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SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WFP LIVELIHOOD RECOVERY INTERVENTIONS

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.

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, OEDE*: Ms C. Heider tel.: 066513-2030

Evaluation Officer, OEDE: Ms M. Forsythe tel.: 066513-3179

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact Ms C. Panlilio, Administrative Assistant, Conference Servicing Unit (tel.: 066513-2645).

* Office of Evaluation



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation examined the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of WFP's support for the recovery of livelihoods after disasters. Field-based research was carried out in Bangladesh, Colombia, Lesotho, Nepal and Uganda during October and November 2008, complemented by a desk analysis of recovery issues in Ethiopia, Pakistan, Sierra Leone and the Sudan and a secondary literature review.

WFP's commitment to support livelihood recovery is reflected in a number of policy papers and reinforced in its new Strategic Plan (2008–2011). These policies envisage using food assistance to enable people to avoid negative coping strategies, rebuild household assets and restore livelihoods.

In terms of relevance, WFP's policy commitments to livelihood recovery are consistent with good practice outside WFP. Although there are good examples of needs assessments using livelihood frameworks to examine recovery needs, it is important for WFP to: i) assess more explicitly the levels of assistance required to enable people to rebuild assets and livelihoods; and ii) improve the link between assessment and programme design. The capacity to implement and scale up cash responses where appropriate is also important.

The efficiency of WFP's livelihood interventions is being adversely affected by funding constraints, which are largely a result of WFP's tonnage-based funding model and donor concerns about the effectiveness of its recovery programming. Funding shortfalls often mean that fewer recovery activities are implemented than planned. Recovery programming is strongest where cooperating partners have significant complementary resources.

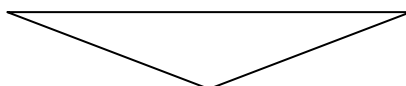
WFP food assistance appears to be effective in helping people to meet immediate food security needs and in mitigating negative coping strategies, but less effective in enabling people to restore the productive assets required for more resilient livelihoods. The effectiveness of livelihood support could be enhanced by addressing issues related to the level, timing and duration of food assistance and the provision of complementary non-food assistance by other actors.

The impact of WFP's support for livelihood recovery is often limited because recovery activities tend to be implemented on a relatively small scale, the volume of assistance may be limited and there is sometimes widespread sharing of rations. Large-scale general food distributions during recovery can support basic needs and enable people to make their own investments in recovery; and because such distributions have greater coverage, they often have the greatest impact.

In terms of sustainability, WFP's support for livelihood recovery could be enhanced by ensuring that food assistance is more generous and longer-term and that it is linked more closely to the livelihood interventions of other actors. There is also an opportunity for WFP to establish a role in the transition from recurrent relief to support for government-owned safety nets, particularly in view of the growing interest in long-term safety nets as a response to chronic poverty.



DRAFT DECISION*



The Board takes note of the “Summary Report of the Strategic Evaluation of the Effectiveness of WFP Livelihood Recovery Interventions” (WFP/EB.A/2009/7-B) and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.



BACKGROUND

Context

1. This evaluation examines the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of WFP's support for the recovery of livelihoods after disasters. The role of food assistance in supporting recovery processes after disasters has always been controversial: some argue that WFP should focus primarily on life-saving relief and leave recovery to other actors; others argue that food assistance can have a useful role in helping people to recover their livelihoods.
2. Debates about the appropriate interaction between relief and development in recovery from crises have been going on for decades. The term "recovery" is increasingly used to denote what was previously called "rehabilitation" or the "grey area" between relief and development; an "early recovery" cluster has now been set up. There has also been considerable debate about the extent to which humanitarian relief should be complemented by approaches that take into account the protection of livelihoods.¹
3. WFP supports livelihood recovery in numerous contexts, in many of which it is difficult to separate emergency and recovery needs from long-term development challenges related to chronic poverty and food insecurity. Contexts that involve long-running conflicts or recurring natural disasters are particularly challenging because livelihoods continue to be undermined by shocks, recovery is difficult and relief needs are ongoing.

WFP and Livelihood Recovery

4. WFP's approach to livelihood recovery is set out in the *Consolidated Framework of WFP Policies* (2007), which draws on a number of policy papers with implications for recovery that show WFP's commitment to supporting the processes of livelihood recovery and to linking emergency life-saving interventions with longer-term work to protect livelihoods. These policies envisage using food assistance to enable people to avoid negative coping strategies, rebuild household assets and restore livelihoods.
5. The evaluation uses the following working definition: "Livelihood recovery is a process of moving towards sustainable and more resilient ways of making a living following a disaster." This definition:
 - recognizes that people may develop new post-crisis livelihood strategies and that it may not be desirable to rebuild pre-crisis or existing livelihoods;
 - recognizes that livelihood recovery is a process, and that rebuilding sustainable livelihoods may be unrealistic in the short and medium term;
 - incorporates the concept of resilience to emphasize the importance of improving people's ability to cope with future disasters; and
 - sees recovery as a process that can take place independently of the actions of aid actors; whether and how aid contributes to or undermines that process is a separate question.

¹ See: Lautze, S. 1997. *Saving Lives and Livelihoods: the Fundamentals of a Livelihoods Strategy*. Medford, MA, USA, Tufts University Feinstein International Famine Center; Vaux, T. 2006. Humanitarian Trends and Dilemmas. *Development in Practice* 16 (3&4): 240–254.



6. The WFP Strategic Plan (2006–2009) included a focus on livelihood recovery in Strategic Objective 2: “Protect livelihoods in crisis situations and enhance resilience to shocks”. The Strategic Plan (2008–2011) increases WFP’s commitment to supporting livelihood recovery and makes it more explicit. Strategic Objective 3: “Restore and rebuild lives and livelihoods in post-conflict, post-disaster or transition situations” is concerned with recovery and Goal 2 focuses specifically on support for the re-establishment of livelihoods.

Evaluation Methods

7. The objectives of this evaluation were: i) to assess how far WFP interventions are meeting their stated and implicit livelihood recovery objectives; and ii) to encourage learning to enable WFP to improve its recovery-related programming. It considered emergency operations (EMOPs) and protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs) and all food assistance activities, recognizing that relief activities as well as activities with explicit recovery objectives may have an impact on restoring livelihoods in recovery contexts.
8. The evaluation used a mixture of methods and information sources including a document review; interviews with staff of WFP, partners and governments; and semi-structured individual interviews and group discussions with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Field-based research was carried out in October and November 2008 in Bangladesh, Colombia, Lesotho, Nepal and Uganda. These country case studies were complemented by desk analysis of recovery issues in Ethiopia, Pakistan, Sierra Leone and the Sudan and a desk review of WFP documentation and the secondary literature on livelihoods and recovery. The evaluation team consisted of three independent consultants.

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Relevance of WFP Livelihood Recovery Interventions

9. This section summarizes the evaluation’s findings concerning needs assessments, the internal and external coherence of WFP policies and interventions, project design and appropriateness.

⇒ *Needs*

10. There were several examples of good practice in utilizing a livelihoods framework to examine recovery issues in the needs assessments of the country case studies. However, assessments often omit clear recommendations about choices between programme options and analysis of the appropriateness of food assistance and particular mechanisms. Initial assessments and programme design are not always updated to reflect changing livelihood recovery needs. The levels of assistance required to enable people to build assets and move beyond alleviation of short-term food insecurity are not always explicitly assessed.

⇒ *External coherence*

11. WFP’s commitments to supporting livelihood recovery are consistent with good practice. WFP recognizes that support for recovery must start early and must often be provided at the same time as relief to enable people to rebuild resilient livelihoods after disasters. WFP is working to align its recovery programming with governments and other



actors, and is becoming increasingly engaged in policy discussions focusing on transition from relief to longer-term social protection approaches.

12. Some donors question the appropriateness of food aid as a tool for recovery, the effectiveness of WFP's recovery-related programming and the strength of WFP's case for its support for recovery. There is a particular concern about the tendency to include activities perceived as developmental in PRROs rather than country programmes. Some donors argue the need for a more accurately defined recovery role with clearer exit strategies and the need to focus more carefully on where food assistance is most appropriate.

⇒ *Internal coherence*

13. Recovery objectives in project documents are generally in line with WFP policies, and consistently refer to the Strategic Objectives. The Strategic Plan (2008–2011) is clearer as to where livelihood recovery objectives may be appropriate. There is, however, little evidence of investment at the Headquarters or country levels in rolling out policies related to recovery.

⇒ *Project design*

14. The evaluation team found that the findings of needs assessments do not sufficiently inform the design of programmes. Project logical frameworks are often weak and this reduces the likelihood of effective monitoring of livelihood outcomes: project documents may not clearly articulate specific recovery objectives or explain the reason for including some types of activity as recovery activities. Nutrition- and food-for-education programmes in particular are often termed recovery activities, but project documents do not clearly explain how they relate to livelihoods recovery. Therefore, in a growing number of contexts donors are reluctant to provide funding for recovery.
15. The lack of corporate-level outcome indicators makes it difficult for WFP to assess its contributions to livelihood recovery. The indicators in project logical frameworks are largely output indicators focusing on amounts of food delivered, numbers of assets built or training delivered. WFP is attempting to move forward on this issue with the roll-out of the Strategic Plan (2008–2011) and the development of draft indicators using coping strategy and assets indices.

⇒ *Appropriateness*

16. The Strategic Plan (2008–2011) contains a commitment to use cash where appropriate. In line with this, assessments are starting to examine the role of cash, and WFP is implementing projects using cash. In Bangladesh, cash for work and food for work (FFW) were provided in areas where markets were assessed as strong enough. In Nepal, WFP is working with three non-governmental organization (NGO) partners in cash transfers: the *Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* (GTZ; German Agency for Technical Cooperation), for example, provided cash and food in its public works partnership with WFP, and in Lesotho WFP participated in a World Vision pilot cash project.
17. WFP has until now been considering cash almost exclusively as a possible alternative or complement to food aid in food-for-assets (FFA) activities and general food distributions (GFDs). There is therefore potential to examine other approaches such as lump-sum cash grants, where cash could be used to enable people to invest in productive assets to start the process of recovery.



Efficiency of WFP Livelihood Recovery Interventions

18. This section examines issues relating to targeting and coverage, monitoring and evaluation, channels of delivery and institutional arrangements in WFP and with partners.

⇒ *Targeting and coverage*

19. In general the evaluation found that fewer activities with explicit recovery objectives are implemented than planned. This is primarily because of funding shortfalls and the prioritization of relief. FFA in particular seems to be consistently small-scale with low coverage. In relation to targeting, a particular issue is that evidence suggests that FFA can rarely be entirely self-targeting in poor countries – and assuming that it is self-targeting can lead to serious issues of exclusion. This needs to be acknowledged in programme guidance and reflected in project design.

⇒ *Monitoring and evaluation*

20. WFP has largely focused on monitoring the outputs rather than the outcomes and impact of its support for livelihood recovery. In some of the case study countries, however, WFP had made significant efforts to generate learning about livelihood issues. However, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) often does not lead to adjustments in programming. Monitoring data is too often being collected but not adequately analysed or documented. Lessons identified in evaluations are not necessarily reflected in changes to programme design or implementation.

⇒ *Channels of delivery*

21. GFDs is often the activity that WFP implements on the largest scale. They require fewer non-food resources and so are more suited to WFP's tonnage-based funding model. GFDs are usually presented as relief interventions to save lives, alleviate immediate hunger and meet basic needs. In contexts where people's livelihoods are recovering, GFDs are also likely to have recovery impacts: by helping people to meet basic needs, they can release income and enable people to make their own investments in recovery; they may also help to minimize negative coping strategies. The most efficient mechanism for supporting livelihood recovery in some contexts may simply be to continue to provide GFDs.

22. The evaluation found that WFP sometimes delegates to partners most of the responsibility for the adequacy, safety and sustainability of assets built through FFA, and defines its own role purely in terms of food delivery.

23. The evaluation found that the education objectives of school feeding are often emphasized, and that relatively little attention is given to the food security rationale for school feeding, especially in recovery contexts. In some contexts, school feeding may contribute to household food security and hence to livelihood recovery. Greater monitoring and analysis is required to improve understanding of the impact on livelihood recovery of food assistance delivered through school feeding.

⇒ *Internal institutional arrangements*

24. WFP's tonnage-based funding system is a major constraint on the ability of WFP and its partners to implement livelihood-recovery activities effectively. The basic dilemma is that support costs are tied to food tonnage. The recovery often coincides with the reductions in the tonnages of food distributed, but recovery activities have higher support costs because they are more complex in terms of implementation. This continues to constrain adequate



investment in the skills and capacities of staff and partners and makes it difficult to cover the non-food costs required to implement more effective recovery programmes.

25. In order to deliver effective livelihood-recovery programmes, WFP staff need the skills to analyse livelihoods and implement activities focused on them. In several of the case study countries, most WFP staff had little exposure to conceptual models such as the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) sustainable livelihoods framework, international best practice in post-disaster livelihood recovery or integrated relief-and-recovery programming approaches. WFP staff were often unfamiliar with WFP's own policies on livelihoods and recovery.

⇒ *External institutional arrangements*

26. There was generally positive feedback from the country case studies on WFP's role in coordination and partnerships. WFP is working to align its recovery programming with governments and other actors, and is becoming increasingly engaged in policy discussions relating to transitions from relief to longer-term social protection approaches. WFP staff sometimes require new skills to play an effective part in national policy discussions.
27. The skills and resources of cooperating partners are also critical to effectiveness. The availability of capable partners that can bring complementary resources into programmes is critical to programming quality. In some of the case study countries, WFP has started to be more strategic in terms of selecting partners according to these criteria.
28. Food assistance alone is often insufficient to support recovery of livelihoods, but in several of the country case studies disaster-affected people are receiving very little assistance for livelihoods other than food. Given its extensive field presence, WFP could be more of a catalyst in bringing in actors to provide complementary assistance. In recovery contexts, WFP needs to maintain its humanitarian principles of neutrality and independence and adhere at the same time to the development principles of support for greater harmonization, alignment and government ownership. Greater attention needs to be given to ways of reconciling these principles and maintaining a constructive but critical engagement with governments on livelihood recovery issues such as relief exit strategies and making transitions to safety nets.

Results of WFP Livelihood Recovery Interventions – Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability

⇒ *Effectiveness*

29. WFP food assistance appears to be helping disaster-affected people to meet immediate food needs and mitigate negative coping strategies. It seems to be less effective, however, in restoring the productive assets needed for more robust livelihoods. The amount of food assistance being provided in several of the case study countries was simply not enough to have any significant effect on livelihoods and processes of asset recovery.
30. To be effective, support for livelihood recovery must be timely. Timeframes for livelihood recovery are often too short, and there is often pressure on WFP from donors and host governments to phase out relief and recovery assistance as quickly as possible. However, recovery processes sometimes take much longer than donor timeframes and require support over a longer period. Recovery activities often need to be implemented simultaneously with relief interventions.



⇒ *Impact*

31. The somewhat limited effectiveness of WFP livelihood assistance in restoring productive assets means that in some contexts WFP may not be making a significant contribution to the establishment of more disaster-resilient livelihoods, even if its assistance is helping to reduce negative coping mechanisms. The impact of WFP support for livelihood recovery is often limited because recovery activities tend to be implemented on a relatively small scale, the volume of assistance may be limited and there is sometimes widespread sharing of rations. Large-scale GFDs in recovery contexts can support basic needs and enable people to invest in recovery, and their greater coverage often means they have the greatest impact.

⇒ *Sustainability*

32. A critical dimension of sustainability is how well WFP is developing and implementing strategies to exit from its livelihood-recovery activities. In several of the case study countries, funding constraints forced WFP to cease activities abruptly rather than phase them out. Another concern was the quality and sustainability of the assets created by FFA and FFW.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

⇒ *Relevance*

33. The evaluation found that WFP support to livelihood recovery could be made more relevant by: i) ensuring that needs assessments assess more explicitly the levels of assistance required to enable disaster-affected people to build assets; ii) defining WFP's recovery role more precisely; iii) articulating project objectives more clearly to allow for appropriate strategies for livelihood recovery, transition to longer-term safety nets and WFP's exit in particular contexts; and iv) being selective as to which activities to include in recovery programming and articulating more clearly the contribution of each activity to livelihood recovery in project documents. The evaluation acknowledged that WFP had made considerable improvements in recent years in assessing and implementing cash-based responses, but cautioned WFP to guard against a bias towards food aid, especially in its needs assessments.

⇒ *Efficiency*

34. The efficiency of WFP's livelihood interventions could be enhanced by: i) addressing financial constraints linked to the tonnage-based funding model; ii) overcoming donor scepticism about the quality of WFP recovery programming; iii) recognizing that FFA in developing countries can rarely be entirely self-targeting and may lead to serious errors of exclusion; iv) ensuring that the link between needs assessments and M&E and adjustments in programme design and implementation is improved; v) complementing the quantitative monitoring of outputs with more qualitative and outcome-focused approaches; vi) improving the quality of FFA programming with respect to labour market analysis, maintenance issues and quality-assurance systems; vii) investing more in the skills of WFP staff and cooperating partners to implement livelihood recovery; and viii) developing the capacity to scale up cash responses where appropriate.



⇒ *Effectiveness*

35. It is difficult to assess the progress achieved against stated livelihood-recovery outcomes because of a lack of appropriate indicators and the tendency for monitoring to focus on outputs rather than outcomes. Although WFP food assistance appears to be helping people to meet immediate food needs and mitigating negative coping strategies, it seems to be less effective at restoring the productive assets needed for more resilient livelihoods. The effectiveness of WFP support for livelihood recovery could be improved by: i) increasing the volume of food assistance; ii) implementing recovery activities earlier and at the same time as relief interventions; iii) supporting recovery processes over a longer period; and iv) acting as a catalyst in encouraging other actors to provide complementary non-food assistance.

⇒ *Impact*

36. The impact of WFP's support for livelihood recovery is often limited or reduced because: i) recovery activities tend to be implemented on a relatively small scale; ii) the volume of assistance may be limited; and iii) there is sometimes widespread sharing of rations. The somewhat limited effectiveness of WFP livelihood assistance in restoring productive assets means that in some contexts WFP may not be making a significant contribution to the establishment of more disaster-resilient livelihoods. Large-scale GFDs may often have the greatest impact on recovery processes.

⇒ *Sustainability*

37. Food assistance has to be more generous, longer-term and more closely linked to other livelihood interventions to enable people to build sustainable assets and develop more resilient livelihoods. In terms of sustainability, WFP support for livelihood recovery could be enhanced by improving contingency planning to: i) avoid cutting off support for activities at short notice; and ii) to provide better planned, gradual transitions, especially when funding or pipeline constraints occur.

Issues for the Future

38. WFP's commitments to support livelihood recovery have not yet been translated into good quality programming in many contexts. Some of the constraints are financial, linked to donor scepticism about WFP's recovery role and its tonnage-based funding model. Other constraints are linked to design and implementation issues that could be addressed.
39. There is a rich body of international experience and an expanding collection of good practice in WFP that can be drawn on to support livelihood recovery analysis and programming. The growing interest in support for early recovery, renewed attention to a "recovery gap" in financing instruments and an emerging donor focus on support for fragile states are trends that could help WFP to address recovery funding challenges. The ability of WFP to provide cash as well as – or instead of – transfers in kind where appropriate provides new opportunities for supporting the recovery of livelihoods.
40. WFP needs to define more clearly what its role should be in recovery contexts and then demonstrate that it can programme recovery-related activities more effectively to secure wider donor support. Headquarters and senior management must signal that livelihood-recovery programming has higher priority by allocating more resources to define policies, issue programme guidance and develop the skills of operational staff so that they are better equipped to support livelihood recovery.



41. WFP could also do more to articulate objectives for specific contexts in ways that lead to clearer strategies for recovery of livelihoods, and transition and exit from livelihood recovery activities. The growing interest in long-term safety nets as a response to chronic poverty is an opportunity for WFP to assume a role in making transitions from recurrent relief to support for government-owned safety nets.
42. In terms of livelihood objectives, a continuing difficulty is that WFP bases recovery objectives on the idea that food assistance will be phased out as people become more self-reliant. In many least developed countries where most people live at or below the poverty line and are subject to recurring shocks, this is simply unrealistic and sets projects up to fail or continue indefinitely. In protracted crises and contexts with high levels of chronic poverty, livelihood recovery objectives may need to be more modest and longer-term; WFP may need to accept that ongoing reliance on relief is necessary. WFP may also need to be more active in linking beneficiaries of food assistance with other forms of livelihood support provided by other actors.
43. The tendency to view relief and recovery as two separate categories of support, each associated with distinct food assistance activities, is not helpful. Combinations of relief assistance to meet basic food needs and recovery assistance to restore assets have proved to be effective in helping people to recover livelihoods.

Recommendations

⇒ *Assessment*

44. It is recommended that:
 - assessments do more to examine the processes of livelihood recovery and the possible role of food assistance to support them;
 - the Food Security Analysis Service (OMXF) provide further support for vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) units to develop the use of livelihood frameworks to inform analysis of recovery needs;
 - OMXF, in collaboration with regional bureaux and country offices, do more to periodically re-assess recovery needs and update initial assessments; and encourage greater use of qualitative analysis of livelihoods to complement the largely quantitative, survey-based assessments; and
 - needs assessments explicitly assess the levels of assistance required to support recovery and enable people to build assets, and not simply meet immediate food security needs.

⇒ *Programme design*

45. It is recommended that:
 - the Programme Design Service (OMXD) continue to develop indicators for livelihood recovery, particularly outcome and impact indicators that will make possible the measurement of progress towards objectives;
 - OMXD support country offices in developing a clearer livelihood-recovery rationale, clearer livelihood objectives and more robust exit strategies for recovery activities; and



- exit strategies include advocacy with donors who fund development and with recipient governments to develop policies and programmes to address needs previously covered by WFP.

⇒ *Programme implementation and efficiency*

46. It is recommended that:

- WFP maintain dialogue with donors about options for tackling the structural constraint imposed by WFP's tonnage-based funding model;
- greater efforts be made at country offices to generate additional resources for recovery activities;
- greater investment be made at the Headquarters and regional bureaux levels in rolling out livelihood-recovery policies and programming standards to the country office level;
- WFP invest more in professional development opportunities training for WFP and cooperating partner staff to enhance their skills in needs assessment, planning, programming and M&E in recovery contexts;
- WFP develop the skills of its staff with a view to enabling them to engage more effectively in policy debates on social protection and in analysis of the role of WFP in transitions to government-owned safety nets;
- WFP continue to develop its capacity to plan and implement cash-based responses where these are appropriate; and
- WFP recognize that levels of food assistance will often have to be increased from current levels and combined with relief to enable disaster-affected people to rebuild livelihoods. Given that timeframes for livelihood recovery are often too short, it is recommended that WFP implement recovery activities earlier and at the same time as relief, where this is appropriate. WFP also needs to guard against premature phasing out of relief and to make a strong case to donors for continued support where it is appropriate.

47. It is also recommended that WFP:

- find ways to scale up recovery support while maintaining the capacity to continue relief, because recovery activities tend to be implemented on a smaller scale than relief;
- do more to encourage other recovery actors to fund and implement other forms of livelihoods support;
- do more to review its partnership arrangements and assess the capacities and performance of cooperating partners. WFP should share responsibility for the adequacy, safety and sustainability of FFA with its cooperating partners to ensure that issues of quality and sustainability are adequately addressed; and
- do more to analyse the impact of food assistance in relation to its support for recovery processes and people's efforts to build more resilient livelihoods. This will require greater collaboration between VAM units and M&E staff.



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
EMOP	emergency operation
FFA	food for assets
FFW	food for work
GFD	general food distribution
GTZ	<i>Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</i> (German Agency for Technical Cooperation)
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NGO	non-governmental organization
OMXD	Programme Design Service
OMXF	Food Security Analysis Service
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
VAM	vulnerability analysis and mapping