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SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE SECOND REGULAR SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, 1998



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FORMAL WORKING GROUP ON REVIEW OF THE RESOURCE AND LONG-TERM FINANCING POLICIES (1998/EB.2/1)

1. This item was introduced by the President of the Board who explained that the proposal was being presented in conformity with the wishes of the informal consultation on WFP's Resource and Long-term Financing policies which was held on 28 April 1998. The establishment of a Formal Working Group would engage Members more directly and help to move the process forward with a view to bringing recommendations to the Board's Third Regular Session of 1998. The Group would be open to all Members of the Programme and the Observer of the European Commission.

EVALUATION REPORTS (1998/EB.2/2)

2. **Nepal 5572.00—Rural Community Infrastructure Works Programme.** The advantages of implementation arrangements involving close partnerships were stressed as well as the positive experiences produced as a result of participatory approaches and increases in local capacity. Given the other partners' efforts, WFP's attention was drawn to the need for timely provision of food inputs at a sufficient level. Several representatives noted that sustainability would stand a better chance if there was greater involvement of local government. As further assurance, the Secretariat indicated that this project was included among the priorities of the Government of Nepal in its core programme on poverty alleviation. The Board noted the lack of specific coverage in the report of gender issues, and was referred to the full report where these issues are addressed.
3. The need to give priority to productive agricultural activities over road construction was stressed by various representatives; they were informed that follow-up on the related recommendations of the mission had already been initiated, for instance, through contacts with FAO.
4. **India 2206.06—Support to Integrated Child Development Services Scheme.** Representatives supported the locally produced blended and fortified food (*Indiamix*); some requested further information about the cost-effectiveness of this product. In response to concerns about the need for impact evaluation, the Secretariat agreed that the project would benefit from a new results-based framework with performance indicators, and noted that evaluation studies were problematic when WFP food assistance was only one component in a much larger government programme. In this respect, representatives indicated that the value added of the WFP intervention could manifest itself better if the Government were to see it as a "pilot" to test innovative ideas before replicating them at the national level. Reference was also made to an evaluation of the larger programme undertaken by the Indian Government. A number of representatives stressed the need to develop a phasing-out concept and to delineate the exit strategy. In this context, the need to concentrate the project on the very poorest states was stressed.



5. **UNHCR/WFP Joint evaluation of emergency food assistance to returnees, refugees, displaced persons and other war-affected populations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.**
The Board appreciated the frankness of the report, particularly with regard to inter-agency difficulties encountered in terms of identifying and recruiting appropriate staff, harmonizing accounting systems and obtaining a fair share of media coverage. It expressed the hope that in future operations these difficulties could be resolved.
6. The Board commended the good collaboration efforts and division of labour between UNHCR and WFP. It recognized the need for a carefully graduated phasing-out of food assistance in view of the slow build-up of national social welfare programmes. Concerns were expressed about the lack of funds for monitoring. The Secretariat stated that during the war, UNHCR was responsible for this function and resources had not been forthcoming to the extent needed. After the war, when WFP became responsible in 1996 for the entire food aid chain, the monitoring capacity needed to be developed. In this connection, one representative recommended that such reports systematically comprise—besides financial details on costs—information regarding objectives to be achieved, financial details and the composition of the evaluation missions.

COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINE—BURKINA FASO (1998/EB.2/4)

7. The Board welcomed the Country Strategy Outline (CSO) for Burkina Faso and expressed its readiness to consider, in January 1999, a Country Programme for the period 2000–2004. The Board took note of the fact that the school canteen component would not be included in the Country Programme, as the related needs were being covered by another donor. An adult literacy programme, focusing on women, will be supported by WFP.
8. The Secretariat was advised to give priority in the Country Programme to vulnerable group feeding and adult literacy. The Secretariat was encouraged to arrange for a careful analysis of the impact of food aid on local markets; the Country Programme should take into account the results of that analysis. The WFP Country Programme must be integrated in the forthcoming United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), and coordinated with bilateral donors and the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel. Collaboration with NGOs for its implementation was recommended. Support to activities targeted to women and a participatory approach was strongly encouraged. Geographical and sectoral targeting in the Centre-West, Centre-South, South-East, Centre-North and North regions was noted with approval. One representative suggested that the Centre region be added, as this region encounters the same risks of serious food deficits.
9. The Secretariat was urged to continue to work with the Government of Burkina Faso on resolving the issue of duties and taxes on humanitarian and development assistance resources. The Board also requested that detailed information on the Government's contribution to WFP activities be included in the Country programme.



COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINE—MADAGASCAR (1998/EB.2/5)

10. The Board reviewed the CSO for Madagascar, noted the participatory approach and the consideration given to gender issues, and encouraged the Secretariat to prepare a Country Programme based on the CSO's general thrust. In preparing the Country Programme, the Secretariat should take into account evaluation reports on previous activities, in particular recommendations on implementation constraints. Consideration may be given to increasing the share of the Country Programme's resources for food production and disaster prevention and preparedness. Complementarity and collaboration between WFP, United Nations agencies and donors, taking into account the recommendations of the UNDAF initiative, were strongly encouraged. All Country Programme activities should aim for sustainability.
11. The Board noted that Madagascar frequently suffers major disasters, such as cyclones, drought and locust infestation, and expressed its appreciation for WFP's support to the country in such circumstances.

COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINE—NEPAL (1998/EB.2/6)

12. In discussing the CSO for Nepal, the Board emphasized that the following points be taken into account in the formulation of the Country Programme:
 - a) enhanced coordination and operational linkages with other donors;
 - b) closer cooperation with the Basic Primary Education Project;
 - c) the need to prioritize WFP interventions, including geographical concentration;
 - d) more attention to the creation of assets that can be owned by the target population;
 - e) greater attention to the environment in the development of infrastructure;
 - f) the need for a check on the potential impact on local price levels when major local purchases of food are planned; and
 - g) the need for a careful analysis of the country's institutional and absorptive capacity.

COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINE—SRI LANKA (1998/EB.2/7)

13. The Board endorsed the strategy delineated in the CSO for Sri Lanka.
14. The CSO was commended for its targeting, gender sensitivity, synchronization with the programmes of United Nations agencies and collaboration with development partners. The following issues were raised: the achievement of the planned target of 25 percent households headed by women among new settlers; and restrictions placed on the transportation of edible oil into the conflict zone.
15. The Board agreed with the Secretariat's proposal to proceed with the Country Programme for submission to the First Regular Session of 1999.



COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINE—ECUADOR (1998/EB.2/8)

16. The Board endorsed the strategy delineated in the CSO for Ecuador. In consultation with the Government, the Secretariat will determine the appropriateness of proceeding with the preparation of a Country Programme, taking into account observations made.
17. The Board recommended that appropriate consideration be given to a gradual phasing-out of WFP's activities in the country. Discussion clarified that the educational activity was presented in the context of phasing out WFP assistance to that sector during the CSO period, but a phasing out of assistance to the country was not necessarily envisaged. Coordination of CSO activities with other multilateral and bilateral agencies was explained in the Board exchanges.
18. The Board noted with satisfaction the strategy for targeting the indigenous population, and in particular women and children. The government's Food Compensation Fund (FOCAL) initiative was considered innovative, and some countries indicated their willingness to contribute to it. The Board urged the Secretariat to ensure that WFP's support to FOCAL is consistent with its mandate.

COUNTRY PROGRAMME—EL SALVADOR (1998–2002) (1998/EB.2/9)

19. The Board noted with satisfaction that the proposed Country Programme for El Salvador (1998–2002) sets out a joint strategy for the Government and WFP to phase out food assistance over the next five years and to ensure sustainability of the activities with government resources.
20. The Board commended WFP for the quality of the Country Programme, and for the clear targeting in favour of women—particularly expectant and nursing mothers—and children, in line with WFP's commitments. One representative suggested decreasing the number of targeted Departments.
21. The Board appreciated the significant contribution of the Government to this Programme (31 million dollars), but expressed concern regarding the supplementary requirements, 12 million dollars, where no donor had yet been identified, and on the extent to which this could affect the Country Programme if the resources could not be mobilized. One representative pointed out that his country planned to respond favourably to this request.
22. The Board acknowledged that the assistance under the Country Programme is warranted to help in the rehabilitation process after a 12-year war. It encouraged WFP to use the time frame of this Country Programme for working with its United Nations partners to provide technical support to the Government of El Salvador regarding its assuming total responsibility for food assistance programmes by the end of 2002.

COUNTRY PROGRAMME—MALAWI (1998–2001) (1998/EB.2/10)

23. The Board expressed its support for the activities proposed in the Country Programme for Malawi as well as their focus and geographic concentration. The Board noted the strong collaboration between the Government, donors, and United Nations agencies within the UNDAF exercise.



24. The Government's ownership of the programme and active participation in planning and implementation were encouraged. Local purchases of food to stimulate local production and a greater participatory approach were also encouraged. Attention to appropriate staffing and ensuring high-quality management of food for work was advised. It was also recommended to ensure appropriate allocation of scarce resources between various programme components, particularly between food for work and supplementary feeding. More transparency in budgetary information was encouraged, particularly with regard to information on direct support costs.

COUNTRY PROGRAMME—ETHIOPIA (1998–2003) (1998/EB.2/11)

25. The Board expressed strong support for the Country Programme for Ethiopia (1998-2003), noting that food aid could play a pivotal role in development. It also expressed satisfaction at the main focus of the programme being on land protection, afforestation and water conservation. It was noted that environmental degradation was a significant contributing factor to food insecurity in Ethiopia.
26. The Board welcomed the confirmation of the Ethiopian Government that the Country Programme was closely linked to its overall strategy and priorities.
27. The Secretariat took note of recommendations and advice expressed by the Board, and confirmed that these would be taken into account during implementation of the Country Programme. In particular, the concerns expressed on sustainability, benefits accruing to women from the assets created, assessment indicators and impact would be kept in mind as activities were developed. Both the Secretariat and the Government confirmed that activities under the Country Programme were anticipated to be in line with the general framework of the Country Strategy Note and UNDAF process once those were implemented in Ethiopia.

COUNTRY PROGRAMME—SENEGAL (1999–2001) (1998/EB.2/12)

28. Regarding the Country Programme for Senegal, the Board noted that the proposed activities could be more innovative and more closely linked to the conceptual framework. Increased contributions from the local communities and the Government towards the school feeding and urban sanitation activities should be encouraged in order to improve their sustainability.
29. The Board noted that, as compared to the CSO, the duration of the Country Programme was adjusted to coincide with United Nations agencies' programme cycling for coordination and complementarity purposes and that the budget had been reduced accordingly.
30. The Board welcomed the geographical focus on the poorest areas and noted that the most drought-prone areas were not the poorest owing to special coping patterns in Senegal.



DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVAL—CAMEROON 4387.01 (1998/EB.2/13)

31. The Board welcomed the project's focus on the country's poorest areas, its social and gender targeting, participative approach and the provisions made for enhanced monitoring. Concern was expressed regarding the sustainability of the canteens after the end of the project, insufficient government funding for the schools and a lack of teachers in some areas. Some representatives drew attention to logistical constraints and the cost of internal transportation. The need for managerial improvements, more effective project implementation and monitoring, and a strong government commitment was emphasized. The Board also requested that a mid-term evaluation be submitted in about two years.
32. The Secretariat informed the Board that participating communities were highly committed and activities had already begun under the transitional phase. Regarding the integration of the project within a coordinated educational programme, the Secretariat indicated that education activities carried out under this project are consistent with Cameroon's education policies and programmes. Food aid is one of the inputs needed to support such programmes. The Secretariat pointed out that the project had been jointly formulated by WFP and UNESCO, and assured the Board that it would carry out a mid-term evaluation.

DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVAL—SUDAN 5745.00 (1998/EB.2/14)

33. The Board noted WFP's comprehensive analysis of water availability and food security. It welcomed the project's thrust and its focus on alleviating hardship and improving the standard of living, particularly of women and children.
34. The representative of Denmark underlined that his Government's policy was not to support or participate in activities or projects that provide direct assistance to the Government of Sudan. Other representatives saw the strength of the project in its support to capacity-building at the community level and the emphasis on self-help, with marginal involvement of the Government of Sudan.
35. The importance of inter-agency collaboration in such projects, as illustrated in this case through UNICEF participation, was highlighted.
36. While agreeing with representatives that one of the important aspects of the project is its support to women, one representative queried whether the type of work requested of women in the framework of the project placed additional demands on them, representing an unfair burden which added to their already strenuous daily workload. The Country Director of the Sudan office responded to queries regarding maintenance of the *hafirs*, reiterating that prior experience indicated the need to establish *hafir* committees from the construction phase onwards. He also pointed out that 50 percent of the fees collected by the committees are used for maintenance. The Secretariat explained that the construction/rehabilitation of *hafirs* consisted of various stages and functions where women participate in tasks suitable to their capacities. Furthermore, the prospect of bringing water closer to their homes is so vital to their well-being that women are willing to take on more work to achieve this. The importance of regular maintenance of the *hafirs* and the need for project monitoring were emphasized.



BUDGET INCREASE TO PREVIOUSLY APPROVED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS—BURKINA FASO 3326.01 (1998/EB.2/15)

37. The Board approved the one-year budget increase to project for the period January to December 1999. A question was raised on the progress achieved since the June 1997 mid-term evaluation mission. The Secretariat advised that an amendment to the plan of operations was signed with the Government, and that the following measures were being implemented: a) geographical targeting in the 25 most food-deficit regions of the country; b) sectoral targeting on four main activities and exclusion of activities for which food aid is not the most appropriate resource; and c) co-management with the Government to improve project monitoring, logistics efficiency and timely food distribution.

PROTRACTED REFUGEE AND DISPLACED PERSON PROJECT (PRO) FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVAL—ETHIOPIA 5241.03 (1998/EB.2/16)

38. In considering the project, the Board expressed satisfaction that it would address the need for continued registration exercises as well as improve distribution mechanisms. The Secretariat stated that the project document is a planning tool, and that the numbers of refugees receiving assistance would depend on registration and revalidation exercises, taking into account any eventual repatriation. Significant changes in numbers would be handled through de-earmarking of resources or an expansion of the project.
39. The Board felt that repatriation is the only durable solution for the refugees and supported the Secretariat's intention to strongly support repatriation efforts. It took note of problems in the refugees' home countries, which remained an obstacle to repatriation for many of them.

PROTRACTED REFUGEE AND DISPLACED PERSON PROJECT FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVAL—KENYA 4961.04 (1998/EB.2/17)

40. The Board urged WFP and UNHCR to ensure that refugee statistics are maintained at as realistic levels as possible by conducting head-counts and controlled card revalidations. The Board also advised that repatriation exercises should be supported whenever opportunities arise.

PROTRACTED REFUGEE AND DISPLACED PERSON PROJECT FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVAL—SUDAN 4168.05 (1998/EB.2/18)

41. The Board welcomed measures taken by WFP and UNHCR to repatriate the refugees to their homelands as well as efforts to promote economic self-reliance. Representatives encouraged the Secretariat to pursue repatriation whenever feasible.
42. One representative welcomed the proposed differential rationing corresponding to the degree of self-reliance potential of the refugees, and recommended that the number of refugees be reviewed semi-annually based on regular reverifications and actual repatriation as they occur. Another representative voiced his country's concern regarding the slim prospects of Eritreans returning to their homes, since many of the current beneficiaries



were born in Sudan. Another representative underlined his Government's view that the only real solution is the return of refugees to their home countries. However, under the existing circumstances he commended highly the shift from support to food for survival to a situation of economic self-sufficiency.

43. In response to a request for the breakdown of the number of beneficiaries among Eritrean and Ethiopians, the Secretariat informed that of 138,000 refugees, 12,000 only are Ethiopian, for whom repatriation is currently under way.

REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON OPERATIONAL MATTERS— DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 1 JULY–31 DECEMBER 1997 (1998/EB.2/19)

44. The Secretariat presented a summary of projects approved by the Executive Director within her delegated authority, between 1 July and 31 December 1997 noting that the usual practice is to do so twice a year.
45. The Secretariat clarified the tonnage of food aid provided to project China 5796.00, after it had been noted that the figure had not been provided in the abstract summary.

REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON OPERATIONAL MATTERS— PROTRACTED REFUGEE AND DISPLACED PERSON PROJECTS APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 1 JULY–31 DECEMBER 1997 (1998/EB.2/21)

46. The PROs in Djibouti 4960.03 and Yemen 5771.01 were commended for the quality of their implementation.
47. In discussing the PRO Algeria 4155.07 project, and related corrigendum—the representative of Algeria stressed the concern of Algerian authorities regarding the implementation of the operation, the reduction in beneficiary numbers, and the delays in food deliveries. The Secretariat assured her that WFP would take the necessary steps to speed up deliveries, and would arrange supplementary ones if necessary.
48. The Secretariat emphasized that efforts are being made to ensure the fullest coordination possible between UNHCR and WFP and other partners on the Algeria PRO. It was confirmed that a Letter of Understanding had been signed between the Government of Algeria and WFP in late December 1997 and that since then, an emergency operation is being prepared to support the repatriation and forthcoming referendum in Western Sahara.

REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON OPERATIONAL MATTERS— BUDGET INCREASES TO PROS APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 1 JULY–31 DECEMBER 1997 (1998/EB.2/22)

49. One representative enquired as to whether the budget increases bore any relation to an increased use of directed contributions by the donor community. The Secretariat explained that most of the increases resulted when a project needed to absorb higher-priced commodities than those foreseen in the project budget, because they were the only ones available at the time the project was being resourced.



REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON OPERATIONAL MATTERS— PROGRESS REPORTS ON APPROVED PROJECTS (1998/EB.2/23)

50. The Board noted the importance of progress reports in general as they provide an impression on project implementation and performance, and that they should be analysed very carefully.
51. Concern was expressed regarding project Sao Tome and Principe 5392.00, where substantial losses of food were reported. The Secretariat advised that local authorities are assisting in bringing those responsible for the losses to justice, and that if no durable solution to the problem could be found, the project would be closed.
52. The Board noted a chronic lack of counterpart funds in Haiti. It was suggested that the Secretariat pursue partnerships with other donors there. The Secretariat advised that it had budgeted additional direct support costs for project Haiti 5583.00 to cover essential items.
53. The Board expressed concern about the unavailability of non-food items for Ghana project 4932.00. One representative noted that the project's performance appeared to be weak, and that the number of children attending the centres did not provide any substantial indication of the project's impact on their nutritional status. It was recommended that the project pursue more opportunities for local purchases.
54. The Board requested the Secretariat to consider issuing guidelines on the payment of food wages and salary supplements to the public sector employees.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN WFP: AN INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT (1998/EB.2/25)

55. The Board welcomed the document and endorsed the proposed strategies. It commended the Secretariat and in particular the Executive Director on the Secretariat's work in gender mainstreaming. Representatives stressed the importance of the conclusions and recommendations of the Beijing Conference.
56. Representatives pointed out that in view of the importance of the topic, it should be resourced primarily from the Programme Support and Administration Budget.
57. The Board agreed on the need to proceed with a qualitative evaluation of WFP activities on gender. Some representatives further urged that future reports be more analytical in nature. Several representatives expressed the wish to see comparative figures on composition by gender of United Nations staff; they pointed out that United Nations agency collaboration on gender issues should be taken into account. The representatives of one regional group underlined the need to include details on their region's situation in the final document. In addition, the need for more qualitative analysis, impact assessment, and improved monitoring and evaluation was stressed.

