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REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Agenda item 9

PROGRESS REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT PROJECT CAPE VERDE 2394.05

Assistance to a school canteen programme

Total food cost	8,494,720 dollars
Total cost to WFP	12,457,897 dollars
Date approved	22 May 1996
Date plan of operations signed	4 October 1996
Date notification of readiness accepted	21 November 1996
Date of first distribution	1 October 1996
Duration of WFP assistance	Four years
Duration of project as at 31 March 1998	Eighteen months

All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars, unless otherwise stated. One United States dollar equalled 97.47 escudos on 31 March 1998. Budget Revision 001, dated 17 December 1997, was made because school terms were changed from three to two, and school days from 180 to 190.



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PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND OF WFP ASSISTANCE

1. The long-term objective of WFP assistance is to contribute to government policies and priorities in the education sector, particularly the goal of achieving six years of primary education for all.
2. The immediate objectives of the project are, in the rural and deprived urban areas of the country, to:
 - a) improve children's capacity to concentrate by relieving short-term hunger; and
 - b) contribute to maintaining primary school attendance at present high levels (in 1996, 86 percent for boys and 84 percent for girls).
3. The expected outputs are:
 - a) an average of 71,725 primary schoolchildren (in approximately 357 schools) will receive a hot meal complemented by a snack for 190 days per school year; and
 - b) an average of 956 female cooks will receive food rations as part-payment for their services.

IMPLEMENTATION

4. In accordance with the plan of operations and the letter of readiness, the Ministry of Education's Cape Verdean Institute for Social School Action (ICASE) is responsible for overall project implementation. Despite a frequent turnover in Ministry staff, one Project Administrator with two assistants were appointed at the central level. All relevant staff is in place at the district level.
5. In-country logistics operations are under the responsibility of a public enterprise (EMPA), which ensures the shipment of commodities from Praia and Mindelo to the other seven islands. From the central warehouse in each island, food is sent to each district's warehouse where a project coordinator organizes the final distribution to schools.
6. According to the plan agreed with the Government for phasing out WFP assistance, each year an average of 3,750 schoolchildren assisted by the project should be taken over by the government-funded canteens. A total of 79,225 beneficiaries was agreed for the first year (1996/97), which by the end of the current phase (1999/2000) should be reduced to 64,255 pupils. During the school year 1997/98, WFP assisted 76,883 pupils (39,113 boys and 37,770 girls) in 377 school canteens situated in the 16 districts of the country's nine inhabited islands.

FOOD MANAGEMENT

7. The project started on 1 October 1996, with a total food commitment of 11,834 tons. Within this quantity, a carry-over stock of 2,719 tons was transferred from the previous phase. As at 31 March 1998, 4,459 tons had been distributed, i.e., 79 percent of the quantity that should have been distributed at that date.



8. The internal transport, storage and handling (ITSH) subsidy is 54 dollars a ton. As at 31 March 1998, WFP had disbursed a total of 195,212 dollars or 71 percent of the amount that had to be disbursed at that date. The low rate of WFP's disbursement was due to delays in the submission of the distribution reports (quarterly project reports (QPRs)).
9. As at 31 March 1998, post-c.i.f. losses amounted to 258 tons (out of which 215 of corn-soya blend (CSB), i.e., three percent of the quantities that were available for distribution. These losses were due mainly to the frequent handling that all commodities have to undergo until they reach their final destination. Also, the packaging materials particularly of the CSB were too fragile, and this has caused higher losses during handling. Moreover, CSB, which was partially transferred from the previous phase, was not well accepted because of the rancid taste caused by long storage. Products that were declared unfit for human consumption but fit for animal feed were sold and the revenues deposited into a separate account. The funds have been utilized to support training activities on project monitoring, including food storage and handling.

GOVERNMENT'S CONTRIBUTION

10. As at 31 March 1998 and in comparison with the targeted financial counterpart contribution, the Government had contributed 453,052.88 dollars, or 61 percent of the target. In terms of staffing, as mentioned previously, foreseen project posts have been filled. Through an agreement with the Ministry of Health, once a year their technical staff tour the schools to assess children's health conditions. At the local level, communities have spent a sum equivalent to 215,206.37 dollars for the purchase of local food commodities (vegetables and spices).

EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE

11. The project benefits directly from significant donations, which cover part of the Ministry's operating costs. Switzerland makes a contribution of approximately 160,000 dollars a year for water and gas supply for school canteens as well as staff salaries. Japan contributed with pupils' uniforms and calculators for approximately 41,000 dollars in 1997. Also in 1997, UNICEF provided about 8,000 dollars to train 383 headmasters in 14 districts. German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) financed a WFP seminar on monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The World Health Organization (WHO) organized a workshop on hygiene and sanitation in July 1997, and recruited a consultant to undertake a survey on sanitary conditions in schools and produce a hygiene and sanitation manual for cooks. In December 1997, WFP distributed non-food items for a total of 27,000 dollars.

ASSESSMENT

12. As regards the immediate objective of contributing to maintaining primary school attendance rates at the present high levels, the analysis of quarterly statistics on education showed an increasing trend of this indicator for boys as well as girls. The attendance rate for the period January to March 1998 was 96 percent for boys and 97 percent for girls, compared with 86 and 84 percent in October 1996. Since the new phase started, the



attendance average rate for the period has averaged 88.5 percent for both genders, revealing a significant increase in the case of girls (4.5 percent).

13. The primary school enrolment rate continues to grow. This very positive aspect makes it difficult to follow strictly the agreed plan for WFP's phasing out, because of the continuously increasing number of schools and schoolchildren. Nevertheless, WFP has reduced its coverage from 94 percent in 1996/97 to 82 percent in 1997/98. Canteens formerly assisted by WFP are taken over by the Government's own programme.
14. The Government's commitment vis-à-vis the progressive transfer of assistance responsibilities must be highlighted. Despite budgetary restrictions, funds assigned to this programme have gone from 290,828 dollars in 1996/97 to 475,448 dollars in 1997/98. The current ration used in government-funded canteens (basically composed of bread, margarine and bananas) has a commercial value of 15 escudos and provides 317 kilocalories (44 percent of the WFP ration caloric content, which includes CSB, rice, canned fish, vegetable oil and sugar). Attempts are now made to diversify this basic ration and supplement it by promoting a more regular cash contribution from parents. This contribution has been established at 50 escudos per month per child (a soft drink costs 60 escudos); it represents around eight percent of the value of the WFP daily ration. In practice, the average monthly contribution by parents has amounted to 18.6 escudos for the 1996/97 school year, and 25.9 escudos for the current one (as at 31 March 1998).
15. In terms of outputs and achievements, and comparing them with the targets set out in the plan of operations, the number of beneficiaries has been eight percent above the prorated target as at 31 March 1998. An annual average of 77,558 pupils and 1,034 cooks have been assisted, against the 71,725 and 956 foreseen. However, commodity utilization in terms of rations was 21 percent below target. This can be explained by a poor planning and organizational capacity on the counterpart's side. At the beginning of each school year, food distribution to schools was implemented with one month's delay. Data show that for the first quarter of each school year, the number of days in which the canteen had been operational was around 25 percent below the target, compared with a 92 to 95 percent operational rate for the other quarters.
16. With the current phase, a new information system for M&E purposes was designed by the WFP country office. Short training courses (45) have been organized for more than 1,000 counterparts at different levels (project coordinators, accountants, teachers). The Programme has also been in charge of designing new data collection and reporting formats, as well as of the elaboration of an M&E manual. The whole system and its implementation have already been reviewed by a technical mission (May 1998). As a result of all these efforts, a significant volume of relevant project data is now available. But these data need to be further treated in terms of consolidation and analysis, within the established time frame. Different key layers at the Ministry of Education are not fully performing M&E responsibilities. It seems that there still is not a clear perception of the role of the M&E system as a management tool, nor of its utility also for the canteen programme funded by the Government. The frequent turnover in Ministry staff is an important obstacle (37 percent turnover a year).
17. In order to avoid the problem of post-c.i.f. losses, ICASE and the country office have established a joint logistic team which is now directly responsible for close warehouse monitoring and for providing the necessary technical support. This team is also in charge of



identifying training needs and organizing the relevant courses or workshops. At the same time, ICASE is improving its food management information system.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

18. Available data lead to the conclusion that food aid is making an important contribution to the Government's objective of maintaining, and even increasing in the case of girls, the attendance rates at very high levels. In a country with a chronic food deficit which worsens the poverty situation in rural areas, the relatively high operational regularity of canteens (except at the beginning of the school year) should play a key role in relieving short-term hunger.
19. The Government's long-term commitment to ensuring the sustainability of this kind of programme is confirmed by the investments made in the phasing-in plan for its own assistance. This comforting trend opens the way to a new form of cooperation between the Government and WFP in the primary education sector. Programme food aid and knowledge of this kind of assistance could be used to reinforce the country's ownership and strengthening local capacities to effectively manage a "national school feeding programme".
20. It is recommended that in terms of management of commodities, the activities already foreseen by the joint logistic team receive priority attention from the Government and close follow-up by the WFP country office. In addition to training and technical support activities, potential logistical problems have to be identified at an early stage. Moreover, ICASE should better plan and implement food distribution to schools before the school year starts.
21. Already available M&E guidelines should be more strictly followed at each level. Data need to be compiled at the district level, facilitating analysis and reporting activities. The Ministry's regional directors, as well as school supervisors, should closely collaborate in the implementation of M&E activities which at the same time will be a useful tool for their own regular tasks. Finally, it is recommended that ICASE work in building up a common ground among project staff which would allow using the information system as a managerial tool instead of a reporting obligation.

