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EVALUATION OF COUNTRY PROGRAMME—GUATEMALA (1998–2002)

ABSTRACT

The main aim of the evaluation was to determine in what way the Country Programme (CP) constitutes a valid tool for planning and implementation of WFP activities and to analyse whether it could facilitate achievement of the four areas of focus—integration, targeting, coherence and flexibility—characterizing a good programming strategy. The precise definition of basic and supplementary programme activities has been participatory but involved a lengthy process. The Government had a proactive role in the whole process of drafting, and a positive change in participation of the government counterpart should be emphasized.

Integration is adequate with official institutions and other entities assisting the communities and is coherent with the Government's Plan of Action. The CP is also consistent with WFP's policy of Enabling Development. However, there are some factors impeding the optimum use of food aid: a geographical dispersion of actions, insufficient targeting of municipalities and beneficiary groups most exposed to the risk of food insecurity, the need to search for new partnerships, and the lack of an efficient monitoring and evaluation system.

It is recommended that targeting procedures be formalized for interventions in areas of extreme poverty, and the new Country Programme should be designed with the participation of communities. Advances in gender training should be supported and consolidated. Moreover, a specific monitoring and evaluation system should become operational as soon as possible. Finally, more operational functions should be allocated to the Country Programme Advisory Committee (CPAC) so that it can adequately fulfil its role.

NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for consideration to the Executive Board.

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

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LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CCA	Common Country Assessment
CP	Country Programme
CPAC	Country Programme Advisory Committee
CSO	Country Strategy Outline
DSC	Direct support costs
FIS	Social Investment Fund
FONAPAZ	National Peace Fund
INDECA	<i>Unidad de logística</i> Logistics Unit
LIFDC	Low-income, food-deficit country
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MAGA	Ministry of Agriculture
SEGEPLAN	General Secretariat of Economic Planning
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
VAM	Vulnerability analysis and mapping



BASIS FOR WFP OPERATIONS IN GUATEMALA

1. Guatemala is a low-income, food-deficit country (LIFDC). It recently emerged from a 36-year internal conflict, ended by a peace agreement signed at the end of 1996. In accordance with the Socio-Economic Profile for Guatemala, 1997, 80 percent of its 10.5 million inhabitants live below the poverty line and 60 percent in extreme poverty. Food insecurity and poverty have structural causes, linked to the high rate of underemployment. Fifty percent of the labour force is mainly occupied in subsistence activities, carried out on small plots, with production levels insufficient to meet the food needs of rural families.
2. Health and education indicators are among the lowest in Latin America. The population's nutritional situation is a matter of concern; infant mortality reported by the National Statistical Institute stands at 57 per 1,000 live births, and the under-5 mortality rate is 79 per 1,000 live births. Malnutrition is the third leading cause of mortality. The Maternal and Child Health Survey of 1995 reported that 26.6 percent of children under 5 suffered severe malnutrition (weight-for-age deficit), 49.7 percent chronic malnutrition (height-for-age deficit) and 3.3 percent acute malnutrition (weight-for-height deficit).
3. There is a high proportion of households headed by women in rural areas, where women are not only responsible for their children's care and education, but also for household economic support. Fifty-six percent of women are illiterate, the highest rate for Latin America, compared to male illiteracy of 38 percent. The low educational level of the rural population, in particular of its indigenous members, continues to be one of the most serious problems facing the nation.
4. The country's environmental situation has continued to deteriorate rapidly over the last three decades, due to the interaction of various social, economic and cultural factors. Major environmental problems are deforestation, soil erosion and degradation as well as air pollution. As a result of Guatemala's geographical and climatic situation, the country is prone to periodic natural disasters, causing loss of human life, property and a major part of agricultural and livestock production.

THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME (CP)

5. From the start of its operations in Guatemala until now, WFP has supported projects with a total cost of about US\$132 million. As from 1991, assistance centred on supporting women's groups (training, group organization and setting up of productive enterprises), on the conservation of natural resources and the environment (soil conservation and improved water resources management), support to vulnerable groups (children under 5 and nursing mothers) and school feeding programmes.
6. The joint WFP/Government CP formulation process was initiated in mid-1997, the five-year (1998–2002) programme being approved in February 1998 with an allocation of US\$19.8 million, subject to resource availability. The CP's broad goals, as presented to the Executive Board, are to “support the Government's efforts in ensuring food security for the population in extreme poverty, through a process of training and community organization that will ensure integrated human development”. The CP's basic and supplementary



activities, as well as number of beneficiaries and respective allocations, are set out in the table below.

COUNTRY PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES			
Activities	Beneficiaries (no.)	Commodities (‘000 tons)	Percentage of programme (%)
Basic Activity 1 Construction of Infrastructure	40 000	52	63
Basic Activity 2 Soil and Water Conservation	62 500	16.5	20
Basic Activity 3 Basic Education for Women	20 200	4	4.8
Supplementary Activity 1 Returnees and Displaced Persons	10 000	1.7	2
Supplementary Activity 2 Prevention of Natural Disasters	20 000	4.5	5.4
Supplementary Activity 3 Pre-school Children	20 200	4	4.8
Total	172 900	82.7	100

SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

7. The main objective of the evaluation was to determine to what extent the Country Programme constituted a valid tool for planning and implementing WFP activities in Guatemala, and to analyse whether this strategy facilitated achievement of greater results than a mere continuation of support to isolated projects with limited inter-relationships. More precisely, the evaluation methodology aimed to identify the extent to which the introduction of the Country Programme had helped achieve:
- a) greater harmonization of WFP development activities with those of the Government, of other United Nations agencies, and with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and other co-executors (*integration*);
 - b) targeting of food aid, to reach the most vulnerable geographical areas and poor people suffering from hunger (*concentration*);
 - c) improved internal links between WFP activities as a result of coordination (*coherence*); and
 - d) enhanced possibility of reorienting initially programmed activities or resources to respond to a changing situation or an emergency (*flexibility*).
8. Therefore, this analysis does not constitute a standard evaluation of the basic and supplementary activities under the CP, but rather an appraisal of the capacity, within the process of CP conception and implementation, to achieve the four areas of focus—integration, concentration, coherence and flexibility—characterizing this strategy. However, in view of the importance of the new policy orientation of WFP on the function



of food aid for development,¹ programme activities were analysed in accordance with the central axis of future WFP programming, which consists in creating conditions to enable food-insecure households and poor communities to make investments which will replace aid in the long term. Finally, important aspects such as gender, participation and sustainability were also analysed, as well as CP execution and management.

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

9. Guatemala is one of the countries chosen for the pilot phase of UNDAF, the peace process offering the opportunity for a favourable environment for UNDAF implementation. In addition, climatic events such as El Niño and Hurricane Mitch facilitated the convergence, integration and complementarity of the activities of United Nations agencies, in line with UNDAF principles. Within this context, WFP, as a member of the United Nations system, plays a proactive role and has participated in the establishment of UNDAF since the beginning of 1998. WFP takes part in the UNDAF Common Country Assessment (CCA) process and in the thematic groups on Rural Development and Food Security, UNAIDS, Gender and Disasters. After a long and extended consultation process with all parties involved, CCA formulation for Guatemala is now in the revision stage and will hopefully be approved at the beginning of 2000.
10. On the initiative of the WFP country office, a Group for the Coordination of Food Aid has been established, comprising all donors and NGOs contributing food aid as part of post-Hurricane Mitch assistance. The group's main functions are global coordination of food aid, discussion of fiscal issues and monetization of food aid, dissemination of information on matters of mutual interest, and updating on progress and achievements of projects managed by each donor and NGO. There is also integration with other institutions supporting the same communities as WFP. However, this integration seems to be only ad hoc in some cases, due to actions related to Hurricane Mitch, and is above all operational. From a strategic point of view, the reflection undertaken within the framework of the Group for the Coordination of Food Aid needs to be broadened and strengthened and integration with community authorities at the strategic and programmatic level must be ensured.
11. The Country Strategy Outline (CSO) and the Country Programme documents were respectively drawn up in 1996 and 1997. The CSO was formulated with the support of the Regional Bureau and involved periodic consultation with the General Secretariat of Economic Planning (SEGEPLAN). In contrast, the Country Programme was prepared by a working group set up by the WFP country office, which included an outside consultant contracted by WFP and a Government committee comprising all the Project Directors, as well as Ministry of Agriculture (MAGA) and SEGEPLAN officials. Moreover, for specific themes, officials from other institutions were invited to enhance the content of the document.
12. An adequate degree of integration with other official institutions has been observed, at the level of Project Directors and with the MAGA food aid counterpart official. However, the rotation of government officials compromises the durability and effectiveness of this relationship, and more effective action is required, for example in terms of knowledge of

¹ "Enabling Development—Policy Issues, Annual Session of the Executive Board (WFP/EB.A/99/4-A). Rome, 17–20 May 1999.



the CP and of WFP's new strategic orientations. On the other hand, there is no provision for the formal, systematic and technical revision of programme guidelines with the Government. The design of a formal revision mechanism would avoid new delays and misunderstandings which have hindered the application of this planning and programming tool.

13. The geographical dispersion of beneficiaries can result in inefficient implementation. Within the activities of the new Country Programme it will hopefully be possible to analyse the weighting of criteria of inclusion, for example, as well as the occurrence of natural disasters, presence of returnees, levels of malnutrition. To enable efficient WFP participation, the minimum and maximum size of communities to be assisted needs to be decided. Targeting should ensure that food aid beneficiaries are those who finally benefit from the food. In order to optimize the design and implementation of CP activities, it needs to be ascertained whether participants in food-for-work projects rightly value the food aid provided (the same applies for local counterpart implementers).
14. The CP is consistent with the Government's 1996–2000 Plan of Action,² as regards specific objectives to increase the supply of basic foodstuffs, develop comprehensive processes of education, promotion and information about food and nutrition, give nutritional care to children under 5, and coordinate agents involved in improving the food and nutrition situation.
15. As regards recommendations on WFP policy on enabling development, there is global coherence of the CP with the former's five areas of focus. However, in order to ensure greater coherence and integration at the level of actions, more detailed analysis is needed during the preparation of each activity. Thus for example, school feeding was included as an addendum to the CP in answer to a request from the Government, because coherence between respective policies during the formulation stage had not been secured, and this delayed the final signature of the CP.
16. It is important to have adequate disaster preparedness measures, including the allocation of food and other resources. In this way, 'borrowings' and the subsequent shortfalls of commodities could be reduced. At the same time, the most urgent needs of disaster victims would be covered, as well as the commitments made to project participants. WFP carries out contingency activities in order to have a minimum food stock for disasters, but since Guatemala is highly disaster-prone, the CP should be broader and more forward-looking in this respect.
17. Flexibility, understood as the possibility of reorienting activities, should be based on a clear definition of responsibilities. The CP, as is the case in the normative project documents, should clarify who is responsible for administration, monitoring and evaluation. Flexibility would seem necessary in relation to the appearance of new co-executors on the local and national scene, as well as to the disappearance and withdrawal of others. In the same way, a 'historical memory' mechanism is needed, so as to minimize the effects of personnel rotation or the disappearance of organizational units within the Government.

² "Desarrollo y Construcción de la Paz. Plan de Acción 1996–2000". SEGEPLAN/Gabinete Social, Guatemala, 1996.



FUNCTION OF FOOD AID AND FOOD SECURITY

18. The function of food aid and the role of WFP within the framework of food security in Guatemala must be analysed in relation to the new WFP orientations for the use of food aid for development,³ approved by the Executive Board in May 1999. As a result, WFP must concentrate its efforts so as to satisfy the urgent needs of the population remaining broadly excluded from the traditional development processes.
19. The strategic focus and CP basic and supplementary activities as presented in the document⁴ concur with the above-mentioned objectives recently formulated by WFP. However, implementation of activities indicates certain obstacles (already identified in the CP document) preventing the adequate use of food aid, in particular:
- Food aid should continue to be directed to those municipalities and beneficiary groups most exposed to the risk of food insecurity, and should be accompanied by investments and permanent technical assistance in support of concrete work plans.
 - Considering the various factors which could affect the capacity of the Government to carry out its counterpart obligations, new partnerships and associations need to be sought with other donors and bodies active in the same sectors, with similar objectives and working methods.
20. On the other hand, due to the existence and permanence of previous WFP projects, the formulation and implementation of the CP were mainly based on existing activities with national counterparts (in particular the National Peace Fund—FONAPAZ—and Social Investment Fund—FIS), but less so in relation to well defined strategic and technical objectives.
21. Each CP basic activity is linked with a national counterpart, which in the case of Basic Activity 1 represents a very important part of the programme (63 percent). However, within a basic activity there can exist various priority actions for the counterpart, but without coherence with respect to the adequate use of food aid, such as for housing construction, road infrastructure, productive activities, community organization and training. Moreover, the same actions can be found within another basic activity. There is need to find a more coherent institutional structure, organized according to technical themes.

GENDER AND PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

22. Within the CP framework and taking as a point of departure the conclusions of the mid-term Evaluation of WFP's Commitments to Women (November 1998), a three-stage programme was designed: a) awareness-raising; b) training and capacity-building for managing gender criteria in projects; and c) institutional support for implementation of actions under each project plan. Through these stages, carried out in 1999 and clearly differentiated as regards objectives, activities and guidelines, an effort was made to raise awareness of both WFP country office staff and national counterparts about the problems

³ "Enabling Development—Policy Issues". Annual Session of the Executive Board (WFP/EB.A/99/4-A). Rome, 17–20 May 1999.

⁴ Country Programmes: Guatemala—1998–2002. Rome, February 1998.



of gender inequality in Guatemalan society and to develop a greater awareness of the need to integrate actions and mechanisms, so as to broaden options and opportunities for women participating in WFP-supported projects.

23. The CP still faces some operational and conceptual difficulties in integrating appropriate mechanisms aimed at fulfilling the Commitments to Women. For example, there is resistance to admitting women into community associations, the argument being that this is the communities' culture, and traditional perceptions are maintained on the allocation of productive tasks between men and women.
24. The limited impact of the guidelines in the gender-training programme could be due to lack of awareness about the true situation of exclusion and marginalization of women in communities and within projects. The lack of continuity of certain government officials in the development of the programme also limited the possibilities of reversing this situation.
25. The participatory focus should lead to the strengthening of working groups, to shared responsibilities, coordinated operations, a strengthening of community organizations and their involvement, and consolidate the sustainability of development actions. In this respect, women took part in the reception and control of commodities during emergency operations and it is hoped that within emergency aid operations, strategies will be developed to allow a greater presence of women. At present, 42 percent of WFP project beneficiaries are women.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT-EXECUTION

26. The exact definition of CP basic and supplementary activities has been the product of a process starting in 1997, and ending with the signature by the Government in November 1999 of the Country Programme Agreement. In the case of Basic Activity 1 (Construction of Infrastructure), the project document had been submitted to the Executive Board and approved in 1996. WFP made a detailed and coherent outline for new activities 2 and 3 (Soil and Water Conservation and Basic Education for Women) The drafting and preparation of documents involved government officials responsible for subsequently carrying out the activities concerned, giving this process greater coherence and resulting in the Government's acceptance of responsibility for subsequent execution. Another innovative aspect was the submission of these projects, for technical review, to a commission comprising representatives of the United Nations agencies with mandates related to the issues addressed by the projects, such as FAO, UNICEF, UNESCO and UNFPA.
27. The process was lengthy for several reasons, such as: a) the impact of Hurricane Mitch, which changed priorities; and b) negotiations with the Government to define the way to include school meals within the CP.
28. During the CP drafting process, the Government set up an Executive Committee in November 1997 comprising officials in charge of administering food aid. This Committee was formalized within the CP agreement, signed by the Government and the WFP Guatemala office in November 1999. The Country Programme Advisory Committee's (CPAC) functions are to define and discuss adjustments eventually necessary in accordance with the degree of implementation of the CP. The functioning of the CPAC



falls within the implementation guidelines of the Country Programme,⁵ which also specify the prerogatives and responsibilities of the WFP Guatemala country office.

29. The Government has played a proactive role in the whole process of drafting and preparation of documents comprising the Country Programme and the activities. This is a very important positive factor to be taken into account, insofar as the Government had not previously attached much significance to WFP's work, resulting in many cases in a defective execution of projects.
30. In the last two years there has been a marked change relating to government counterparts. The appointment of a functional entity as the unit responsible for logistics has enabled a considerable improvement of food distribution. The nomination of a Food Aid Coordinator has led to better coordination with the Government. The broader participation of Government officials in activities, meetings, field visits, seminars and trips outside the country has enriched the executive capacity of the Government. The entry of new entities, such as the FIS, has opened up new possibilities and dynamics in project management. Finally, the interest shown by the highest levels of Government ensures to a certain extent the possibility of being able to count on means to execute planned activities. However, government constraints on execution remain, such as the lack of adequate and opportune budgetary allocations to finance logistics, insufficient technical assistance to agriculture, and budget difficulties of some official counterparts, which reduce the response of field staff.
31. Problems in the design and implementation of an efficient monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system affect WFP's activities in Guatemala. At the moment of programme design, and as a function of the latter, the problem arose of how to design and implement a monitoring system allowing the measurement of the progress of the CP overall and in individual activities. The proposal made in the CP does not make clear how the M&E system is going to be set up. With regard to specific activities, efforts have already been made, with WFP country office officials and their counterparts, to start designing a complete M&E system to include all aspects of logistics and of beneficiaries.
32. In line with the Executive Board guidelines, a series of changes in administration and finance has been implemented, ranging from the establishment of biennial budgets to the introduction of controls on resource management assigned to each activity executed. As from 2000, direct support costs (DSC) will be introduced, i.e. resources specifically assigned to activities. This new financial-administrative policy is motivated by the reduction in project operational costs and DSC are conditioned to the quantity of commodities annually allocated to activities. However, this limits the possibility of making long-term projections relating to personnel and to the monitoring of project activities.
33. During the last two years, food distribution has speeded up, not only for victims in emergency operations, but also for other WFP country activities. Unloading, transport, storage and distribution of commodities have accelerated. These distributions are taking place smoothly with the assistance of the Logistics Unit appointed by the Government's *Unidad de logística* (INDECA), which receives technical and financial support from WFP. Procedures for allocation and delivery of products have been worked out with the counterpart, starting from general programming of distribution per project and product, the request from the National Project Coordination for rations to be distributed on the basis of working norms and activities actually carried out, reception in the communities and community organization of distribution.

⁵ Fortieth Session of the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes, Rome, November 1995.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

34. The UNDAF programming cycle is set to cover the period 2001 to 2004. In order to harmonize United Nations programming cycles, the present duration of the CP should be shortened by one year and WFP should prepare a new CP during 2000 on the basis of the recommendations of this evaluation. The process of revision and preparation of the next CSO and CP should employ the same methodology used in the preparation of the existing CP, seeking as much as possible coordination with, as well as participation and collaboration by the Government and other co-executors. This approach would allow the rapid acceptance of the final draft and easier collection of necessary data and information.
35. The donors' Food Aid Coordinating Group needs to be strengthened and integrated into a joint strategy and a plan of operations which will maximize the benefits of the presence of such agents in the country, while seeking complementarity and synergy and avoiding duplication of actions, missing items, or responses without common or complementary coordination or objectives. The integration of the CP with other co-executors should minimize shortfalls in implementation in whatever respect, and avoid putting at risk credibility and confidence gained in the country.
36. Targeting procedures should be formalized in the CSO, taking as reference the work done in Basic Activity 2, duly weighting criteria of environmental vulnerability with those of social vulnerability, in particular food insecurity and malnutrition. The Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) tool will have to be used to ensure adequate targeting. Selection criteria should be revised to balance the emphasis between attention to displaced persons and returnees, Hurricane Mitch victims, and people suffering from extreme chronic poverty. Significant use should be made of community malnutrition and food consumption indices so as to guarantee the selection of the most needy. Community participation must be emphasized in the design process of the new CSO. During the preparatory phase, differences must be resolved and compatibility sought between the priority interests of all parties involved in the preparation of the CSO.
37. The preparation of the documents on Basic Activities 2 and 3 has been adequately carried out. The same mechanism is recommended for the new CP. However, Basic Activity 1 has a rather outdated design, and if these activities will be chosen in the CSO, a technical mission should revise and restructure this basic activity, as a function of both the new guidelines for use of WFP food aid and the new realities in Guatemala.
38. In the same way, technical assistance is required to evaluate the design, execution and impacts of past and present government school feeding programmes, whether carried out with WFP assistance and/or that of other co-executors. The evaluation's results and recommendations should enable the Government and WFP to take decisions about the inclusion of such programmes in the next CP.
39. Provision for adjustment or change in case of disasters or socio-economic events should be made at the programming level, as far as possible. Also, courses of action should be defined in case of a shortfall of resources, whether from the Government or WFP. Also, flexibility is needed to reorient food rations so as to respond to M&E recommendations on activities. This can be at the same time a control mechanism to guarantee efficiency and fulfilment of commitments and operational programmes.
40. Practical strategies and mechanisms need to be defined, to guarantee that progress achieved through the gender training programme is supported and consolidated. Projects should determine a clear strategy to verify and monitor the fulfilment of the WFP



Commitments to Women. Care must be taken not to differentiate activities or allocation of resources (food rations) as a function of gender discrimination. Gender aspects need to be incorporated into the design of activities, giving opportunities for the equitable incorporation of women in power and decision-making structures as well as in community organizations.

41. Communication must be improved on all sides, both as regards information sharing (not only WFP-MAGA or SEGEPLAN-MAGA, but by setting up co-executor groups), so as to achieve an efficient and participatory process of discussion, reflection and decision-making. To this end, a quality guarantee system of the CP should be designed and implemented, according to the modern concept of total quality management, linked to results-based management. The focus should move away from accounting indicators towards indicators on quality of food aid for development.
42. On the level of the consolidated CP, there is no specific M&E system, partly because the programme has not yet started overall. At the level of each individual activity the set-up of an M&E system has been studied, which would include the possibility of including both qualitative and quantitative data. The system, supported by a specific computer program, consists in a set of activities which are: a) periodic, i.e. field visits; b) specific and periodic studies and reviews; c) collection of data from counterparts and co-executors; d) assessment or appraisal missions; and e) establishment of character profiles of communities and beneficiaries. Data obtained serve for the preparation of periodic reports. The existing guidelines for Country Programmes indicate the following reporting systems for activities: quarterly progress reports on resources and half-yearly reports on each summarized activity of the WFP country office. This system should become operational as soon as possible.
43. More operational functions should be added so that the CPAC carries out the role of CP advisor. The preparation of the new CP offers the opportunity of defining a *modus operandi* for the Committee, with the possible creation of commissions for each CP activity. However, the following principles need to be observed: a) access of all programme co-executors; b) reflection based on the focus and technical issues contained in the WFP policy document "Enabling Development", in addition to the government's social development policy; and c) operational feasibility especially as regards the validation and approval of project proposals. While preserving the prerogatives and responsibilities of the WFP Country Director/Representative, the responsibility of the Committee will be both managerial/coordinating and technical. The Committee will also be responsible for project supervision and coordination of reports to WFP and all co-executing institutions.
44. Despite the efforts made by the WFP country office, the present logistics system needs to be strengthened by a more modern computerized system such as COMPAS. In consequence, the Government and WFP should jointly implement the manual and recommendations of the logistics consultants who analysed project actions in February 1999, which would contribute to improving the logistics system.