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Programme
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PROGRESS REPORTS ON APPROVED PROJECTS

Agenda item 9



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PROJECT BENIN 5215

Multi-purpose rural development and support to food security

Total food cost	5 448 900 dollars
Total cost to WFP	8 927 670 dollars
Date approved by the CFA	28 October 1993
Date plan of operations signed	21 June 1994
Date notification of readiness accepted	20 June 1994
Date of first distribution	1 July 1994
Duration of WFP assistance	Four years
Duration of project as at 30 June 1997	Thirty-six months

All monetary values are in United States dollars, unless otherwise stated.

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.

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.

The WFP focal points for this document are:

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PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND OF WFP ASSISTANCE

1. The long-term objectives are to improve the living conditions of impoverished population groups through the implementation of priority programmes aimed at improving labour productivity in the rural sector, increasing food production, safeguarding the natural environment and setting up basic infrastructures.

2. Four sub-projects have been implemented to achieve these objectives, i.e.:

Sub-project I: Support to groups, villagers' associations and training programmes: this aims to help villagers organize themselves by introducing more efficient production and management techniques, assist unemployed graduates of rural promotion centres to start up farming activities, and support agricultural production and processing activities.

Sub-project II: Development and rehabilitation of rural infrastructures: this aims to contribute to the improvement of the road and rural track network, and other economic and social infrastructures.

Sub-project III: Support to forestries development, management of natural resources and protection of the environment: the sub-project aims to develop seedling production and forest planting and maintenance activities, and to further provide increased support to activities aimed at rehabilitating agricultural and forest lands.

Sub-project IV: Creation of cereal banks in the Atacora: this aims to help improve the food security of the communities involved by supporting the creation of cereal banks.

3. WFP assistance will consist in: a) a support to farmers to tide them over until their first harvests or until they market their handicrafts; b) an incentive for villagers to undergo training or participate in community works; c) a wage supplement for forestry workers; and d) a contribution to the cereal banks' start-up funds.

IMPLEMENTATION

4. The Ministry of Planning will have overall control of the project through a national Directorate of WFP projects. The Directorate will be responsible for project management through the Ministry of Agriculture, and will be supported by other donors, by local and international NGOs and by the decentralized structures of the ministries responsible for rural development, public works, water management, and health and social affairs.

5. The national Directorate of WFP projects has four services which are in turn assisted by six WFP units deployed at the departmental level; the latter have a total staff of 67, including 41 permanent and 26 part-time officers. Regarding logistics, the Directorate has eight warehouses available with a total capacity of 4,650 tons, and has a fleet of six 7.5-ton trucks.

FOOD MANAGEMENT

6. The total quantity of food commodities committed under the present project is 16,700 tons over four years; this corresponds to 11,140 tons up to 30 June 1997.



7. Project execution has been slower than anticipated due to a number of constraints, such as delays in financing, shortage of appropriate human resources, and late deliveries of commodities. The utilization of commodities supplied by WFP represents 56 percent of the relative commitment, i.e., 6,210 tons instead of 11,140. The quantities distributed are listed by sub-project and by activity in the annex.
8. Monetization of wheat foreseen under the plan of operations did not take place in the best of conditions. Some 1,263 tons of wheat (i.e., 63 percent of the quantity targeted) received by the end of March 1995 was sold without any real competition. The WFP office in Cotonou and the Government of Benin ran into a series of difficulties because of the monopoly over wheat processing.

GOVERNMENT'S CONTRIBUTION

9. The Government's contribution to the project amounts to 546.1 million CFA francs, or 1.1 million dollars, which represents 85 percent of its commitment. The Government can thus be considered to have honoured its financial obligations. Technical support requirements of the project were covered in accordance with the plan of operations.

EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE

10. External aid and WFP aid complement each other in practice at the level of rural communities where many WFP micro-projects have benefited from complementary financing from a number of sources. Close cooperation has developed with different organizations in the United Nations system as well as with the European Development Fund (EDF), the African Development Bank (BAD), USAID, Gesellschaft Für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), and NGOs such as Africare and OXFAM-Quebec.

ASSESSMENT

11. The project's low level of implementation (an average of 44 percent) is due to the late delivery of commodities which complicated the planning of activities during the first two years (see the annex). Moreover, the cereal banks sub-project became operational only in 1997.
12. Sub-project I, and in particular its training and village groups components, has produced the best results. The number of beneficiaries, estimated at 95,000, largely exceeded the 51,750 targeted in the plan of operations. A total of 50,293 apprentice farmers took part in training and recycling sessions at the rural promotion centres. Support to village groups also performed well, with 24,633 women and 21,376 men taking part in training courses on the processing of farm products and on income-generating activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

13. Given the wide differences in the performance of the various components, it is clear that the sub-projects and their components should be redefined in the light of the community



development policies adopted by the country. The efforts made by the Government, including the preparation of a Country Strategy Note and the holding of the National Economic Conference, should result in helping to re-orient the project and improve the targeting of beneficiaries.

14. Geographic targeting should be continued and improved to enhance the impact of food aid and improve the effectiveness of project execution. A regular supply of commodities is essential to improve planning of activities.
15. The large number of activities in the project and the fact that it is scattered over a wide area have not made either monitoring or evaluation any easier. The system set up during project preparation should be revised, especially regarding the number of beneficiaries, the impact of food aid in terms of short-term food security, and the long-term impact of training courses.
16. It is proposed to extend the project, with no additional commitment of food aid, by re-orienting activities geographically and through improved targeting of beneficiaries. The project, officially due to end on 30 June 1998, will be extended to June 1999 on condition that the improvement of the monitoring and evaluation system is guaranteed by the government counterpart.



ANNEX

COMPARISON BETWEEN TARGETS AND ACHIEVEMENTS
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Description	Distribution planned 30 June 1997	Distribution achieved 30 June 1997	Percentage achieved
Monetization	1 500	1 263	84
Sub-project I: Support to village groups/associations training programmes	5 207	2 706	52
Training/recycling	498	452	91
Support to graduates	1 638	69	4
Support to groups	3 071	2 185	71
Sub-project II: Development/rehabilitation rural infrastructures:	2 235	1 105	49
Road infrastructures	518	532	103
Sanitary infrastructure	246	145	59
Storage infrastructure	79	32	41
Rural waterworks	1 392	396	28
Sub-project III: Support to forestry development/environment protection	3 286	1 102	31
Rural forestry development	683	401	59
Reforestation	771	402	52
Watershed management	1 160	23	2
Natural forest management	498	54	11
Protection of fauna and flora	105	35	33
Training	62	61	98
Other activities	7	36	514
Sub-project IV: Creation of cereal banks	412	104	25
Stocks to cereal banks	412	104	25
TOTAL	12 640	6 210	49
Total direct distribution	11 140	4 947	44

