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Programme
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Mundial
de Alimentos

**Executive Board
First Regular Session**

Rome, 21 - 23 January 1997

POLICY ISSUES

Agenda item 3

IMPLICATIONS OF THE WORLD FOOD SUMMIT PLAN OF ACTION FOR WFP

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Distribution: GENERAL

WFP/EB.1/97/3

7 January 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for comments and guidance 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.

The WFP focal points for this document are:

Chief, Policy Service: D. Spearman tel.: 5228-2601

Director, Strategy and Policy Division: J. Powell tel.: 5228-2600

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Documentation and Meetings Clerk (tel.: 5228-2641).



Before the Summit

1. In preparation for the World Food Summit, WFP completed a background paper, entitled “Tackling hunger in a world full of food; tasks ahead for food aid”, and participated as an observer in each of the FAO Regional Conferences, and in meetings of the FAO Committee on World Food Security and the associated Intersessional Working Group. WFP also took part in conferences and seminars in several countries.
2. The focus of WFP was on *access* to food; there were five themes that it consistently emphasized:
 - a) Food security is about people, not just about growing more food. It has to do with the ability of people to gain access to sufficient food.
 - b) We must meet the challenge of hunger *today*, for hunger today leads to hunger tomorrow.
 - c) We must invest in *people*, not just agriculture, in the producers as well as production.
 - d) Women are a key part of the solution to hunger. Resources for women are resources for food security.
 - e) Peace is a prerequisite for food security. Acute hunger is increasingly found in the presence of political instability.

The Plan of Action Commitments

3. These concerns, shared by many participants in the Summit, are echoed in the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action. As a result, the Plan of Action and WFP’s Mission Statement mirror each other on matters relating to WFP. This consistency means that follow-up to the Summit will not require a modified mandate or a shift in orientation for WFP.
4. Many aspects of the Plan---those relating to preparedness for natural disasters and man-made emergencies, for example---have been deeply embedded in the work of WFP for some years. This applies also to the references to the links between relief and development, along with demining activities; employment generation through cost-effective public works programmes; the importance of investment in health, education and nutrition; safety nets for the most food-insecure; community-based food security and nutrition programmes; school feeding programmes, with particular attention to rural areas and to girls; the need to focus development assistance on countries in greatest need; and provision of assistance within the framework of national plans. These are familiar, long-standing features of WFP’s activities. They are of great importance, but call for sustained efforts rather than a change in direction.



5. The Plan also highlights a few matters which WFP has identified for further attention and particular effort in its follow-up to the Summit. These are the key contribution of women to food security; the importance of participatory approaches; the need for information and mapping of food insecurity and vulnerability; and advocacy to raise the global profile of food security questions. While these issues are far from new, they will be the focus of special efforts on the part of WFP.
6. These issues are all fully consistent with the Mission Statement, which notes that “WFP will ensure that its assistance programmes are designed and implemented on the basis of broad-based participation” and that “women in particular are key to change”. It also stipulates that WFP will “bring the issue of hunger to the centre of the international agenda”. While the Mission Statement does not specifically mention vulnerability analysis and mapping, this is clearly a means to direct food aid to the “neediest people and countries”, while local purchases and triangular transactions are an obvious way to “avoid negative effects on local food production, consumption patterns and dependency on food aid”.

Women and food security

7. WFP’s support to women is well known. It is based on the premise that investment in women is an investment in the food security of the whole household. At the Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing, WFP committed itself to a series of concrete measures to respond to the special needs of women, to facilitate their access to food aid and the long-term assets it creates, and to accord women greater participation in decision-making. Concrete steps are being taken to meet these commitments by 2001.
8. While WFP has a good record in providing assistance to women, it intends to do better. An area requiring further attention is that of targeting more of our resources to a particularly vulnerable group - expectant and nursing mothers and their young children. Malnourished women give birth to babies whose start in life is compromised by their small size and weight; thus, malnutrition passes from one generation to the next. Food aid provided at this crucial time not only helps women and children cope with immediate hunger, but it is also an investment in the health and productivity of the next generation. WFP has long been active in providing food to mothers and children, but greater concentration on this target group would be appropriate. Later this year, WFP will present to the Executive Board a paper which will set out the rationale for this investment and seek approval for strengthened programming in this field.

Participation

9. In developing participatory approaches, WFP has placed particular emphasis on ensuring the participation of women as well as men. Women are to have a substantial voice in local decision-making concerning the management of food aid and the assets created, for example. These and other measures to ensure the access and participation of women are incorporated not only in WFP’s own planning process but also in agreements with implementing partners.



10. A training module in gender participation has been designed to make staff members fully aware of various levels at which WFP activities influence the lives of beneficiaries--at the most basic level, in affecting their material welfare; in providing access to longer-term assets; in increasing understanding of inequalities; in providing a chance for equal participation of women and men in decision-making. Staff are trained in working with partners on more equitable measures to select beneficiaries, design activities, manage food commodities, and develop food aid programmes in partnership with women's literacy and leadership development programmes.
11. Further work is needed on the monitoring and evaluation of participation. Experience has shown that country offices need support in the definition of indicators, methodology for information collection, and for data analysis and reporting. Work to provide this support is in progress, beginning with guidelines (almost finalized) for monitoring participation in natural resource interventions and the identification of indicators for relief operations.

Local purchases and triangular transactions

12. In the nineties, WFP food purchases in developing countries were three times greater than in the eighties. Some 20 percent of the food aid provided through WFP is purchased in developing countries. About 75 percent for emergency relief, for which timeliness of supply is often of paramount importance. Purchases in developing countries often also prove to be the most cost-effective source when transport costs are taken into account.
13. WFP normally purchases food in developing countries only when it is available in quantities surplus to local consumption. In such cases, local purchases and triangular transactions offer the additional benefits of promoting food production and exports, stimulating regional trade, and ensuring the provision of familiar foods. These advantages often outweigh the particular effort that is sometimes required to purchase in less well-established markets of developing countries.
14. WFP has qualified, experienced procurement officers in country offices who are responsible for a substantial volume of food procurement. In recent months, the Executive Director has substantially increased the delegation of procurement authority to country offices, and the procurement review and approval process has been streamlined. These steps have strengthened WFP's capacity to procure food locally, but there is scope to work with other purchasers of food aid and with donors to enhance local food procurement through:
 - a) Coordination: insufficient coordination among food-buying organizations can disturb local markets and impair the effectiveness of local purchases.
 - b) Knowledge of markets: greater sharing of information among food-aid-buying organizations would benefit not only the buyers but also the recipients, who would benefit from the timely delivery of an increased tonnage of suitable food commodities.
 - c) Improved timing: for maximum cost-effectiveness, procurement should be undertaken close to harvest periods. Timely contributions of donor cash resources enable WFP to maximize the benefits of local procurement.



Vulnerability analysis and mapping

15. Information pertaining to food insecurity and to the factors determining vulnerability, when it is disaggregated and analysed, can enable governments, donors, international agencies and NGOs to identify emerging problems and effectively target assistance. Many organizations, including WFP, have experience and expertise to contribute, and the scale and scope of the task will require the coordinated efforts of a number of players.
16. FAO, for example, covers predominantly the supply side-production, markets and macro-economic aspects; through GIEWS, it is well placed to provide early warning on national and regional food security problems. The Household Food Economy Approach of Save the Children Fund (SCF), on the other hand, brings together information on the factors (production, income, coping capabilities) shaping the food security and vulnerability of rural households.
17. WFP, for its part, developed its Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Unit (VAM) as a tool for operational decision-making. The unit serves development activities by identifying specific target groups most in need of food aid interventions, and by providing an understanding of the reasons for their vulnerability. This enables WFP to better design its interventions, thus serving both country programming and effective project implementation. VAM also contributes to effective emergency responses since it is a critical component of contingency planning. WFP follows a people-centred approach in that it focuses on the various elements contributing to household food security and the role food aid can play - especially in crisis situations - in improving food security, preserving assets, and strengthening coping mechanisms.
18. The challenge will be to bring together the various organizations and methodologies in a way that is complementary, not duplicative. Important first steps were taken in December 1996, when workshops enabled the key players to exchange views on methodological questions, draw out the lessons of experience, and explore ways to strengthen the linkages between vulnerability analysis and decision-making. Continuing dialogue, and perhaps more structured mechanisms for collaboration, will be necessary. The general approach which WFP will bring to this dialogue is as follows:
 - a) The purpose of WFP's VAM is operational, to help WFP in better planning and implementing its activities.
 - b) WFP will not adopt a fixed, standard methodology, but rather make use of the instruments and information sources available in each country in order to find the most suitable approach.
 - c) WFP will work closely with national governments. Its field units will tailor their work to the local situation and develop arrangements with governments for integrating key VAM techniques, results and procedures into broader poverty monitoring and early warning initiatives. National VAM officers will be appointed and trained to take over VAM activities when international staff have been phased out.
 - d) WFP's VAM presence will not be universal, but it is WFP's intention to ensure some VAM capacity where there is a significant WFP presence. This



may be done either through a VAM capacity in regional offices, to support associated country offices, or through VAM field units similar to the eight now present in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Senegal, Mozambique, Angola, and Cambodia.

- e) WFP will continue to work closely with NGOs as well as with United Nations organizations and national governments. The WFP/VAM maintains a particularly close cooperation with FAO/GIEWS, with the United States Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) and with Save the Children (UK). In Malawi and Zambia, WFP has a joint programme with FEWS and in the Southern Sudan Operation, a SCF field officer works within the WFP Lifeline Sudan Office. Other partners include CARE, Catholic Relief Service and the International Federation of the Red Cross. While the specifics of such collaboration will change according to circumstances, it is WFP's intention that the "site" for collaboration be the field rather than headquarters.

Advocacy

19. One of the principles of the organizational change in progress in WFP is that it will be an advocate for the hungry poor. By mid-January, an organizational change team on Advocacy and Resource Mobilization will make its recommendations to management as to how WFP can become a more effective advocate for the poor and hungry. While it is too early to report on the specific actions that will be taken to this end, the starting point is that WFP has an important responsibility for advocacy, which should be based on, not divorced from, its operational activities. Advocacy has been identified as one of the key responsibilities of the Regional Managers, for example, and headquarters staff will also have a role to play.

Conclusion

20. Literally all of WFP's activities are consistent with the Plan and contribute to the achievement of its Commitments. "Follow-up" is already integrated into WFP's operational activities and plans; no change in mandate is required.
21. Follow-up to the World Food Summit is a task for the entire United Nations system, and WFP will collaborate fully with other players in the United Nations as well as with national governments and NGOs. WFP considers that this coordination is best effected at the country level, through the United Nations Resident Coordinator system and, as the Board is well aware, WFP is committed to enhancing and further strengthening such coordination. Other mechanisms for follow-up to the World Food Summit will be considered at the April 1997 meeting of the FAO Committee on World Food Security.
22. Finally, in accordance with objective 7.3 of the Plan of Action, the Executive Board of WFP will "provide regular reports in implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action through the CFS via the FAO Council to ECOSOC", and WFP will also "report to ECOSOC in accordance with established procedures progress on the follow-up by United Nations agencies to the World Food Summit".



