and hand over is well advanced. The extension of the Mauritania CP for example presented to you today includes a strong cross-cutting government capacity development component which includes the development of a national school feeding policy.
- In July 2010, Cape Verde became the first country in Central and West Africa to successfully make the transition to complete national ownership of its school meals programme. Although our office has closed in Cape Verde, the UN joint office has called upon WFP to provide a two- year technical assistance to support the consolidation of past achievements and strengthen cost-effectiveness of the

programme through technical support to the Government, with an eye to achieving cost effectiveness, coverage and local procurement of food.

- Following the steps of Cape Verde, other countries in the region are encouraged to speed up the takeover of programmes: Sao Tome' and Principe's school feeding programme is being currently discussed with the government under this framework and the next cycle of assistance will be geared towards the realization of a full national school feeding scheme; in addition, the Benin school feeding programme is based on the School feeding policy principles and is designed to accomplish a full hand over at the end of the programme; finally, the Ghana CP also has integrated strong capacity development and hand over elements for all planned activities during the next cycle.

4. Risks

Key risks	Mitigation measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weather related risks (droughts, floods) - Insecurity and political instability (BKF and CIV, potentially in large number of countries going through elections in 2011/2012), Presence of AQMI in the Sahel - High Food Prices affecting mainly the coastal countries - Limited number and/or capacity of partners to implement WFP activities in several countries - Inability to mobilize critical staff for responses to crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening emergency preparedness and response/early warning capacity, supporting contingency planning processes and regional disaster risk reduction mechanisms • Use of third parties for monitoring • Strengthening of market/price monitoring systems • Use of government structures • Enhancement of existing partners capacity • Establishment of regional rosters of staff

Weather related risks

- Overall, the region is exposed to a high risk of increased occurrence of natural disasters, which include droughts, floods and locust invasions. During the annual lean season, household food stocks are low and grain prices reach their peaks, rendering populations extremely vulnerable to shocks. During the same period, increasingly unpredictable rainfalls often result in floods, displacing hundreds of thousands and destroying houses and road infrastructure. In addition, many

countries have recently experienced political instability (i.e. BKF and CIV), and many more could potentially do so with upcoming elections in 2011/2012.

Mitigation measures for weather related risks and insecurity

- WFP is continuing to strengthen early warning systems in close collaboration with partners and governments, setting up regional disaster risk reduction mechanisms and is providing support in the management of inter-agency contingency plans. WFP continues to support government and partner efforts in emergency preparedness and response through training and technical guidance.
- In 2010 before the elections in Cote d'Ivoire in the context of CIV+ 5 preparedness, WFP supported actively the interagency contingency planning process, and conducted an emergency simulation exercise just before the elections.

Mitigation measures for HFP risk:

- On the high food and fuel prices that affect not only government and vulnerable populations but also our capacity to purchase and transport adequate quantities of food to the beneficiaries, we have been promoting local and regional purchase, when and where feasible and cost effective, including through P4P activities. In addition, forward purchasing (when prices are relatively affordable in the region) is used when resources are available.

5. Achievements/Significant Set-Backs

Among the various achievements that can be mentioned here, I would like to focus on three major ones, including the implementation of activities in CIV in a very difficult environment and major efforts made to bring food into the country through various logistics arrangements, the recent signature of an MOU with NEMA and finally the progress made in the implementation of the REACH and SUN approach thanks to WFP support:

Under the first point I would like to highlight in what a difficult environment our colleagues in Cote d'Ivoire were operating and actually managed to reach the most vulnerable while their own security was at risk. In the area of logistics major efforts were made to get as fast as possible the required commodities into the country, including through airlifts (270mt of rice airlifted to Abidjan, and 240mt to Monrovia), through the opening of new corridors and regional procurement.

An achievement in the area of partnership: Two weeks ago, we signed an MOU with the Nigeria Emergency Management Agency NEMA; this represents an important step towards strengthening government and partner capacity in the areas of emergency preparedness in Nigeria and the sub-region. This signature is a follow-up to activities

implemented since 2010 under a previous MOU, and mainly includes activities related to ICT, logistics and emergency preparedness activities focusing on training.

I have previously mentioned the progress made in the implementation of the REACH and SUN approach. This will hopefully gear towards stronger institutions among involved countries to fight hunger and malnutrition.

Set-backs:

Cote d'Ivoire

We of course also experienced set-backs, including for example the insecurity and unstable situation in Abidjan by the end of March which led to the closure of our office for almost three weeks and the looting of our warehouse in which we lost 2000 mt of commodities and NFIs (including wiikhalls, fuel bladders and pallets) in Abidjan. This meant a significant loss to our activities.

Chad

Another set-back has been experienced by WFP in Chad (WFP's biggest operations in the region), where the Chadian judicial authorities have recently authorized, in two instances, the seizure of funds on WFP's bank account in Chad, in violation of the privileges and immunities enjoyed by the Organization. In one instance, the claimants were able to get hold of a sum equivalent to 1.1 million U.S. dollars. In the second, the claimants were permitted to seize an amount equivalent to 140,000 U.S. dollars. WFP considers this situation to be unacceptable and highly detrimental to WFP's humanitarian operations in Chad. We have informed the Government that, failing prompt reimbursement, WFP would be forced to consider whatever measures are necessary to protect its rights and those of its beneficiaries and donors. The Government has hence been made aware that such measures, where appropriate, may extend to a suspension of WFP's operations in Chad.

Although the Government had recognized the illegality of these actions, no steps were taken to effectively protect WFP's status, despite the approaches made by WFP at the highest level. WFP is of the opinion that these claims were without legal basis and that the misappropriated sums were not due. Hence, this situation is directly affecting WFP's operations in Chad.

Last week, the U.N. Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs set up a meeting with the Permanent Representation of Chad to the United Nations to express dismay at actions taken recently with regard to WFP assets, and demand their restitution. The United Nations and FAO have assured us of their full support.

We hope that we will be able to continue implementing our activities in Chad, where needs remain high and WFP assistance is key for vulnerable communities, particular during the upcoming lean season.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, as the region is entering the lean season which is one of the most difficult period of the year in many aspects, I would like to reiterate the importance of our joint commitment to support the most vulnerable, who we are committed to assist. I am certain that we can take up the challenge and respond to the basic food and nutrition needs of vulnerable people together with concerned Governments across the West Africa region.

Thank you.