

برنامج
الأغذية
العالمي



Programme
Alimentaire
Mondial

World
Food
Programme

Programa
Mundial
de Alimentos

Executive Board
First Regular Session

Rome, 8 – 10 February 2000

EVALUATION REPORTS

Agenda item 5

For consideration



Distribution: GENERAL
WFP/EB.1/2000/5/1

15 December 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SUMMARY EVALUATION OF EMERGENCY OPERATION– CENTRAL AMERICA 6079.00

Emergency food assistance to households
affected by “Hurricane Mitch”

ABSTRACT

Helped by the existence of in-country stocks of food, mainly from development projects, and the presence of a small number of staff already deployed in the region, WFP was able to respond quickly and effectively to the acute emergency caused by Hurricane Mitch. Following a number of previous emergency operations (EMOPs) funded from the Immediate Response Account (IRA), regional EMOP Central America 6079.00, with generous funding from donors, supported the food needs of 1,125,000 people in four countries. Additional WFP staff were seconded or recruited, and partners found to deliver food and subsequently develop a food-for-work (FFW) programme which, while continuing to provide food to affected people, also supported the reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged assets.

Each country office modified the regional EMOP to suit its particular needs and opportunities. The quality of partner organizations was critical to the success of logistics arrangements and FFW activities. Substantial physical assets were created through FFW. In the protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) Central America 6089.00 approved following EMOP Central America 6079.00, it should be possible to include activities aimed at creating long-term social assets. WFP cooperated with other agencies in supporting the health of affected people. WFP management of food logistics was efficient and effective. The presence of a decentralized Regional Office in the area was found to be beneficial, facilitating communication, travel, assessment and decision-making.

NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for consideration to the Executive Board.

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.

Director, Office of Evaluation (OEDE): A. Wilkinson tel.: 066513-2029

Evaluation Officer (OEDE): A. de Kock tel.: 066513-2981

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Documentation and Meetings Clerk (tel.: 066513-2645).



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COMPAS	Commodity tracking system
CSB	Corn soya blend
DSC	Direct support costs
EMOP	Emergency operations
EU	European Union
FFW	Food for work
IRA	Immediate response account
ITSH	Internal transport, storage and handling
LIFDC	Low-income, food-deficit country
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PRRO	Protracted relief and recovery operation
RAM	Resource allocation model
UNDMT	United Nations Disaster Management Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAM	Vulnerability analysis and mapping



PURPOSE OF THE MISSION

1. A joint United Nations Disaster Response and Recovery Mission to Central America was organized by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in February 1999, with the participation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO). However, although the World Food Programme (WFP) is one of the main actors in the provision of disaster relief to the affected countries, it was unfortunately advised of the mission at a rather late stage when appropriate participation was no longer feasible. Nevertheless, the WFP Regional Office and WFP Headquarters in Rome agreed that an evaluation should be undertaken of WFP's performance in response to Hurricane Mitch. This evaluation assesses the achievements made under the regional emergency operation (EMOP) Central America 6079.00 and serves as a guide for implementation of the subsequent two-year regional protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) Central America 6089.00.
2. An evaluation of this regional EMOP provides insights on strategies, coordination, opportunities, constraints and limits related to the planning, implementation and management of WFP emergency food aid at the regional level.

METHODOLOGY

3. WFP fielded a four-person mission in July and August 1999, comprising a team leader, a socio-economist, a logistics expert and a nutritionist/public health specialist. The leader held consultations prior to the mission at WFP Headquarters.
4. Over a period of six weeks, three members of the mission visited Guatemala (one week), El Salvador (one week), Honduras (two weeks) and Nicaragua (two weeks). The nutritionist/public health expert visited only Honduras and Nicaragua which were the most severely affected countries.
5. The mission met WFP staff working in the decentralized regional office, cluster and country offices, sub-offices and in the field. In each country, the mission also met staff of relevant government departments and a selection of partner organizations, including other United Nations agencies, and some donors. On occasion, the mission worked as a single unit, but more frequently split in order to meet well-informed experts, inspect field-implementation activities and interview beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries and representatives of beneficiary communities (i.e. mayors, women's groups and cooperatives).

BACKGROUND TO THE EMERGENCY

6. This emergency operation was carried out in an area where disasters are frequent. The four Central American countries particularly affected by Hurricane Mitch are prone to suffer the effects of natural hazards, experiencing frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Events such as the drought caused by El Niño in 1997/98 are common. Thirteen



large hurricanes have hit Central America since 1950. All four countries have suffered the effects of internal conflicts in recent history.

7. Mitch was the most severe hurricane/heavy rain event to have affected the region in the last 200 years. The hurricane first struck the island of Guanaja on 28 October 1998, then the mainland of Honduras on 29 October, moved in an arc south and west, leaving Guatemala on 1 November. Torrential rains devastated much of the region, causing river floods, landslides and the destruction of roads, bridges, housing, possessions, food supplies, animals, harvests and safe water supplies. In parts of Guatemala and Honduras, there was a significant threat of a breakdown in law and order. Both rural and urban areas were affected.
8. The torrential rains caused massive physical damage, but the impact on persons varied according to political-economic circumstances. Disproportionately, the poor were more affected because they lived in more hazardous environments, such as the easily flooded low-lying areas or landslide-prone districts of urban centres such as Tegucigalpa, and on the steeply-sloping impoverished upland sites throughout much of the region. Denied access to good quality lowland farms through a highly concentrated land tenure system, they are forced to attempt to survive by farming small plots of easily eroded land, more appropriately left as forest. Some indigenous groups living in the remote eastern areas of Honduras and Nicaragua remained inaccessible to help for many weeks.
9. The response by governments showed a lack of preparedness. Much of the immediate response was by local people and the mission was impressed by the effectiveness of the civil society response in general. National and international military forces played a significant role in the early response, making use of their communication systems, manpower, planes and helicopters.

Recommendations:

WFP should continue to support central and local governmental and civil society capacities to plan for and respond to emergencies. A key aspect of this disaster planning is the development of flexible decision-making systems able to respond to unpredictable hazards.

WFP should be pro-active in ensuring its full and timely participation in multi-agency reviews and evaluations of emergencies.

FOOD ASSISTED OPERATIONS

Phase I:

10. WFP food operations started in Nicaragua in anticipation of the hurricane, on 26 October when the first distribution took place. Within two days, WFP was coordinating the management of airlifted materials on behalf of a number of agencies. In this first phase, the WFP policy was to provide food for all who appeared to be in need. WFP country directors in Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala, the most severely affected countries, were able to do so through EMOPs funded from the Immediate Response Account (IRA).



Phase II:

11. Government estimates of food and other needs were used in the preparation of EMOP Central America 6079.00, which was devised as a regional response to provide a full 2,100 kcal emergency ration to compensate for loss of food, crops and earning opportunities. WFP provided food for 600,000 hurricane victims in Honduras; 400,000 in Nicaragua; 65,000 in Guatemala; and 60,000 in El Salvador. This aid was targeted to the most severely affected provinces. Though the regional EMOP did not specify a transition to food for work (FFW) as the target for the implementation mode, this became the aim in each of the countries and was incorporated in Letters of Understanding with governments.

Phase III:

12. By mid-November 1998, the Regional Office was preparing PRRO Central America 6089.00 which, initially, was to run from May 1999 to May 2001.

PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Preparedness and Immediate Response

13. WFP was able to respond immediately to the Mitch emergency. In Nicaragua, food was being delivered from 26 October, in anticipation of a formal appeal by the Government of Nicaragua. Four factors enabled this quick response: 1) the existence of almost 14,000 tons of WFP food in the region (5,166 in Honduras; 3,500 in Nicaragua; 2,355 in El Salvador; and 2,769 in Guatemala); 2) owing to ongoing development projects and emergency operations, WFP already had field offices with professional staff, including monitors, working relations with governments and other agencies, a partially effective communication system and means of transportation; 3) WFP quickly coordinated with other agencies and re-deployed staff; and 4) having a regional director based in the affected region allowed for a relatively short lead-time in decision-making.
14. At the time of the Mitch emergency, WFP was undertaking two emergency operations related to the El Niño drought: regional EMOP Central America 5949.00 and EMOP Nicaragua 6039.00. WFP also had eight ongoing development projects: Honduras 5691.00 and 5609.00; Nicaragua 4515.00 and 4571.00; Guatemala 5279.00 and 2704.00 and El Salvador 3886.01 and 4508.00. Stocks from these operations and projects were made available, in agreement with respective governments. WFP staff played a key role in the management of the Programme's own food and that of other agencies at airports.
15. After preparation of the EMOP, WFP started to strengthen staff levels by transferring additional professional staff to the region; through short or extended visits by specialist staff (such as logistics experts, communication or vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) specialists); by country visits of staff from the Regional Office; and by relocation of country office staff and recruitment of United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) and local staff.



Recommendations:

WFP should be enabled to access an appropriate range of food, at any time, in order to be able to alleviate hunger/famine conditions for a period of one week. This may entail a reconsideration of the level of support for development projects through the Resource Allocation Model (RAM), given the vital importance of borrowings from in-country development stocks as WFP's immediate disaster response. Specifically, this reconsideration should address the issue of support to development in low-income, food-deficit countries (LIFDCs), such as those of Central America, that are exceptionally likely to experience natural disasters. This proposal should be weighed against the response opportunities offered by the IRA-funded EMOPs, combined with local purchase possibilities.

WFP, as a member of the United Nations Disaster Management Team (UNDMT), should seek further support for governmental and civil society capacity to respond to future hazards through funding for VAM, early warning systems and the facilitation of locally-based emergency response systems.

VAM units should be supported as part of development activities, allowing the use of their findings in flexible contingency planning before emergencies occur.

WFP, along with other United Nations agencies, should create and maintain a regional list of appropriately skilled people (such as proven monitors) to be contacted quickly in emergencies.

Initial Assessment of Food Needs

16. WFP's initial assessment of food needs was based on governments' estimates of damage to houses and crops, and reduced employment opportunities. This was supplemented by WFP's knowledge of field conditions and by rapid appraisals. Subsequently, WFP itself and through its partners attempted continuously to check for under-provision and duplication of provision. This allowed WFP country offices to better target the most needy and, as in Honduras, substantially reduce initial beneficiary figures.

Coordination with Other Agencies

17. Coordination during the acute emergency phase benefited from existing formal and working relations, arising partly from development projects with other United Nations agencies, central and local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and donors such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union (EU). These existing partnerships allowed quick decision-making and facilitated joint assessments. On 28 October, for example, WFP, UNDP and UNICEF met in northern Honduras to identify and assess problems, list resources available and allocate responsibilities. In this informal relationship, WFP provided food, and UNICEF emergency drinking water and funds for transport and handling of food to allow immediate responses.

18. Subsequently, but from as early as 6 November, detailed Letters of Understanding were signed with governments and numerous implementing partners, who were to provide logistics and implement FFW activities. Partners included agencies of central and local governments, municipalities and groups in civil society such as NGOs, religious bodies and trade associations. In some cases, the responsibilities of partners were unclear and needed further elaboration; for example, regarding the payment for internal transport, storage and handling (ITSH).



Recommendation:

The limitation on governmental capacities to coordinate places an onus on other agencies to undertake these activities. Achievements during the response to Hurricane Mitch should be consolidated through continued meetings of Food Security Groups, which are usually chaired by the WFP country directors. Lessons learned from coordination, successes and failures should be incorporated in implementation documentation for future emergencies; for example, full elaboration of the mutual obligations of partners.

Effects of Decentralization in the Region

19. Though each country has a distinctive character and specific problems relating to recent history and, for example, multiple ethnic groups, the countries of the region have several characteristics in common. For example, they share a range of hazards and environmental characteristics, notably environmentally sensitive steep lands and pervasive structural poverty. Thus, a regional EMOP, modified to meet the needs of each country, was an appropriate development. In this respect, WFP differs from other United Nations organizations in the region.
20. Examples of the benefits of having a regional operation and regional office are: decision-making by a regional director and team with close personal knowledge of sites, situations, people, problems, opportunities and threats; efficient and effective use of scarce human resources, with low overheads for travel and communication; frequent visits possible by regional office staff to each country; economies of scale in purchase of equipment; the possibility of easy exchanges of personnel and resources and ideas on good practices within the region; possibilities of regional procurement; and a regional bank account allowing rapid purchases and transfers.
21. In all the above cases, location of strategic decision-making in the region has been advantageous. A further and unanticipated benefit lay in the presentation of the Hurricane Mitch event as a regional disaster. This was almost certainly an advantage in mobilizing funding, particularly for the less-affected countries. Clearly, however, the implementation and fine-tuned planning of programmes must be at country level because of the need to work with national governments and local institutions.

Recommendations:

WFP should discuss within the region the possibilities for cost-effective centralization of activities and functions, and for the sharing of experiences through inter-country visits and focus on the issues mentioned elsewhere in this report.

Within WFP's information systems, regional EMOPs should be identifiable as such, so that confusion with country responsibility is not possible; for example, as EMOP Central America 6079.00.

Implications of Borrowings from Development Projects

22. Rapid response by WFP was possible only because stocks were available in-country and accessible to WFP with a written undertaking to the governments that they would be replenished. Loans were being repaid in El Salvador by May 1999, but a debt of 385 tons of rice, 69 tons of pulses and 61 tons of canned fish still remained. By this time, development projects were being affected. It is significant that only 40 percent of the



original EMOP Central America 6079.00 food commitment was received in El Salvador. Fortunately, 1,590 tons could be transferred from EMOP Central America 5949.00 (El Niño) so that 68 percent of the original commitment could be provided. In Guatemala, 60 percent of loans were repaid by February. There has been a problem, however, in that beneficiaries of development project Guatemala 5279.00 have been working without payment: Honduras repaid a loan of 326 tons of beans to Guatemala in January 1999. It is not clear how much of the loan from Honduran in-country stocks has been repaid but repayment is being related to absorptive capacity as development projects, delayed by Hurricane Mitch, have been restarted. In Nicaragua, 86 percent of the loan had been repaid at the time of the mission, and repayment of the balance is under way. In this case, development projects have not been adversely affected.

23. Loans from development projects have in some cases affected long-term programmes through non-repayment. These loans should be repaid, since development activities in Central America address the chronic condition of what may become emergency conditions if not given adequate support.

Recommendations:

Repayment of loans from development projects or from any other source should be a high priority when EMOP stocks are delivered in any emergency. Otherwise the value of such in-country stocks as strategic reserves may be reduced and the integrity of development programmes is threatened.

WFP should take stock of successes and failures during the EMOP, and ensure that materials and equipment are re-deployed before continuing with PRRO Central America 6089.00.

Communications

24. Communications systems are essential for logistics, coordination of activities and staff security. Problems of communications were most severe in the earliest phase when it was essential to gather sound information for planning. Subsequent communication was easier, though parts of the Atlantic coast of Honduras and Nicaragua have very few means of telecommunication. In the early phases, cellular phones were purchased as part of the Honduras EMOP. Weekly conference sessions lasting up to one hour were used for regional planning with WFP Rome and country offices. More recently, the WFP commodity tracking system (COMPAS) has been installed down to sub-office level in Honduras and will soon be installed in other countries. During the emergency, a deep field communications system was installed in Nicaragua and Honduras. This system included HF, VHF and e-mail facilities in offices and vehicles. It has demonstrated its value for the United Nations system as a whole in Central America. Since the region is certain to experience major emergencies in the future, a reliable, comprehensive and mobile field communication system will be valuable. This will be particularly needed during the acute phases of future emergencies, when assessments are made and accurate information is critically important.

Recommendation:



For future emergencies, particularly those with sudden onsets, the deep field communication system will be valuable. The established system should be maintained and extended to Guatemala and El Salvador.

SECURITY

25. All four countries registered increased problems of insecurity in both urban and rural areas. WFP staff have experienced armed robbery, kidnapping and theft of vehicles. Staff training in security issues has recently started and standard security procedures are maintained throughout the region. A further problem is that land mines were washed out during the Hurricane Mitch flood in Nicaragua.

NUTRITION AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Effects of Hurricane Mitch on Health and Nutrition in Honduras and Nicaragua

26. Even before the hurricane, health and nutrition conditions were poor in the four countries. For example, 39 percent of under-fives in Honduras and 25 percent in Nicaragua suffered chronic malnutrition, while 90 percent of the rural population in Honduras and 78 percent of the rural population in Nicaragua have unsafe water supply. In Nicaragua 86 percent and in Honduras 82 percent of rural people have no access to latrines.
27. The direct health effects of Hurricane Mitch may be summarized as follows:

	Honduras	Nicaragua
Dead	5 657	3 045
Injured	8 058	287
Missing	12 225	1 000
Damage to health facilities (%)	14.6	12

28. Over a period of six months following Hurricane Mitch, an increased incidence was noted of acute upper respiratory infections, acute diarrhoea, malaria, leptospirosis and leishmaniasis. It is probable that increases of leptospirosis and leishmaniasis were caused by changed environmental conditions. There is evidence of some rise in both chronic and acute malnutrition.

Nutritional Quality of Food Aid

29. Food aid was provided for vulnerable groups, those in shelters and through FFW. Culturally, the rations provided were acceptable, though there was some unfamiliarity with certain commodities such as tinned fish. Specific groups, such as the Misquitos on the Caribbean coast of Honduras and Nicaragua, were unfamiliar with maize, corn-soya blend (CSB) and split peas. The calorific value of the ration was adequate and attempts were made to compensate for deficient food items.



30. Initially, during the acute emergency, logistical constraints limited food supply so that food was not available for inaccessible or unnoticed groups. Subsequently, WFP supplied food to all *prima facie* cases of necessity: 600,000 hurricane victims in Honduras and 400,000 in Nicaragua. The ration remained constant as far as possible but the numbers of beneficiaries in Honduras were reduced as lists were checked, while in Nicaragua censuses were used to fine-tune distribution to the neediest. WFP itself and through partners worked hard to verify that those in need received rations.

Complementary Interventions

31. Though WFP does not implement health interventions, the country offices coordinated with partner organizations such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to arrange safe water supply, construct latrines and provide health services both in shelters and as part of FFW housing projects. In both cases, these were complemented by WFP food. Safe (normally chlorinated) water was provided. In the shelters, an effective vaccination programme was carried out through health posts. In FFW housing projects, performance varied in respect of timely provision by partners of full water supply, latrines and waste collection.
32. It can be concluded that in respect of nutrition and health, WFP reacted quickly and appropriately, helping the governments achieve food security, while achieving a satisfactory, coherent and coordinated food/health programme without major health or nutrition problems. Some settlements, however, still need adequate water/sanitation/waste collection services.

Recommendations:

WFP should encourage, through partnerships, support for training of health personnel, particularly in relation to nutrition.

In addition to current coordination with United Nations and national agencies, and in anticipation of future emergencies, WFP should build strategic alliances with regional agencies such as the Nutritional Institute of Central America and Panama, and institutes of agricultural technology, to more effectively address health, nutrition and food security issues. WFP should encourage the monitoring of nutritional status through schools, recording the height of children on entering school (height for age).

In conjunction with other health and nutrition agencies throughout the region, WFP should continue to investigate micronutrient deficiencies and the production of fortified food.

WFP should encourage and make use of the results of rapid nutritional assessments during emergencies.

FOOD AID LOGISTICS

Effectiveness and Efficiency of Food Delivery Arrangements

33. The two ports with associated warehouses visited by the mission (Corinto and San Lorenzo) were effectively run with quick turnaround and good working arrangements with customs authorities, assisted by experienced WFP staff. Warehouses were well run with appropriate handling, storage and recording. Inland transport from extended delivery points was awarded through tendering among proven contractors. There were some delays



in payment for this transport owing to uncertainty about ITSH (see paragraph 37). In Nicaragua and Guatemala, some beneficiaries complained that they were charged for final delivery by implementing partners. This was inappropriate, and subsequently rectified by WFP.

34. It is clear that both effectiveness and efficiency of delivery improved during the EMOP as more monitors were appointed and became more experienced. Monitors in Nicaragua, who had motorcycles, were able to witness two, or exceptionally three, distributions in one day.
35. Interviews with beneficiaries showed that they associated the food deliveries with WFP even though one government attempted to use WFP food to score political points. This was firmly resisted by WFP. Some beneficiaries claimed that the food ration was too small and others, though certainly not all, found some of the food items, particularly split peas and tinned fish, not to their taste. Attempts were made by WFP to teach them how to use unfamiliar foods by, for example, using nutrition students in Guatemala.

Local Purchases

36. Paragraph 13 stresses the importance of in-country stocks early in the emergency. Local procurement was also carried out from the period of the EMOP onwards. WFP Guatemala purchased some maize in south-west Mexico, whereas WFP Honduras borrowed beans from Guatemala. In Nicaragua, WFP purchased locally 4,698 tons through some 15 transactions which included maize, rice, flour, oil and beans. All country offices were in favour of local purchases because they could help the recovery of local production, but some purchases fell through as sellers inflated prices. In addition, there were practical difficulties because local prices tend to be higher than world market standards and the effect of local requests is to bid them up further. Purchases during an emergency may be difficult in relation to the crop cycle and also because it may be uncertain how much of the donor contributions may be available as cash.

Recommendation:

Despite the many difficulties of achieving local purchases, it is desirable that the local market be searched.



Internal Transport Storage and Handling and Direct Support Costs

37. Both ITSH and Direct Support Costs (DSC) caused some problems in EMOP Central America 6079.00. Donors were willing to support ITSH for the EMOP at a rate of US\$70 per ton. In reality, the true costs varied greatly so that deliveries to inaccessible areas such as the Atlantic coasts of Honduras and Nicaragua may have incurred costs of over US\$250 per ton (due to mixed mode transport and very small loads). In addition, these inaccessible areas were unattractive as working environments, so that it was necessary to encourage partners through repaying actual costs. There was confusion among partners over the issue of which costs were allowable (port charges, transport hire and warehousing costs, for example) and which were not (such as costs of travel, monitoring and evaluation and office costs). It was decided that in the cost matrix, El Salvador and Guatemala would have a base cost of less than the more affected countries, with the intention that the governments concerned should support the ITSH costs.
38. Donors were less willing to support DSC, and only about half of the appropriate DSC was provided. The most severe reduction was in non-food items, with the result that very few tools were provided. As a consequence, in some FFW schemes the emphasis was on activities that did not need such inputs—for example, cleaning and clearance. Not all NGOs were sufficiently well-funded to be able to supply tools. Moreover, if undistributed EMOP stocks are transferred to the PRRO, there will be no accompanying DSC.

Recommendations:

The rules governing ITSH support for all partner organizations should be clarified in written form.

Donors should be urged, as agreed in principle, to provide full Direct Support Costs.

Food-for-Work Activities

39. FFW became the normal mode for the distribution of food aid within four months and was being actively developed in all countries from January. FFW was welcomed and requested by central governments, local governments, implementing partners and individuals. More than 50 main agencies, including United Nations and governmental agencies, international NGOs and local NGOs, supervised a wide range of FFW activities. ‘Flexible’ FFW was used in Nicaragua as a method to enable the participation of those, particularly women, who have commitments such as child care and food preparation. Such commitments may preclude their participation in normal four-hour time units. ‘Flexible’ FFW allows people to work when their other commitments permit.
40. In Guatemala, FFW within EMOP Central America 6079.00 was seen as “a bridge to keep development going”. Where feasible, well-sourced agencies with appropriate skills, able to provide non-food items, were selected; the lack of agency skills and equipment restricted some communities' activities. Ongoing programmes were attractive targets for support through FFW.
41. Physical assets like new or rebuilt houses and water supplies are contributing to better living conditions for some hurricane victims; for example, families who previously lived in multi-occupancy buildings but now own a house. Rehabilitation and maintenance of the environment helped maintain livelihoods. Human assets such as transferable skills and strengthened community structures are permanent benefits for both emergency responses



and longer-term development. After a disaster, FFW helps rebuild livelihoods but it also helps rehabilitate traumatized minds. 'Flexible' FFW may allow the incorporation of differing needs and opportunities within the FFW framework.

42. Many communities undertook house repair or house building as FFW. Undoubtedly, there is a great need for housing if people are to move out of shelters. The mission noted, however, that there are large differences in the quality of housing provided, depending largely on the partner agencies. The difference between a US\$500 skeletal single-room building and a US\$4,000 multi-roomed building with electricity, stove, direct water supply and sewage is enormous. WFP, as a participant, is advised to take a view on the following issues: safety from future hazards (location); health (whether safe water and sanitation provided); ownership (title to women?); allocation process (transparent); and location in relation to livelihood opportunities.
43. The mission draws particular attention to housing issues because it was able to witness the large differences in the quality and circumstances of the provision of this investment. The same general problem exists in all programmes with partner implementers, particularly bearing in mind their differing competencies and the differing strength of their funding from other sources. To make matters more complex, agencies that are independent of WFP may be delivering similar programmes in the same areas but to different standards. In these latter cases, uniformity and quality control will depend on the strength, competence and broad sense of responsibility of WFP's partner agencies.
44. The problem of housing is particularly acute in Tegucigalpa and other large towns where many houses were destroyed during Hurricane Mitch. Here, many people are still living in temporary houses or even specially constructed shelters. New houses are often built far from workplaces, so that people are unwilling to move from shelters and, in any case, new houses are being built slowly. Consequently it is unlikely that the shelters will be cleared during the PRRO or that the people will be adequately re-housed.



Recommendations:

WFP should agree a *modus operandi* with partners, to determine acceptable standards in housing developments and other FFW investments. WFP has leverage and a moral duty because it supports these investments through FFW.

WFP should monitor the activities of agencies, engaging in dialogue and discussion of possible partnership modes, during non-emergency conditions in order to be able to identify quickly strong partners and specific activities for emergency interventions.

Strategic choices in PRRO FFW programmes: a) should take into account national development frameworks, in order to support them and cause them no harm; b) should seek sustainability through the encouragement of maintenance (issues of ownership and responsibility); c) should seek actively to allow women's participation; d) should stress production, poverty alleviation and access to the most affected; and e) should continue to focus on small producers.

WFP should support implementation of the messages of the 1999 'Enabling Development' paper by working towards sustainability in FFW programmes.

WFP should emphasize and support the development of human as well as physical assets in emergencies.

WFP should explore the possibility of extending 'flexible' FFW to allow the benefits of FFW to be spread to more women.

WFP should seek other agencies which will be given the responsibility of re-housing the urban displaced when the PRRO ends.

Quality of Packaging

45. In general the quality of packaging was good although some tins of fish had to be rejected because they were damaged, some cartons containing rice split and some locally-procured five-gallon plastic containers for oil ruptured and damaged other commodities. Overall, however, the number of damaged cereal bags was small.

Post-CIF Losses

46. In each country, post-cif (cost, insurance, freight) losses were within acceptable limits, though it was not possible to be sure of the situation during the acute emergency phase when controls on distribution were weaker, a wide range of delivery agents was used and staff with little logistics experience were employed. Overall, the loss rates were below 0.1 percent in Honduras, 0.47 percent in Nicaragua, less than 0.25 percent in Guatemala and in El Salvador 0.03 percent.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE WFP PROGRAMME**Gender**

47. Most WFP professional staff were aware of the organization's 'Commitments to Women'. Letters of Understanding stressed that food should preferably be distributed to women. Several members of staff, however, were unsure of the validity of a gender-targeted response during acute emergencies. On the other hand, it can be assumed



that Hurricane Mitch affected men and women differently, considering their varying degree of vulnerability prior to the event. Though there are gender focal points at country and regional office levels, they had different levels of skill. No gender adviser was involved in programming the EMOP, though WFP sensitized field monitors, for example in El Salvador. Some disaggregated data on gender were collected.

48. In the shelters, women took on traditional roles in cleaning, cooking and family care; in Nicaraguan shelters, there is some evidence that men were involved in the non-traditional role of food preparation. At the same time, women have been involved in rebuilding houses.
49. Women participating in 'flexible' FFW gained better control of time for their multiple roles, though more might have been done to support women in restoring income-earning opportunities. On the whole, FFW favoured men in that more were able to find temporary employment through those activities.
50. The gender breakdown of WFP professional staff, coordinators and monitors varied between countries. In Nicaragua, for example, 64 percent of all professional staff involved in the EMOP were women. In Choluteca (Honduras) it was noted that the presence of a woman in authority was seen by some women as an aid to easier communication and facilitated their ability to seek support.

Recommendations:

WFP should review human resourcing in order to fulfil its 'Commitments to Women' and at regional level a staff person/consultant should oversee progress in this respect.

WFP should seek to collaborate with agencies with longer experience in considering gender issues and that are taking on gender advisers (for example Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Honduras, USAID Nicaragua). This should allow WFP to benefit from their achievements in responding to the opportunities and problems of incorporating the gender dimension in activities.

WFP should review specific investment targets for women within the PRRO, for example in facilitating their participation in FFW.

Targeting

51. Within the first few days of the emergency, respective governments identified geographical areas of need. Within this framework, WFP attempted to verify the lists of beneficiaries according to need, recognizing that the poorest suffer both from having less resilient livelihood systems and are restricted to live in more hazardous locations. Loss of housing was accepted as a surrogate for loss of food and basis of livelihood, as was loss of land. WFP also acknowledged the significance of loss of jobs in food production and export agriculture, and made pragmatic decisions to support rehabilitation of some of these activities. From January 1999, targeted groups included those still in shelters, vulnerable groups and those who self-targeted through FFW. Targeting was sharpened by the continued questioning of the beneficiary lists.
52. In fact, WFP's ability to target was restricted by: dependence on the competence, capacity and probity of partner agencies; the difficulty of targeting when so many are poor; and the looseness of the definitions of beneficiaries and scarcity of potential partners in challenging areas such as the Atlantic coastlands. Communities in these remote areas,



whatever their needs, were unlikely to be prioritized until the later stages. On pragmatic grounds, it could not have been otherwise.

Recommendations:

WFP should define explicit targeting criteria for internal and partner use, taking into account the needs of groups which tend to be excluded and the contingencies of each emergency.

WFP should undertake joint assessments with partner agencies in relation to need for, and assessment of, targeting.

Beneficiaries

53. Though FFW seeks to allow participation by beneficiaries, many participate only through self-selection for the activity. Some partner agencies appear to see beneficiaries instrumentally, as a labour force rather than as decision-makers, so that house builders have no influence on layout and design. In many cases, it is intended that they will be able subsequently to customize through extending, an option which many have taken. Similarly, in environmental protection schemes, beneficiaries were able to select which crops they grew and which species of tree they purchased, though decisions on the scope for choice were made by partner agencies.
54. In El Salvador, monitors served as access points for beneficiaries. Monitors became aware of beneficiary views because their checklists ensured that these were taken into account.

Recommendation:

Discussion with beneficiaries of their needs and perceptions takes time and skills. WFP should consider the use of a social anthropologist to explore beneficiary perceptions of aid and emergency needs, particularly, but not only, with groups such as the Misquitos. It would be advisable to contact remote/inaccessible groups for this during 'normal' times, rather than during an emergency.

Monitoring and Evaluation

55. Monitoring and evaluation are critically important in ensuring effectiveness and efficiency. Monitors, as the eyes, ears and voice of WFP, influence the quality of WFP performance and in particular the beneficiary view of WFP. Monitors were recruited and trained from December, though some (a great advantage) were inherited from ongoing programmes and existing local offices. Parallel counterpart monitors, working from the same offices, as in Nicaragua, seem to have been advantageous, cost efficient and replicable. Much time was (rightly) spent by monitors in checking beneficiary lists, allowing them to develop a wide knowledge of the community. In El Salvador, monitors made brief daily reports of their activities, providing a valuable real-time picture of conditions for key decision-makers.
56. Conversely, weekly reports, heavy with quantitative data, occupied considerable time. Timely qualitative data can sharpen programme delivery if, as in Nicaragua, the right questions are asked. The right questions are, for example, those that inform on gender issues, beneficiary needs and perceptions and on local specificity.



57. Like targeting, monitoring depends on the quality of partner agencies. The mission welcomes the recent appointment of a consultant supported by the Germany Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in the Honduras office, with responsibility for monitoring and evaluation and social aspects for the PRRO.

Recommendations:

WFP should systematize the accumulated experience on monitoring and evaluation in order to develop a simple operational manual for future emergency operations.

Guidelines should be produced for internal and partner use specifying the qualitative and quantitative monitoring and evaluation information needed.

WFP should continue to progress towards the use of monitoring and evaluation as a main contribution to the development of a reflective institutional culture and as a management tool.

LESSONS LEARNED

58. Very large-scale FFW activities can be organized and carried out soon after the acute emergency phase. To be fully effective, however, partnerships are required for the provision of technical assistance and non-food items, to achieve sustainability of the assets created.
59. Natural hazards, as part of normal life in Central America, must be accommodated in development projects through effective contingency planning. VAM can be critically valuable in elaborating effective contingency plans and should be carried out as part of normal development activities, rather than only for emergencies.

CONCLUSIONS

60. There are many significant advantages in making use of regional offices and clusters in WFP programme design and support, though delivery needs to be through national systems. Stand-by arrangements and rapid deployment of available resources and staff by WFP contributed to its effective response. Although the value of in-country food stocks in the acute emergency phase was reconfirmed, a solution needs to be found to the problem of rapid repayment in order not to jeopardize development projects. Moreover, borrowing of food stocks from development projects, which did not have ITSH in three of the affected countries, created problems in the use of these resources in emergencies. The level of funds for covering Direct Support Costs was significantly too low, causing constraints in the implementation of EMOP Central America 6079.00. Field visits for donors can be very effective in ensuring continuing, informed support for WFP operations.
61. EMOP Central America 6079.00 has involved one of the largest ever implementation of FFW in the three months following a natural disaster. Being a principal provider of disaster relief, WFP has the leverage in FFW schemes within the EMOP to ensure increasing opportunities for socially responsible activities after the disaster. WFP food with the technical assistance and non-food items provided by competent partner organizations can be very effective synergistically in creating assets. Civil society and the military played a significant role in the acute emergency phase, making available their capacities. It is of



critical importance to identify effective and efficient partners before an emergency and continue to monitor their effectiveness and efficiency during the emergency. The timely provision of emergency food aid constituted a valuable contribution to maintaining social stability in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch.

