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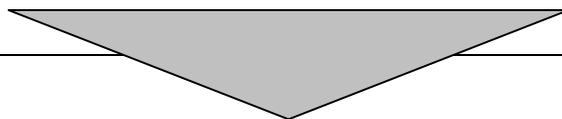
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Executive Summary



This Information Note traces the history of WFP's involvement in Kosovo from the commencement of food assistance in September 1998 to the termination of WFP operations in June 2002. In addition to providing a brief background to WFP operations in Kosovo, the paper lists the key features and accomplishments of those operations. The main theme that emerges from this paper is that WFP entered Kosovo when there was urgent need for food assistance. The Programme played a critical role in providing life-saving food assistance at the height of the Kosovo crisis and played an equally effective role in scaling down its assistance when the situation improved and people were increasingly able to meet their own basic food needs. As an advocate for the most vulnerable people, WFP was a key actor in supporting the development of the indigenous Social Assistance Scheme. Other critical initiatives undertaken by WFP included the strengthening of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through capacity-building, and developing schemes that promoted inter-ethnic relations. WFP has been equally sensitive in ensuring proper placement of its local staff and orderly redeployment of its assets before implementing a smooth termination of its operations in Kosovo.



BACKGROUND

1. WFP involvement in Kosovo began in September 1998, when the eruption of inter-ethnic tensions resulted in massive internal displacement of people. At that time, WFP provided food aid to over 400,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), ensuring that their basic nutritional requirements were met.
2. By March 1999 the tensions had escalated into an open conflict, resulting in the exodus of nearly 800,000 Kosovar Albanians to neighbouring Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (fYRoM). The precarious security situation forced WFP to suspend its operations in Kosovo.
3. From March to June 1999, WFP was in the forefront in providing emergency food assistance to Kosovar refugees in Albania and fYRoM.
4. In June 1999, the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 brought an end to hostilities and led to the establishment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). WFP re-entered Kosovo with the first convoys and lost no time in re-establishing its operations. The Programme immediately started providing food assistance to the rapidly returning Kosovar refugees from Albania and fYRoM, and IDPs from within Kosovo and other areas of Yugoslavia.
5. The peak period of food-assisted operations in Kosovo was the initial months after the return of most of the Kosovar refugees. During that time, nearly 1.3 million people, around 70 percent of Kosovo's population, benefited from blanket food distribution. WFP gradually and steadily phased down its assistance, with the caseload falling to 50,000 in the last three months of operations (April–June 2002).
6. The key features and accomplishments of WFP's presence in Kosovo, until the completion of WFP operations in June 2002, are described below.

KEY FEATURES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Generous donor support enabled WFP to respond rapidly and maintain a steady food pipeline. The regional emergency operation (EMOP) approach proved most appropriate. WFP supported local NGOs as food distribution partners and international NGOs as monitoring partners. The Programme played a major food aid coordination role among the international humanitarian community.

7. A generous and rapid response by the international community to WFP appeals greatly helped in maintaining a steady food pipeline and made it possible to avert a humanitarian catastrophe.
8. From June 1999 to June 2002, WFP provided food assistance under a regional EMOP. The regional approach proved invaluable as it provided the flexibility to move personnel, resources and assets to where they were most needed. It also greatly enhanced the Programme's ability to respond quickly to unforeseen developments, such as meeting the short-term food needs of 70,000 refugees who had crossed into Kosovo following civil disturbances in fYRoM in February 2001.



9. WFP played a critical role in the coordination of all food assistance provided by the international humanitarian community. WFP chaired Food Aid Coordination meetings and consulted regularly with other organizations on key food assistance issues.
10. WFP assistance to Kosovo during this critical period totalled 164,000 tons of food, with a total cost to WFP estimated at US\$103 million.

The early establishment of an exit strategy allowed for a timely and sustainable phase-out of WFP's programme.

11. As the situation in Kosovo changed rapidly from emergency to post-conflict recovery, the role of food assistance evolved from saving lives to that of assisting the most vulnerable. By September 1999, WFP had shifted from a blanket distribution to a targeted, needs-based distribution.
12. As an integral part of its exit strategy, WFP continued to refine the targeting of its assistance through periodic needs-assessment studies and supported the concept of introducing an indigenous social assistance scheme.

The phase-down of food aid was based on regular assessments of need. This ensured that the requirements of the most vulnerable households continued to be met even as the caseload was reduced.

13. A number of food-needs-assessment studies, carried out among ethnic majority and minority populations, were used to identify and profile beneficiaries. Based on these profiles, WFP established criteria that would assist local distribution partners (LDPs) in refining the targeting of beneficiaries.
14. The selection of beneficiaries on the basis of criteria thus developed was conducted with extensive participation from the local and international community and beneficiaries. WFP and its partners held meetings with beneficiaries in all parts of Kosovo to explain the change in approach, thus ensuring beneficiaries' understanding. Media campaigns informed the public of the need and rationale for phasing down food aid. Community support was mobilized to the degree that many people voluntarily deregistered as food aid beneficiaries.

The commitment of local authorities to the social protection of the population at risk provided a longer-term solution to the problem of vulnerability.

15. In April 2000, UNMIK introduced a Social Assistance Scheme (SAS) for the most vulnerable population. UNMIK's Department of Health and Social Welfare (DHSW) required technical support to develop the SAS, identify its target beneficiaries and implement the scheme. Since the SAS provided an obvious link to WFP's exit strategy, WFP played an important role in making the SAS operational. WFP provided the services of a senior adviser to the DHSW and 12 field assistants to the Centres for Social Work (CSW), the DHSW's outreach at the district level.
16. The WFP staff provided technical support to DHSW and CSW staff. In addition, they helped in defining criteria for beneficiary targeting and in establishing a computerized database. The SAS targeted households without assets and without a family member capable of working or finding a job.



17. UNMIK's limited financial resources required the establishment of strict eligibility criteria. This meant that not all vulnerable people qualified as beneficiaries of the SAS. WFP therefore designed a transitional food safety net component under the regional EMOP to cover the needs of those from the minority and majority ethnic groups who were not registered by the DHSW but were at risk. As part of the overall phase-down, phase-out strategy, the food safety net programme came to an end on 31 March 2002.

WFP's capacity-building of its local NGO partners in programme management enhanced their long-term sustainability as self-reliant organizations. WFP created the Consortium for Inter-ethnic Development, which comprised WFP's local NGO partners.

18. The effectiveness of phasing out the food safety net programme was largely ensured by UNMIK's commitment to the SAS, which provided a longer-term solution to the problem of assisting the most vulnerable population. This effectiveness was enhanced by WFP's capacity-building of its local partners, which enabled them to target the most vulnerable households, establish a beneficiary database and formulate proposals for donor funding. The result was improved programme management and enhancement of their long-term sustainability as individual organizations.
19. The most significant recent development is enhanced cooperation among the former local NGO partners, which represent various ethnic groups. They formed the Consortium for Inter-ethnic Development (CID) with assistance from WFP. They will cooperate on joint projects in health and agriculture, on inter-ethnic youth activities, and in the provision of social welfare services to the vulnerable population. CID has acquired a high profile and several donors are already supporting the Consortium.

The proactive assistance provided by WFP's Kosovo office to local staff in finding alternative jobs before the end of their contracts contributed to maintaining a high morale during the staff reduction exercise.

20. Staff reductions in the Kosovo office were carefully planned alongside the phase-down of programme activities. The skills and experience that local staff had acquired with WFP made them strong candidates in the job market. Potential employers (mostly aid agencies) were contacted at an early stage and vacancy announcements were received and disseminated to the staff. Letters of recommendation were given to all separating staff on request. The release of staff before the end of their contracts did not pose a major problem. This was resolved through the extension of the contracts of remaining staff, the transfer of staff between posts and the outsourcing of some tasks. The result was that all WFP local staff had found other employment at the time of WFP's closure of operations in Kosovo.

WFP thanked donors, partners and Kosovo Government officials in a reception held in Pristina, marking the end of WFP operations. The Kosovo office was closed on 30 June 2002.

21. The WFP Kosovo office hosted a closing ceremony attended by the Prime Minister of Kosovo and other members of the newly formed Government, the Principal Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and representatives of international organizations and local and international NGOs. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General commended WFP for its operation and smooth phasing out.



22. The WFP office in Kosovo was closed on 30 June 2002. All non-food items were redeployed among other WFP offices or sent to the United Nations Humanitarian Depot in Brindisi.

