

برنامج
الاغذية
العالمي



Progi
Alim
M

World
Food Executive Board
Third Regular Session

Rome, 21 - 24 October 1996

INTERIM EVALUATIONS OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Agenda item 5 c)

PROJECT MADAGASCAR 3936

Support to primary education¹

Total food cost	3 124 800 dollars
Total cost to WFP	4 101 726 dollars
Date approved by the CFA	8 December 1989
Date plan of operations signed	21 January 1991
Date of first distribution	1 October 1991
Duration of project	Five years
Official date for completion of project	30 September 1996
Date of evaluation	November 1995
Composition of the Mission	WFP/UNESCO ¹

All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars, unless otherwise stated. One United States dollar equalled 4,138 Malagasy francs at the time of the evaluation.

The complete report of the evaluation is available, on demand, in French.

¹ The mission was composed of a senior officer of the Evaluation Office, (Head of Mission) WFP; a nutritionist (consultant), and an expert (consultant) in primary education, (UNESCO).

ABSTRACT

The project targets 143 schools in the provinces of Tuléar and Mahajanga, representing 24 percent of the state schooling in these provinces. The increase in overall school enrolment observed over the period covered by the evaluation tends to show the role of encouragement played by the presence of a canteen in the retention of pupils in the system, and in the decrease in the number of drop-outs. During the same period of reference, the effects of the crisis in the public education system have involved a constant lowering of attendance in non-assisted schools. As a result of the absence of qualitative improvements in teaching conditions, the project has functioned more in terms of social assistance than as a real encouragement of education. The good progress of the project was affected by a number of dysfunctions in relation to the original plan. The measures taken since 1994 have perceptibly improved the functioning of the canteens. There is now room to consolidate the gains by an intensive follow-up, and by a continuous training programme. All future projects should be concentrated in the first place in the province of Tuléar, classified as a zone of chronic food deficiency, particularly in the south and extreme south, where the rates of school attendance are at their lowest.

This document is produced in a limited number of copies.

Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring it to the meetings and to refrain from asking for additional copies.

Note to the Executive Board

This document is submitted for comments to the Executive Board.

Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session, the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented. The meetings of the Executive Board are to be conducted in a business-like manner, with increased dialogue and exchanges between delegations and the Secretariat. Efforts to promote these guiding principles will continue to be pursued by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat therefore invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document in the plenary.

The WFP staff dealing with this document are:

Director	W. Kiene	tel.: 5228-2029
Desk Officer:	A.-M. Waeschle	tel.: 5228-2032

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Documents Clerk (tel.: 5228-2641).

THE PROJECT AS PLANNED¹

1. Project No. 3936 benefits from the lessons drawn from the two WFP-assisted pilot projects² in the educational sector throughout the country. It is targeted to 111 schools in five educational districts of the province of Tuléar (in the south of the country), and 32 schools in two educational districts of the province of Mahajanga (in the north-west of the country), where school attendance rates are particularly low.
2. The project is included within the framework of national policy and strategy for education, with a view to the development of human resources. The immediate objectives are as follows: i) to improve the educational infrastructure; ii) to increase enrolment rates, especially in the least favoured areas; iii) to increase the performance of pupils and reduce the number of repeats; iv) to increase awareness of the value of schooling and the canteens among decentralized communities and parents of the pupils, so that they can understand the advantages to be gained from them for school gardens; and v) to improve training in matters of nutrition and health, and stimulate the motivation of the teachers and volunteer cooks. (The Annex lists the objectives, by year, for the whole duration of the project).
3. WFP assistance was to encourage the enrolment and regular attendance of pupils, and the participation of the teaching staff and cooks in running the canteen, as well as the participation of parents of pupils engaged in the building of school infrastructure during the lean season of the first year of the project.
4. The WFP food basket included, among other things, 7,769 tons of wheat flour intended to be monetized. The sale of 7,248 tons was to make it possible, using the school headmasters as intermediaries, to purchase locally 4,065 tons of rice or maize, vegetables and sugar for the preparation of the meals. The revenues deriving from the sale of the remaining 521 tons was to be used for the building of improved ovens, and the financing of training courses.

¹ Differences should be noted between the project as approved by the CFA and the plan of operations, notably as concerns the number of schools per province, and consequently, the number of pupils. It has not been possible to obtain information on the reasons for the variations which have occurred. As a result, the plan of operations has been retained as a basis of reference by the mission.

² Project No. 2643 - "Pilot school feeding programme for primary schools", and project No. 2679 - "Experimental school feeding and development programme in primary schools."



EVALUATION OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Project design and formulation

5. The severe economic crisis that Madagascar has been experiencing since the eighties has had repercussions on access to education and on the quality of teaching. Recognizing the weaknesses of the public education system, the appraisal mission had made a certain number of recommendations in 1989 to guarantee that the project would be well executed. In particular, it was recommended that the project be closely associated with others on the improvement of the quality of teaching. This cooperation was not made the object of concrete proposals in the plan of operations.
6. Under these conditions, the educational objectives of the project, although relevant, were not realistic, especially regarding the improvement of scholastic performance. For such objectives, linked directly to the quality of teaching, school meals only play a complementary role, and only have a minimum effect in the absence of more decisive factors in scholastic success, such as the availability of school infrastructure and teaching materials, the competence and dynamism of the headmaster, or the qualifications and motivation of the teaching staff.
7. On the basis of the available data, the province of Tuléar was, at the time of project preparation, the least favoured area from the point of view of primary education and food production, especially in its southern and extreme southern districts. In contrast, at the time of project formulation, the school attendance indicators for the province of Mahajanga were considered fairly near to the national average, except for the very high rate of repeats. As regards natural resources, the province possesses potential wealth thanks to income-generating (cotton) and food (rice) crops.
8. The selection criteria featured in the plan of operations are debatable: i) they are more concerned with the schools than with the pupils: "accessibility at all seasons", "enrolment above 80 pupils with the exception of schools or scholastic districts where conditions are special" (details not given); ii) they do not reflect poverty or vulnerability indicators; iii) the criterion of "imbalanced and precarious food supply for children due to the climatic and socio-economic conditions of the region" is unrealistic, because it would have required undertaking a preliminary survey of consumption of the pupils of each school and an inter-class selection. This absence of precise socio-economic criteria makes it impossible to state that the project always reached the targeted group determined by the WFP Mission Statement. Furthermore, questions may be asked as to whether the notion of school meals is well-founded in schools in an urban environment or in the state concessions and in private plantations where, when all factors are taken into account, the conditions are better. There is some question too with regard to the very high attendance rates in urban schools which create problems of organization and logistics for the distribution of meals in relation to the school schedule.
9. The concentration of the project in seven school districts of the two provinces did not permit the complete resolution of the management and monitoring difficulties observed in the previous pilot projects.



Achievement of objectives

10. The lack of data on the new-entry enrolments in primary schools made it impossible to assess the evolution of the demand for education. The analysis made by the mission of the evolution of the overall enrolments in the beneficiary schools shows that, in general terms, the objectives set out were almost achieved (See annex). For the province of Tuléar, the data differ according to the school districts, and in overall terms they are slightly lower than the estimates of the plan of operations. These variations may depend on the economic situation and seasonal mobility of the parents, the effects of the drought in 1991/92, and the teachers' strike of 1991. For the province of Mahajanga, where the project began, as envisaged, a year later, the evolution of overall enrolments in the schools was constant and in conformity with the plan of operations.
11. All the teachers noted great receptivity and readiness to cooperate on the part of the pupils in their classes, but any remarks on the correlation between a better food supply and the concentration capacity of the pupils must remain qualitative rather than quantitative. Repeated years are still numerous in the schools visited, because of the absence of improvements in the teaching conditions.
12. For each school, the parents of the students built a dining-room, a kitchen and a storehouse, on the basis of food for work. These buildings are made of stabilized red clay, and need periodic refurbishing which the parents undertake themselves. The installations are functional, and contain the minimal equipment. The rehabilitation of the school buildings was not undertaken as foreseen with food assistance, but was financed by a contribution from the Italian Government and one by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The construction of new buildings was ensured by the non-governmental organization "Aide et Action", by the Government itself, and by the previously mentioned ILO project. In total, these interventions involved 80 schools, around 56 percent of the schools benefiting from the scheme. The construction or restoration of teachers' accommodation did not take place. They see to their own housing arrangements, with the exception of those heads who already benefit from allotted housing, in a more or less good state of repair.
13. As regards the classroom equipment, only the 20 schools built by "Aide et Action" were provided ready-equipped (tables, desks, teacher's desk and boards). In the other schools, the equipment is lacking or is in a bad state. The installation of two improved ovens per school suffered considerable delays, since the monetization of the wheat flour provided by WFP did not take place (see paragraph 32). At the end of 1994, the project management and the WFP country office agreed to use funds deriving from the sale of damaged goods for the building of ovens in baked brick. Of the 286 improved ovens planned, 180 were still to be installed in December 1995.
14. In the province of Tuléar, the availability and quality of water is a constraining factor both on the health of the pupils and on the good functioning of the canteen. Only the 20 schools built by "Aide et Action", and those situated in the state concessions or private plantations, have a well or a supply of running water. The school gardens are in fact scarce because of the rarity of water points, and they are more a place of production than of demonstration for nutritional education.
15. The participation of parent-teacher associations is effective, in relation to their means, for the infrastructure and the functioning of the canteen (provision of water, fuelwood and condiments). On the other hand, the parents do not seem to become involved in



taking measures which would resolve the problems noted above. They have perhaps not yet absorbed the idea that the canteen belongs to them, and that they could assume some responsibility for its management.

16. With regard to the maintenance of the school buildings and classroom equipment, the parents consider that the responsibility lies with the State. This attitude is the result of an insufficiency, or rather a complete lack, of sensibilization. It should also be stressed that the parents are often asked for assistance in numerous other areas by the different technical services and development agencies in the zone.
17. Taking into account the change of strategy of the project based on the partial monetization of WFP's commitment, the objective of training teachers has unfortunately had to be abandoned for lack of funds. As a consequence, the canteens could not serve as practical workshops for creating a link between nutritional teaching and basic hygiene and daily life.

Role and function of food aid

18. It is difficult to establish a direct connection between school meals and the educational objectives, taking account of the mediocre quality of education in general, and certain shortcomings of the project (see paragraphs 32 and 33). The canteens did not effectively begin operating until January 1992 (Tuléar) and March 1993 (Mahajanga). Their functioning was irregular, more particularly in the course of the first two years, and afterwards the canteens never reached the planned total of 170 days. The number of functioning days seems to have been overestimated at the time of the formulation of the project, since the number of school days in each year is estimated at 130-140.
19. School meals only have a marginal effect on school enrolment. The main limitation to school attendance is linked to parents' income. On the contrary, the increase in overall attendance levels observed for the period covered by the assessment tends to show that the canteen does have an influence on the decrease in drop-outs. In effect, during the same period, the crisis in the public educational system involved a steady drop in enrolments in the non-assisted schools. It is somewhat disturbing to note, however, the effect that a significant increase in attendances may have on children's learning capacity, because of the very high student/teacher ratio and the lack of qualitative improvements in teaching.
20. The impact of the canteen on school attendance would have been more easily verifiable if the school headmasters had added up, by month and by year, the daily registrations of attendances, specifying the number of days on which the canteen had been functioning. According to the information received from the headmasters and from the heads of the educational and administrative districts for the school year 1994/95, the attendance at beneficiary schools seems to be in the order of 90-95 percent, up to 99 percent in certain schools, and this even during the lean season (with a few exceptions). In comparison, for the non-assisted schools, it is 75-85 percent, with a decrease of 20 to 30 percent during the lean season.
21. The monetary value of the food rations facilitated the recruitment of cooks and their retention in their posts. In contrast, the monetary value of the meals taken at school does not seem to have been a sufficient incentive to reduce the relatively high rate of teacher absenteeism.



Beneficiaries

22. The majority of parents live in a rural environment and obtain their income from agriculture, livestock raising and fishing. Nevertheless, the absence of socio-economic criteria at the time of school selection prevents us from concluding that the canteens always affect the most deprived children. About 30 of the schools in three of the five school districts of the province of Tuléar are situated in localities identified as vulnerable by the National Food and Nutrition Surveillance Programme (PNSAN).
23. There is no gender disparity in the schools visited. The girls are sometimes in a majority in the upper classes, since the boys often have to aid in agricultural work.

Advantages

24. In the present teaching conditions, the canteen has above all a social and economic function. The school meals increase food availability to the families, and produce an income transfer, evaluated in 1995 at 5,600 Malgasi francs per month, i.e., about 25 to 35 percent of the average monthly wage. The family saving represented by the meals taken in the canteen cannot be calculated, but it is inferior to the previous figure, since the majority of the parents have no access to the same foodstuffs as those provided by WFP.
25. The canteen meal provides an appreciable contribution to the food supply (the energy value of the ration is 1,100 calories, or 55 percent of the average daily energy needs of the targeted group). The parents recognize that the children eat better at school, the proportion of vitamins, minerals and proteins rarely being sufficient in meals prepared at home. Nevertheless, the nutritional contribution of the WFP ration would have been more important and the canteen menu more varied if the funds for the purchase of food such as vegetables had been available (see paragraph 32).
26. The morning breakfast meal (corn-soya blend and sugar) is usually a complement, and gives the child who has travelled several kilometres to arrive at school the chance of being more attentive. The midday meal is more of a substitute, except during the lean season or periods of major agricultural labour, when the number of family meals and their quality are lower. School meals then make it possible to protect the children at the nutritional level.
27. For the teachers, the meal taken at school provides revenue in kind, corresponding, over the school year 1994-95, to about half a monthly salary. Nevertheless, this is not sufficient to reduce the relatively high rate of absenteeism among the teachers.
28. The project created 567 temporary jobs for cooks. To satisfy a very high demand, school headmasters had to introduce a system of recruitment by rota. As the intentions of the plan of operations (two cooks per school) took no account of school attendances, the cooks are now excessive in numbers. New regulations were established at the last training session in April 1995, and were available in all the schools in January 1996. The cooks eat at the school (even though this was not originally planned for) and receive family rations to take away. Their revenue in kind is between 21,385 and 42,700 Malagasy francs per month, according to the number of working days. This represents between 20 and 40 percent of the minimum wage in the rural environment.
29. The availability of improved ovens in the schools guarantees a transfer of technology.



The utility of these ovens is recognized by the cooks and the parents, not only because of the economy of fuelwood, but also because of the reduction in cooking time. These ovens are desirable also for household use.

Project management and commodity utilization

30. The linking of the project to the planning of education by the Ministry of National Education does not seem to have raised any problem of authority with the decentralized services, placed under the responsibility of the management of primary education. In contrast, the coordination with other relevant projects of assistance to primary education is not always systematic. In practice, since 1994 this coordination has essentially been ensured by the WFP country office. Thus, the teachers of 12 beneficiary schools of one school district of the province of Mahajanga took part in a training course imparting education on population issues, organized by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)/UNESCO project. The WFP project was also able to benefit from a first group of 20 new schools built and equipped by "Aide et Action" in the province of Tuléar.
31. Despite a difficult economic context, the Government provided the necessary funds for the reception, transport and storage of the foodstuffs. For the school year 1994-95, the national direction benefited from an additional governmental budget. The mission estimates that the systematic recourse to these finances would permit the national direction and the decentralized services to improve their management facilities.
32. The national policy of subsidizing the price of wheat flour made monetization unfeasible in economic terms. This measure had a markedly disturbing effect on the planned management, causing gaps in stock and an increase of costs both for the Government and for WFP. As a result of this, some activities which should have been carried out thanks to the monetization of wheat flour had to be abandoned. The request to headquarters by the WFP country office, from November 1991 onward, to give up the monetization of wheat flour, and to proceed to a budgetary revision in order to make possible local purchases of rice and pulses, and also to include the expenses of maintenance and internal transport in the budget for the project, was not followed up. Several ad hoc budgetary revisions were approved. At the time of the evaluation, a final revision was in progress to regularize the situation and allow an amendment to the plan of operations.
33. The frequent changes of Minister and Secretary-General for State Education, as well as the strike by civil servants and teachers in 1991, have also affected the project. Moreover, the emergency operations in the south of the country following the drought of 1991 and 1992 have not allowed the country office, taking account of the number of personnel available, to devote all the necessary attention to the project.
34. Since mid-1994, the Government and the WFP country office have taken measures which have progressively ensured better functioning of the project, namely: i) a penalty for suppliers who do not respect the delivery dates stipulated in the bids for local purchases; ii) the repair of six lorries for the project, with funds from the WFP subsidy for internal transport; iii) the allocation to each of the three United Nations volunteers of responsibility for a petty cash account for maintenance expenses; and iv) training in methods of management and monitoring of the personnel responsible for the canteens. As from the school year 1995-96, the Government has decided to release one teacher from his duties in order to concern himself exclusively with the management of the canteen. At



the time of the evaluation, 80 percent of the canteens had the services of a full-time manager. Although this measure further reduces the already limited number of teachers available, it does witness to the Government's commitment to the project.

35. Provision of foodstuffs from outside the area has been regular in overall terms. The stock failures, more significant during the initial years, are to be attributed to delays in the procedure of local purchases and to logistical problems.
36. As at 30 June 1995, the project had received a total of 4,260 tons of rice, vegetable oil, sugar, and corn-soya blend, of which 3,038 tons (71 percent) had been distributed. The post-c.i.f. losses amount to about five percent of the total receipts: 78 percent of these losses are due to maintenance and to prolonged storage of the corn-soya blend in difficult climatic conditions. The rest is to be attributed mainly to theft at the school and district levels, and transport. The management of the project has already undertaken measures to reduce these types of losses.
37. The food supplied by WFP is appreciated, with the exception of the corn-soya blend, the taste of which is at times altered after prolonged storage. In general terms, the composition of the food rations seems to have been respected.
38. Breakfast is distributed before the morning lessons begin. In the schools with large attendances, it is served by rota, and impinges on the teaching time. The main meal is distributed between 11.30 and 13.30. The children who do not live far away, and whose courses begin in the afternoon, come to eat in the morning, go back home, and return for the main meal before the 12.30 lesson.
39. The materials for the kitchen and the dining-room supplied at the beginning of the project by the Italian Government are functional but ageing. An inventory of the cooking pots currently in use will make it possible to replace or repair the equipment in the poorest condition.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

40. In the province of Tuléar, monitoring is rendered particularly difficult by the extent of the area of the project. The recent appointment of a second United Nations volunteer, recruited by WFP, and assigned to the provincial capital, will make it possible to visit the beneficiary schools more regularly with the officials of the school districts. A third United Nations volunteer is stationed in the province of Mahajanga.
41. Despite the training sessions already undertaken, the monitoring and evaluation forms introduced by the WFP country office from the beginning of the school year 1993-94 have not yet been used by all the school headmasters. The mission has proposed some modifications to improve the gathering of necessary monitoring data, and provide elements for further evaluation.
42. The quarterly reports on the use of foodstuffs in schools have been established on the basis of the delivery notes and consumption registers, which contain a recapitulatory monthly figure. Even when the registers are well-kept, the head teachers have often had problems in summarizing the information and sending their reports in the time required. This makes the work of the official responsible for the school district more difficult; these officials are responsible for preparing the overall report for the schools in the district, and they combine this activity with numerous other functions. The lack of



reliability in the information transmitted to the national management complicates the handling of the data. A greater contribution to the project by the heads of the administrative and educational zones is necessary to improve the quality of the reports.

Durability and prospects for phasing out

43. The measures taken by the Government since 1994 to redress the situation show that those responsible at the national level feel committed to the project. When allowance is made for the very difficult economic situation of the country, the Government will not be in any condition to increase its contribution substantially in order to take over upon termination of WFP assistance.
44. Even if the parents of pupils recognize the usefulness of the canteens and are mobilized sufficiently to ensure their good functioning, it is inconceivable that they should be able to assume control of them completely in present conditions.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

45. The measures taken since 1994 by the government and the WFP country office have substantially improved the functioning of the canteens. It will now be necessary to consolidate the gains by an intensive follow-up and a continuous training programme. The updating and simplification of the monitoring and evaluation forms undertaken by the mission will make it possible to target the effects of school feeding more closely on the pupils' attendance. It will be advantageous to ensure the involvement of the three United Nations volunteers in the work of monitoring and evaluation.
46. The activities undertaken recently by the Government to improve the quality of education make it feasible to hope for a restoration of credibility in public teaching, but they will not have immediate effects on the improvement of teaching conditions. In order for WFP assistance to play a role in fostering education, it must be integrated with other complementary projects of assistance and education. The efforts undertaken by the WFP Madagascar office in this context should be pursued.
47. If WFP and the Government decide to continue the project over and beyond the present phase, it should be centred on the province of Tuléar, where the rates of school attendance are lower. Moreover, this province, in particular the south and extreme south, is classified as an area of chronic food deficiency, and an arid zone of unpredictable production.
48. The selection of the school districts should be based on the vulnerability criteria defined by the PNSAN, as well as on the information issued by the Early Warning System (EWS) at present operated by the European Union. The schools should be situated in rural zones and have an enrolment of between 80 and 200 pupils. The required conditions are as follows: i) the presence of adequate minimum equipment (classrooms, tables, desks, blackboards); ii) the availability of minimum teaching materials for teachers and students; iii) the presence of a drinking-water outlet; and iv) the training of teachers in matters of nutrition and health.
49. The recommendations of the mission have been accepted by the Executive Director of the World Food Programme and by the Government.



LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

50. In order for school feeding programmes to be a genuine encouragement to education, they must be integrated with other projects for educational assistance. Certain prior conditions (see paragraph 48) should be fulfilled before the project is begun.
51. The formulation of school feeding programmes must take account of the educational context in low-income countries. In particular, it is essential that the objectives are not disproportionate to the structures and means of primary education.



ANNEX

ENROLMENTS IN THE BENEFICIARY SCHOOLS IN COMPAR

School Year	1991-92			1992-93			1994
	Estimated	Actual	%	Estimated	Actual	%	Estimated
Tuléar	20 050	20 165	101	21 654	21 026	97	23 386
Mahajanga ¹	-	-		4 743	4 510	95	5 122
Total	20 050	20 165	101	26 397	25 536	97	28 508

¹In accordance with the recommendations of the appraisal mission in 1989, the project began in Mahajanga province in October 1992.

