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COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINES

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COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINE— CAMEROON

ABSTRACT

Cameroon is a low-income, food-deficit country with an annual per capita income of some US\$650. Its population is estimated at 14.1 million, with an annual growth rate of 2.8 percent. UNDP's Human Development Index for 1998 places Cameroon 132rd out of 174 countries. The 1998 Human Development Report shows that 84 percent of the poor live in rural areas, and that 64 percent of the rural population is poor. The poverty index increases away from the coast and towards the north. The infant mortality rate (zero to 5 years of age) is 102 per 1,000 and the Aggregate Household Food Security Index (AHFSI) is 79.4.

In view of the Government's priorities and strategies in fighting poverty and food insecurity and the programmes being implemented by other partners, WFP's future activities in Cameroon will focus on the poorest rural areas affected by food insecurity and on two sectors: primary education and rural development. The future programme will meet growing demand for education in the East, Adamaoua, North and Extreme North provinces. It will also contribute to two food security operations in North and Extreme North provinces. In line with the Executive Board's decision 1999/EB.A/2, WFP's development activities focus on five objectives. WFP's future programme in Cameroon will bear on three of those objectives:

- Enable poor households to invest in human capital through education and training;
- Make it possible for poor families to gain and preserve assets; and
- Enable households which depend on degraded natural resources for their food security to make a shift to more sustainable livelihoods.

Children (both girls and boys) in poverty-stricken, food-deficit areas as well as smallholders, particularly women, in rural areas of northern Cameroon will benefit from WFP assistance.

The Country Programme will cover the 2003-2007 period so as to coincide with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and harmonize with the programming period of other institutions in the United Nations system. Primary education activities as well as those linked to food security such as village storage facilities and hydro-agricultural improvements will commence before the formulation of the Country Programme so that its projections may be based on well-tested levels of technical feasibility and absorption rates.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ACF	Action contre la faim (Action against Hunger)
AfDB	African Development Bank
AHFSI	Aggregate Household Food Security Index
CE2	Elementary courses 2
CM1	Middle courses 1
CM2	Middle courses 2
DDC	Diocesan Development Committee
DPGT	Farm Development and Farmland Management
GDP	Gross domestic product
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
ORSTOM	Overseas Scientific and Technical Research Organization
SNV	The Netherlands Voluntary Services
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteer



FOOD INSECURITY AND THE HUNGRY POOR

Economic and Social Context

1. From 1960 to 1985, Cameroon enjoyed a period of rapid growth following increased agricultural and oil exports. From 1985, however, the country entered a phase of deep economic recession characterized by a fall in oil earnings and in the price of raw materials. Between 1985 and 1995, the gross domestic product (GDP) fell by 6.3 percent a year. From 1995/96 the country has been coming out of the recession with a positive growth rate of some 5 percent. However, the turnaround has not yet had any significant effects on the living conditions of the population.
2. The economic crisis, accompanied by reduced government spending, has led to a substantial reduction in the offer of basic social services and, most worryingly, to a marked drop in school enrolment. Public funding of the education sector fell significantly from 86.80 billion CFA francs in 1990/91 to 55.96 billion CFA francs in 1995/96. According to Ministry of Education statistics, the overall enrolment rate dropped from 67.8 to 58.9 percent between 1990 and 1994. In 1996, the enrolment rate for children aged between 6 and 14 years of age was estimated at 76 percent. But the figures fail to reflect wide geographical differences.
3. School enrolment is even lower in the country's poorest provinces, according to the most recently available gross figures, which are 62 percent for Adamoua, 50 percent for North region, 33 percent for Extreme North and 33 percent for East. Girls' enrolment is 38.8 percent in Adamoua, 32.5 percent in the North, 31 percent in the Extreme North and 31 percent in the East. Most poor families in those provinces no longer send their children to primary school because of the costs involved and because children, especially girls, are needed to work in the fields or at home. Those attending are clearly tired from not eating any lunch or any snacks during the day.
4. Cameroon is a country where poverty among women is exacerbated by significant gender disparities in health, nutrition, education, employment and the level of participation in economic and political life (UNDP—Human Development Report, 1998). But for all their lack of formal education, Cameroon women are very active in the informal sector of the economy. They work under extremely difficult conditions and find it very hard to gain access to the principal means of production, especially land and credit. Many women are actively involved in subsistence agriculture, but have to battle against problems such as land property rights and low wages.
5. Chronic malnutrition has dropped in all provinces, but much less so in Adamoua and North, Extreme North and East provinces. The population also suffers from diseases arising from lack of micronutrients such as iron and iodine, which affect children and women from low-income households in particular. Studies have shown that goitre is endemic in the East, Centre-south, North-west, Adamoua, West and Extreme North. These problems particularly affect the poorest strata of society.

Characteristics of Food Insecurity in Cameroon

6. The national cereals budget appears balanced, but food security remains precarious. Over the last few years, food production has failed to keep up with demographic growth. The food self-sufficiency index fell from 99 in 1982 to 78 in 1994, but there appears to



have been some improvement following devaluation, which was accompanied by a relative increase in food-crops production and a drop in food imports. However, the main cause of food insecurity remains poverty. Food insecurity particularly affects North and Extreme North provinces, where crops are exposed to climatic hazards and pest attacks. Emergency food aid is often needed there, as happened during the last two lean periods (April-July) in 1998 and 1999.

7. Calorie intake over the country as a whole dropped from 2,340 Kilocalories per person per day in 1979-81 to 2,140 in 1995-97. These figures conceal large differences among regions and different population groups, however. Vulnerability analysis and mapping shows that food insecurity differs widely between various agro-ecological areas on the one hand and different social groups on the other. Food insecurity in Cameroon is distributed as follows:
 - *High-risk rural areas* and areas with chronic food deficits. These comprise Sahelian and Sudanese-type agro-ecological areas characterized by: i) water deficits or very severe drought; ii) rudimentary production equipment and unskilled producers; iii) lack of farm inputs and frequent attacks by predators such as insects, birds and plant parasites; and iv) lack of water management, low soil fertility levels and over-intensive farming. According to FAO, only between 25 and 85 percent of food needs are covered in these areas. A survey by the Office for Overseas Scientific and Technical Research (ORSTOM) in 1995 estimated that all families suffered an average cereals deficit of between 200 and 300 kg in any given year in certain districts (Mayo-Danai, Mandara mountains, Logone and Chari).
 - *Moderate-risk rural areas* and areas with occasional (quantitative or qualitative) food deficits. They extend over the entire southern part of the country, including: i) High Western Plateaux sub-district where nearly 100 percent of food needs are covered, but where food security is seriously jeopardized by the over-exploitation of the little land available for farming and by environmental degradation; ii) rain-forest sub-district, where between 90 and 95 percent of food requirements are covered. Food insecurity arises from low productivity, precarious food storage conditions and diets poor in protein and essential mineral salts.
 - *Urban centres* where some social groups risk suffering food deficits, chiefly because financial constraints make it impossible for them to enjoy adequate diets. The urban poor suffer more than others from seasonal shortages in food supplies.

Characteristics of Poverty

8. In the 1998 Human Development Report, the UNDP poverty index noted that almost one third of the population of Cameroon suffered from the three fundamental forms of deprivation, i.e. short life expectancy, precarious living conditions, and lack of education. Cameroon dropped from 124th out of the 174 countries listed in 1995 to a current 132nd, evidencing the country's worsening poverty. Although the improvement in national finances noted in 1998 continues, this has yet to have an impact on the figures shown during Cameroon's household survey in 1996, which underlined the country's poverty.
9. Poverty in Cameroon is prevalent in rural areas (84 percent of the poor live in rural areas and 64 percent of the rural population is poor). The poverty index calculated for each region shows that the incidence of poverty increases away from the coastal areas and towards the north. It is below 25 percent in the Southwestern urban centres, but climbs to more than 50 percent in rural areas in the North and Extreme North.



10. According to available social indicators (housing, education and nutrition) scarcely-populated forest areas in the South and East regions of the country have the highest incidence of poverty. However, the greatest numbers of poor are concentrated in the densely-populated areas of North and Extreme North provinces. There is less poverty on the coast and around Douala as well as in Northwest, West and Southwest provinces.
11. In rural areas, poverty is linked to low productivity and soil fertility. Agriculture and forestry account for 32 percent of GDP, but these sectors employ nearly 70 percent of the population. Most farmers, especially the poorest, practise intensive farming on plots of less than two hectares. Access to technology, credit and infrastructure is very limited.

GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITIES AND POLICIES ADDRESSING POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY

12. The Government announced its commitment to fighting poverty in a strategic policy statement published in December 1998. The statement was part of the Government's economic and financial programme for the period 1 July 1998 to 30 June 2001. The stated objective was to "wage effectively the fight against poverty in Cameroon so as to reduce considerably and sustainably the proportion of the population living below the threshold of poverty".
13. The strategy provides for increased government spending on basic social and economic sectors in order to help the poor enter into the productive circuit and improve their living conditions. It also includes specific measures in favour of women, vulnerable groups and economically-backward areas.
14. The main lines of intervention proposed by the Government in its strategy statement are:
 - a) *growth*, through the promotion of agricultural production, and particularly food crops, the production of animal and fish protein, productivity and employment opportunities, especially through labour-intensive programmes;
 - b) *resources*, by investing in human capital (e.g. nutrition, health, drinking water and education), basic economic infrastructure and environmental resources management; and
 - c) *specific initiatives* such as projects aimed at women, vulnerable groups and economically-backward areas.
15. Alleviation of rural poverty and improvement of the living conditions of rural populations are seen by the Government of Cameroon as the principal challenges facing it. Achieving those objectives presupposes three things: a) increasing rural incomes in order to develop a monetary-based, as opposed to a subsistence economy; b) improving rural infrastructure (agricultural service roads, water supply, markets etc.) and, generally speaking, the living conditions of the populations concerned; and c) reorganizing social services (health and education) and make them more accessible to people so as to increase productivity, especially in the farm sector, through health services in the short term and through education in the long term.
16. Under a new strategy adopted in 1996, the Government has decided to increase funding to education and involve people more closely in the sector, with priority given to providing basic education for all. Increased participation by local groups and associations in the financing and management of schools is also foreseen.
17. Improving household food security is likely to make a significant contribution to reducing poverty in rural areas. Priority development activities are to be undertaken in favour of smallholders in the north of the country. These strategies will focus mainly on



women, who account for an estimated 70 percent of the workforce involved in subsistence agriculture (production, processing and retail). Initiatives aimed at improving their skills and productivity (especially in agriculture, animal husbandry and fish-farming) are also to be undertaken, while constraints limiting their access to education, health, land and credit are to be reduced. In this connection, a National Action Plan for the integration of women in development was recently adopted by Parliament.

18. The Government's agricultural policy objectives over the next decade emphasize the development of food crops production. Achievements of those objectives should bring about food security, chiefly in terms of having sufficient quantities of produce of the right quality available, and in terms of access to food by the population (involving stable consumer prices and increased incomes). In view of the rate at which the population is growing, food production should increase by more than 37 percent by 2010. Meeting this challenge implies the implementation of a vigorous policy of increased food-crops production. The three principal guidelines adopted by the Government are: a) increasing farm production and incomes; b) improving environmental factors and incentives (regulations, financing, management of land resources, rural infrastructure); and c) modernizing institutional framework.

Food Aid Policy

19. Cameroon has no clearly-defined policy on food aid. Such a policy is currently being defined through a reorganized Cereals Office. Food aid to Cameroon is chiefly supplied by WFP, which has been shipping an average of 6,000 tons a year since 1979, 80 percent of which is project aid.
20. Emergency assistance accounts for 20 percent of food aid delivered to Cameroon. This was supplied to victims of local drought and locust infestations which severely affected some districts in the Northern and Extreme Northern provinces. On those occasions food assistance was also distributed by some donors such as the European Union and Italy, as well as by the Government. In addition, many refugees from Chad and Equatorial Guinea benefited from large-scale emergency food aid during the 1980s.

ASSESSMENT OF WFP'S PERFORMANCE TO DATE

21. A basic agreement on WFP assistance to Cameroon was signed in April 1968 between WFP and the Government. Since 1971, WFP has provided assistance worth some US\$63 million to Cameroon, of which 50 million for development projects and 13 million for emergency operations. The project currently being implemented is worth US\$9.9 million.

Development Projects

22. Between 1979 and 1992, WFP implemented a series of multi-purpose projects in support of a large number of widely different activities. They included the settlement of immigrants, reforestation, village irrigation works, technical agricultural training, school canteens, social centres, nurseries and orphanages, mother-and-child health care centres, rice development and a cereals-stabilization stocks. Given the large number and great differences among the activities undertaken, and their geographical spread, it has not been possible to measure their impact on beneficiaries. Nor was it an easy matter to select beneficiaries in a rigorous fashion and make sure that stocks were properly managed.



23. Starting in 1992, with the implementation of project Cameroon 4077.00—“Support to the Tropical Forestry Action Plan” and Cameroon 4387.00—“School Feeding for the Social Dimension of Adjustment Project (DSA)”, WFP abandoned multi-purpose projects in favour of more specific forms of intervention.
24. Cameroon 4077.00 covered the period 1992–96 and was aimed at assisting the Government in developing the forestry sector. Food aid was supplied to labourers taking part in the works as a complement to their wages. Since those wages were paid irregularly, the food represented a nutritional supplement and provided an incentive which guaranteed continuity of the works.
25. Cameroon 4387.00, covering the period 1992–96, aimed at assisting the Government achieve its objectives in the education sector. During the period of execution, 28,057 pupils in primary and secondary schools received cooked meals in boarding-schools and school canteens throughout the country’s provinces.
26. The two projects were the object of a technical review by a joint WFP/UNESCO mission in 1996. The review concluded that, contrary to WFP’s Mission Statement, assistance provided by the projects was never centred on those areas and populations hardest-hit by poverty and hunger. The two projects also suffered from a lack of internal monitoring and evaluation and a low level of financial and technical assistance. Food aid was found to have acted chiefly as a form of budgetary support to the Government. The technical review mission recommended the termination of project Cameroon 4077.00 and re-targeting Cameroon 4387.00 exclusively to primary schools in rural areas of the northern provinces.

Emergency Operations

27. Over the past 10 years, WFP has provided emergency food aid to populations affected by drought and a variety of infestations and attacks, from locusts and grain-eating birds to elephants in the country’s North and Extreme North provinces. Such operations were undertaken in 1991, 1998 and 1999. Between June and December 1998, under emergency operation (EMOP) 6007.00, WFP supplied 6,000 tons of cereals to 210,000 people struck by a plague of migratory locusts and drought in Extreme North province. In addition to WFP’s assistance, the European Union supplied 2,500 tons of cereals and the Government 3,000 tons. EMOP 6084.00, in aid of victims of natural disasters in the North and Extreme North, was approved in February 1999. Of the 9,429 tons of cereals due to have been distributed under this EMOP to 94,290 families between March and August 1999, only 2,651 tons could be mobilized and distributed between May and July 1999, equivalent to an achievement rate of 28 percent. WFP relied on the services of international NGOs (SNV—Netherlands Voluntary Services and CARE) for distribution of the commodities, which were delivered directly to beneficiaries. The list of beneficiaries was drawn up by officials of the Ministry of Agriculture assisted by local authorities.
28. When delivered in a timely fashion, emergency aid has, generally speaking, helped maintain a minimum of food security and stabilize commodity prices in village markets in affected areas. However, EMOPs, even though vital to the survival of the populations concerned, have had disruptive socio-economic effects at the local level, as noted by various development partners involved in the Extreme North of Cameroon. In their view, the volume of aid was not sufficient to satisfy all the needs of given deficit areas, while the selection of beneficiaries led to tensions among the population. In addition, there was always a risk of emergency food aid becoming structural, to the detriment of longer-term development efforts.



Ongoing Projects

29. Project Cameroon 4387.01—“School Feeding in Adamoua, North, Extreme North and Eastern Provinces”—covers the period 1998–2002. The project was approved by the WFP Executive Board in May 1998 and became operational at the beginning of the 1998/99 school year. At that time, out of the 4,307 tons of food provided for under the plan of operations, a total of 3,320 tons was distributed in schools assisted by WFP, corresponding to an achievement rate of 77 percent. Some 1,246 tons were delivered to school canteens, and approximately 2,075 tons were distributed as dry rations. An internal evaluation was carried out from June to August 1999 at the end of the first year of operations. It was based on data provided by a representative sample of 59 schools benefiting from WFP assistance.
30. Results of the evaluation highlighted the following positive aspects: a) there had been a large increase in the number of pupils; b) attendance rates had climbed to between 70 and 98 percent, particularly for girls; c) communities were participating actively in managing the canteens; and d) the number of girls enrolling had increased as a result of the distribution of dry rations. As regards the last point, it was noted that: “delivery of dry rations tends to increase the status of girls. The project’s demonstration effect encouraged many families to enrol their girls at school, and the distribution of rations was systematically followed by the further enrolment of girls.”
31. However, project execution ran into a number of difficulties due to poor logistics management. Problems included irregular supply and distribution of commodities, delays in the opening of canteens and their erratic functioning, the rundown of stocks and the distribution of double rations to girls. Dry rations were also distributed to the first classes in primary schools whereas the project specified they should be given to the last two primary classes.
32. The internal evaluation mission also noted some undesirable effects, observed also by some school heads. In several instances, pupils were “migrating” from non-assisted schools to those benefiting from WFP assistance. The result was an overload on assisted schools and an increase in demand for the commodities. The phenomenon makes it even more difficult to manage and evaluate the project (numbers of beneficiaries, quantities to be delivered, etc.), and may lead to conflicts among different communities. Lastly, the monitoring and evaluation system is hampered by a lack of equipment, personnel, financial means, etc. which the project had provided for. The admission of more schools as beneficiaries under the conditions listed in paragraph 37 below should stop pupils migrating from one school to another.
33. The project can be said to have started reasonably well, but it remains fragile because of: inadequate control over the numbers of pupils, irregular delivery of commodities, poor logistics and lack of the funds which would permit a closer monitoring of the project’s activities. In addition, reviewing the distribution of responsibilities among the different centres involved in the project (the Central Coordination Unit and the Provincial Coordination Units) would improve project performance.

FUTURE ORIENTATION OF WFP ASSISTANCE

34. Future WFP activities in Cameroon will focus exclusively on the poorest rural areas characterized by chronic food insecurity. Basic education activities will target East, Adamoua, North and Extreme North provinces, where the incidence of poverty is high and



where large numbers of children are no longer being sent to school. Activities in support of food security will target rural food-deficit areas in North and Extreme North provinces. These activities include three of the five priority areas adopted by WFP in document WFP/EB.A/99/4-A—“Enabling Development”:

- Enable poor households to invest in human capital through education and training;
- Make it possible for poor families to gain and preserve assets; and
- Enable households which depend on degraded natural resources for their food security to make a shift to more sustainable livelihoods.

These activities fully conform with the Government’s strategies on food security and poverty alleviation.

35. In accordance with WFP’s Mission Statement, target groups will consist of the poor and very poor exposed to food insecurity. Children (both girls and boys) in economically backward areas affected by precarious food situations will benefit from activities implemented in support of basic education. Smallholders, especially women, in rural areas in the northern part of the country will benefit from activities aimed at establishing food security. Girls will represent the priority target in the Support to Primary Education project. Women, who account for 70 percent of the workforce in agriculture, will be the principal beneficiaries of food security activities.

Identification of Principal Areas of Intervention

Basic Education

36. As far as available resources permit, WFP will, as a matter of priority, strive to respond during the next academic cycle to the growing demand for education in the provinces targeted by project Cameroon 4387.01 (North, Extreme North, Adamaoua and East). WFP’s intervention in the education sector will contribute in the long term to the improvement and extension of primary education to all, as well as to the reduction of geographical and gender inequalities. It will also seek to involve more closely the populations concerned in the management of schools and to ensure that the country’s poorest and most under-educated populations are given equal access to schooling. Immediate objectives of WFP assistance will be to:

- a) help improve regular attendance of primary schools by children in economically backward areas characterized by precarious food security;
- b) help increase children’s learning ability by providing them with a balanced diet; and
- c) help increase enrolment and attendance among girls aged between 6 and 14 in the provinces targeted by the project.

WFP’s intervention will enable: i) one daily meal to be served to all children, both boys and girls, in selected schools; and ii) the distribution of special dry food rations to families keeping their girls at school for the last three years of primary school (CE2, CM1, CM2).

37. WFP support will target schools in rural areas where the overall enrolment rate is below 30 percent and where girls account for less than 40 percent of pupils. In order to prevent children migrating from non-assisted to beneficiary schools, WFP’s intervention will be extended to other schools meeting selection criteria in the same areas. Support to education for girls will be extended to girls attending classes in the last three years of primary school in order to ensure that they complete the course. The aim is to increase the enrolment rate



of girls to an average of more than 50 percent in beneficiary communities as a whole. Between 70 and 80 percent of WFP's contribution will go directly or indirectly to promoting the education of girls. Information and training will also be provided to women so as to involve them more closely in the management of canteens and food stocks.

Food Security

38. Recent emergency operations in North and Extreme North provinces have shown the need for development activities to be implemented in response to situations of acute food insecurity. WFP will, through food aid, support operations aimed at making food-crops production more reliable (hydro-agricultural schemes, rural service tracks, water and soil conservation works) and, through village granaries, prevent the occurrence of deficits through speculation.

Storage of food products in villages

39. The creation of village granaries to prevent speculation and deficits is nothing new. The World Food Summit's Action Plan, referring to Cameroon, calls for "the creation of food security stocks through the construction of village granaries in the northern part of the country the objective being to build 1,200 granaries each with a storage capacity of between 20 and 40 tons".
40. Experience in the region has shown that village storehouses can be effective, but that so far they affect only a very small minority of producers. They are not accessible to the poorest farmers, who are forced to sell their produce immediately after harvest.
41. WFP will match deposits made into the community granaries by the poorest farmers with its own deposits of locally-purchased cereals until the scheme becomes self-sufficient and a revolving fund is established. The Cereals Office provides an appropriate structure for this purpose and for harmonizing the initiatives of the various parties involved. WFP aid will be provided in support of technical assistance (mostly training in the organization and management of village granaries) by agencies which have already acquired considerable experience in the matter (Développement paysannal et gestion des terroirs (Farm Development and Farmland Management) (DPGT) and Comité diocésain de développement (Diocesan Development Committee (CDD)).

Development of farm production

42. Erratic rainfall and predator attacks in the provinces targeted for WFP assistance recently caused food crises which government services were unable to control. Crises of this kind produce a lowering of soil fertility on smallholdings (less than 2 hectares on average) because farmers can no longer afford to leave them fallow. The phenomenon is exacerbated by very rapid population growth (some parts of North province have seen their population double in ten years under the combined effects of immigration and natural demographic growth).
43. These provinces must increase agricultural production and make it more reliable, which in turn involves the creation of hydro-agricultural schemes, the improvement of agricultural service tracks (making villages more accessible), and water and soil conservation works. Such activities can be promoted through food-for-work activities in these vulnerable communities.
44. Principal activities suitable for assistance through food aid include integrated hydro-agricultural schemes featuring the construction of hill lakes and small dams or dry-stone or masonry barrages (*biefs*). The latter are aimed at reducing soil erosion caused



by flood waters and facilitating the infiltration of water in sediments accumulated downhill. Works of this kind are carried out during the dry season. Construction of bridging works and tracks rehabilitation could also be supported by WFP.

Prospects of Joint Programming with Other Organizations

45. Efforts are under way in Cameroon among United Nations system agencies to coordinate their interventions through systematic consultations around the different activities financed or executed by individual institutions. In 1998, a procedure was set up for the preparation of joint country budgets and a first document was produced. The future United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) will cover the period 2003-2007 so as to take account of the need to harmonize different programming cycles. Discussions are under way on the preparation of an intermediate framework plan to cover the period 2000-2002.
46. The future Country Programme will be implemented in harmony with the programmes and activities financed by multilateral and bilateral donors and NGOs, with whom WFP will reinforce its partnerships.
47. As regards education in Cameroon, possibilities for partnerships appear somewhat limited because the various players involved do not always target the same areas. But some opportunities for collaboration do exist, both with United Nations agencies (UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA) and with NGOs such as Plan International.
48. As regards storage of food products in villages, close collaboration will be established with the Cereals Office, which recently received funding for this purpose from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). Tasks to be performed by the Cereals Office include:
 - a) constitution and management of an emergency cereals stock of 15,000 tons;
 - b) promotion of storage in rural areas through training and the introduction of appropriate technologies aimed at reducing post-harvest losses and at ensuring that cereals are adequately stored; and
 - c) construction and rehabilitation of rural tracks in order to make remote production areas more accessible. Technical assistance to the Cereals Office will be provided by FAO.
49. As regards agricultural development, potential partners include FAO through its Special Programme on Food Security, whose water-management component is responsible for hydro-agricultural schemes in the northern part of the country. The component's initial phase will be operational in the year 2000 through the intermediary of a technical cooperation project for the Extreme North region and an ad hoc loan from the African Development Bank (AfDB) to the North region. AfDB and UNDP are soon to start a project entitled "Reduction of Poverty and Activities on Behalf of Women in the Extreme North Province", some of whose activities will be suitable for collaboration with WFP. They include the setting up of a facility for monitoring and evaluating poverty, the rehabilitation of rural tracks and the construction of community micro-infrastructure. In addition, agencies active in the northern regions and specialized in rural development such as SNV, DPGT, CARE, Action against Hunger (ACF) and Plan International will use WFP assistance to carry on their activities through the lean period. More information is needed about food vulnerability and poverty, and collaboration with ACF on a vulnerability mapping of Cameroon's northern regions is envisaged under the future Country Programme.



Modalities of WFP Assistance

50. WFP will as far as possible purchase cereals locally as required by the various activities and the different intervention areas, and bearing in mind local food preferences. Purchases will be made whenever products come onto the market at competitive prices. Cornflour, millet and sorghum can all be bought locally. Regarding food security activities, the initial stocks of village granaries will be completed by millet/sorghum purchased by WFP from the Cereals Office, if its terms are acceptable. Such operations will contribute to regulating markets and promoting the creation of village stocks. Local purchases by WFP will depend on the availability of funds, on competitive prices being available on the market and on the different activities to be supported. In connection with the last point, it should be recalled that commodities supplied by WFP, whether of domestic or foreign origin, are intended exclusively for feeding target populations; their storage in village granaries will represent a preparatory step intended to respond to emergency situations justifying the use of food aid as emergency relief.
51. The modalities of execution of different activities will be improved in the course of the programming cycle. Regarding food security, WFP will reinforce its own management capabilities and use the services of NGOs. In addition, recruitment of a United Nations Volunteer (UNV) to be based in Extreme North province would help follow activities more closely. As regards basic education, the project's Central Coordinating Unit, grouping representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Agriculture and the WFP country office, will be responsible for matters of general policy and for defining broad strategy to be executed by the Provincial Coordination Units. The decision-making powers of the provincial units will accordingly be strengthened as regards selection of beneficiary schools and organization of supplies. In addition, the provincial units should be given sufficient means to monitor the project's execution.

Operational Implications

52. In Cameroon UNFPA and UNICEF are in the middle of a programming cycle covering the period 1998-2002. Their next cycle will cover the period 2003-2007. UNDP has decided to extend its current cycle covering 1997-2001 for a year so as to coincide with UNFPA and UNICEF's next cycle. In order to harmonize with the other agencies, WFP's future programme will cover the period 2003-2007. Project Cameroon 4387.01— Assistance to School Feeding—will run until 2002. Food security activities in the period 2000-2002 will be undertaken in the form of projects.
53. Formulation of the future Country Programme will be preceded by a Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) of WFP's intervention area. Project Cameroon 4387.01 will be subjected to a technical review after two years of operation, prior to the formulation of the future Country Programme.
54. For the time being, WFP is not intervening in the fields of food security and agricultural development in Cameroon. Subsequent recommended interventions will initially be limited in scale. Meanwhile, the implementation of a quick action project seems advisable and would be accompanied by the recruitment of a UNV charged with monitoring and managing operations in the field. It is important that food-for-work activities begin before the formulation of the Country Programme in order that projected requirements be based on tried and tested absorption capacities and technical feasibility.



Resource Requirements

55. Resources to be allocated to Cameroon will depend on the global level of WFP's resources. They will also depend on the results of the technical review of project Cameroon 4387.01 and the performance of development activities in the field of food security. However, given the size of the planned programme, WFP assistance should be in the order of some 6,500 tons of commodities (worth US\$2.3 million) a year for the duration of the programme. The share of quantities would be 85 percent to the primary education sector and 15 percent to food security.

KEY ISSUES AND RISKS

56. **Budgetary Constraints.** Despite the efforts made by the Government over the past few years, Cameroon still suffers from a large budget deficit. If that trend continues, the future programme risks being jeopardized by the Government's scarce absorption capacity. Continuing government participation is a prerequisite for the pursuance of WFP activities in the country. At the same time, mobilization of food and non-food resources programmed by WFP should be carried out in good time and at the appropriate levels.
57. **Partnerships.** At the time of writing, most partners identified for the implementation of activities linked to food security have an intervention horizon of between three and five years, whereas the Country Programme will run on for another two years, until 2007. The continuity of financial assistance (IsDB for food security and AfDB for poverty alleviation and activities for women) and of high-quality technical assistance (FAO and other operators such as SNV, CARE, DPGT, CDD, Mandara Mountains Development Project, etc.) are a prerequisite for the pursuit of development activities linked to food security in the northern provinces.
58. **Environmental constraints.** Pressure on land, lower soil fertility and climatic hazards may trigger emergency operations to the detriment of development activities.



ANNEX

Poverty Index by Province
Based on environment, illiteracy and malnutrition

