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REPORT OF THE UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF AND WFP EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS' JOINT VISIT TO MOZAMBIQUE

WFP SEGMENT

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PLAN OF WFP COUNTRY STRATEGY

1. The country programme for Mozambique of the World Food Programme (WFP) for 2002-2006 was drawn up within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and oriented to the priorities of the Action for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty (PARPA), Mozambique's version of the PRSP. The strategic priorities of WFP in Mozambique are (i) to increase the scope and effectiveness of education-support programmes and (ii) to strengthen mechanisms and infrastructure to support crisis prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. HIV/AIDS concerns are integrated into all programmes.
2. Three basic activities are covered: (i) school feeding; (ii) the Food-for-Development Fund; and (iii) a community safety-net facility. In 2002, WFP distributed 16,000 tons of commodities and reached 140,000 beneficiaries through country programme activities.
3. Mozambique is prone to natural disasters, which, compounded by the effects of HIV/AIDS and economic recession, erode people's coping capacity and increase the vulnerability of the population. Under WFP emergency operations (EMOPs), 17,000 tons of emergency food aid was distributed to 285,000 people—but this met only 50 percent of requirements because of funding shortfalls.

VISITS¹

4. The delegation toured extensively in the drought-affected provinces of Sofala and Manica. These districts are situated on the arterial corridor, so there is higher prevalence of HIV/AIDS here than in other provinces. The delegation met governors and government representatives of these provinces and was impressed by their commitment to the rapid attainment of development objectives. They emphasized the need for long-term development assistance and highlighted the importance of sustainability and the need for the Government to take the lead role.
5. The delegation visited the port of Beira to observe WFP unloading and warehousing operations, and visited several schools to observe school feeding and school construction through food-for-work (FFW) programmes and to meet school management, teachers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community organizations. The delegation visited FFW programmes for agricultural development and asset creation in drought-affected parts of the Muanza and Guro districts.

OBSERVATIONS

Education and School Feeding

6. The most striking aspect of the education system is the weak infrastructure. Because the sparse population is scattered, primary schools are few and far between. It is difficult enough to enrol in primary school, but enrolment in the second level of primary education

¹ The delegation wishes to extend its gratitude to the WFP country office in Maputo for its efforts in organizing this unprecedented mission and for the exceptional outcome.



(EP-II) is even more restricted because there are so few schools with grades 6 and 7. There are only very few secondary schools in each district, to which access is severely circumscribed. The challenge, therefore, is to provide access to schooling at the primary level and enable continuation through higher levels, particularly for girls.

7. In some of the schools visited, WFP school feeding had been in progress for several years. Teachers and community members said that the meal provided by WFP was definitely a major incentive for children to enrol and continue in school, and that it would be exceedingly difficult for the community or the Government to take over the burden of school feeding. Some initiatives for self-sufficiency have been launched, however, through school gardens, poultry farms and apiaries.
8. Some of the schools visited were comparatively well equipped in terms of infrastructure and teaching materials, largely the result of synergy with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), other United Nations agencies and NGOs. The need for such collaboration and coordination was everywhere apparent.
9. Boarding school feeding is an impressive initiative. In the remote village of Bunga, it was reported that some children came from as far as 50 to 60 km away. The delegates felt that the boarders should be provided with rations for the entire week rather than only for working days, so that they would be spared the trek home and back at weekends.

HIV/AIDS

10. HIV/AIDS affects on all aspects of life in the country. The number of able-bodied workers in agricultural and other professions is declining as the number of orphans, widows and other destitute people increases. A huge burden is placed on communities and extended families.
11. The delegation visited encouraging demonstrations of partnerships between WFP and NGOs in caring for people living with HIV/AIDS, orphans and vulnerable children. Most evident in these institutions was the success of collaborative efforts in providing various services and goods. The need to scale up such initiatives was clear.

Food-for-Work Programme

12. In the districts visited by the delegation, WFP has undertaken FFW programmes to support families affected by drought. Irrigation channels and water-containment facilities are being constructed; and agricultural-support programmes such as seed production and field preparation are in progress. Such activities need to be expanded and durable assets created to strengthen the capacity of rural people to withstand the effects of natural disasters. FFW has been innovatively applied in constructing houses and physical infrastructure. With appropriate collaborative efforts, extension of such activities will provide much-needed employment and generate essential infrastructure for the community.

Food for Development

13. The innovative Food for Development Fund, aimed at community-level disaster mitigation, was started in 1997. The delegation was highly appreciative of the impact of activities carried out under the fund. Because the fund is demand driven, ownership by the community is strong and sustainability is ensured. A variety of activities for creating infrastructure and facilities can be taken up under this programme.



RECOMMENDATIONS

14. The need was apparent everywhere for the Government, United Nations agencies, NGOs and communities to pool their comparative advantages and work together. Given the weak infrastructure and backwardness of the areas visited, it was clear that sustained development assistance was unavoidable; the need to build capacities was also very evident. These issues have been dealt with in the joint recommendations.
15. The School Feeding Programme is a demonstrated success. It is reported that enrolment figures have increased and that drop-out rates have declined. It would be useful to compile systematic data relating to enrolment, retention and completion at EP-I and EP-II levels by boys and girls separately.
16. The nutritious meal provided in schools has educational and health benefits for the children, but the quality of education must also be addressed. The provision of school supplies, teaching materials and teacher training should be coordinated among UNICEF, NGOs and the Government.
17. Programme authorities and implementing partners face various bottlenecks in procuring non-food items for management of their programmes. As demonstrated in some schools, it is evident that appropriate partnerships will facilitate the availability of required items.
18. The Boarding School Initiative is a laudable success. The Government plans progressively to upgrade all primary schools to grade 7. The Boarding School Initiative would need to be extended correspondingly to more schools. Vocational training and income generation could be introduced to increase enrolment at the higher levels.
19. Given the Government's resource constraints, it is evident that transferring full responsibility for school feeding programmes to school authorities would be difficult. Exit strategies need to be developed and progressively implemented nevertheless. The Department of Education has established a production wing with the intention of generating income to meet the burden of school feeding. Such initiatives need to be supported and expanded.
20. Community participation in managing and operating school activities needs to be strengthened through training and sensitization. This would result in empowerment of communities and encourage them to shoulder a greater share of the burden.
21. Integrated rural development is the key to increasing the prosperity of the agriculture-dependent economy. This can be facilitated in a variety of ways through creating durable assets for strengthening agriculture, marketing and related activities. Technical inputs, particularly from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and south-south cooperation would strengthen such interventions.
22. The Food for Development Fund focuses on the most vulnerable and insecure sections of the population. Given the emphasis on agriculture-related activities, sustainability is a critical issue confronting the programme. This initiative needs to be strengthened through coordination with other agencies, particularly with regard to technical inputs and non-food items.
23. The logistics of WFP operations become exceedingly complicated and costs comparatively high because the country is so large and its infrastructure weak. In view of this, the present system of allocating direct support costs does not appear to be realistic because it does not account for the size and nature of individual operations.



24. The delegation had extremely valuable meetings with WFP staff. The members obtained useful insights into the intricacies, problems and difficulties of work in the field, but felt that field personnel were not adequately aware of important policy issues being considered by higher management. The delegation felt that more effective exchange of information and experience between central management, the Executive Board and the field would add value to the policy dialogue.

