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# **PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WFP'S COMMITMENTS TO WOMEN**

Agenda item 3 d)

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## NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

**This document is submitted for consideration and guidance.**

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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## INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes (CFA) approved the Food Aid Policy on Women in Development in 1987 and the Sectoral guidelines on gender variables in food-assisted projects in 1989. The guidelines address two priority areas for improving the quality of projects: the quality of women's participation; and equity in distribution of benefits. WFP's Mission Statement states that women's advancement is the key to solving problems of hunger and poverty, and ensures a broad-base participation of the target group population in the design, implementation and monitoring of WFP-supported activities.
2. On the occasion of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995, WFP launched a set of Commitments to Women to be met by the year 2001, with the aim of reducing gender-related inequalities. The Commitments represented the concerns and strategic goals of women that were brought to the attention of the international community at the Beijing Conference, and were addressed as they relate to equality in access to food, and to income-earning, employment and education opportunities.
3. Virtually all country offices and several headquarters units translated the Commitments to Women into specific action plans to meet these commitments. Initial targets are set for 1998. The understanding of the concept of gender equity and the ability of the country offices to address issues differ. Therefore, targets to meet these Commitments also differed.

## ACHIEVEMENT OF COMMITMENTS

### Commitment I: Providing direct access to appropriate and adequate food

#### ***Target A: Target relief food distributions to households, ensuring that women control the family entitlement in 80 percent of WFP-handled and -subcontracted operations***

4. Strategies are slowly being developed in order to target and deliver relief food so that women are consulted and have control over the entitlement. All submissions of emergency operations (EMOPs) and protracted refugee and displaced person projects (PROs) are screened on this aspect. Targets for 1998 differ by region and from country to country.
5. Systematic reporting on the control over food by women is a target to be reached in the coming years, but positive examples are quoted from various countries. In Gaza, where households headed by women are given priority, women are hired to be in charge of food distribution. Azerbaijan has a computerized gender-desegregated list of beneficiaries: more than 50 percent of registration cards are now in the name of women. In Algeria, the Sahraoui women participate actively in the management of food distribution in the camps. In Iraq, the General Federation of Iraqi Women, which has an extensive outreach capacity, is in charge of supplementary food distribution to households headed by women with malnourished children under the age of five.



**Rwanda**

*When Rwanda was preparing to receive returning refugees from Tanzania in late 1996, WFP Rwanda reiterated to the Minister of Family Affairs and Promotion of Women its commitment to distribute food through women represented in local structures. In the two preceding months, the Ministry had reinforced the organization and management capacity of the women's committees within the local government structures, as part of the national plan for the empowerment of women. They welcomed this opportunity for women to assume responsibility in their domain of competence.*

*Within this new political context, the United Nations Volunteer/WFP gender expert and the WFP sub-office teams visited with representatives of the ministry from each prefecture, the prefect, burgomaster and representatives of the Social and Development Committee for Women (SADCFW). They explained what was expected from the women's committees. The team was welcomed in most cases because, according to women, the new arrangement meant:*

- They obtained a job opportunity. This income was welcome because women tied with family responsibilities had less chance to leave the community and search outside for employment.*
- Information about food distribution was welcomed, because such information circulates among men's groups rather than among women.*
- The value of nutritious corn-soya blend could be reinforced when women control food and minimize exchange by men of this commodity for cash.*
- Food distribution responsibilities boosted women's image at the community level.*

**Target B: Addressing micronutrient deficiencies in certain vulnerable groups of women, children and adolescents; and, consider local eating and cooking habits in all operations**

6. A variety of approaches are being examined to meet women's specific needs. Plans to reduce micronutrient deficiencies in women and adolescents at risk were implemented in all regions. A new Grant Facility financed by the Canadian Government was launched in 1996. The Women's Health and Micronutrient Facility has received proposals from all regions. These activities strengthen ongoing WFP projects to improve the nutritional and health status of women and children. New activities include the use of fortified blended food and supplements of micronutrients such as Vitamin A to prevent infections, and iron folate tablets to resolve anaemia problems related to pregnancy. Four projects were approved in 1996 for a total value of 6.8 million dollars, and 10 countries are preparing proposals for projects.

**Commitment II: Taking measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.**

**Target A: Ensuring a lead role of women within all local decision-making committees on food management and in the management of the assets created by food-for-work projects**

7. Different plans exist among the regions and countries to introduce in the plans of operation agreements on how to provide women with a substantial voice in local committees in planning and monitoring food distribution systems and food-supported activities.
8. Asia and Mediterranean, Middle East and CIS regions have set specific targets (80 and 100 percent achievement by 1998, respectively) on integrating government responsibility for participatory implementation mechanisms and women's role in decision-making positions in the existing plans of operation and all EMOPs/PROs. Reports on achievements show examples, such as in **India**, where the state governments have provided for a



minimum number of women members on the executive committees of Village Forest Protection Management Committees. In **Viet Nam**, technical and management training for women in FFW activities increased the number of women work-gang leaders. The Committees also decided on the investment of funds generated through food-for-work activities. In **Chechnya**, women have been actively involved in committees for the assessment and implementation of activities. In **Tunisia** (project 4783), women are elected members of all development committees, under the project's integrated participatory approach.

9. The Asia Region will accomplish an effective participatory implementation approach in 50 percent of ongoing projects and will specify this commitment in all new plans of operation. The Africa Region has targeted 1998 to deliver reports providing information on who controls the food management. Positive examples of participatory approaches to food distribution and food-for-work activities came from **Sierra Leone** and **southern Sudan**.

#### **Southern Sudan**

*The WFP and partner NGOs are addressing the food needs of women who have been caught up in the conflict, as well as immunisation and the future health care needs of their children. Community representative Relief Committees were formed in early 1995, as an advisory group for communication and as an information focal point for the national and international aid agencies. The committees are composed of a majority of women (each representing a household). It was felt that, when it comes to identifying individuals, it was women who best knew who in their village was at risk. Women were more likely to discuss their problems with other women and see, when visiting each other, what each family has to eat. Identification of vulnerable areas was left with the Sub-Chiefs and Ghol leaders/headmen.*

*WFP also adopted the Food Economy approach in order to "give food to those who need it". With this approach, WFP introduced a more qualitative and participatory approach to the targeting of beneficiaries. It provides a better insight into peoples' understanding of what makes them vulnerable, and what the probable future repercussions may be.*

*The Relief Committees and the Food Economy approach have improved communication and cooperation at the field level. Women's position in the committees has re-empowered them in their traditional role as managers of the food in the household, and given them decision-making ability at a time when inequalities can affect women's ability to sustain themselves and their family.*

#### **Target B: Contributing to the United Nations goal of reaching gender equity by the year 2001, particularly in higher management positions**

10. Many country offices, as well as headquarters, are campaigning to increase the number of professional women through specific invitations in job advertisements (giving preference to women in selection if all other qualifications are equal), networking with private-sector associations, advocacy during meetings with implementing partners, and through the media.
11. Although there is still much work to be done, the number of female staff has increased substantially at all levels and in all categories, through a proactive recruitment and promotion, and a better retention rate. In particular, 18.9 percent of staff at the P-5 level and above was female in December 1996, against 9.2 percent in 1992. The overall recruitment of female staff increased from 12 percent of total recruitment during 1994 to 39 percent during 1996. In 1992, there were no women at a level higher than P-5. In December 1996, female staff is represented at D-1 (18.6 percent),<sup>1</sup> D-2 (14.3 percent), and ASG/USG (33 percent) levels.

<sup>1</sup> By end March 1997, the percentage of female staff will have increased at D-1 level to 24.4 percent and at D-2 level to 25 percent.



12. Female staff representation has increased from 17.12 in 1992 to 26.47 percent in December 1996 in relative terms (i.e., as compared to total staff numbers). Considering career staff only, that is, Specialist and Unified Service categories (excluding Project staff), female staff represented a higher percentage: 35 percent (Specialist) and 24 percent (Unified Service) as of 31 December 1996. Project staff numbers in Country Offices unfortunately have the lowest levels of gender balance at 20 percent female.
13. Gender-parity working groups are operational in various WFP country offices (Bangladesh, Kenya, Malawi) with defined action plans dealing with career development and working environments as well as recruitment issues.
14. National representations to the Beijing Conference were contacted and asked for support in identifying qualified female candidates for WFP recruitment. Female African consultants were hired to use their extensive contacts in women's organizations in developing countries to sensitize qualified women to WFP's aim of parity by 2001 and to encourage qualified professional women to send their CVs to WFP. CVs of those candidates considered meeting WFP's requirements were disseminated to WFP managers who have delegated authority for selection of project staff.

### **Commitment III: Taking positive action to facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade**

#### ***Target A: 60 percent of country programme resources will be targeted to women and girls in those countries where gender statistics demonstrate a 25 percent disadvantage of women as compared with men***

15. Where gender gaps exist, specific targets are being introduced to country programmes to invest 60 percent of resources in women and girls. For example, in the Bangladesh Country Programme (CP), specific targets were introduced within the Rural Development programme to reach more women beneficiaries and to meet the required investment level of the overall resources in women and girls.
16. A target set by the Africa Bureau to improve strategies for targeting women has been met: the Bureau is producing a report on gender-specific targeting strategies applied in Western Africa to reach the most disadvantaged, particularly women. Assessment guidelines to replicate the exercise in other countries are in progress.
17. Achievements for the 1996 target set in the Mediterranean, Middle East and CIS Region are as follows: all approved development projects (3), emergency operations (4) and PROs (4), as well as the CSOs (2) and the CP (Pakistan) included identification and analysis of relevant gender issues and a strategy to address these issues in project implementation. As a result, better and specific targeting to women has been achieved. The ongoing development projects in Gaza, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen were reviewed to ensure that girls and households headed by women are given priority for targeting, and that activities address women/girls' needs. Plans of operation have been amended to reflect the commitments made. The Latin America and Caribbean Region expects to meet this target in 1997. The Asia Region set a target for the end of 1998, at which time 80 percent of project design appraisal reports will contain gender analysis data on beneficiaries and benefits profiles, as well as on the potential for women's participation in decision-making committees.



**Afghanistan**

*Following the take-over of Kabul in September 1996, the authorities halted projects that directly benefited women. As a result, WFP re-assessed its programme of assistance to Afghanistan and defined that projects or their end results should benefit women and men, such as in the education sector and in employment schemes. Subsequently, following pressure from the women themselves, the authorities in Kabul allowed the resumption of the widow's bakery project, food for training and income-generating activities for women. In other areas of the country, where women were more constrained in seeking the resumption of training activities and income-generating activities, the Programme successfully negotiated with the authorities the continuation or resumption of projects. In late 1996, WFP adjusted its plan of assistance for 1997, concentrating on humanitarian relief and life sustaining rehabilitation activities, and ensuring that WFP activities are in areas where WFP/NGO national and international female staff are allowed to work and monitor activities.*

**Target B: 50 percent of education resources within a country programme are to target girls**

18. School feeding resources were used as a leverage to increase or ensure positive action by governments to support girls' and women's education, and to attract other donor investments.
19. All new school projects/programmes developed specific plans to ensure that WFP resources are invested equally in girls and boys. Specific measures allowed more girls than boys to be reached in the school feeding projects in Azerbaijan, Morocco, Pakistan and Yemen. The WFP/UNESCO liaison office is working on guidelines for the WFP programmes in this area.

**Ethiopia**

*School committees are being informed that the existence of initiatives to increase the percentage of girls in total enrolment will be a criterion for food assistance. Support to kindergardens will be provided to release girls from child care, and the feasibility of various actions towards positive discrimination are being studied. WFP support is complementary to the Government's own efforts in sensitization and awareness campaigns on the importance of girls' education, preparation of female teacher trainees as role models for change, quotas for female applicants to teacher training institutes and the establishment of focal points from the Women's Affairs Bureau at the Ministry and Regional Bureaux of Education*

**Target C: At least 25 percent of project outputs/assets created through FFW are to be of direct benefit to and controlled by women; at least 25 percent of generated funds are to be invested in activities aimed at the advancement of women; food aid is used as a leverage to obtain complementary national and international resources to improve the condition of women**

20. Assessments of beneficiaries and benefits undertaken to analyse gender gaps in project benefits showed that longer-term benefits, credit and training did reach more men than women, that men decided on the extent of women's contribution in FFW activities (Bolivia) and that men controlled the food rations from FFW activities (Nicaragua). Corrective action to ensure women's membership in production associations, and that women direct the collection of FFW food rations, has been taken, with the assistance of WFP staff and gender consultants. In Bolivia, amendments to the monitoring system, reporting requirements and management action required were introduced in the plans of operation as a result of the analyses. The computerized M&E system in Ecuador now includes indicators to follow up project benefits with a gender perspective. Participatory planning is used to develop gender-sensitive plans of operation and mobilize required government resources to ensure that high value-added benefits in a new forestry project will also be accessible to women (Honduras). Gender training of key managers in a



watershed project in Peru on how to work in response to women and men beneficiaries' needs influenced targets, working modalities and choice of activities. After negotiation, the Government decided to incorporate this aspect/activity in the mainstream of their project and technical work. A specific unit has been set up to monitor accomplishment of objectives.

#### **Syria**

*The commitment to analyse benefits from FFW and guarantee a minimum of 25 percent benefits to be controlled by women was taken up in Syria. In one project, analysis of past performance in this regard showed that girls of school age and women were working under poor conditions. Objectives did not aim at longer-term benefits for women. The project expansion introduced income-earning activities that were responsive to women labourers' needs at nurseries and in villages located near forestry range plantation sites, combined with literacy courses, technical training and inputs for small-scale agriculture and food processing activities. The project also invests in improving working conditions at the sites by providing protective clothing, benches and latrines.*

#### **China**

*In order to facilitate the participation of women belonging to ethnic minority groups in remote mountainous areas of China, labour-saving activities such as installation of safe drinking-water and water-supply schemes are included as priorities in recent projects. Complementary resources are being ensured by IFAD for loans to women, under their own signatures, who have received WFP-supported training in agricultural development, forestry and livestock breeding.*

#### **Bolivia**

*At the initial stages of a project in Bolivia, women conducted most of the work: the care and milking of the animals, which were purchased with project credit, and delivery of milk to processing plants. However, full membership in the producers' associations and benefits from marketing proceeds were often denied them, as it was claimed that their husbands represented them sufficiently. After discussion, the project operating manual was changed to ensure the legal registration of the women and their businesses in their names. This measure, with the provision of credit and technical assistance to women, ensures that they have control over the dairy production, from production to distribution, and the proceeds from the sale of milk.*

### **Commitment IV: Generating and disseminating gender-desegregated data and information for planning and evaluation**

**Target: All WFP Monitoring and Reporting will specify:**

- **men/women percentage share of resources received from food distribution**
- **men/women share of benefits by category of activities**
- **percentage of positions held by women in the planning and management of food distribution**

21. By December 1997, the Asia, Mediterranean, Middle East and CIS Region, and the Latin America and Caribbean Region, will have data by gender in the emergency situation reports, and in country office progress reports. In the absence of such data, country offices will have specific plans to identify inequalities in the distribution of benefits. Progress will be gradual, as the ability to obtain data on beneficiaries, benefits and participation varies according to counterpart capacity to monitor and evaluate.

### **Commitment V: Improving accountability on action taken to meet the commitments**



***Target: Defining the implementation and monitoring requirements of the Commitments in the contractual agreements with partners, and the performance of WFP managers***

22. Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) on joint and individual responsibilities of each agency, signed in 1996 with seven international partners, define the following implementation and monitoring requirements: a) participatory mode of planning that considers the specific needs and potential of refugee and displaced women; b) provision of appropriate and adequate food to be considered for women and children at risk; and c) substantial positions held by women in managing food aid. The new WFP/UNHCR Memorandum of Understanding to be signed in 1997 will also incorporate new commitments of both agencies concerning women's position in the management of food distribution.
23. Other measures to improve the accountability for action include:
- Funding proposals for WFP development and relief operations specify how women will be given a substantial voice in local decision-making committees on administration of food aid management, and also in those which administer the assets/benefits created. Monitoring indicators are becoming specific on this issue.
  - A Gender Task Force, chaired by the Deputy Executive Director, operates at senior management level in the field and at headquarters to ensure that the momentum will be sustained throughout the Programme. The task force advises WFP on the overall strategy and monitors progress in the implementation of a WFP Action Plan on Commitments to Women.
  - The Technical Support Service is strengthened with a second gender adviser in the Technical Support Section. Since 1 October 1996, an adviser based with the Southern/Eastern Africa Task Force member in Malawi has been supporting various countries in that region. She focuses on training and technical advice on gender specific participation issues related to food for work and food distribution systems. A network of gender focal points is established at country office, regional and headquarters level, linked to the Task Force and the Programme Advisers on socio-economics and gender.
  - As part of their gender action plan, efforts to diversify the skills profiles in the office have led to the recruitment of gender experts, who have taken up such posts as UNV programme officer (Rwanda), national training officer (Mozambique), emergency field assistants (Sierra Leone), national programme officer (India) and desk officer (Latin America and Caribbean Bureau, headquarters).
24. The Gender Action Plans are monitored regularly on the specific indicators set in the regions and by headquarters units. The Task Force and Focal Points play a crucial role in ensuring timely and accurate reporting on achievements and financial requirements. A mid-term progress review will be carried out mid-1998.

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**OTHER INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENDER ACTION PLANS.**

**Gender Action Fund**

25. A budget allocation of one million dollars was made for 1997 to finance the Gender Action Plans at the country and headquarters levels. The funds will be used to design and



disseminate training modules, hire professional trainers, develop training materials, and implement training workshops and seminars at the sub-regional, regional and interregional levels to exchange experiences. National and regional expertise will be contracted to assess current practices, assist country offices in negotiating operational improvements with counterparts, and mainstream gender concerns in overall WFP policy, strategies, programming, M&E and training.

## Training

26. Four gender training workshops were organized in the regions and four at headquarters by the gender focal points, the gender adviser and trainers. The training objectives include developing a common understanding of gender policy and concepts, and skills development in targeting and participation, and in monitoring gender equity.
27. A gender analysis and planning training module was developed and subsequently used by the various organizers as the framework for their training design. The module built upon the lessons learned in the first WFP regional training workshop organized in 1995 in South-east Asia, and used the positive experience with female leadership filmed by the Public Affairs Service in the southern Sudan operations, as well as FAO gender analysis training tools. The WFP Trainers of Trainers workshops played a major role in the success of the gender training team's design and delivery initiatives. UNIFEM advised on outside technical expertise from the region.
28. In the Latin America and Caribbean Region, gender policy and practices were integrated into the regional strategic planning and training workshop. All international staff participated. In the Mediterranean, Middle East and CIS Region, a total of 82 individuals, of whom 46 percent were women, participated in one regional and two sub-regional gender workshops, addressed to WFP national and international staff and counterparts. At headquarters, 48 desk officers participated in a two-day gender training course.
29. National gender training workshops with counterparts were organized in Bolivia, Guatemala, Malawi, Mozambique Nepal, Nicaragua, Tanzania and Uganda. Workshops were followed up with preparation of gender action plans.
30. Approximately 300,000 dollars from the Dutch Quality Improvement Grant have been invested since mid-1995 to support many of these initiatives, as well as other capacity-building consultancies.

## Advocacy

31. At the World Food Summit and many other public events, WFP has stressed the key role of women in food security, their roles and responsibilities during crises and their contributions to safeguard the family and the community. The video "Women Eat Last" has been widely broadcast by international and national television networks and has been shown to a wide range of audiences by WFP personnel. At the regional level, media attraction was drawn to the effects of emergencies on women through interviews with key WFP female staff and beneficiaries and through focus on projects which strongly reflect WFP's Commitments to Women.
32. WFP/UNESCO presented "WFP Food Aid in Support of Education of Women and Girls in Africa: past experiences and future action" to the African Conference on the Empowerment of Women through Functional Literacy of the Girl Child in Kampala. Other regional efforts include WFP India joining other United Nations agencies such as ILO, UNIFEM and UNDP in organizing regional workshops for NGOs, government banks and



credit agencies, and United Nations interested agencies. The purpose is to share information and experiences on best practices in India regarding micro-credit for women.

33. In the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) sub-group on gender and the newly established Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equity, WFP emphasized the need to integrate gender equity in institutional policy and programming by setting goals and success indicators.

## FOUR MAIN STRATEGIES FOR FUTURE ACTION

34. The process of integrating gender equity and the empowerment of women<sup>1</sup> in WFP has major implications for policies, programming, and for the development of human resources.
35. The following four strategies will be pursued:
- Managers' role in mainstreaming gender concerns
  - Staff and counterpart capacity-building in analysis and planning, taking into consideration the differences between women and men
  - Development of guidelines
  - Exchange of experience

### Managers' role in mainstreaming gender concerns

36. Executive/senior management training will need to address the policy and strategic planning requirements to focus on reduction of social/gender-related inequalities in designing and programming food aid.
37. Regional Managers and Directors will ensure appraisal of performance of their staff on programme priorities and resource allocation to reduce social and gender inequalities, use of local structures for food management with women, and improvements made to monitoring systems to provide such information.

### Capacity building

38. Action includes the use of gender consultants in country offices to apply assessment tools and develop guidance for follow-up and replication, and subsequent training of staff and counterparts. The majority of country offices plan for revisions of the M&E system, but do not specify, as yet, where the difficulties are encountered (e.g., in the development of gender-specific indicators; in the procedures, methodology, tools, human/financial resources for information collection, analysis, processing of information and reporting).

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<sup>1</sup> Mainstreaming **gender equity** in WFP means integrating in WFP policy, resource allocation, programming and human resource development the principle of targeting and participatory planning of assistance in response to the different needs and interest of women and men, with the aim of reducing inequalities in options and opportunities for development.

Inequalities in participation are addressed in a **process of empowerment** through increasing access to knowledge, resources, and decision making, consciousness-raising about their utilization and participation in decision-making, in order for women to reach a level of control over their own environment.



39. The Gender Action Fund will be used to enhance the Trainers of Trainers capacity within WFP and counterparts. Socio-economic and gender training workshops will be followed up with sub-regional workshops, which will include national staff and counterparts, and with national and local training.

### **Development of guidelines**

40. Existing gender recommendations should be integrated into the Programme's design and operational procedures. The integration will go hand in hand with the development of guidelines on the Country Programme Approach and the revision of corresponding procedures. The development of basic gender-specific monitoring indicators for each priority sector of WFP assistance is a high priority.

### **Exchange of experience**

41. Further action to strengthen WFP staff capacity over the coming years includes sub-regional, regional and interregional exchange of experiences. Inter-agency collaboration will include support to JCGP and the Inter-agency Task Force on Women and Gender Equity in their efforts to advance the mainstreaming of gender equity in the United Nations system.
42. The commitment of staff in reaching current achievements, the supportive initiatives, the strategic measures for improvements and an annual review of targets and indicators on the progress made in the gender action plans will allow WFP to meet the Commitments to Women by the year 2001.



