



**World Food
Programme**

**Executive Board
Second Regular Session**

Rome, 9–13 November 2015

OTHER BUSINESS

Agenda item 13

*For information**

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Distribution: GENERAL
WFP/EB.2/2015/13/2
6 November 2015
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT ON THE FIELD VISIT TO PAKISTAN OF THE WFP EXECUTIVE BOARD



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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for information.

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

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. The Executive Board members who participated in the field visit to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan wish to express their appreciation to the WFP Secretariat and to thank the WFP country team in Islamabad, Peshawar, Karachi, Lahore and Quetta, led by Country Director Lola Castro, for its professionalism in conducting an expansive, informative and well-organized field visit. Members would also like to thank the Government of Pakistan for hosting the visit, and thank the dedicated national staff of WFP Pakistan in particular.

INTRODUCTION

2. From 6 to 14 September 2015 members of the WFP Executive Board visited Pakistan to gain a better understanding of WFP's food assistance programming in one of its largest operations. The delegation comprised Mr Samuel Beever, Alternate Permanent Representative of Australia and Executive Board President (List D); H.E. Crisantos Obama Ondo, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea (List A); Ms Sylvia Maria Leticia Wohlers de Meie, Alternate Permanent Representative of Guatemala (List C); and H.E. Andrzej Halasiewicz, Minister Counsellor and Permanent Representative of Poland (List E). The delegation was ably supported by colleagues from the WFP Secretariat, Ms Harriet Spanos, Executive Board Secretary, and Mr Erich Stromeyer, Junior Professional Officer.

Political and Socio-Economic Context and Food Security Situation

3. With a population exceeding 180 million, Pakistan is marked by diversity, with striking socio-cultural, ethnic and linguistic variations and differences in economic development among its regions. The country is the world's 26th largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity and has the 44th largest gross domestic product (GDP).
4. Pakistan is a net food exporter deriving almost 22 percent of its GDP from agriculture; wheat production is forecast to reach a record level of 26.4 million mt in 2015.¹ However, despite strong national food production, household food insecurity and malnutrition are concerns. Pakistan ranks 146th of 187 countries on the 2014 human development index and contains pockets of complex poverty. With 22 percent of the population undernourished,² insufficient calorie intake results in a global acute malnutrition rate of 15.1 percent among children under 5, and stunting prevalence of 44 percent.
5. The Government has prioritized combatting food insecurity and malnutrition in Pakistan's national development strategy Vision 2025, and is the second largest contributor to WFP's operations in Pakistan. In the Government's efforts to increase economic growth and income, WFP can play an important role in supporting food security and nutrition and bolstering the Government's social safety nets.

¹ FAO, Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture.

² FAO, IFAD and WFP. 2015. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015*. Rome.

Objectives and Programme

6. The field visit provided an opportunity to showcase WFP's partnership with the Government of Pakistan and other stakeholders. The purpose of the visit was to engage directly with programme beneficiaries and participants, cooperating partners and the Government to learn about the impact of and future priorities for WFP programmes; to observe WFP field operations; to examine WFP as a partner of the Government and the United Nations country team; and to gain insight into the implementation of WFP's policies and strategies. This report is the main output of the visit.
7. While in country, delegates travelled to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Sindh and Punjab provinces to visit a range of project sites and to meet beneficiaries, provincial government officials, cooperating partners, private-sector collaborators and WFP staff. In Islamabad, the delegation benefited from a range of high-level engagements, including meetings with ministers, senior officials, representatives of partner United Nations agencies and members of the international community.
8. A lunch was held with staff affected by the 2009 bombing of WFP's Islamabad office and the family of Ms Mehreen Abbas who lost her life in a car accident while travelling on mission to Chaghi district, Quetta, earlier in 2015. A meeting with all WFP staff was the final formal event of the field visit.

WFP COUNTRY PROGRAMME IN PAKISTAN

Strategy and Operations

9. WFP's operations in Pakistan address diverse food security and nutrition challenges and contexts. Activities implemented under the current protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO 200250) span WFP's humanitarian and development mandate in pursuit of four strategic priorities: supporting the Government in facilitating the return of displaced people and supporting those who remain displaced; supporting the food security and nutrition of vulnerable communities; strengthening the government's preparedness and response capacity, and building community resilience; and strengthening the Government's capacity to design, manage and scale up nutrition programmes.
10. The delegation wishes to acknowledge the Government of Pakistan as the largest host-country contributor to WFP operations and as WFP's 18th largest donor overall in 2015. Since 2013, the Government has donated 519,000 mt of wheat valued at USD 198 million to WFP's relief activities. These contributions have been complemented by funding from international donors for milling, fortification, transportation and distribution of wheat flour and monitoring of activities. The delegation concluded that this partnership can serve as a model for other governments as they increase their contributions to WFP operations.
11. The relative emphasis given to each of WFP's strategic priorities differs by area in Pakistan. For example, the Government of KP articulated strongly the need to continue classic relief programming through general food distribution (GFD) to support displaced people and their return to their areas of origin. Government partners in Sindh look to WFP for assistance in resilience-building activities, including in supporting nutrition and livelihoods. In Punjab, the provincial government sees WFP not as a direct implementer, but as a technical and capacity-building partner, able to access WFP's knowledge and experience in disaster preparedness, reducing and responding to food losses, and home-grown school feeding. Interlocutors from the federal ministries echoed the opinions of provincial and district counterparts.

⇒ *Relief programming to support the return of displaced people*

12. The delegation visited Jalozai camp in Nowshera and the Peshawar 1 Off-Camp Humanitarian Hub to see the relief assistance provided to communities displaced by law and order operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). With support from the Government, in-kind food assistance is provided to more than 1.5 million temporarily displaced people every month, while families returning to their homes receive six months of food assistance. Cash- and food-for-work opportunities enable vulnerable people, particularly recent returnees, to rebuild productive assets and livelihoods. School feeding programmes provide children, particularly adolescent girls, with fortified food, and increase retention in schools, especially among girls. Currently, 66 percent of total planned beneficiaries and 86 percent of total planned food distributions are in KP and FATA.
13. At Jalozai camp, delegates observed GFD with protection measures such as gender-disaggregated waiting areas and trained women staff at grievance desks and food distribution points to work with women beneficiaries. Information about the distribution process was displayed prominently as was the feedback hotline number, which was also printed on distributed food items. Two officers on the grievance desk – one from the implementing partner and the other from WFP – explained complaint-handling procedures on site. Delegates also observed a community-based acute malnutrition intervention, including referral of cases to specific medical services, activities to raise awareness of hygiene and early child feeding practices, basic medical consultations and polio vaccination. Community health workers informed the delegation that the stigma associated with polio vaccination had not affected beneficiaries' willingness to obtain other health services.
14. Men beneficiaries reported that the amount of food provided was insufficient to feed their large families; the ration size is for an average family of six people, based on a family size study conducted with the local government, but beneficiaries said that actual family composition can range from two to fourteen people. Some women beneficiaries said that they would like rice and tea included in their food packages; others expressed fear of not receiving food assistance when they return to their areas of origin. All pointed out how important it is to be able to rely on the food assistance offered by WFP.
15. Off-camp displaced people – 98 percent of the displaced population – said that they had been welcomed by local communities. They had access to education for their children and health care for their families, but housing costs were high and most displaced people reported limited livelihood opportunities. One man reflected that two conditions are required before displaced people would return to their homes: peace and stability, and the restoration of infrastructure and basic services.
16. The delegation met the Governor of KP, Mehtab Ahmed Khan Abbasi, who provided an update on the return process. He noted the importance of community engagement in designing and implementing rehabilitation activities, as “it is the people who know best”. The Governor emphasized the Government's objective of ensuring the dignity of displaced people throughout the return process and said that monitoring of WFP's activities will mean that assistance continues to reach those in genuine need. He argued forcefully for continuing relief and recovery activities in the next WFP operation from January 2016. In a later meeting the Federal Minister of States and Frontier Regions, Lieutenant General (Retired) Abdul Qadir Baloch, reiterated the need for continued relief assistance. Minister Baloch also noted that collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is needed to facilitate the return of 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees scheduled for 2016 and 2017.

17. The delegation asked about the potential for introducing cash assistance. Governor Abbasi noted that in-kind assistance was preferred as it ensures that assistance is used for food and reduces opportunities for corruption. Minister Baloch also noted that the provision of in-kind assistance avoided the risk of cash being used to support potential terrorist activity.

⇒ *Supporting the food security and nutrition of communities*

18. Delegates travelled to Thatta district, Sindh to observe the implementation of activities addressing stunting. The local government estimates that 58 percent of children in Thatta suffer from anaemia resulting from a combination of poverty, adolescent motherhood, dirty water, inadequate sanitation and a shortage of animal protein. The Government-managed Lady Health Workers national programme, with support from WFP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization, provides a range of nutrition and stunting prevention interventions, including vaccinations and specialized nutritious foods (SNFs) for pregnant and lactating women and malnourished children. At local "health houses", Lady Health Workers educate pregnant and lactating women about SNF and the importance of their own nutrition for their unborn children. Lady Health Workers also raise awareness of good hygiene practices, such as washing hands before handling food, and undertake growth and weight monitoring. Delegates found strong support among men for these activities and saw how such interventions can empower women in their role as caregivers within households.

⇒ *Strengthening capacity to prepare for shocks, and building community resilience*

19. The Government's capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from shocks is of fundamental importance given Pakistan's vulnerability to seasonal weather events and one-off natural disasters. The delegation saw WFP investments in "hard" preparedness infrastructure and discussed WFP's "soft" investments in capacity-building and training with the Government.
20. With financing support from donors and the contribution of land from the Government, WFP has constructed five of eight planned humanitarian response facilities. The delegation visited two of these facilities in KP and Punjab. The Director of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) in Punjab noted that the provincial government had already revolved stock once during this year's flood season. Stocks held included food and non-food items, such as shelter kits (tents), boats, generators and outboard motors.
21. Regarding capacity-building, the PDMA Director acknowledged the value of the warehouse management and simulation training that WFP provided to provincial staff, and expressed interest in further capacity-building. The delegation learned that the expanded assistance for disaster preparedness and response in WFP's next operation will include supply chain and commodity management, and continue the community-based disaster risk management, school safety, multi-hazard vulnerability risk assessments and additional response simulations.
22. To complement its relief programming, WFP has fostered a transition from food distribution towards resilience programming, including through nutrition and livelihood activities. The delegation visited livelihood activities in two villages in Badin district, Sindh. Badin is a disaster-prone, coastal, rural area subject to frequent floods, cyclones and the effects of run-off from industrial and municipal wastewater. The delegation met villagers who had been involved in community asset-creation activities including the construction of flood protection walls, village drainage systems and kitchens. The villagers have replicated and improved the kitchens constructed through the cash-for-work intervention. They have also organized working groups that are responsible for maintaining

flood protection walls and village drainage. According to WFP's project monitoring, as a result of the intervention the number of communities with an increased asset score had risen by 22 percent, while the number of households with poor food consumption had decreased by 21 percent.

⇒ *Supporting capacity to design, implement and scale up nutrition programming*

23. A national nutrition survey published in 2013 found rates of chronic malnutrition of 43.7 percent, maternal anaemia of 52 percent, low birth weight of 31.5 percent, and wasting in children under 5 of 15.1 percent. WFP supports the Government and its partners in designing, implementing and scaling up nutrition programming. Examples of policy and advocacy support include establishment of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Secretariat in the Ministry of Planning and Development, and technical assistance to the National Fortification Alliance Secretariat in the Ministry of National Health Services. Support provided to both government and private-sector partners includes assistance to the national salt iodization programme, commercial wheat flour fortification in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and the development and production of SNF and high-energy biscuits.

⇒ *Gender*

24. Throughout the visit the delegation sought evidence of gender-sensitive programming. The Safe Distribution Initiative at Jalojai camp is an example of gender-sensitive GFD that includes separate entrances, counters and waiting areas for women and men, and women staff to assist women beneficiaries. Delegates were briefed on interventions targeting marginalized and extremely vulnerable displaced women, the establishment of a gender working group that carries out gender assessments of humanitarian interventions and advises agencies on gender gaps in programming, and a dedicated Gender and Protection Officer in the WFP country office.
25. Delegates also observed evidence of the challenges posed, particularly to women, by the registration process, which is based on a household structure or "family tree" headed by men. Many men have more than one wife, only one of whom can be registered. "Other" wives and their children can thus be excluded from assistance. Complaints regarding registration are referred to the Government through the National Database and Registration Authority, UNHCR and, sometimes, WFP grievance desks. Jalojai camp staff reported that more than 200,000 complaints had been filed since 2008, most of which related to registration.
26. In discussion of women's involvement in planning and implementation of nutrition programmes, the delegation learned that gender equality is a stated objective of the provincial government in Sindh, where education attainment is higher among girls than boys. Although women's participation rates differ across project types, women health workers are fundamental to nutrition and stunting prevention programmes as they have greater access to all members of households.
27. Finally, delegates noted that although women's representation in the staffing of WFP Pakistan has improved with concerted efforts from 11 percent in 2013, it still remains low at 19 percent. The country office and WFP Headquarters are encouraged to continue working to address this gap.

⇒ *Future programming*

28. The delegation took opportunities to ascertain whether WFP takes into account the views of the Government, particularly in design of the next phase of operations. Federal and provincial government interlocutors confirmed that they had been consulted in the project formulation process, which began with an external evaluation of the current PRRO 200250 and a food security and nutrition assessment and targeting review. Consultations with the Government began at the federal level in November 2014, a year in advance of the presentation of the new PRRO, followed by in-depth provincial consultations starting early in January 2015 in KP and FATA, Balochistan, AJK, Punjab and then Sindh. Consultations were also held with donors, the United Nations country team and civil society. The results of these consultations were validated at meetings in all provinces in May. Following ministerial-level meetings, the project document was in the final stages of negotiation with federal ministries at the time of the field visit.
29. Regarding the focus of the next phase of operations, it became clear to the delegation that WFP's key challenge will be to provide differentiated assistance to an increasingly capable partner Government in response to diverse challenges. Continued attention will be required to ensure appropriate balance between emergency relief and activities that foster the transition to development through capacity-building and technical assistance. Only a flexible operational programme can address such a wide range of needs. Based on these conclusions, the delegation supports WFP's decision to design another PRRO that facilitates a steady, conditions-based transition towards a country programme.

Partners

⇒ *Government of Pakistan*

30. The delegation saw abundant evidence of strong partnership with the Government of Pakistan. Officials at the federal and provincial levels routinely referred to WFP as a reliable and serious partner. High regard for WFP was evident in the seniority of the government officials whom the delegation met, including four ministers. Federal government counterparts impressed on the delegation the need for a long-term view that links relief to recovery and emergency response to development.
31. The delegation perceived that the Government has a strong sense of ownership of Pakistan's development and has assumed responsibility for driving the relationship with WFP. Minister of Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal provided a compelling vision of how Pakistan will take forward the 2030 Agenda through its national development strategy Vision 2025. He remarked that Pakistan's commitment to fighting malnutrition is evident in the Government's decision to join the United Nations SUN movement and establish a national Zero Hunger programme. Minister Iqbal noted that food security, with specific consideration of nutrition, was a fundamental element of Vision 2025. The best contribution that WFP can make is in sharing knowledge and providing technical expertise, policy and implementation support, and capacity-building.
32. Minister of National Food Security and Research, Malik Sikander Hayat Khan Bosan emphasized progress in the Zero Hunger Challenge and stressed the need to launch a pilot in applying Brazil's experience in family farming support and school feeding to address food insecurity in rural areas. Strengthening communities' economic capacity, to make food more affordable and reduce malnutrition, was another priority. Minister Bosan indicated that he would be discussing how to proceed on the Zero Hunger Challenge with the Chief Minister of Punjab.

33. The Secretary of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination Mr Muhammad Ayub Sheikh recognized WFP's support to nutrition in Pakistan. Examples he shared included support provided to the Ministry by WFP and UNICEF for the development of national guidelines on managing acute malnutrition, and WFP's support for salt iodization and establishment of the National Fortification Alliance. The Secretary expressed a desire that the partnership in nutrition be guided by Vision 2025 to ensure that it is consistent with Pakistan's needs.
34. The breadth of existing and potential future cooperation was also discussed with provincial government partners. Government officials of Sindh province acknowledged WFP's efforts to coordinate activities with government departments, and noted the importance of WFP's nutrition and stunting programming. In response to the Finance Secretary's observation that major natural disasters could not be budgeted for, WFP suggested exploring its own experience in natural disaster insurance mechanisms.
35. Demonstrating further the Government of Pakistan's leadership in development, the Chief Minister of Punjab Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif articulated a new form of partnership with WFP. Chief Minister Sharif emphasized that finance was not the main issue, but that Punjab needed WFP's technical expertise in developing market effectiveness measures, such as increased wheat storage capacity, a commodity stock exchange, management of seasonal food price instability, and improved market linkages. He saw an ongoing role for WFP's capacity-building and simulation training in disaster preparedness and invited WFP to liaise directly with his office on these priorities.
36. At a later meeting, the Managing Director of the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation – Pakistan's national grain reserve – briefed the delegation on its role in supporting smallholder production through the payment of subsidized prices for surplus production; it also ensures food security in Pakistan by maintaining the country's strategic reserves of wheat and providing WFP with wheat contributed by the Government of Pakistan. He also announced that a project on increasing storage capacity for the wheat reserves would soon be presented to the Chief Minister.
37. Meetings with provincial authorities revealed a high rate of turnover in government staff. This has proved challenging for WFP and partners in ensuring awareness of their activities and continuous engagement in programming.

⇒ *The private sector*

38. The delegation benefited from several opportunities to engage with WFP's private-sector partners. Private-sector collaboration includes the development and production of SNF, the local procurement of more than 410,000 mt of food valued at almost USD 200 million since 2011, the SUN Business Network, food fortification and logistics services.
39. A tour of the production facilities of the English Biscuit Manufacturers (Private) Limited (EBM) provided an opportunity to see private-sector investments in SNF and in research and development. EBM produces locally made SNF products, Wawa Mum and Acha Mum, which will soon be exported to WFP operations in other countries. EBM's Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Dr Zeelaf Munir explained that the partnership with WFP is based on synergies between EBM's "planet, people and profit" growth model and WFP's mission to enhance food security. Dr Munir suggested that the development sector could learn a lot about branding from the private sector.

40. The delegation also met private-sector representatives at a reception in Karachi to discuss opportunities for further partnerships, including in knowledge transfer on supply chain management, shipping, and networking through the SUN Business Network. A visit to a salt iodization plant provided insights into motivating small-scale businesses to contribute to better nutrition and improved brain and thyroid function. Through the Universal Salt Iodization programme, WFP is establishing and strengthening quality control laboratories to improve iodization quality standards and their monitoring. Partly as a result of this work, 70 percent of all salt produced in 2015 was adequately iodized.

⇒ *The international community*

41. The delegation had the opportunity to meet United Nations representatives in Islamabad, Peshawar and Karachi. These representatives stressed WFP's important role and the excellent collaboration among WFP, government institutions, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Many noted that WFP's credibility with the Government has helped to open doors for other agencies.

42. Representatives of WFP's Member States based in Islamabad praised the strength of WFP's relationship with the Government, its reach and access, and its ability to respond quickly to needs. Some representatives suggested that WFP could use its relationship with the Government to a greater extent in advocating for increased access for other partners, and multi-sectoral responses. While Pakistan is a good example of how "One UN" can work, opportunities exist for international partners, including WFP, to improve links with support mechanisms such as World Bank-managed multi-donor trust funds. WFP's gender programming was described as commendable.

43. On cost-efficiency, WFP's focus on effectiveness and maximizing reach with available funds was acknowledged, but alternatives to in-kind food assistance such as cash programming should be further expanded under the new project. Continued focus on vulnerability-based targeting, and a deliberate shift away from blanket approaches for populations that have been displaced for significant periods warrant consideration. Commonly expressed challenges included the difficulty in mobilizing resourcing in the absence of government requests for international assistance, and concern that the loss of international and NGO space could affect the ability of WFP and others to respond to needs. Uncertainty about the continuity of NGO operations could have serious impacts on aid efficiency, which should be brought to the attention of government partners.

44. A meeting with WFP's Rome-based agency partners explored current collaboration and common challenges. Delegates learned that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is working with WFP in support of the SUN movement, as co-lead of the food security cluster, on a range of food security and livelihood assessments such as the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification system, and in facilitating the return of displaced people in FATA, where WFP's cash-for-work programming complements FAO's longer-term livelihood and agriculture recovery interventions. Common challenges included the onset of general donor fatigue, and the discontinuity of initiatives resulting from frequent changes in government counterparts.

45. Representatives of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and FAO noted the importance of inter-operable financial instruments in facilitating greater collaboration. They recommended that the governing bodies of the Rome-based agencies explore legal and financial instruments that would, for example, allow IFAD loan finance to be passed on as complementary grants to WFP or FAO.

Resources

46. Over the past five years WFP Pakistan has received average funding of USD 278 million per annum. The Government of Pakistan is the second largest donor to WFP in Pakistan after the United States of America. Other significant donors include Australia, Belgium, Canada, the European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Norway, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The total budget for the current PRRO (2013–2015) is USD 676 million, of which 86 percent – USD 580.6 million – has been received. The delegation noted that decisions on programme modalities have implications for resource mobilization, and acknowledged that a future country programme would attract far smaller amounts of resourcing, and a more limited donor pool, than would a PRRO.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

47. The delegation wishes to make the following observations:

- The field visit confirmed the strong and collaborative relationship between the Government of Pakistan and the WFP country team.
- The Government has clearly defined objectives in relation to food and nutrition security and rural development; WFP can contribute to the achievement of these objectives.
- Pakistan is in transition and faces a diversity of challenges as it continues to grow, so WFP's assistance must continue to be flexible and to balance emergency relief with the transition to development through capacity-building and technical assistance.
- The draft of WFP's next operation responds to the clear request of government partners, at the provincial and federal levels, for continuing relief and recovery operations.
- The country office is encouraged to continue utilizing and investigating cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness measures, including alternative modalities such as cash programming and vulnerability-based targeting.
- The country office's efforts to engage the private sector are commendable and should be continued with vigour, including through the SUN Business Network and other fora.
- WFP has a close relationship with other United Nations agencies, but coordination efforts, including with other partners, must be sustained.
- The country office is encouraged to capture, and to share with other WFP country programmes, lessons from its engagement with the Government of Pakistan as a host-country contributor.

48. It is recommended that the Board adopt this report and that it serve as guidance to management in ensuring the continued effectiveness and efficiency of WFP programmes in Pakistan.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

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| AJK | Azad Jammu and Kashmir (state) |
| EBM | English Biscuit Manufacturers (Private) Limited |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FATA | Federally Administered Tribal Areas |
| GDP | gross domestic product |
| GFD | general food distribution |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| KP | Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (province) |
| NGO | non-governmental organization |
| PDMA | Provincial Disaster Management Authority |
| PRRO | protracted relief and recovery operation |
| SNF | specialized nutritious food |
| SUN | Scaling Up Nutrition |
| UNHCR | Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |