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SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT ON KOSOVO REGIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATION 6040.00

Food Assistance to Kosovar Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Duration	Thirteen months
Date of evaluation	23 October–14 November 1999
Date approved	3 November 1998
Date of first distribution	1 September 1998
Official termination date	2 December 1999

Cost (United States dollars)

Total cost to WFP	99,449,881
Total food cost	47,216,726

ABSTRACT

The report covers the WFP Kosovo operation during the crucial period from September 1998 to July 1999. It describes WFP's assistance during three phases: September 1998 to March 1999, with WFP focusing on internally displaced persons (IDPs), and other vulnerable groups within Kosovo; March to mid-June 1999, with massive emergency assistance to refugees in Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Montenegro; and, finally, from mid-June to July 1999, a period characterized by the rapid return of refugees and IDPs.

A number of key issues for this operation have been identified and recommendations made for future interventions of a similar nature. The main ones refer to contingency planning, where it is suggested that the Programme establish a better framework for early warning, preparedness and response to rapidly evolving emergencies. The successful employment in the Kosovo operation of WFP telecommunications and information technology should also be reviewed and the conclusions used to increase the Programme's rapid response capacity.

With regard to staffing, it is suggested that experience gained in the Kosovo operation be used to draft a rapid deployment system. Further recommendations refer to benefits gained from WFP improving its strategies as lead organization for food coordination and food aid policies in emergency situations, and to possibilities for improving coordination with military forces in complex emergencies.

NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for consideration to the Executive Board.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

Director, Office of Evaluation (OEDE): Mr A. Wilkinson tel.: 066513-2029

Chief Evaluation Officer, OEDE: Mr R. Huss tel.: 066513-2358

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Documentation and Meetings Clerk (tel.: 066513-2645).



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

AFOR	Albania Force
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
EMG	Emergency Management Group
FYRoM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
KFOR	Kosovo Force
MCI	Mercy Corps International
MRC	Macedonian Red Cross
TC/IT	Telecommunications and Information Technology



INTRODUCTION

1. In November 1998, emergency operation (EMOP) Kosovo 6040—"Food Assistance to Kosovar Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"—was approved. The scope of the operation was expanded by 11 subsequent revisions.
2. In 1999, WFP decided to undertake an evaluation of the operation. Besides the assessment of the achievements of the programme, the mission was also requested to identify elements of the WFP operation that might be of special interest and provide guidance for future emergency assistance.
3. The evaluation was undertaken by an external consultant supported by the Office of Evaluation (OEDE). The work comprised a review of reports and three weeks' field work in Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRoM) and Kosovo. A structured questionnaire was sent in advance to the WFP country offices to ensure inputs from field staff and other parties involved.
4. The evaluation mission contacted many of the main role players and interviewed over 60 resource persons from different organizations: WFP, UNHCR, NGOs, donors, governmental organizations and others. In Kosovo intensive group interviews were undertaken with former beneficiaries. Other target groups were interviewed in FYRoM and Albania. During field visits to camp sites, collective centres, warehouses and distribution points, interviews were undertaken with representatives of the various organizations.

FINDINGS

General

5. EMOP 6040 comprised a set of activities undertaken in the context of the Kosovo crisis until June 1999. The adopted approach was to integrate assistance provided under EMOPs 6040 and 5142 into one programme. In July 1999 WFP went one step further by consolidating all activities within the region under one single operation, EMOP 6136. Project document EMOP 6040 was successively updated through budget revisions. Together with other food providers, WFP covered the basic food needs of refugees, IDPs and other vulnerable groups in different geographical areas of the southern Balkans affected by the crisis.
6. After the approval of the original EMOP 6040, the programme has seen a dramatic change in the scenarios, and revisions have been required in order to adjust the operation to the rapidly evolving situation. Although most of these revisions refer to financial procedures, food transfers and commodity substitutions, there have been three major increases in the total food requirement estimates and two extensions in time, reflecting major military/political changes and resources provided by the donors.
7. The response to the appeals was very positive. Already in October 1999 the value of donations to EMOP 6040 had reached US\$88 million, corresponding to 99,730 tons of food. Main donors included the European Commission, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States. Also new donors, such as Croatia, provided cash or food commodities.



8. The generous response was an indication of the humanitarian concerns of the international community. It also reflected a strong political interest in finding a solution to the conflict. It might have been heightened by a fear that the conflict could spill over into other countries of the region. European states affected by an influx of ethnic Albanian immigrants had a particular interest in the situation. The strong support to WFP may be interpreted as a demonstration of the confidence of the international community in WFP's ability to respond quickly and efficiently to the crisis.
9. The overall goal of EMOP 6040 was to prevent hunger and malnutrition among displaced ethnic groups trying to escape the violence that had erupted in Kosovo. This goal has been achieved, as documented in various reports. In key refugee areas, such as Kukes in Albania, the nutritional level never fell below accepted standards. In no refugee areas have higher death rates been reported.
10. The results can be attributed to the provision of more or less timely and adequate food supplies to the target groups by WFP and other providers. However, like in other major crises of this nature, the refugees and IDPs have also themselves assumed responsibility for their survival and well-being, particularly during the first weeks of the emergency. The mission found that, in addition to the external assistance received, the coping mechanisms available to many of the affected groups also played a decisive role in avoiding hunger and malnutrition. These included the following:
 - a) refugees, IDPs and other vulnerable groups had their own contingency plans, emergency food stocks and resources to overcome periods of dislocation from their homes; and
 - b) extended family members from inside and outside Kosovo provided generous assistance. The supply of food and shelter, as well as remittances from abroad, helped refugees and IDPs to overcome "dry spells" in the provision of external aid.
11. The fact that there was no general shortage of food was confirmed by interviews with former target groups of EMOP 6040. Almost all previous beneficiaries described the food aid received as good and adequate.
12. Although the overall objective of the programme—i.e. to prevent hunger and malnutrition among displaced ethnic groups fleeing the violence in Kosovo—remained the same, the specific objectives, operational conditions and type of target groups kept changing. In reality the programme covered three distinct periods, as outlined below.

First Phase

13. The first phase covered the period September 1998 to March 1999. WFP operations centred on IDPs in Kosovo, providing them with the necessary support. The main target group was ethnic Albanians, who had to leave their homes due to violence and seek shelter and support with others. Host families in need of food were also assisted. During this phase only limited food quantities were required outside Kosovo, that is, for Albania, FYRoM and Montenegro. The total cost to WFP was estimated at about US\$20 million. Initial staffing requirements were met mainly through the ongoing emergency operation in former Yugoslavia.
14. The objective was to prevent hunger and malnutrition within a target group of 420,000 people and to prevent further displacements. Also included in the plan was the provision of a two-month winter safety net for January and February 1999.
15. WFP was one of a number of food suppliers in Kosovo. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Mercy Corps International



(MCI) maintained their own pipelines. While in September/October 1998 WFP did not cover more than 10 percent of all food distributed, the share increased to 25 percent in February 1999, when significant quantities of food were distributed. The Mother Theresa Society played an important role in reaching the target groups and distributing the food.

16. From September to December 1998, the Programme faced difficulties in reaching the target groups in Kosovo. The logistics units of WFP as well as its implementing partners had problems with inadequately equipped ports, cumbersome customs procedures and bad roads. The two-month winter stock was not distributed. The second objective of preventing further displacements was not achieved, and could not be achieved, as people were moving at the point of a gun.
17. The fact that no serious food shortages appear to have occurred in spite of the difficulties in providing food assistance to the targeted population groups can be explained with the coping mechanisms referred to earlier. It can safely be assumed that in these early days of the emergency, such means were still quite extensively available and provided the necessary buffer until the external assistance got into gear. When food from WFP and others did arrive, it helped to replenish family food stocks.
18. During this period the emphasis was on Kosovo. Operations in Albania were slowly building up, and FYRoM and Montenegro needed only limited food quantities to assist small numbers of refugees and IDPs.

Second Phase

19. The second phase of EMOP 6040 covers the dramatic three-month period from March to the end of June 1999, and relates to the situation of refugees and/or IDPs in Albania, FYRoM, Montenegro and Kosovo. By early June 1999, about 750,000 refugees had fled to neighbouring countries, 150,000 had been displaced to other parts of Serbia and Montenegro, and 600,000 had left their homes but remained within the provinces. Altogether, about 1.5 million people had been displaced.
20. Most of the assistance provided under EMOP 6040 refers to this phase. It is characterized by the unexpected fast exodus from Kosovo of large numbers of refugees and their subsequent spontaneous return, also within a very short period. During this phase, WFP had to deal decisively with challenges of logistics, deployment of qualified staff, and food policies and coordination.
21. As a result of budget revisions, the programme reached its peak during this period, with total allocations of almost US\$90 million. The overall target was to provide food for 950,000 refugees, IDPs and other vulnerable people affected by the conflict.
22. The general objective remained the same as during the previous phase. New target groups included refugees in camps and collective centres, refugees staying in private homes, needy host families and other vulnerable groups.
23. The distribution of food to the different target groups became more complex. Various bilateral and other donors also provided food through separate pipelines. WFP was by then the main food supplier and became the coordinator for this sector. For the final food distribution WFP entered into an agreement with UNHCR and a number of international NGOs which in most cases took over the final distribution to the target groups.
24. Following the NATO intervention, there was a steady influx of refugees into Albania, initially with some 30,000 arrivals daily. By end June, about 460,000 refugees had arrived. The heavy influx added over 12 percent to the country's population. As in other areas,



most of the refugees found accommodation in private homes with only smaller numbers staying in camps and collective centres. In the case of Albania, almost two thirds of the total stayed with host families or in rented flats. This confirms the mission's finding that the affected population often had some resources of their own and, therefore, were not totally dependent on external aid.

25. Other refugees were accommodated in collective centres or camps. Some 83,000 refugees were sheltered in tented camps, erected and managed by various bilateral and international organizations. Assistance by NATO and other troops for the construction, operation and maintenance of the camps was crucial, in particular during the early stages. Available basic services included water, health and community services, and in some cases educational facilities. Two thirds of all refugees in tented camps stayed in Kukes (31,000), Durrës (13,000) and Tirana (13,000) with the remaining third distributed over the other provinces.
26. At the end of this phase, almost all refugees returned spontaneously to Kosovo, with marginal external logistics support. It can be considered one of the most amazing movements in the history of refugee events. Here WFP had established a clear exit strategy. When the number of refugees fell below a minimum of 5,000, the Programme was to hand the food responsibility over to UNHCR. However, in practice this handover took place only in Albania and there, not until August 1999.
27. By the end of March 1999, UNHCR estimated that up to 65,000 persons had fled Kosovo for FYRoM. Refugees continued to arrive until early June, by which time there were an estimated 254,100 in FYRoM, most of them staying with host families but some in camps. Food distribution to refugees with host families was carried out through the Macedonian Red Cross (MRC) in coordination with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).
28. By mid-June, eight refugee camps had been established, with one more under construction. There was also one collective centre. WFP basic rations were distributed, and NGOs provided complementary foods. Some of the camps had no cooking facilities, necessitating the use of WFP ready-to-eat rations.
29. Refugees began to return as soon as Kosovo Force (KFOR) troops entered Kosovo on 12 June. Camps were being closed and food stocks transferred. By July, four of the camps had closed. Carry-over stocks were transported to Skopje with 5,000 tons forwarded to Kosovo by the end of September. Many NGOs followed the refugees to Kosovo. Six NGOs remained in FYRoM alongside three Red Cross organizations.
30. As the Kosovars left, there was a new influx of refugees, namely Roma and Serbs from Kosovo, and ethnic Albanians from southern Serbia. Throughout the crisis, WFP had been responsible for food aid to the refugees and CRS had handled the assistance to their host families.
31. Montenegro hosted some 34,000 IDPs before the NATO strikes, a number which increased to 83,000 during the course of the air campaign. Like the refugees in Albania and FYRoM, IDPs in Montenegro began going back as soon as KFOR troops entered Kosovo. Within a short period, about 43,000 IDPs returned to Kosovo. Simultaneously, many Serbs and Roma living in Kosovo felt threatened and fled. By the end of June, more than 20,000 of them had arrived in Montenegro.



Third Phase

32. Events rapidly turned around after 10 June when a military technical agreement was reached between the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and NATO. United Nations humanitarian workers and convoys of relief supplies entered Kosovo shortly thereafter. In this connection, the Programme gained considerable support from the NGO sector to clear WFP warehouses and office locations from unexploded devices. This was crucial as it enabled the Programme to establish its operations very quickly.
33. The third phase covers the second half of June and the beginning of July, a short period during which the majority of refugees and IDPs returned to Kosovo. In the first two weeks of this movement, over 415,000 Kosovo refugees returned by their own means and others by arranging collective transport from the camps. By late July, the total number of returnees stood at about 700,000. This phase also embraces the winding up and phasing out of activities, particularly in Albania and FYRoM.
34. While the overall objective remained the same, there was a major shift in the immediate objectives. The intention was to provide as much food as possible to the returning refugees on their departure from the host country in order to build up stocks in Kosovo which would help both the returnees and, to some extent, those who had remained to recuperate and start re-building their lives. At this stage WFP had in place a contingency plan for the return to Kosovo of large numbers of people and had the necessary resources available.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

35. The mission was required to identify a number of issues seen as crucial for the outcome of this operation and which could provide guidance for assistance under similar conditions in the future. It may be noted here that already while the operation was ongoing, the WFP Regional Office and some of the headquarters units involved started to assess what lessons could be drawn from the intervention.
36. Opinions on what could be learned from EMOP 6040 are not uniform. While most of the role players interviewed by the mission were generally quite enthusiastic about the way WFP handled the operation, some argued that this fell within WFP's normal mandate and that the Programme quite often handled emergency cases much larger and more complex than the Kosovo operation. The evaluation has tried to summarize the impressions received on some crucial issues. These are described below.

Contingency Planning and Exit Strategies

37. The refugee crisis in March 1999 caught WFP, like other organizations, off guard, in part because the intelligence provided by United Nations staff in the region was somewhat inaccurate. Nevertheless, the Programme was able to respond to the emergency situation. Although available quantities were initially insufficient to fully meet the requirements, particularly in Albania and FYRoM, WFP had some food to distribute and, generally, the capacity to do it. The problems occurred because of the rapid expansion of the operation and the speed with which the situation changed.
38. WFP had been active in the Balkan region since 1992. Planning for larger food needs in the context of the Kosovo crisis was undertaken in 1998. Requirements were at that stage judged to be most critical within Kosovo. A WFP/FAO joint food needs assessment was undertaken in early 1998 and appeals were launched.



39. When almost one million refugees left Kosovo in just a couple of weeks, WFP, through a dynamic response and with a lot of effort, could respond adequately. By re-routing food resources already in the pipeline, originally intended for IDPs in Kosovo, by mobilizing stand-by agreements for logistics support and equipment, and through rapid deployment of experienced WFP staff from around the world, the organization could cope with the crisis and assume its role as food aid coordinator.
40. For the return to Kosovo, plans were much more elaborate. Planning was no doubt easier, because conditions and target groups were by then known. The only unknown factors were the dates and speed of re-entry. The advantage WFP's senior field staff held at this point was their understanding of the strong determination of refugees to return to Kosovo immediately after the bombing stopped. This happened when large parts of the international community still hesitated to support actively the return because of logistics concerns and the fear of mines. The management decision to support the spontaneous return with massive food distributions at the border points also helped to get food supplies into Kosovo at a critical point in time.
41. The ad hoc arrangements reverted to during the earlier stages suggest that WFP still has no established mechanisms for early warning, preparedness and response. The establishment of a framework for this would be useful for any quickly developing disaster situation. The Regional Office in its assessment has proposed the development of a standard format for contingency planning. Further recommendations include the establishment of contingency stocks of food ready for airlifting, especially rations not requiring cooking facilities, and the availability of strategic supplies of essential logistics, communications, office and security equipment. These recommendations are strongly endorsed by the mission.
42. Facilities available to WFP, such as COMPAS, could also be used as a powerful contingency planning tool to identify available surplus food in a region which could be channelled rapidly to emergency areas.
43. Contingency plans need to be continuously reviewed and updated. Possibilities to coordinate such efforts with those of other major role players, such as UNHCR and UNICEF, should be explored, in particular in connection with more complex emergencies.
44. The mission found that WFP was generally regarded as strong in assessing the food situation and in the design of clear exit strategies. These strategies also provide linkages with subsequent development efforts. It is recommended to continue these efforts because it provides a bridge to sustainable development and provides donors with an outline of future requirements. WFP/FAO food and nutrition assessments at the beginning of an emergency operation should remain a standard practice. The results should be shared with donors, implementing partners, donors and other main role players at an early stage in order to reinforce a common strategy.

Staffing of Key Posts

45. One of the key decisions of WFP management was the deployment of experienced senior staff. Other organizations were not able to do so. The experiences from this deployment strategy have been widely discussed within WFP, and the Regional Office in Pristina has made a number of suggestions and recommendations in a working paper on "lessons learned".
46. Personnel considerations are important in preparing a policy for the response to emergency situations. The conditions and environment of such situations normally differ



significantly and it is often difficult to apply pre-programmed mechanisms. Emergency situations require full management competence on the spot to allow the essential immediate response. The operations require experienced and skilled staff, particularly in the early stages, and there is normally no time to provide on-the-job training as may be possible in development projects. It is proposed that a study be conducted, aimed at the drafting of a rapid deployment system for the Programme.

Coordination of Military and Humanitarian Matters

47. The collaboration with NATO was essential for the humanitarian operation. The military was particularly indispensable for the rapid construction of refugee camps and centres; it also provided valuable support to food logistics and the provision of emergency rations. WFP successfully negotiated with NATO a number of logistics arrangements.
48. Cooperation between humanitarian organizations and the military is not a new concept. In the case of the Kosovo crisis it appears that the intensity and magnitude of collaboration reached new levels. While good collaboration was achieved, the military did not always fully appreciate the operational principles of humanitarian organizations. The improvement of such cooperation remains a challenge and will require adaptation of procedures by both sides. A number of steps may be considered by WFP in order to improve this relationship in the future, such as introducing military liaison training and making WFP staff aware of what assistance the military might be able to provide, mainly with regard to security, shelter, various aspects of logistics, and communications.
49. The establishment of an emergency management group (EMG) in Albania was an example of effective collaboration between the different role players in the crisis. The EMG, led by the Government of Albania, was entrusted with the task of providing information and management support to the humanitarian community, including the international organizations, NGOs but also the military Albania Force (AFOR). Its valuable role as focal point during the crisis has been acknowledged. Within the EMG, different sector desks, such as shelter, logistics, health and food, were set up to coordinate the inputs, with WFP chairing the food desk. This model, adapted to local conditions, is recommended for future emergency situations.

Coordination of Food Aid

50. The Programme participated in a variety of inter-agency coordination mechanisms at all levels. In Albania, WFP assumed the responsibility for food coordination within the EMG. In FYRoM, the Programme quickly took on the role of food coordinator, receiving and distributing also non-WFP food. It cooperated with NATO and hosted weekly food coordination meetings.
51. Split food pipelines and conditions placed by donors complicated to a certain degree the coordination and establishment of a common food policy. Initiatives were taken in order to develop a corporate strategy to discourage donors to use split food pipelines and impose their own conditions. Throughout the Kosovo crisis, WFP had been one of the main food providers, with a share exceeding 50 percent from March 1999. WFP chaired regular food coordination meetings and led food policy discussions. The Programme's recommendations were generally respected, although not always followed by all food providers.
52. It is proposed that the Programme continue to improve its strategies as lead organization for food coordination and food policy in emergency situations and continue to base its own interventions on professional food and nutrition assessments involving specialized United



Nations and other organizations. Plans should include exit strategies to be developed at an early stage and shared with partners in the field. The exit strategy should indicate the linkage between emergency aid and sustainable development, if required.

53. It is unrealistic to expect that major donors would give all their emergency food aid to WFP. However, the functions of coordination and policy formulation can be performed satisfactorily without controlling the entire food aid. The minimum requirements are that:
- a) WFP has direct control over sufficient contingency food and equipment supplies to react fast in an emergency situation;
 - b) WFP develops strategies for emergency responses, including exit strategies. The approach should be more concerned with technical quality and competence than with food quantities donated; and
 - c) the total amount of food controlled by WFP must have a critical mass, enough to constitute an example for other role players and to obtain the necessary respect for the policy recommendations.

Political Support and Infrastructure Conditions

54. The political situation and infrastructure conditions both had a considerable influence on the performance. In Albania, the Government and the population provided political support, but the poor infrastructure hindered food distribution. In FYRoM, on the other hand, the infrastructure and local economy facilitated the operations but political conditions were less favourable. In Albania, refugees could move almost freely while in FYRoM their movements were controlled, because the Government was worried that the prolonged stay of ethnic Albanians could affect the existing fragile ethnic balance.
55. In Montenegro the political situation was also not easy, as Montenegro remained a province of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). Despite some difficulties, the Montenegro authorities held a positive attitude towards the IDPs and also WFP.

Deep Field Mailing System

56. The WFP Telecommunications and Information Technology (TC/IT) staff provided essential support to the operations. At a very early stage, a HF and VHF radio network, the so-called Deep Field Mailing System, land cellular and satellite telephone systems, and a computer network were successfully installed.
57. It appears that WFP got its telecommunications system working faster than other main role players. This is essential as communications constitute a crucial element in all emergency operations. It is recommended that WFP initiate a review of the TC/IT experiences in the Kosovo operation and use this to augment its rapid response capacity.

Food without Cooking

58. A major problem during the second phase was that refugees and IDPs had no cooking facilities. Food which did not need cooking thus had to be provided. In general, this was done successfully. In particular, the distribution of bread in combination with canned meat or fish turned out to be fully satisfactory from the view points of acceptability and nutritional value. This strategy made a massive distribution of cooking utensils unnecessary. This was particularly important in FYRoM, where the Government was reluctant to accept anything which would imply an extended stay of the refugees. A



possible lack of cooking facilities would obviously affect the composition of contingency food stocks discussed under the section on Contingency Planning and Exit Strategies.

Bread

59. Bread baking was a key element in the WFP food strategy. When the system was established, each refugee in Albania and FYRoM got a daily allocation of 0.5 kilogram of fresh bread. The system used in FYRoM was simple. It worked through contracts with a small number of big bakeries which delivered the fresh bread every morning at agreed distribution points. The principle was to exchange bread for WFP wheat flour. In Albania, bread production and distribution were more complex. In addition to a few donated mobile bakeries, bread was prepared at more than one hundred small bakeries all over the country. The contracts were similar to those used in FYRoM. In some cases a cash supplement was added to the flour to cover distribution costs.
60. It appears that the target groups were in general able to get bread. This, however, does not exclude specific cases and circumstances where shortages or other shortcomings occurred. No major constraints or deficiencies have been observed regarding the arrangements with the local bakeries while the mobile bakeries faced a few problems during the start-up period.

Media and WFP Information Officers

61. The press coverage was intensive throughout the operation and in particular during its second and third phases. As a generalization, it may be concluded that the refugee protection aspects were covered rather critically by the media while food aid issues were described more positively. WFP enjoyed great visibility with regard to its activities which probably had a strong positive effect on the fund-raising efforts. The deployment of WFP information officers allowed the Programme to present its views and explain its actions. There is no doubt that these arrangements substantially contributed to the positive coverage of the WFP operations. The Programme should continue to deploy its information officers in emergency situations and also include guidance on media relations in the regular staff training programmes.