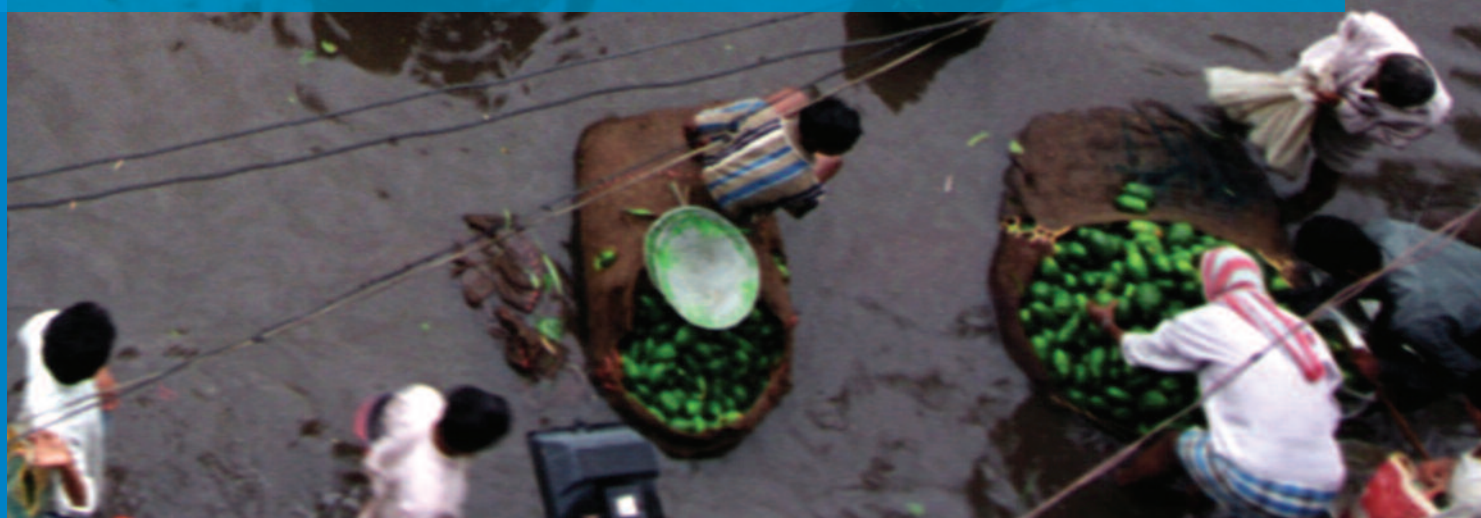




WFP's Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch 2013



World Food Programme

WFP's core function is effective response to emergencies.

Emergencies, including natural disasters and human-induced crises, are increasing in scale and frequency. Their impact on some of the world's most vulnerable people is great. In some situations, the risk to humanitarian workers has also increased. Sadly, these trends are likely to continue.

Speed, coherence and appropriateness of response are critical to saving lives, alleviating suffering and ensuring those who are affected do not take actions which will have a negative long-term impact on their livelihoods. The loss of hard-won development gains must be minimized.

Emergency response is undertaken by communities, governments, militaries, regional organisations, UN agencies, NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as well as the private sector. Coherence in this crowded space is a key issue. Duplication must be avoided but gaps must also be covered.

A sound general level of preparedness, augmented by actions that enhance readiness for specific high-risk scenarios facilitates speed, coherence and appropriateness. It also helps to ensure that scarce resources can be most effectively used.

Rigorous risk analysis, early warning and planning – which are components of preparedness for response – can also be used to inform actions in advance to preserve or mitigate the effects of disasters, develop resilience and conserve resources.

Sound decision-making is critical to effective preparedness and response. A clear understanding of the current and potential situation enables this. Technology, including geospatial capacity, supports this understanding.

Functional networks, led by the Director of Emergencies, facilitate the management of WFP's emergency preparedness and operational information capacity. These networks are comprised of elements of WFP's Global HQ, including HQ Rome, Regional Bureaux and Liaison Offices, as well as country level emergency focal points and reports officers.

As part of the Division of Emergencies in WFP's Global HQ, the Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch (OMEP), provides strategic support to ensure that WFP is as READY as possible, that its response both internally and with partners is COHERENT and that decision-makers have the best INFORMATION available. The Branch forms WFP's Operations Centre.

To do this, OMEP's four closely connected Units work with WFP elements in the field, in our Global HQ and with partners to determine what is happening, what might happen, why it is happening and what readiness actions are appropriate to enable a rapid response, should it be required. Particularly in emergency response, information is welded together to create a common operational picture for all of WFP and our partners. This gives key decision-makers - at the Global HQ and in the field - the crucial information to make the right call, at the right time.

Our Four Units

The Operational Information Management Unit - provides the cornerstone of WFP's common operating picture, enabling operational situational awareness. It collects, processes and disseminates the information that assists decision-making.

The Analysis and Early Warning Unit – provides situation understanding and anticipation by asking why something is happening and what WFP may have to face next. It flags up crises early on – forewarned is forearmed.

The Operational Readiness Management Unit – provides the response to information and analysis by supporting the development and management of preparedness and readiness actions, including plans in WFP's Country Offices and Regional Bureaux.

The Geospatial Support Unit – provides authoritative and clearly understandable digital and paper maps. These highly visual pictures of WFP's operating environment help in effective decision-making.

All of OMEP's Units have a dual function. They provide support to operations while enhancing the capacity of WFP and its partners, including governments. This latter function includes development of tools, conduct of disaster management simulations and provision of relevant training packages. OMEP is well placed to encourage this activity through its leadership, with UNICEF, of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Sub Working Group on Preparedness (SWG-P). This body deals with early warning and preparedness and is increasingly involved in development of national capacity.

Operational Information Management Unit

Working in collaboration with all of WFP's functional areas and with the Organisation's offices around the world, the Operational Information Management Unit (OIM) is the foundation for timely decision making, particularly when supporting effective response. It monitors and analyses events with a 7-day horizon, so generating WFP's common operating picture. Close links with the Geospatial Support Unit are maintained to ensure consistency and to develop new tools. One such tool is the Common Operating Picture Map. This is an interactive map, which allows the user to select individual or simultaneous levels of information so as to display the most pertinent picture to inform their decision-making. Other key OIM Unit outputs are Daily Operational Updates for WFP's Executive Director, Immediate Flash Alerts, The Weekly State of the World and The Week Ahead reports. The Unit also oversees WFP Country Office Executive Briefs and Operational Reporting.

Corporately, the OIM Unit is the custodian of all operational information management while also providing technical oversight for operational



reporting and inter-agency information management. Linkages are maintained with a wide range of sources, including the strategic level of partner organizations. The Unit also monitors selected social media. A network of specially trained staff provides standby capacity for rapid deployment to undertake OIM in emergencies. The core of WFP's Operations Centre is provided by the OIM Unit. With reinforcement it can operate around the clock. In addition, the OIM Unit maintains support tools such as WFP's Emergency Preparedness and Response Web – EPweb.

Analysis and Early Warning Unit



WFP/Marco Frattini/Syria

Good preparedness and rapid response can only be achieved if they are built on a sturdy base of strong early warning and analysis. Working closely with other elements of WFP's Global HQ, in particular Regional Bureaux, OMEP's Analysis and Early Warning Unit (AEW) anticipates natural, political and economic risks, in order to ensure timely delivery of emergency assistance to the people who most need it. In addition to Regional Bureaux, OMEP is also linked to field security analysts, market and food security analysts and a number of strategic-level partners external to WFP.

The Unit is developing early warning analysis as a professional discipline within WFP with particular focus on ensuring comprehensive links between analysis and preparedness, operational readiness, resource allocation and in-depth vulnerability analysis. Its Natural Hazards Calendar and the Monthly Early Warning Report directly inform WFP's food pipeline management.

Meticulous information gathering and analysis ensures effective early warning. Regular interaction with each WFP region underpins the Monthly Early Warning Report. The report provides a forward-looking assessment for the next two months of risks identified by Country Offices through the Emergency Preparedness and Response Package (EPRP) operated by the Operational Readiness Management Unit and other UN agencies.

As co-chair of the SWG-P, WFP has led the transformation of the Inter-Agency Early Warning Early Action Report into a risk and evidence-based anticipatory product. The Report contains clear recommendations for action and is now being shared with donors. The Analysis and Early Warning Unit also sits on the steering committee of the Humanitarian Disaster Risk Index developed by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission on behalf of the SWG-P.

Operational Readiness Management Unit

WFP's executive management needs to be certain that each and every WFP Country Office has robust emergency preparedness measures in place. Even with the best early warning systems possible, disasters can strike at any time, affecting many thousands of people.

The Operational Readiness Management Unit (ORM) seeks to develop a picture of WFP's overall readiness using tools such as the EPRP. This allows succinct decision-making for existing and new operations.

The ORM Unit also works with WFP's Regional Bureaux to help Country Offices implement the EPRP. The EPRP is a practical, action-orientated tool, based on risk management. It brings together contingency and business continuity planning. E-learning tutorials in three languages are available to assist in understanding and over 40 support missions from WFP's headquarters have been carried out.

An online version of the EPRP has also been developed to allow each Country Office's readiness to be easily and transparently viewed. The EPRP is consistent with Cluster and Inter-Agency preparedness mechanisms and tools. The success of the EPRP has led to the Unit being invited to revise Cluster and Inter-Agency Contingency Planning guidelines.

Emergency simulations are another essential tool in enhancing preparedness efforts. The Operational Readiness Management Unit provides simulations at the strategic level and supports those conducted by WFP Regional Bureaux, Country Offices and inter-agency partners, as well as relevant government entities – especially national and local disaster management agencies. Particular emphasis is given to the training of simulation facilitators. WFP also supports simulations used to validate inter-agency concepts and tools, such as those developed as part of the Inter-Agency Transformative Agenda.



Geospatial Support Unit

Decision-makers need to clearly visualize WFP's operating environment. The Geospatial Support Unit (GSU) uses the best technology and systems to provide them with accurate digital and paper maps and other products, clearly presenting raw information and analysis in an easily understandable form.

Targeted geospatial analyses are also created using high-resolution satellite and radar data and weather forecasts. They show the immediate impact of a disaster such as an earthquake or a flood on the ground and the number of people most acutely affected.

The Geospatial Support Unit also delivers multivariate analyses in collaboration with other WFP Divisions. These often draw on historical trends to dig deep into the causes and effects of a crisis. With climate change now having a disproportionately harsh impact on the world's poorest people, bringing together information such as environmental degradation, rainfall variations and food security onto one integrated map helps WFP target its assistance where it is most sharply needed.

Often, direct help, training and data gathering are needed in field locations where WFP is operating. Expert staff from the Geospatial Support Unit are deployed to support colleagues on the ground and develop systems, which are in harmony with those at WFP's Headquarters. Standardizing mapping

procedures and products is another key part of the Unit's work, as is creating geodatabases and working libraries of spatial data for rapid access in an emergency.

Developing vibrant external partnerships has been crucial in accessing free of charge the latest technology and methods – which WFP could not otherwise afford. One such partnership is with the world-class Polytechnic of Turin, which created the ITHACA Institute (Information Technology for Humanitarian Assistance Cooperation and Action), especially for OMEP. ITHACA's Extreme Rainfall Detection System, for example, helps produce Immediate Flash Alerts and Daily Operational Updates, which WFP shares with partners.



Emergency Preparedness and Response Strengthening

Emergency preparedness and response strengthening is a generic function of the Division of Emergencies. It involves systematically improving WFP's ability to prepare for, and respond to, emergencies. It is now firmly recognized by WFP as a corporate priority for a humanitarian agency committed to delivering emergency assistance as effectively and efficiently as possible. Managed by the Director of Emergencies, a three-year initiative known as PREP – WFP's Preparedness and Response Enhancement Programme – is driving strengthening to the level that WFP can confidently deliver a timely and appropriate response to up to 6 million people in 2 concurrent, sudden-onset, corporate emergencies.

EPR strengthening ensures that accountability to both beneficiaries and donors is as robust as possible when preparedness and response are made central to WFP's work. PREP is the vehicle to deliver progress by building on previous EPR investments and on a rigorous process of listening to "lessons learned" from staff and partners in previous emergencies. It will deliver a New Response Model for WFP when the programme closes in 2014.

As EPR strengthening is taking place in some form or another throughout WFP, PREP engages with these initiatives while also resourcing and implementing priority areas. More than 60 interconnected projects – many of which are implemented using existing resources - are brought together to make the best use possible of WFP's capacities.

Where gaps or overlaps are identified, new strategies and frameworks are being put in place and practical actions taken to streamline both preparedness and response.

- The Emergency Preparedness and Response Framework and the Ready-to-Eat Strategy are just two of the systems being developed to guide corporate response management.
- Sustained knowledge management tools and processes are being created to ensure that WFP continues to learn and act.

- Specialized emergency training is being provided in a direct response to staff requests. Responders being deployed to the field are being equipped with new tools to help them in challenging environments.
- The United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot Network has been restocked with specialized food and essential equipment for more rapid mobilization of resources.
- The Forward Purchase Facility has been developed to release working capital, allowing food to be bought in advance and a corporate rolling inventory to be made available.
- External partners, including National Disaster Management Agencies of national governments, are being trained and supported to boost their abilities to respond.

This EPR strengthening approach ensures sustainability beyond PREP. To fully capitalize on the investment made, EPR strengthening must be given sustainable funding. This is a major lesson learned from previous investments, as between emergencies, funding often declines. WFP is making EPR funding a priority.





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