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REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Agenda item 11

*For information**



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PROTRACTED RELIEF AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (1 JULY – 31 DECEMBER 2005) — NEPAL 10058.4

Food Assistance to Bhutanese Refugees

Number of beneficiaries	106,800
Duration of project	12 months (1 January – 31 December 2006)
Cost (United States dollars)	
Total cost to WFP	9,305,859
Total food cost	6,987,963

* In accordance with the Executive Board's decisions on governance, approved at the Annual and Third Regular Sessions, 2000, items for information should not be discussed unless a Board member specifically requests it, well in advance of the meeting, and the Chair accepts the request on the grounds that it is a proper use of the Board's time.

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for information.

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

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Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact Ms. C. Panlilio, Administrative Assistant, Conference Servicing Unit (tel.: 066513-2645).

* ODB: Asia Regional Bureau



1. Bhutanese refugees started entering eastern Nepal towards the end of 1990 following Bhutan's enforcement of restrictive citizenship laws during the second half of the 1980s. In 1992, at the request of the Government of Nepal, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and WFP began an operation to provide refugees with shelter, food and non-food items. By 1993, more than 80,000 refugees had arrived in the camps and were granted refugee status; afterwards, new arrivals were gradually reduced to a few cases a year. As of December 2005, the registered population in the seven camps was 106,248; on the basis of this number and a projected annual growth rate of 1.2 percent, a planning figure of 106,800 refugees will be used for this phase of the protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) from January to December 2006.
2. WFP/UNHCR joint assessment missions (JAMs) have been carried out regularly since the beginning of the operation. The findings of the latest JAM in December 2004 constitute the basis for this phase of the PRRO.
3. The 2004 JAM confirmed that no progress had been made in the bilateral verification process between the Bhutanese and Nepalese governments. The bilateral process of finding durable solutions has been virtually stalled since 22 December 2003, when Bhutanese members of the joint verification team were assaulted and injured by refugees protesting about the announced conditions of return, which fell short of international standards. UNHCR remains excluded from the bilateral process.
4. The 2004 JAM found that the camps continue to be well managed. In the absence of durable solutions, however, refugees remain entirely reliant on external assistance for their daily subsistence; continued humanitarian support is clearly needed. As in previous phases, WFP food assistance provided under this PRRO will contribute to the sustenance, health and well-being of registered refugees. WFP's basic daily food ration contributes approximately 2,100 kcal per person. Following the 2004 JAM recommendations, fortified blended food has been included in the general ration to address and prevent micronutrient deficiencies in the camps. Fortified blended food is also provided as a supplementary ration for vulnerable groups such as malnourished children and mothers to restore or maintain sound nutritional and health status. Supplementary activities such as gardening, vocational training and micro-loan schemes are implemented to strengthen coping mechanisms and enhance skills among vulnerable refugees and local people in the communities surrounding the camps.
5. This operation is implemented in compliance with WFP's Gender Policy (2003–2007); support for supplementary activities will continue to help to increase self-reliance and improve skills among women and vulnerable refugees, pending durable solutions.