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FOOD ASSISTANCE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

A summary review of experiences

ABSTRACT

Since its inception, WFP has supported projects aimed at assisting people to protect, develop or use natural resources better. The majority of these types of projects have been geographically focused on poor, marginal areas where environmental degradation was evident and where most people were suffering from food insecurity. The links between hunger, poverty and environmental degradation are quite apparent: the rural poor usually have little land; the soils are often fragile and only marginally productive. The farmers can afford few inputs and often have little choice but to over-exploit the land, thus exacerbating their vulnerability to hunger—and even famine.

What role can or should food aid play in this context? During the past two years WFP has undertaken various studies and reviews of experiences in the field of rehabilitation and natural resource management interventions, and of the related issues. This paper draws on these efforts, and summarizes the major findings of a review of some 30 evaluation documents on WFP-supported natural resource projects; a review of the existing literature on natural resources and food aid, and the findings from 10 case studies of WFP-supported natural resource projects.

The conclusions to be drawn from these reviews revolve around both universal food assistance issues and those specific to natural resources. The need for rigorous, well researched project or programme design is consistently stressed; however, the difficulties involved in planning and implementing technically sound natural resource management interventions that are targeted to the poorest populations and create assets of lasting use require particular consideration by planners and implementers.

The integration of more participatory processes into project design and implementation is recommended, with the caveat that prevailing cultural norms need to be recognized, and that the full development of a genuinely participatory process takes time. This in turn places considerable demands on high-quality technical and managerial skills, the supply of which is usually quite limited.

The need to integrate natural resource management interventions into overall development activities is stressed; this holds for relief and rehabilitation programmes. While definitions of longer-term objectives for the latter programmes will need to be flexible, it is crucial that development-orientated objectives and activity plans are included as early as possible. And usually these objectives should comprise some natural resource management proposals, which at a minimum should be designed to reduce deterioration of the host countries' natural resources, while responding to the changing needs of the target populations. Expanding field-level capacity and skills to respond to localized needs, in terms of planning and implementing of interventions, is emphasized. However, the scarcity of such resources is also noted.

A holistic approach rather than a melange of piecemeal activities is recommended. However, the studies and reviews have highlighted the fact that over-ambitious objectives, in terms of coverage and complexity, have led to beneficiaries being disappointed and counterpart government authorities being reluctant to become involved. Objectives and then achievements of more modest, but more realistic targets are commendable in themselves since they avoid the risk of raising expectations that cannot be met. Also, it is possible to avoid the perhaps equally serious risks of causing increased natural resource degradation, further loss in crop production and hence eventually yet further deterioration in the food security of the poorest.

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for consideration to the Executive Board.

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.

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BACKGROUND

1. Since its inception, WFP has supported projects aimed at assisting people to protect, develop or use natural resources better. There are currently some 34 WFP-assisted natural resource interventions being implemented, their total cost to WFP is estimated at around 400 million dollars.¹ The majority of these types of projects have been geographically focused on poor, marginal areas where environmental degradation was evident—or becoming evident—and where most people were suffering from food insecurity. The links between hunger, poverty and environmental degradation are quite apparent: the rural poor usually have little land, which often they do not own; the soils are often fragile and only marginally productive and the farmers can afford few inputs, in terms of improvements—including fertilizers, new technology or equipment. In fact, such poor farmers often have little choice but to over-exploit their land, thus further reducing its productivity and their own livelihoods, while exacerbating their vulnerability to hunger—and even famine.
2. Given these linkages, it has been assumed that there could or should be a link between providing food aid and thereby ameliorating both environmental degradation and poverty. Food aid should be used for sustainable development in the natural resource sector in support activities such as soil and water conservation, and re-forestation, which would lead to increased agricultural production and thereby to improved household food security. And it is this that has been the underlying, although often unstated—and unproven—justification for providing food aid to environmental and natural resource management projects.
3. Linkages between food aid and natural resources were originally confined to WFP's development projects. Meanwhile, the concepts of linking relief to development, and vice versa, i.e., of linking development to relief, have been gaining in visibility and natural resource considerations have entered that debate as well. Recent experiences in protracted emergency operations have led some bilateral and international organizations to consider the potential links, i.e., to try to include natural resource management developmental or rehabilitation activities within these operations. Similarly, in some long-term, environmental disaster relief programmes, attempts have been made to design a development or rehabilitation project in such a way that when and where appropriate it can adapt, or be adapted to address relief or emergency needs.

OBJECTIVE OF THE REVIEW

4. The purpose of this summary review is to draw lessons from WFP's experience and to contribute to the Programme's preparation of operational guidelines for the design and implementation of activities in the field of natural resources. The summary complements and draws on several efforts undertaken by WFP's Operations Department, the Strategy and Policy Division, and the Office of Evaluation: a desk review of some 30 evaluation documents on WFP-supported natural resource projects, a review of the existing literature in natural resources, 10 case studies of WFP-supported natural resource projects undertaken with the assistance of the FAO Investment Centre, draft guidelines on "Monitoring of participatory natural resource projects", based on experiences of WFP-

¹ All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars.



assisted projects in Ethiopia, India and Syria, and a joint WFP/UNHCR exercise of drawing up environmental guidelines for refugee and emergency operations.

LESSONS LEARNED

1: More solid knowledge about people's hunger and food security needs to guide planning and implementation of food assistance activities aimed at natural resource problems of the hungry poor

5. WFP's mandate indicates that hunger and food insecurity at the household level are the Programme's main concerns, while the overall food strategy and framework of the country assisted should usually also be taken into account. However, according to the case studies and evaluations, project documents rarely contain meaningful analyses of the household food security situations and how they relate to national policies. The justifications or problem analyses rarely provide sufficient details of the food security issues or household income situations, or of people's coping mechanisms, to allow for the definition of indicators for monitoring food security issues.
6. Similarly, it is often not sufficiently clear how much programme activities will or should contribute to household food security. For instance, the case study of the Kenya project—Food assistance to support forestry activities (Kenya 4616)—concluded that on average beneficiaries spend only 40 days a year on project activities, which provides the household with 120 kilograms of maize, 9.6 of beans and 3.6 of vegetable oil, which does not make any substantial contribution to household food security. Similarly, in Mali the study noted that the food aid acquired through the project did not ensure the accepted minimum yearly intake of 200–220 kilograms per capita to every household every year. However, complete food security or food self-sufficiency is not an essential short- or longer-term objective of all WFP-assisted projects. A contribution to short-term household food security through the provision of food rations is a commendable achievement, just as a contribution to increased household income levels and food self-sufficiency might be a quite acceptable longer-term objective within a certain context.
7. The case study of project Syria 2418.03—Assistance to reforestation—stresses one of the charges often made against the public works approach to food aid endeavours. Thus, the report notes that, although the project has been relatively successful in addressing short-term household food shortages, "...long-term food security has not improved and perhaps is becoming even more precarious with the structural economic changes that are slowly being introduced into Syria's planned economy." In fact, the current situation in Syria might actually be a reflection of the inherent problems inflicted by a structural adjustment programme, rather than the effects of a food aid project, which to some extent may be mitigating the negative effects of structural adjustment.
8. However, at least one of the studies did demonstrate that, under certain conditions, more can be achieved. In the Guatemala Soil conservation and agro-forestry activities in depressed areas project (Guatemala 2587.01), it is reported that as a result of the project's soil conservation measures and extension activities, the majority of the communities visited *had* reached food self-sufficiency in basic foods for household consumption. The implication is that these soil conservation measures had sufficiently raised the productivity of the family farm plots. And the construction of small-scale irrigation works apparently



generated substantial surpluses, which when sold on the market contributed towards improving the variety and quality of the household food basket.

2: Project solutions need to take beneficiaries' needs as a point of departure: hunger and poverty are the intervention triggers for food assistance

9. The following approaches have been conventionally used in food-assisted natural resource management projects: the budgetary support to host governments approach; a participatory approach involving local communities; or a watershed management approach, involving a more holistic strategy to the problems and interventions. The lack of a full understanding of both the social and physical situation in which beneficiaries find themselves and the analyses of food access problems, their causes and the means for resolving them, has been identified as an issue by past evaluations and by several of the case studies.
10. This has led to a tendency to treat symptoms rather than causes (although it may be noted that food aid does not have a monopoly on this limitation). For example, in the Land development and settlement project in Egypt (ARE 3214), according to the case study, there was only limited concern for the food security needs of the population and very little conceptualization of the natural resource management issues or of the environmental elements of the proposed developments. There was little recognition of irrigated agriculture as a farming system or as involving the management of natural resources: people, soil and water. The rather narrow approach of this project probably led to the omission of several complementary interventions necessary for the establishment of a local rural economy—including credit, extension, market and social infrastructure development.

3: The role of food aid in natural resource management needs to be more sharply defined, not only in the design process but also during implementation in order to ensure that there is “food for work” rather than “work for food”—the danger of “make-work” programmes

11. In the context of natural resource management projects, food aid is currently provided for one or several of the following purposes:
 - a) as an income substitute to help beneficiaries bridge the period of first improved harvest or to assist people during the start-up of income-generating activities; examples of such projects are settlement projects and those targeted to returnees;
 - b) as an incentive to beneficiaries to encourage them to take part in improvement activities on their own landholdings or on communal lands; for example, soil and water conservation projects;
 - c) as part payment of wages to casual labour hired to undertake labour-intensive infrastructural works: the food aid either addresses chronic, localized food insecurity or provides an income transfer; assistance to forestry activities in Syria is an example of such a project;
 - d) as budgetary support to governments when the food aid is used to supplement or substitute wages for government staff or labourers; such as WFP's assistance to the India forestry projects; and/or
 - e) to substitute governments' development budgets in supplying limited non-food contributions through generated funds; the India and Syria projects are examples.



12. Analysis of the role of food aid is often critical to the success of a project in terms of addressing both food security and natural resource management objectives. While ideally these coincide, it is often the case that food needs become secondary to the scope and objectives of the natural resource management objectives. However, the latter in turn may become limited or compromised by the apparent need to provide food resources to hungry people. The net result then may be that neither food security nor natural resource objectives are achieved in a meaningful way.
13. Part of the problem may lie in the limitations—actual or perceived—of the role of food aid as a development resource. Unless it is monetized, food aid cannot be used to purchase additional supplies or to hire technical assistance at a scale required to assist and supervise these frequently large work projects. Similarly, many food-for-work activities tend to attract uninterested workers (those in need of food and available for work are not necessarily from among the community that will benefit from the assets being created). Also, the activities may tend to be viewed as a purely quantitative issue, i.e., the thrust may be to “make work”, in order to reach as many people with food aid as possible. This is particularly common to emergency and rehabilitation projects, and frequently leads to poor attention to quality control and maintenance.
14. In the very extensive WFP-assisted soil and water conservation projects in Ethiopia and Eritrea (the largest food-assisted programme in sub-Saharan Africa), there has been very little post-construction protection and maintenance. Domestic animals are allowed to graze freely on the rock wall-based terraced areas. They have destroyed the walls and eliminated any regenerating vegetation. This has undermined the capacity of these structures to retain soil and water, and at times has increased the degree of erosion by concentrating run-off along walls that have been breached. Eventually crop production is reduced and obviously longer-term food security is in fact deteriorating—rather than improving.
15. Another common constraint is the transitory nature of food-aided development interventions, which typically may only function for limited periods. This is often the case during the emergency and rehabilitation phases, primarily because of the short-term funding. And again, incomplete works and more typically, lack of resources (as well as lack of interest from donors, project managers and project participants) for the necessary follow-up and maintenance can undermine the efforts and at best allow natural resource degradation to continue—or even to accelerate. According to the case study on the Egypt resettlement project, there is a serious risk that the irrigation works are not sustainable; if food aid and/or government funding for operations and maintenance is withdrawn, it is likely that the irrigation structures will collapse.
16. The case study of the two WFP-assisted projects in Guatemala (Post-war assistance to returnees, displaced persons and needy populations—Guatemala 5360/Q and Soil conservation and agro-forestry activities in depressed areas—Guatemala 2587.01) raised some interesting issues and questions regarding the role of food aid. Firstly, the study reported on the “instinct of opportunity” of the settlers being assisted, i.e., that their participation was due to the availability of food aid rather than to any conviction regarding the choices and priorities of the activities. Food aid was proffered for community development activities, through food for work, at a time when the settlers might have devoted their efforts to developing their own production activities.
17. In project Guatemala 2587.01, food aid was seen as an incentive for farmers to undertake soil conservation activities—the food rations were to compensate the farmers for time spent on such activities, time which would otherwise have been spent on off-farm



employment. Hence, food aid allows farmers to develop more sustainable production systems on their farms, and mitigates the consequences of poor land husbandry (erosion and siltation) on the surrounding areas. The study also noted that farmers' appreciation of food aid was dependent on their income levels. However, the report warned against projects which seek to "institutionalize subsistence farming"—when food aid may be used to deter farmers from making better choices, such as crop diversification or off-farm employment.

4: Many assumptions underlying government programmes for natural resource development are not necessarily conducive to the optimal use of food assistance

18. It has been a requirement of WFP-assisted rehabilitation and development interventions that they should be designed to support or form a part of government programmes. Hence, the longer-term objectives of food-aid-assisted projects should complement the governments' policies and goals. This approach may be valid, but it does not necessarily provide the required details and specifications of what the food assistance will actually do, i.e., what the objectives of WFP's assistance within the overall programme are.
19. However, the assumptions upon which government policies have been made may not always be valid, or even if they were valid at the time of initial project design, some assumptions may lose their validity as situations and conditions change. For example, many government and externally-aided forestry projects have been based on misconceived notions of people's enthusiasm for participating in "social" or "community" forestry initiatives. There are many examples of such projects in Asia, where the World Bank, after investing some 1.5 billion dollars in "social" forestry projects in the region between 1979 and 1990, concluded in an evaluation that the Bank's investments had had a negligible impact on the forestry sectors concerned (and hence on the people concerned). In India, WFP also initially supported some of the Government's "social forestry programmes" which, as elsewhere, have not been very successful. More recently the approach has been modified and now the Government has adopted a "Joint Forest Management" programme, which several donors, including WFP, now support. But, it is not yet clear that this new approach will be much more successful than the "social forestry" programmes. The WFP-assisted projects are designed to assist tribal peoples who inhabit the forests, yet the appropriateness of the project approach obviously rests on whether the concepts of Joint Forest Management are themselves valid or appropriate. At present, these remain open questions and hence obviously the projected benefits for the tribal peoples are not yet assured.



5: Targeting food assistance and the resulting benefits needs to be a dynamic and location-specific process that raises the critical questions—Who receives the food? Who receives the project benefits? Are they the same people? Are the poorest reached?

20. In all food-assisted interventions the targeting of the food aid and targeting of the benefits are critical—but separate—issues. As the immediate needs wane, pockets of food-insecure people become more difficult to identify and reach. In the past many WFP-assisted natural resource management projects were designed to cover an entire country, or large, loosely defined regional areas. Many of the projects reviewed had been implemented as national multi-purpose projects, with little attention devoted to further refining and focusing on areas with a greater food deficit, or areas where food markets did not function well. Increasingly WFP is attempting to target only those geographical areas known to be food-deficit, or areas which have been mapped as vulnerable, and to concentrate its efforts and resources on these areas.
21. Targeting the poorest and the most vulnerable, and paying greater attention to gender issues, has sometimes encountered governments' unwillingness to give these issues the requested priority. Project documents thus sometimes contain only quite general statements on these issues, which are subsequently overlooked during project implementation. WFP needs to place greater emphasis, during project design, on carrying out initial needs assessments exercises and incorporating the necessary follow-up mechanisms to ensure that targeting issues receive adequate attention throughout the implementation of the project.
22. The concepts of “self-targeting projects” or “self-targeting activities” are sometimes proposed as a means of ensuring that only the poorest will participate in food-assisted projects. However, this seems to be valid in only a very few cases: for example in Bangladesh, where payment for wages in food aid and in particular in wheat does seem to exclude all but the poorer people. However, in many other countries where employment is scarce and where almost any cash wage, and even the food ration, is quite attractive, the notion of any “self-targeting” taking place is quite dubious. This has been found to be the case for example in Ethiopia, India and Cambodia, where employment opportunities are so few that food-for-work schemes do not necessarily attract only the poorest. In fact, such schemes do not necessarily even reach the poorest households, which may be least well equipped to participate in food for work; for example, women heads of households often have too many other tasks, including cooking and child-caring, to be able to join a food-for-work project, while less poor, less food-insecure households with more than one adult would be able to fully participate.
23. In particular in Asian countries, such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, the question of how to effectively reach poor landless people who have no access to land or other productive assets arises. For the project to be successful in terms of targeting of food aid, the target group may be employed to work on public works projects or on other people's lands. However, they are unlikely to be the direct or major beneficiaries of the assets created by the project. Similarly, in Kenya, the community members in the arid and semi-arid zones were indeed the beneficiaries of the food aid through participating in the activities of the project. However, as the case study found, most of the land improvement benefits from the food-aid-assisted forestry activities have accrued to group leaders and community chiefs. In India, the Forestry Department has made considerable efforts to focus its efforts, and both the food aid and the generated funds are targeted geographically to very poor areas, but, as the case study notes, “...it is not apparent that benefits have been spread wider or more equitably within the villages”. In Mali, no one is excluded at the community level from



participating in the food aid programmes. However, this blanket approach may be one of the causes of the really food-insecure groups not being able to realize sufficient gains to improve their household food security situation.

24. In Egypt, although the poorest remained as participants, other poor groups in the area originally targeted, including Nubians, pastoralists and fishermen, did not fully participate, either because they did not find the settlement package sufficiently interesting or because they were discouraged. Although it was later realized that the basic assumption that all the groups had an agricultural background was erroneous, it is clear that without other productive alternatives these latter groups will remain among the poorest in the country, and they may continue to cause environmental degradation of the surrounding areas.
25. This is clearly an important issue for WFP, in particular as the Programme attempts to target and assist people who are moving from an emergency situation to a rehabilitation mode. To achieve these aims, at a minimum it is essential that careful and continuous analyses of the populations, their problems, their needs and their capabilities are undertaken. The proposed project activities must be equally well scrutinized, in terms of technical, social and economic and feasibility. Recognition of the changing nature of the situation and hence flexibility should be built into such analyses.

6: Sustainability requires a holistic approach to planning and implementing food assistance for hungry and resource-poor populations

26. Achieving a sustainable impact for food-supported interventions requires a holistic and integrated approach. It will be necessary that technical support and non-food inputs are available, as well as sound government implementing partners. The case studies on the Egypt and India projects illustrate some key issues that are common to most of the projects reviewed, namely that the natural resource management projects will be sustainable in part to the extent that they are sensitive to overall aspects of sustainable development, specifically:
- a) the protection and sustainable management of the forest areas by local communities: this will be successful to the extent that the proposed partnership approach can be successfully implemented;
 - b) the provision of alternative income-generating and employment opportunities, in particular for women; and
 - c) the establishment of mechanisms for the resolution of equity and conflict problems; this issue is also relevant to improving the role of women in management and decision-making.
27. In those projects which are focusing on resettlement activities and relief to rehabilitation, the sustainability of the current interventions requires that efforts be made to limit the duration of the relief phase and to initiate relief/development activities at the earliest possible opportunity—i.e., as soon as external conditions allow. This of course requires also that an efficient framework, including in particular institutional arrangements, be put in place to ensure continuity of financial and technical assistance.
28. There is often a considerable risk that refugees in camp situations may contribute to and accelerate the environmental degradation of common property resources. There is an urgent need to ensure that measures to mitigate the degradation of resources are integrated into refugee and returnee rehabilitation activities. WFP (and UNHCR) should attempt to ensure that the natural resource base needed by the host populations is not destroyed in the process of providing humanitarian assistance.



29. The sustainability of assets created and the capabilities of participants to maintain them are of course dependent on the technical soundness of the assets, and their appropriateness to people's needs. These factors are themselves dependent on the quality, quantity and duration of technical assistance provided.

7: Food assistance can contribute most effectively to resource problems of the hungry poor if it is integrated with other programmes

30. A finding highlighted by the review of past evaluations is that stand-alone food aid projects are usually less effective than when food aid is used more as a way of co-financing a project or programme, to which solid contributions from the government and/or other donors are assured. Other contributions may be needed during project implementation; for example, when tools or equipment are required to implement project activities, or at a later stage, when credit is required after basic land preparation has been done. Initial project design should review in depth these other activities and appraise the respective contributions from the other agencies involved. WFP's contributions to other donor-financed projects can have an important multiplier effect, either by supplying food aid incentives to support all or part of these projects' activities; or by enabling such projects to expand their targeted areas, and/or to increase numbers of beneficiaries and activities, by allowing an internal re-allocation of funds due to savings made through WFP's food contributions to the project.

8: Using food for solving natural resource problems of the poor requires continuous technical back-stopping at all stages and levels

31. The case studies describe a variety of issues and opportunities associated with the choice of activities and their implementation. One of the major issues, common to nearly all the projects reviewed, was the question of the adequacy or lack of technical oversight and support to the food-aided projects, and the role of technical assistance in facilitating a greater impact.
32. The case study of the Ethiopia project notes that road-building activities have been an important component, seemingly well adapted to the public works approach to large-scale food-for-work programmes, and an important element in developing the remote rural hinterlands. However, the related issues of the technical quality and maintenance requirements have been continuously raised for the last 11 years. The case study stresses that "...Badly designed and executed roads or tracks often end up creating more erosion and making access even more hazardous". Moreover, low overall quality makes annual maintenance much more difficult and costly and dissuades local authorities and communities from taking over the control and care of roads. The earthen dams created through the project were to have led to increased agricultural production through small-scale irrigation, but have also suffered from a lack of technical inputs and supervision, and have been poorly maintained.
33. The project in Mali included the establishment of village-based irrigation for horticultural development. However, the benefits were limited by a lack of markets. This was reported as an example of a shallowly conceived project which failed to look at the demand side of production.
34. Many of the projects reviewed promote micro-level planning and micro-projects, apparently to respond to local communities' needs in a timely and flexible manner. This is obviously a laudable goal. Such an approach usually requires embarking on umbrella-type



projects. By definition, these projects embrace the micro-plans and projects, which are later further defined through ongoing design and monitoring. The Bangladesh food-for-work project has been designed as one of these umbrella projects, whereby a large number of individual, smaller or micro-schemes are integrated into the one programme. Similarly, in Ethiopia the Rehabilitation of rural lands and infrastructure project (Ethiopia 2488.03) promotes the local-level participatory planning approach (LLPPA), through which grass-roots communities in the project's target areas should be involved at each stage of planning and implementation of the various micro-project activities, throughout the life of the project. The Cambodia rehabilitation programme has been designed to be implemented using a similar approach.

35. The implementation of such micro-plans or schemes usually involves the local-level authorities and local WFP country office staff. This requires that at a minimum there is a real commitment by the governments and the WFP offices to work through local communities and local-level administrative structures, and possibly also with NGOs. Also required is that the government at the local level and the WFP country offices have staff with the necessary technical capabilities, and monitoring skills. These conditions are not often found to be in place.

9: Lip-service to the participatory approach might lead to the achievement of physical targets but is not enough to reach the hungry poor

36. Several of the cases studies noted the lack of effective participation. In the India project, Employment through forestry activities and tribal development in Rajasthan (India 2773.01), the case study found that "While the Forestry Department has shown much enthusiasm for introducing contemporary methods of rapid and/or participatory rural appraisal (RRA and/or PRA), it is not everywhere apparent that more than lip-service is being paid to genuine discussion and defining of the real needs of people". Similarly, the Mali Rural development project (Mali 2231.04) was reported as "...Though intended to be participatory, the approach has not incorporated a needs assessment into either the refinement of village plans or the actual selection of activities". It was found that the activities actually undertaken do not reflect the stated priorities of group members and do not address the real concerns of women.
37. These problems are not unique to food aid, but are common to many externally funded programmes, and in part reflect an insistence on a concept without a real understanding of or will to understand the issues involved, the full implications and the necessary conditions for implementation. The donors' and agencies' present requirement is that management change from a traditional top-down style to participatory approaches. This is commendable, but it may in effect be calling for quite radical social changes which may or may not be reflected in the current cultural norms or even trends of the recipient country. And even if such changes in attitude were to be readily accepted, the application of the new style of management, at least initially, is quite demanding of planning and managerial staff. The food-aid-assisted projects are often of such a size in relation to available, suitably qualified staff, that it becomes very difficult to put a truly participatory approach into effect.
38. The difficulties may be compounded by external and internal pressures to disburse resources, food or non-food, and reach targets as rapidly as possible; as well as by pre-conceived ideas of possible choices of activities. These factors are obviously not conducive to a genuine participatory approach. Some of the case studies have revealed that during project design the problems and issues involved may have been over-simplified, and hence the anticipated results of the participatory approach were rather over-ambitious, in



terms of raising the expectations of project managers as well as of the intended beneficiaries.

10: The impact of food assistance on natural resources is more pronounced in “silent emergencies” than in rapidly evolving man-made emergencies

39. The case studies of some of the more recently designed natural resource management projects have demonstrated both the importance of and the difficulties associated with linking relief and development. An example may be found in the case of Cambodia, where the Programme for rehabilitation (Cambodia 5483) allows for emergency, rehabilitation and development activities. The case study reports that the approach enables the operation to shift from relief to rehabilitation, and vice versa. At the same time, the project should be establishing the base for an integrated, government-implemented development programme. However, the links between relief and development seem to be reduced to the fact that the use of food aid is quite flexible: it is used for either purpose, depending on external conditions, in particular the level of security and stability. The proposed rehabilitation and development interventions are quite standard natural resource management activities, such as irrigation/water control structures, communal pond construction and road rehabilitation. None of these particularly lend themselves to a quick adaptation to address relief/emergency needs of people. There is also a problem that people in need of rapid relief assistance may not be living in the geographical areas where rehabilitation/development activities are technically and institutionally feasible.
40. A different and more consistent concept of relief-development linkage is identified in the case study for India where the entire project is aimed at some of the very poorest people of India, the marginalized tribal people who inhabit the increasingly degraded forests. These people are living at the margin of an emergency/relief situation. They have been described as being part of India's “silent emergency”. The project itself may be described as addressing some of the emergency or near-emergency needs of the people, many of whom are on the verge of starvation. The case study concluded that the food aid project has indeed contributed to forest management programmes, reaching more remote areas and poorer people than would have been the case without the project.

