

HAVING THE PLANS IN PLACE – WFP’S EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PACKAGE

The reaction from WFP’s Country Offices to the Emergency Preparedness and Response Package – the EPRP – has been extremely positive from the start. This is very encouraging as the EPRP is to be compulsory following the issuing of a WFP Corporate Directive. Even after the very first pilot training session in **Yemen** at the end of 2010, staff said it provided them with a straightforward work-plan, which focused their minds on areas which can easily be overlooked in a volatile country facing multiple risks. After another early workshop in **Burkina Faso**, staff also found their preparedness thinking had been sharply improved. They faced an army mutiny and violent disturbances almost immediately after their introductory training and fell back on the structures of the EPRP for guidance. More recently, **WFP El Salvador** noted that the roles of units such as Finance and Human Resources in an emergency was now much clearer – the result of the EPRP’s new approach of involving all staff in preparing for an emergency. The Country Office also felt it now had a roadmap of how to move forward in better planning its response.

EVIDENCE FROM THE FIELD – THE EPRP CHANGING THE WAY WFP WORKS

SOUTH SUDAN – WFP’s newest Country Office found that implementing the EPRP went hand in hand with the drawing up of its Annual Performance Plan and review of its Risks Register – it pulled all the preparedness and planning work together. WFP South Sudan implemented the EPRP on a state by state basis, having recognized that the risks and their potential impact were very varied. One risk which was identified by the EPRP was an influx of refugees into Upper Nile State. So, in readiness, food was pre-positioned based on the anticipated worst-case scenario of 65,000 people. When 105,000 refugees arrived, the next EPRP step-up action was taken, involving the opening up of a new transport corridor from Gambella in western Ethiopia. Food and fuel could then be brought in by river, rather than relying on more expensive air routes when seasonal heavy rains closed roads.

The EPRP also helped WFP South Sudan in highlighting non-operational emergency preparedness needs, such as safely advancing funds to remote areas. Funds were advanced to Malakal and Bentiu, and for Kapoeta – where there are no banking facilities – an agreement was made to transport cash securely. The logistics team also worked with key river transporters to have them pay casual labourers directly, while WFP reimbursed them with bank transfers in the capital. This reduced WFP’s risk exposure.

WFP South Sudan worked hard to include all staff in the implementation of the EPRP as it recognized that each specific area of work needed to be involved in preparedness planning for the best response possible. As the deepening emergency meant more staff would be needed – with more accommodation tents, fuel, generators and so on – Human Resources and Administration worked together to step up readiness in line with the EPRP. There are specific challenges in working in South Sudan, such as the remoteness of some locations and the lack of availability of goods, which makes being properly prepared especially important.

TAJIKISTAN - Azam Baharov, a Senior Programme Assistant with WFP Tajikistan got down to work with his colleagues as soon as he returned from a regional workshop in Istanbul, which trained him on how to implement the EPRP. It meant that when a flood hit the district of Temurmaliq in Khatlon province in March 2012, Azam and his fellow staff members had better plans to step up WFP’s response straight away. They had all their assessment formats together, along with the contacts of their partners in the government and NGOs. This is an EPRP requirement. It made it possible for a joint assessment to be carried out much more quickly. Though not a massive emergency, several hundred people had lost their homes and food stocks and needed rapid assistance.

KYRGYZSTAN - Mirgul Surankyzy and Sharifbek Sohbnazar of WFP Kyrgyzstan also got down to business straight after learning about the EPRP in Istanbul. They updated their Country Office risks register and put the minimum preparedness actions in place. They’re

now ready to be tested by a major emergency. Smaller-scale natural disasters occur frequently in Kyrgyzstan – in the first six months of 2012 there were 300 – mainly minor earthquakes, avalanches and floods.

The humanitarian agencies there have also been practicing their response to a major earthquake by carrying out a 70-person strong simulation exercise with the government and donors. WFP managed to launch blanket feeding of 70,000 earthquake affected people within 72 hours during the simulation and to establish logistical support from both the Russian and US Air Forces. Mike Huggins, WFP's Deputy Country Director, used the EPRP to focus all staff member's minds and sharpen the Country Office's approach in the run up to the exercise. For him, the EPRP engages all staff in thinking "what if?" and "what would I do" and the EPRP red file sits in every office. It's there to continually remind staff that not only an earthquake, but the return of the inter-ethnic clashes which last shook the country in 2010, could demand their best emergency response.

GHANA - In West Africa in August, staff in WFP's Ghana Country Office found the EPRP really helped them when three northern states suffered heavy rains and the Bagre dam in neighbouring Burkina Faso was opened. Floods had been identified as a significant risk using the EPRP methodology - indicators, triggers and thresholds were closely monitored. The EPRP's Minimum Preparedness Actions were then carried out, including establishing contact lists, local food inventories and assessment checklists. Food was also pre-positioned. This level of preparedness meant that the response took place within seven days of the flooding – including the assessment and the signing of agreements with the government. Nearly 30,000 people were assisted with over 440 mt of food. The head of WFP's Sub-Office in Tamale, Aboubacar Koisha, feels the EPRP made staff very clear on how to respond when the government asked WFP for help, and resources were mobilized very rapidly.

PHILIPPINES - WFP Philippines had two emergencies in the same week as they were trained in implementing the EPRP. There was monsoon flooding in Central Luzon province – including Metro Manila – and conflict in Mindanao. Both had been identified as the highest risks during the EPRP training. While WFP's Country Director in the Philippines, Stephen Anderson, and his team, could not fully apply the EPRP checklists due to the rapid onset of the two emergencies, the EPRP's systematic thinking - with clear roles and responsibilities - had showed them gaps, which had to be plugged. Informal arrangements should be formalized and put down on paper, contact people needed to be on file and improved communication should always be a priority.

SENEGAL – Getting ready is not just a WFP Country Office priority – one of the upcoming challenges for the EPRP team in Rome is to extend the process to help WFP Regional Bureaux be better prepared for emergencies. A new tool for them is to be created and built. Some Regional Bureaux have already borrowed some of the methodology of the EPRP however, having recognized how it can help them keep running if the risk of an emergency increases and then materializes.

When the risk of political turmoil rose ahead of Senegal's presidential elections, the Regional Bureau in Dakar created its own checklists and identified strategic actions it should take. This saved the Bureau the time of creating a specific plan to maintain business continuity for the 19 Country Offices it serves. Staff in Dakar liaised with others in Bangkok and Cairo who had faced similar challenges from political instability in keeping their Regional Bureaux operating optimally.

In Dakar, the step up to Emergency Readiness Actions was taken immediately, with the Regional Bureau being supplied with basic sleeping mats, canned food and water so that staff could remain in the office to work, or could safely stay there if they were trapped by the situation outside. The location of essential staff was mapped with geographical centers established where they could group together in a secondary "home" office. Alternative power supplies were sourced to keep the office running and work was identified which could be handed over to WFP's headquarters in Rome if the situation deteriorated further.

The EPRP also has relevance to partners. WFP has recently led work at the interagency level to develop tools that are fully interoperable with the EPRP.