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## **POLICY ISSUES**

**Agenda item 4**

### **WFP AND THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT THE PROGRESSIVE REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY**

*For information\**

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## NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

**This document is submitted for information 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.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2004, the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations adopted the *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security*. Negotiations to formulate the guidelines were initiated following the 2002 World Food Summit: *Five Years Later*, building on a series of inter-governmental consultations and previously adopted human rights and food security definitions.<sup>1</sup>

The *Voluntary Guidelines* are in line with WFP's mission statement, WFP's Humanitarian Principles, and WFP policies and activities in both emergency and development contexts.

The *Voluntary Guidelines* apply primarily to States. They invite interested States to consider using the guidance in the context of their national food security policies and programmes. For WFP, the *Voluntary Guidelines* create an opportunity, in countries that decide to use them, to deepen the dialogue on hunger and food security.

WFP continues to welcome the leadership of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – which began with the World Food Summit and continued through a period as Secretariat to the Inter-Governmental Working Group – in advocating for the implementation by States of the *Voluntary Guidelines*.

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<sup>1</sup> To elaborate the guidelines, an *Inter-Governmental Working Group (IGWG) for the Elaboration of a Set of Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security* was established. The Voluntary Guidelines can be found at [http://www.fao.org/righttofood/en/23413/highlight\\_51802en.html](http://www.fao.org/righttofood/en/23413/highlight_51802en.html).



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## BACKGROUND

1. At the 2002 World Food Summit: *Five Years Later*, Heads of State and Government invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Council to establish an Inter-Governmental Working Group (IGWG), “to elaborate, with the participation of stakeholders, in a period of two years, a set of voluntary guidelines to support Member Nations’ efforts to achieve the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security”. WFP was a participant in this inter-governmental group, particularly with respect to Guideline 15 on food aid. The negotiations also took into consideration the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration (including the Goals) and the outcomes and commitments made at major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social related fields.
2. The IGWG concluded its work in September 2004, when the *Voluntary Guidelines* were endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security. They were subsequently endorsed by the 127<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Council in November 2004. The guidelines apply primarily to States and are non-binding and voluntary.

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## THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES AND WFP

3. The *Voluntary Guidelines* apply primarily to States. The guidelines invite interested States to consider using the guidance in the context of their national food security policies and programmes. WFP fully supports the use by States of the *Voluntary Guidelines* in order to improve existing development frameworks – specifically to make food security a central element of development policy and to bring issues of hunger and under-nutrition to the forefront of development debate and planning. The guidelines offer a welcome framework for governments to strengthen this process.

### The Voluntary Guidelines and WFP Policies

4. WFP’s core policies are consistent with the general principles of the *Voluntary Guidelines*. WFP’s Mission Statement asserts that its assistance programmes should be designed and implemented on the basis of broad-based participation, including beneficiaries, national and local governments, civil-society organizations and other partners.<sup>2</sup> WFP’s Humanitarian Principles include impartiality, non-discrimination, self-reliance, participation and capacity building.<sup>3</sup> These WFP policies are mirrored in the guidelines, for example, guidelines 13.3, 14.3, 14.5, 15.4, 15.5. In addition, WFP’s policies and practices are consistent with the specific provisions of the *Voluntary Guidelines*.

### The Voluntary Guidelines and WFP Activities

5. For WFP, the *Voluntary Guidelines* create an opportunity, in countries that decide to use them, to deepen the dialogue on hunger and food security. Implementation of the *Voluntary Guidelines* by a WFP recipient country implies a comprehensive plan to build an enabling environment for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food. WFP

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<sup>2</sup> WFP/EB.3/2000/3-D.

<sup>3</sup> WFP/EB.A/2004/5-C.



can play a supporting role to governments, together with FAO and other international partners, to build comprehensive food security strategies.

6. WFP's value-added is its knowledge of food insecure populations and its understanding of their food insecurity – primarily through vulnerability assessment as well as through on-the-ground experience among the most needy, including during periods of crisis. Additionally, under WFP's Strategic Objective 5, building capacity, WFP would be in a position to assist countries in establishing or strengthening nationally-managed food aid programmes. Food aid, depending on the specific country context, may have a greater or smaller role in assisting recipient countries to achieve the progressive realization of the right to adequate food. For countries that have adopted enabling food security policies, the *Voluntary Guidelines* encourage donors and the United Nations system to support these efforts with financial and technical support.
7. In practice, in many of the countries where WFP is present, most people are able to feed themselves through their own income and/or food production. Government safety net programmes or externally-funded programmes – such as WFP food assistance – should only go to those who need it.
8. WFP has established policies and guidelines on needs assessment that allow it to target those who are most vulnerable. These are consistent with an overall national strategy for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food. WFP's programmes rely for practical purposes – for day-to-day targeting decisions in the context of resource limitations – on assessing the needs of affected populations.

### **In Practice: the Case of Sierra Leone**

9. The *Voluntary Guidelines* are a potential policy tool for Governments to put hunger at the centre of their development agenda. WFP continues to welcome the leadership of FAO – which began with the World Food Summit and continued through negotiations in the IGWG – in advocating for the implementation by States of the *Voluntary Guidelines*. Recent experience in Sierra Leone illustrates how WFP can complement the work of governments and partners such as FAO in supporting the progressive realization of the right to adequate food.
10. Since 2002, President Kabbah of Sierra Leone has put the right to food at the centre of the country's recovery and development agenda, as reflected in WFP's Country Programme – Sierra Leone 10333.0 (2005–2007).<sup>4</sup> With advocacy and technical support from FAO, in 2003 the Government confirmed a commitment to the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security. A “Right to Food Ministerial Policy Committee” and a “Right to Food Secretariat”, funded by Germany with technical assistance from FAO, were established in 2004.
11. In the context of these commitments and institutional support to the strategy for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in Sierra Leone, WFP participated in the formulation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and subsequently formulated the WFP Country Programme. In partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, FAO and leading NGOs, WFP worked to develop a comprehensive food security approach to be incorporated within the Poverty Reduction Strategy paper (PRSP), which is now in final draft. This national Draft Food Security Strategy and the national Draft Food Aid Strategy, also prepared with assistance by WFP, are soon to be submitted for cabinet review.

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<sup>4</sup> WFP/EB.3/2004/7/2.



12. At the same time, WFP, in conjunction with the Government, has continued its operational transition from protracted relief and recovery assistance to longer-term development interventions. A major component of WFP's contribution to these processes has been the utilization of WFP's vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) surveys and data to inform decision-making on where scarce national resources should be aimed in order to help the Government strategy for the progressive realization the right to adequate food for all its citizens.
13. Similarly, the experience of WFP emergency and transition interventions in school feeding and integrated mother-and-child health and nutrition (MCHN) programmes has helped the Government define what role food aid should continue to play in Sierra Leone. These WFP contributions to helping Sierra Leone progressively realize the right to adequate food for its population have occurred in the context of a national commitment to implementing the *Voluntary Guidelines*.

