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GENDER AND GEOGRAPHICAL DIVERSITY: A WAY FORWARD FOR MEETING ESTABLISHED TARGETS

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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.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During its Annual Meeting in June 2007, the Board reviewed information documents regarding the gender and nationality representation of WFP's international professional staff. The Board requested that a strategy for improving such representation, especially at senior levels, be presented.

This document outlines an approach for developing a comprehensive human resources strategy to improve, and achieve targets in, the geographical and gender balance of WFP's international workforce.

DRAFT DECISION*

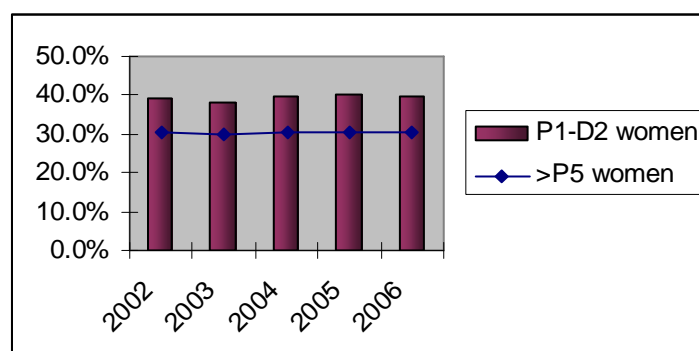
Having reviewed document WFP/EB.2/2007/4-B, the Board takes note of the methods WFP proposes to use in establishing a policy and strategy for improving gender and geographical representation in the international professional staff category.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document (document WFP/EB.2/2007/15) issued at the end of the session.

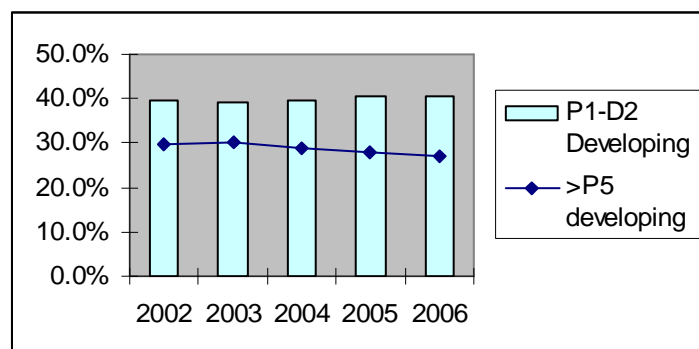


IMPROVING THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND OF NATIONALS OF ECONOMICALLY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THE INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL STAFF CATEGORY

1. In line with United Nations objectives, WFP has set targets of 50 percent women and 40 percent nationals of economically developing countries in its international professional staff category.
2. The Board noted with concern the overall under-representation of women and nationals of developing countries, particularly at senior management levels. The Board requested the Administrative Department's Human Resources Division (ADH) to present a strategy for addressing this imbalance. The strategy is to outline actions for progressing towards the goals of 50 percent gender distribution and 40 percent representation of developing country nationals in WFP's international professional staff, especially at senior levels.
3. As of 31 December 2006, women accounted for 39.5 percent of the international professional category and 30.5 percent of levels P-5 and above. These figures have remained more or less constant over the last five years. Currently, 50 percent of the Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) posts are filled by women.



4. Developing country nationals accounted for 40.5 percent of international professional staff as of 31 December 2006. Although this figure meets WFP's target, the equivalent figure for senior management levels was only 27 percent, a slight reduction from the 29.7 percent of 2002. It should be noted, however, that 50 percent of the ASG posts are currently filled by nationals of developing countries.



5. In the United Nations General Assembly document *Improvement of the Status of Women in the United Nations System* of 7 September 2006, the Secretary General reported that "...the representation of women in the professional and higher categories remained almost static with negligible improvement, and in some cases, even a decrease...". The Secretariat

analysed the causes of this slow improvement in the status of women in the United Nations, and measures were identified that organizations could adopt to overcome the challenges hindering progress.

6. WFP has implemented several methods for improving geographical and gender balance in its workforce but has not achieved targets for all staff levels.

Current Situation in WFP

7. WFP is undergoing a transition. As outlined in the 2008–2009 Programme Support and Administration (PSA) Management Plan, WFP has a tighter budget than previously, particularly at Headquarters and in regional bureaux. The new streamlined organizational structure consolidates several existing units and functions in Headquarters. The outcome of these changes in terms of staffing composition is not yet known, but there will be significantly fewer senior positions at the P5 to D2 levels at Headquarters. Staff may be adversely affected by the resultant need to abolish posts.
8. To minimize these impacts, WFP is implementing a recruitment freeze. Strategies to increase the representation of women and developing country nationals in decision-making positions will therefore have to focus more on retention and career development than on recruitment.
9. ADH will be monitoring the impact of these organizational changes on gender and nationality representation. A new baseline will be captured pending the outcome of this transition.

Existing Efforts to Improve Gender and Nationality Representation

10. To achieve its gender and geographic diversity targets, WFP is implementing the following measures:
 11. **Recruitment.** WFP recruits international professional staff through a roster system. On each roster, the percentages of women and nationals of under-represented donor and developing countries are monitored regularly.
 12. The recruitment system includes an on-line search engine that enables managers to identify candidates based on the requirements and qualifications for a particular assignment. The search can be filtered to include only women or only nationals of developing countries to support managers in reaching recruitment targets.
 13. ADH is reviewing international professional recruitment procedures with a view to reinforcing processes that ensure the best qualified candidates are identified through a transparent and rigorous process.
 14. **Retention.** Retention is fairly balanced between men and women: 45 percent of the international professional staff who separated in 2006 were women. The retention of developing country nationals is higher: in 2006, 30 percent of the staff who separated were nationals of these countries.
 15. Regarding the age of staff at separation, more women than men leave WFP between the ages of 30 and 39 years. There did not seem to be an age-related pattern regarding staff from developing countries who separate.



16. Marital status may also be a variable linked to gender. Overall, 70 percent of WFP's international professional staff are married, but women make up only 29 percent of the married workforce. The proportion is smaller at senior levels, where women account for only 17 percent of married staff at levels D-1 and D-2.
17. The United Nations Global Expatriate Spouse Association (GESA) supports the United Nations system's ability to recruit, reassign and retain the best qualified candidates by encouraging expatriate spouse employment and assisting United Nations families to settle into new duty stations. As the focal agency for GESA, WFP created a website for staff and prospective candidates, containing country-specific information and employment opportunities for spouses.
18. Policies issued by WFP to address retention and gender are listed in the Annex.
19. **Career development.** WFP management has taken action to increase the flow of women into senior levels. Through reassignment, the proportion of women deputy country directors rose from 13 percent in 2002 to 35 percent in 2006. The percentage of women country directors remained steady at 20 percent. Women deputy regional directors increased from 29 percent in 2002 to 56 percent in 2006. Promotion rates for women were also positive: in the latest reassignment 45 percent of promotions in the P-1 to P-4 levels were women.
20. Nationals of developing countries account for 30 percent of country directors and 38 percent of deputy country directors, a decrease from 35 percent country directors and 54 percent deputies in 2002. On the other hand, their share of regional directorships has increased from 57 percent to 71 percent.
21. Efforts have been made to prepare women for future roles. In 2006, 40 percent of participants in corporate emergency response training were women. A target of 50 percent was set for 2007. Greater proportions of women are involved in the United Nations Rome-Based Management Development Centre (MDC). Since the beginning of this year, 60 percent of the participants nominated by WFP have been women.
22. **Accountability mechanisms.** Recently introduced accountability measures assess managers' efforts to improve the representation of women and developing country nationals. Beginning in 2007, an automatic output has been included in the Performance and Competency Enhancement (PACE) electronic system to ensure that all managers at P-5 level and above are evaluated on the extent to which they meet corporate targets related to human resources management, especially gender and nationality recruitment.
23. ADH monitors the effectiveness of its own recruitment efforts and those of other WFP units, reporting regularly to executive staff.

Next Steps

24. Sustainable change of the workforce profile requires a comprehensive review of existing barriers, real and perceived, at the individual, managerial and organizational levels. Recognizing and neutralizing these obstacles will facilitate the implementation of recruitment and retention strategies directed at women and developing country nationals.
25. The following ongoing activities support ADH's development of a strategy for achieving this, in line with initiatives in the United Nations system.



26. ADH is developing a Human Resources Strategy aligned with WFP's Strategic Plan. A planning exercise has been initiated to identify the current demographic and competency profile of the international workforce. Based on this information, ADH will identify actions for meeting anticipated staffing needs and addressing gender and nationality diversity targets. The Human Resources Strategy will be finalized following the Board's endorsement of the WFP Strategic Plan in 2008.
27. Simultaneously, the Policy Department's Gender Unit (PDPG) is developing the WFP Gender Policy, with ADH involvement. WFP plans to present this policy to the Board in June 2008. It incorporates strategies for addressing both programmatic and staffing aspects of gender.
28. The Office of Evaluation has initiated a corporate review of the Enhanced Commitments to Women, the eighth of which aims at gender equality in staffing. The review comprises a quantitative and qualitative analysis of human resources data from 2002 to 2006.
29. As a follow-up to the General Assembly report *Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system*, the United Nations Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women is establishing an approach for addressing the status of women in the United Nations. As a first step, a high-level panel of experts will meet in November 2007 to prepare recommendations for improving the current situation. These will be presented to the next General Assembly and Legislative Bodies. This process, coordinated by the Association of Human Resource Management in International Organizations (AHRMIO), involves WFP and other United Nations agencies.
30. Although these activities focus on gender, many of the resulting recruitment and retention strategies will be applicable to WFP's efforts to improve the representation of developing country nationals.

Timeline

31. **September to December 2007.** To identify barriers and the underlying causes of WFP's limited progress in meeting gender and nationality targets, ADH will retain an external consultant to conduct an analysis similar to that of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF),¹ in coordination with the Office of Evaluation's review of the Enhanced Commitments to Women.
32. **November 2007 to January 2008.** Liaison with the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women on strategies approved by the General Assembly for improving the status of women in the United Nations system.
33. **January to February 2008.** On the basis of the analysis results and recommendations, ADH will consult managers and members of the Board about the feasibility of implementing the recommendations and the timeline.
34. **March 2008 to June 2008.** A policy on gender balance and national diversity in WFP's international staff will be presented to the Board. This policy will be integrated into the Human Resources Strategy and, as it relates to gender, aligned with the Gender Policy prepared by PDPG.

¹ The Executive Board of UNICEF requested UNICEF to address gender parity to achieve the United Nations system-wide goal of parity by 2010. UNICEF published the study *Gender Parity in Senior Management at UNICEF in 2006*. Based on statistical data, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and exit surveys, the study found that several complex interlocking phenomena underlie the shortcomings in gender parity.



ANNEX

ADH Policies and Guidelines Relevant to Gender Issues

1. Administrative Procedures for International Professional Staff.
2. Awards Programme. Includes the International Women's Day Award, which recognizes a contribution to advancing women's role in food aid.
3. Breastfeeding.
4. Board document WFP/EB.1/2004/4-B/Rev.1 – Staff Representation. Sets WFP's goals regarding gender balance and geographical representation.
5. Family Leave. Allows staff members to attend to family-related emergencies or obligations.
6. Hours of Work. Includes the option of flexible work arrangements such as part-time employment.
7. Maternity Leave. Grants leave to women staff members with fixed-term or continuing/indefinite appointments for up to 16 weeks.
8. Paternity Leave. Allows men staff members to take four weeks –exceptionally eight weeks for non-family duty stations – of paid leave to bond with and take care of their newborn children.
9. Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Power. Provides documents on definitions, principles and guidelines for dealing with sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of power.
10. Reassignment, Rotation and Mobility Policy. Ensures that due consideration is given when reassigning one or both spouses employed by WFP.
11. Recruitment. Includes documents on the recruitment and selection of international professional staff and on how WFP pursues its gender recruitment targets through specific strategies and requirements.
12. Special Operations Approach. Enables internationally recruited staff serving under difficult conditions at non-family duty stations to manage the costs associated with family separations and dual households. Helps WFP to attract the most appropriate staff to these locations.
13. Spouse Employment. Provides documents outlining WFP's policies concerning the employment of spouses of WFP staff members.
14. Special Leave. Staff Rules and Manual Section, allowing staff members to take leave, with or without pay, for training, illness or other important reasons.
15. Telecommuting. Outlines alternative work arrangement in which staff members may be allowed to work off WFP office premises.



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ADH	Human Resources Division
ADHC	Staff Development Branch
AHRMIO	Association of Human Resource Management in International Organizations
ASG	Assistant Secretary-General
GESA	United Nations Global Expatriate Spouse Association
MDC	United Nations Rome-Based Management Development Centre
PACE	Performance and Competency Enhancement Programme
PDPG	Policy Department Gender Unit
PSA	Programme Support and Administration
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund