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SUMMARY REPORT OF THE EVALUATION OF THE ERITREA RELIEF PORTFOLIO



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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.

Director, Office of Evaluation (OEDE): Mr K. Tuinenburg tel.: 066513-2252

Evaluation Officer, OEDE: Mr S. Green tel.: 066513-2908

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Supervisor, Meeting Servicing and Distribution Unit (tel.: 066513-2328).



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WFP food aid to Eritrea currently represents approximately 50 percent of the total food aid provided to Eritrea, or nearly 33 percent of Eritrea's estimated food requirement. After a suspension of activities in 1995, operations in Eritrea were resumed in mid-1999. A portfolio evaluation was undertaken by the Office of Evaluation (OEDE) to assess the effectiveness and impact of the assistance provided since operations had recommenced.

The evaluation concludes that the portfolio has been correctly and appropriately oriented towards the provision of relief to large segments of the rural population affected by drought and war. Lack of resources, however, particularly in 2002 and early 2003, seriously reduced the reach and effectiveness of WFP's activities. This resulted in significant reductions in food distributions and beneficiary caseloads compared with planned figures. The situation improved from the middle of 2003 so that at the time of the evaluation more than 1 million people, nearly a third of the population, were receiving assistance.

Over 90 percent of WFP food assistance is provided as general feeding rations to beneficiaries affected by drought and war. Less than 10 percent is provided through various programmes in the areas of school feeding, supplementary and therapeutic feeding, adult literacy and support to people affected by HIV/AIDS. These recent recovery activities use small volumes of the WFP annual food resources, but require large efforts in programming, management and coordination. It is important that the country office continue to recognize the primacy of general distributions of regular food rations to the most vulnerable people.

The evaluation team could find little direct objective evidence of significant achievement against core portfolio objectives such as to improve nutritional status and increase access to physical assets, knowledge and skills. In many *zobas* (regions) where WFP is operating, the reported rates of global acute malnutrition are of serious concern. Recent survey data suggest that malnutrition rates for children under 5 and adult women have not significantly changed and may have even increased since 2002. In contrast, national infant and under-5 mortality rates have shown a consistent decrease since 1985 – deemed more a function of increasing vaccination coverage and vitamin A supplementation, decreasing fertility rates among women and improving health services over the same period than of WFP food aid. There has been little opportunity for WFP to support sustainable livelihoods, given the long-running drought and continued population displacement; little impact is evident.

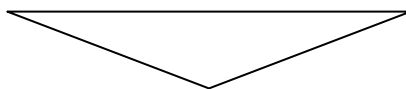
The apparent failure to improve nutritional status is attributed to a variety of factors, principally the continuing chronic drought conditions, significant under-resourcing of WFP activities in 2002 and early 2003, and extensive community redistribution and sharing of food aid. Despite drought conditions commencing in 1999 in many parts of Eritrea, with the worst drought since independence in 2002, there were very few drought-affected beneficiaries receiving food aid in the second half of 2002. Where villagers have been receiving WFP food aid, most of those interviewed by the team were receiving considerably below their daily caloric, protein and vitamin requirements. Community redistributions or sharing of food aid is a major concern, reducing both targeting effectiveness and nutritional impact.



The recent reorientation of the portfolio towards recovery activities may hinder the improvements to performance of relief activities necessary to address community redistribution and continuing malnutrition. Recovery activities are not sufficient on their own to provide the food safety-net required to support the most food-insecure people because of their partial coverage of demographic and social groups. WFP recovery and relief activities often target different beneficiary groups and geographical areas; they are rarely mutually supportive and do not reflect a coherent overall country strategy with clear roles and interrelationships between emergency operation and protracted relief and recovery operation activities.

As the starting point for enhanced effectiveness, the evaluation calls for a more strategic orientation towards provision and management of food aid, improved monitoring of food insecurity and distributions, and greater synergy between relief and recovery activities. Continued use of responsive emergency operations to address the chronic food insecurity that affects much of Eritrea today is inappropriate. Greater programmatic emphasis is required in areas such as targeting effectiveness, beneficiary participation in relief management, especially by women, and contingency planning. The strategy must be explicit in the analysis of the merits of long-term development-oriented support such as education and literacy relative to activities that can make a more immediate impact on self-reliance and recovery.

DRAFT DECISION*



The Board takes note of the information and recommendations contained in the “Summary Report of the Evaluation of the Eritrea Relief Portfolio” (WFP/EB.3/2004/6-B).

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.



INTRODUCTION

1. After a suspension of activities in 1995, WFP recommenced operational activities in Eritrea in mid-1999, commencing a series of six emergency operations (EMOPs) and in 2003, one protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) to support vulnerable populations that had been affected by war and drought. The combined value of WFP's assistance was approximately US\$150 million, excluding expenditure under the current EMOP and PRRO, with an estimated tonnage exceeding 500,000 mt since support recommenced in 1999. This support had grown to reach over 1 million beneficiaries by the middle of 2003.
2. From June 2002 to June 2003, 92 percent of all WFP food assistance was provided to beneficiaries affected by drought and war as general feeding rations totalling 81,736 mt.¹ The remaining 8 percent, totalling 7,245 mt, was provided through diverse programmes in the areas of school feeding (5,198 mt, 6 percent), supplementary and therapeutic feeding (341 mt, 0.4 percent), adult literacy (1,354 mt, 1.5 percent) and support to people affected by HIV/AIDS (352 mt, 0.4 percent).²
3. Since its return to Eritrea in 1999, WFP has been a major contributor of food aid to meet the shortfall in Eritrea's basic food needs, in some years providing more than half the total food aid provided. In 2002, however, WFP provided only a small amount of food aid despite the severe drought that year.

Programme Objectives

4. There have been two main elements of WFP's assistance: support to populations affected by drought and support to war-affected internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees and expellees. The objectives have remained largely unchanged and fall into three broad areas:
 - i) to save the lives of drought-affected households and displaced persons by providing regular access to food rations;
 - ii) to improve nutritional status of drought- and war-affected populations, particularly children and pregnant and lactating women; and
 - iii) to increase access to physical assets, knowledge and skills, and/or to rebuild and protect livelihoods.

STRATEGY AND DESIGN ISSUES

Relevance and Appropriateness

5. By the middle of 2003, over 700,000 (89 percent) of WFP beneficiaries were receiving general feeding rations; only 86,000 (11 percent) were beneficiaries of school feeding,

¹ The most recent monthly data available to the team, for October 2003, indicated that 83 percent of general feeding was provided through the EMOP; 17 percent was provided through the PRRO to IDPs in camps, returnees and expellees. *WFP Eritrea Situation Report*. Vol. 1/2003. Issue No. 10.

² Based on data provided by the country office for June 2002 to June 2003, inclusive. These various recovery activities are currently under the PRRO.



supplementary/therapeutic feeding and HIV/AIDS programmes combined.³ Emergency operations based on general feeding to the most vulnerable and food-insecure populations affected by drought were considered appropriate by the team. Similarly, supporting the nutritional requirements of IDPs, returnees and expellees can be justified while they have no land upon which to grow crops and few other sources of livelihood.

6. Many of the more recent PRRO activities, however, such as adult literacy, support for people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, and school feeding, although exciting and innovative, may not be entirely appropriate given the pervasive need for relief in the current context. This may become particularly problematic when scarce resources, either commodities or staff and management resources, are applied to PRRO activities to the detriment of essential relief. Some of the targeted interventions of the recent PRRO are not necessarily reaching the most needy people — targeting is based on other factors without regard for vulnerability.⁴ This reduces targeting effectiveness of the portfolio as a whole.

Portfolio Strategy and Logic

7. The portfolio is a combination of support provided as general feeding and relief to populations affected by drought and war and more recent activities that are considered recovery-oriented. General feeding aims to provide emergency food security for the most vulnerable populations and is by far the largest part of the portfolio — 92 percent — in terms of food resources.⁵
8. The country office is actively developing a variety of new recovery activities that use comparatively small volumes of WFP's annual food resources but require large efforts in programming, management and coordination.⁶ It is important that the primacy of EMOPs associated with the systematic distribution of food rations to the most vulnerable and food-insecure people be recognized, and that time and resources are allocated to support general feeding and improve implementation. Because of their partial coverage of demographic and social groups within the population, the recovery activities are not sufficient in themselves to provide the food safety-net necessary to support the most vulnerable and food insecure sections of the community.
9. Recovery and relief activities often target different *zobas* (regions) of Eritrea. They are not designed to be mutually supportive or to reflect a coherent overall country strategy with clear roles and interrelationships between EMOP and PRRO activities. The appropriateness of repeated short-term EMOPs must also be questioned, given the protracted requirements for relief in the face of chronic food insecurity throughout much of Eritrea. The serious delays experienced in resourcing new projects underline the need for longer-term programming. Given the likelihood of protracted relief, it will be important that the country office develop a strategy to avoid dependency on food aid. Similarly, the country office must be explicit in analysing the merits of long-term development-oriented support such as education and literacy relative to activities that can make a more immediate impact on self-reliance and recovery.

³ Figures are for May 2003 when school feeding was in full operation. The proportion of beneficiaries who receive general feeding has since increased, a result of school feeding decreasing at the end of the school year and the number of general feeding (drought) beneficiaries increasing. By October 2003, general feeding beneficiaries represented 99 percent of all beneficiaries (see Table 3 in the main report).

⁴ Factors such as attendance at literacy classes or schools, and registration with NGOs supporting people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA).

⁵ Based on data provided by the country office for the period June 2002 to June 2003.

⁶ These recovery activities used only 8 percent of all WFP food resources by weight for the period from June 2002 to June 2003.



Design Assumptions and Risk Assessment

10. EMOPs are primarily responsive in nature, but effective recovery programmes are more strategic and must assume a range of external factors and conditions outside the control of the country office.
11. At the operational level, the country office's recovery activities depend on:
 - suitable implementing partners with the capacity to support efficient implementation and monitoring of recovery operations;
 - timely and adequate provision of associated non-WFP inputs essential for the various recovery activities;
 - staff capacity and technical expertise in the country office to cover the range of new programmes inherent in recovery operations, from design through management and coordination to monitoring;
 - donor preparedness to fund/resource recovery activities; and
 - the capacity of the Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (ERREC) to deliver small quantities of food commodities to a large number of final distribution points (FDPs) associated with the various activities, thus ensuring a reliable pipeline.
12. Several of the assumptions underpinning the success of recovery operations have not been fully realized. Of particular concern is the availability of suitable implementing partners with adequate skills and capacity to implement WFP programmes.
13. The country office Contingency Plan 2003 is largely a justification for the current EMOP 10261.0, addressing a known crisis that had already begun to unfold. It superficially assesses several potential risks, but does not include risk-management strategies for the few risks identified. A number of risks to the implementation of WFP activities have not been considered, such as critical fuel shortages, frequent attacks on vehicles delivering food aid or on WFP/partner staff and the proposed policy for monetizing food aid for recovery activities. The contingency plan does not cover the necessary coordination between United Nations development agencies and the government in response to a critical emergency.

MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES

Activity Planning

14. The country office has developed and continues to support the development of valuable tools for activity planning. It has considerably improved its planning capacity in recent times. The current EMOP has targeted areas and beneficiary numbers based on a Quality of Season Index (QSI), representing a significant advance in designing emergency responses. Despite this greatly improved capacity, QSI and other information from the recent nutritional surveys and livelihood studies have not been used subsequently to determine the monthly number of sub-*zoba* beneficiaries to be covered in distribution plans, nor to adjust the selection of areas following the 2003 main growing season. As a result, the numbers of beneficiaries receiving food aid in any sub-*zoba* differ from the planned number of beneficiaries identified using the QSI. There are no such comparisons made of planned numbers of either beneficiaries or associated quantities using QSI/vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) with actual numbers. Using such tools at the design phase of an operation only, with subsequent distributions largely unrelated to the planned areas identified, brings into question QSI's utility. Notwithstanding, the



country office has been placing greater emphasis on post-distribution monitoring which, if conducted effectively, could become the basis for programme adjustment and improvement during implementation. The evaluation team considers this an important initiative, which will help in the broader corporate effort to emphasize results in addition to food aid deliveries.

15. There has been little apparent consideration of coordination between the two current operations, the EMOP and PRRO, or among activities within the PRRO. Despite the fact that both operations aim to improve food security and nutritional status among vulnerable populations, they often operate in different areas and with different groups of beneficiaries. In particular, improved coordination will be essential if the varied activities under the PRRO are ever to provide food security for vulnerable households.

Targeting and Coverage

16. Of the nine villages visited by the team that received general feeding for drought-affected households, only two reported an identification and distribution process that targeted the most vulnerable people. The vast majority of villages and individual household informants reported equal redistribution of food commodities, regardless of vulnerability of households or the amount of food available. As a result, individuals were generally receiving less than the full ration. The average quantity of wheat received per month reported by general feeding drought-affected beneficiaries was 13.1 kg compared with the ration amount of 17.25 kg; it ranged down to 3.5 kg.⁷ By contrast, IDPs, returnees and expellees reported an average of 16.1 kg, with a low of 10 kg. These rations were further diminished by the sale of wheat to cover milling and transport costs by the majority of the most vulnerable households without other sources of income. This directly impacts the achievement of WFP's objective of improved nutritional status among the most vulnerable people.
17. In the villages and IDP camps visited, the team found no evidence of the most vulnerable households being excluded from general feeding distributions (exclusion error). There was clear evidence, rather, of food assistance going to people who were not the most vulnerable in the community and who had other means to acquire food.
18. Despite findings of reliable food aid supply to the villages selected for the team to visit, WFP coverage in terms of geographic area and number of beneficiaries has been variable. During the worst drought since independence in 2002, WFP food aid fell from 167,000 mt to 39,000 mt.⁸ There were very few drought-affected beneficiaries receiving WFP support in the second half of 2002, despite ongoing drought since 1999. This critical lack of resources was only partly resolved in February 2003 when sufficient resources became available for up to 400,000 beneficiaries to receive the planned 60 percent of a full ration, but this was still considerably less than the 738,450 drought-affected people originally targeted. After a two-month delay, again because of resource constraints, the new EMOP 10261.0 commenced in July 2003. Originally designed to support 900,000 beneficiaries in Debub, Gash Barka, Anseba, Northern Red Sea and Maekel, by the end of 2003 it was supporting fewer than 600,000 beneficiaries in the two *zobas* of Debub and Gash Barka.

⁷ The country office notes that reduction of rations received by beneficiaries is not only the result of food redistribution and sharing at the community level, but also possibly of reduced food rations at times of shortfall.

⁸ This was covered under EMOP 10049, originally planned to finish at the end of February 2002, but extended to cover the continued emergency, eventually finishing in September 2003.



19. It is acknowledged that emergency situations are dynamic and planning is difficult. Nevertheless, there has been little correspondence between what has been planned and stated in project designs and subsequent implementation. This inconsistency of supply to beneficiaries, both in terms of tonnage and geographic location, makes monitoring and evaluation difficult. Plans and project designs must be more formally amended and documented once the basis for volumes and target locations have been revised. The QSI-based targets that formed the basis for the design of EMOP 10261.0 no longer provide a sound basis against which to monitor and evaluate performance. The approved revised plan, however, will enable WFP and its stakeholders to monitor performance more meaningfully.

Logistics and Pipeline Management

20. Gross commodity supply data since early 2002 depict a situation of unreliable volumes and highly variable beneficiary numbers. Serious delays in food arriving in the country at the start of the two new operations, mainly due to slow donor response and shortfalls in the resourcing of earlier EMOPs, have significantly affected the number of general feeding beneficiaries supported by WFP. This has been mitigated to some extent by borrowing from both in-country and regional food stocks. The pipeline for IDPs in camps has been the most reliable, with very few serious delays or breaks in supply. However, the number of drought-affected general-feeding beneficiaries reported by ERREC has varied with the commodity supplies available, as discussed above.⁹ At times, when cereals have been available to fully meet the needs of the targeted beneficiaries, the supplies of iodized salt, oil and pulses have been lacking.
21. Supplies have also been disrupted and occasionally inadequate for the implementation of PRRO activities aimed at health and educational outcomes — supplementary and therapeutic feeding, school feeding and adult literacy. Food shortages have been common at the beginning of new activities while waiting for donors to respond to appeals and before actual contributions take place. When shortages have occurred, the country office has usually accorded the highest priority to general-feeding operations.

Partnerships and Coordination

22. The country office has developed good working relationships with the Government of Eritrea and has made efforts to ensure that the strategies and goals of the Government inform WFP programme planning at the country level.
23. WFP plays a lead role in coordinating in-country food and relief efforts and is the secretariat for the Food Aid Sectoral Working Group among other functions. This group is an ideal forum for discussing thematic, policy and programming issues related to food aid. Issues of where relief food will be targeted, appropriate and standardized means of targeting, and minimum food requirements for areas in need should be addressed at this broad forum to ensure a coordinated approach to the relief package.
24. The coordination and partnerships that the country office has developed with the Government of Eritrea and government implementing partners can greatly facilitate implementation of activities in the field by sub-offices. The team noted the willing participation of ERREC in all regions and the generally excellent communication between the heads of sub-offices and their government counterparts.

⁹ Data provided by the country office indicate few to no general-feeding drought-affected beneficiaries from June 2002 through to January 2003.



25. WFP currently has four sub-offices, in Debub, Gash Barka, Anseba and the Northern Red Sea, enabling it to interact with the government and react programmatically to changing needs and issues. Many of the donors and NGOs, however, are centrally-based and do not have full-time field presence outside of Asmara. This significantly limits field coordination and integrated programme planning with implementing partners.

Monitoring and Management Information

26. The country office has recently refined its field monitoring framework, field tools and methods prior to the evaluation mission. A database had been developed to assist in data collation, analysis and reporting. At the time of the mission, however, few of the new tools had been tested; the database had yet to be utilized and already required amendment.
27. Of greater concern were the very non-standard sets of field information being collected at each of the sub-offices using a variety of forms and formats and the difficulty of the programme personnel at the country office in locating and providing much of this information to the team, let alone as collated or analysed summaries. The staff at the country office and sub-offices aim to overcome this weakness with the new monitoring framework and database.
28. WFP's national field assistants (NFAs) are not often able to monitor food distributions while they take place because of limited staff, large distances and imperfect communication with ERREC.
29. Although it is often delayed, information provided by ERREC is the basis of country office quantitative data on food distributions and beneficiary numbers and for tracking, local transport, storage, and handling and COMPAS entries. In the case of food aid in support of recovery or development activities such as school feeding, literacy and HIV/AIDS, and for feeding IDPs, expellees and returnees, this information can be expected to be accurate. The information is problematic, however, in the case of relief for drought-affected communities, which is by far the largest component of the portfolio with respect to food flows. Given the extent of redistribution discussed earlier, and the failure of relief committees to use beneficiary lists as the basis of food distributions, the information received on ration sizes and beneficiary numbers is spurious. As a result of the shortage of food aid, food distribution is supply-driven, not demand-driven – the number of people designated as beneficiaries and on the official lists is a function of the amount of food available divided by the given ration size. Beneficiary numbers provided by ERREC and reported by the country office, therefore, are underestimated and ration sizes are overestimated.

Beneficiary Participation

30. Beneficiary participation is extremely important in WFP programming, offering the beneficiary a form of ownership over the programme, which then enhances its effectiveness and facilitates eventual phase-out of WFP resources. WFP's Commitments to Women and Enhanced Commitments to Women both address the role of women in all phases of needs assessment, and the need for gender-specific planning, targeting, and food distribution.
31. The current programmes in Eritrea are having mixed successes in terms of beneficiary participation. The most basic level of participation includes one-way information sharing from the decision-makers to the beneficiaries. In terms of the general feeding programme, the team found that very few beneficiaries were aware of their basic food entitlement or knew how long the food aid would continue or how that decision would be made. Rather than observing beneficiary participation and information sharing, the team found the



beneficiaries to be ignorant and dependent; they had little information and virtually no opportunities to influence developments.

32. Beneficiary participation in other areas of the Eritrea portfolio is also minimal. WFP works well with the Government of Eritrea and other implementing partners, but more needs to be done to ensure that the food aid recipients have a voice in the food aid process. Training and sensitization in this area are essential to advance WFP's worldwide commitments towards beneficiary participation at all stages of the programming cycle.
33. Of particular concern is the low number of women represented in relief committees and the failure of the country office or implementing partners to monitor such representation. Women comprised only 14 percent of the members in the 33 relief committees met by the team.

Staff and Institutional Resources

34. The staff, budget and other resources available to WFP's implementing partners are critical to the success of the country office portfolio. Lack of adequate capacity among implementing partners has limited the efficiency and effectiveness of many WFP-supported programmes. With few NGOs or donors operating in Eritrea, there is often little choice for WFP but to work with under-staffed and under-resourced government agencies. Most employees in the Government of Eritrea are highly dedicated and motivated, and many are well-trained and capable, but they face serious limitations because resources are unavailable. The situation is exacerbated by compulsory national service and the occasional drafting of agency staff.

PROGRAMMATIC RESULTS ACHIEVED

Saving Lives

35. The limited secondary data available suggest that national infant and under-5 mortality rates have shown a consistent decrease since 1985, despite the succession of droughts commencing in 1999 and the severe drought in 2002. However, it is difficult to attribute such improvements to WFP support. Many factors beyond relief feeding undoubtedly affect mortality rates, such as increased vaccination coverage and vitamin-A supplementation, decreased fertility rates among women and improved health services over the same period. Very high malnutrition rates in WFP areas, with survey rates increasing since 2002, cast further doubt on WFP's contribution to any such improvement.
36. WFP food aid currently represents nearly half of that provided to Eritrea, or nearly one third of the total Eritrean food requirement, and reaches large numbers of beneficiaries. This has not always been the case, however: in 2002 and early 2003, commodity supplies available for WFP programmes fell far short of requirements. The results in terms of saving lives have been further compromised by the small ration sizes received by many households. Redistribution of the general-feeding rations for drought among a whole village population is a common practice. Losses from milling and occasionally from transport from the FDP to the household again reduce the ration. The result is an inadequate diet that does not meet the nutritional needs of those fully reliant on food aid.

Malnutrition

37. Despite food aid support since 1999, the evaluation team found limited evidence that the assistance has had a significant impact on reducing malnutrition. Recent surveys indicate that global acute malnutrition for children under 5 was in the very high range for most



zobas in 2003. Maternal malnutrition was also high to very high in all *zobas* in the same year. The limited survey data available indicate that in most regions, including those where WFP has concentrated its relief efforts, malnutrition rates for children under 5 and adult women may have increased since 2002.

38. In the IDP camps where a stable population of people are receiving most of their daily food requirements from WFP food aid, it was reported to the evaluation team that the malnutrition rate is fairly low, the populations generally have easy access to basic health care and the rates of morbidity are quite stable with illnesses generally related to seasonal and environmental diseases.
39. The causes of the poor nutritional situation in-country are complex, but certainly relate directly to poor quantity and quality of food in households, limited access to health care and sanitation, and poor understanding of appropriate weaning practices and complementary foods for young children. While the reported child and infant mortality rates remain acceptable, the impact of acute and chronic malnutrition on children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women is extreme, leading to high morbidity, mental underdevelopment and poor birth outcomes.
40. The WFP country office is attempting to reach people in need of food assistance through the targeted general feeding programme and the supplementary and therapeutic selective feeding programmes. Unfortunately, the food programmes are limited compared with the number of people in need of food support. The impact on the nutritional status of the most vulnerable people can be severe if an individual is receiving far below his/her daily caloric needs of 2,100 kcal/adult/day. For a malnourished pregnant woman, insufficient daily food intake will not only result in her own weakness and ill health but will greatly increase the likelihood of a low-birth-weight baby. Low-birth-weight babies are four times more likely to die in the first week of life from infections and may also suffer from immune and developmental deficiencies.
41. Based on the team's interviews, most general feeding beneficiaries are receiving far below their daily caloric, protein and vitamin requirements.

Building Physical Assets, Knowledge and Skills

42. In the context of continuing drought and population displacement, there has been little opportunity for WFP to support sustainable livelihoods, and little impact is evident. After five years of drought, the conflict with Ethiopia and difficult economic conditions, many households have disposed of productive assets or lost them as the result of drought and displacement. Households reported very low livestock numbers, including draught animals, compared with their situations before the war and drought. Nevertheless, households that have been able to retain some livestock have done so partly as the result of regular food aid.
43. An important part of the programme includes support to returnees, IDPs out of camps and expellees as they re-establish their predominantly agricultural way of life. Food aid does little to guarantee their success, however. Households settling or resettling on the land require a range of inputs and infrastructure that have not always been available. The cooperation and coordination required from other agencies such as the Government of Eritrea, donors and NGOs have not always been evident or sufficient.
44. Many government officials voiced fears regarding food aid dependency: with regular full rations provided as food aid, there was little incentive for households to work for their subsistence or to generate income. It is important that this risk be addressed by careful targeting. Without complementary inputs, food aid can clearly do little to promote



sustainable livelihoods; it must be a component of joint programming with the Government, donors, the United Nations and NGOs.

45. It can be argued that in the long term, school feeding and adult literacy can build knowledge and skills, although the benefits are distant and dependent on many other factors. It has been proposed that the food-for-work (FFW) programme will more directly support sustainable livelihoods, but it faces a variety of constraints (see Section 5.7 in the main report).

Supplementary Feeding

46. At the time of the mission, WFP was supporting 4,200 children under 5 and 1,800 pregnant and lactating women. The school feeding programme target in late 2003 was far higher — 16,700 in school feeding programmes, including some therapeutic feeding programmes under the PRRO, and 72,000 under the EMOP — and expansion was under way. Currently, given the very low levels of enrolment, pipeline problems and shortages of much needed food inputs, the impact of the supplementary feeding programmes has so far been quite limited.
47. Access is a major constraint to the programmes because many beneficiaries have to travel large distances to reach FDPs, which limits participation and encourages defaulting. It is essential to move the school feeding programme into all health centres and health stations. Consideration should also be given to providing school feeding programme supplies to remote villages that have community-based growth-monitoring programmes. Given the very high levels of malnutrition, the current selective feeding programmes should be expanded or a targeted food programme such as blanket feeding should be started.

Therapeutic Feeding

48. WFP supports therapeutic feeding centres in 23 health facilities countrywide, including 15 hospitals and eight health centres that are intended to cover approximately 900 children — a number far below the project documents, which propose 2,400 children under the PRRO and 6,000 children under the EMOP. The purpose of the centres is to provide on-site wet feeding as a form of intensive nutritional therapy to allow severely malnourished children to regain above 80 percent of weight-for-height.
49. On average, 174 children were enrolled in the therapeutic feeding programme each month in 2003, which suggests only seven children per facility. Given that the malnutrition rate for severely malnourished children is between 2 percent and 2.5 percent countrywide, one would expect approximately 10,200 severely malnourished children in Eritrea. A major constraint remains underutilization of the programme, often as a result of distances mothers are required to travel.
50. The average recovery rates for all centres in 2002 was 49.4 percent, increasing to 66.5 percent in 2003 — both well below the target rate of 80 percent.¹⁰

School Feeding

51. At the time of the evaluation, the school feeding programme was beginning its third year of operation. The first year, a pilot phase providing dry rations, reached 43,000 children in 134 schools. The first wet feeding year reached 80,000 elementary school children in

¹⁰ Some factors influencing these low recovery rates include poor record-keeping, children's early exit prior to full recovery and limited food inputs received at the centres.



212 schools. Between January 2002 and June 2003, WFP provided food and non-food items valued at US\$2.8 million for the former and US\$350,000 for the latter.

52. WFP's support through the school feeding programme conforms with the priorities of the Government of Eritrea and WFP's own commitment to support universal access to basic education. The Ministry of Education and WFP have worked effectively together to design and implement the programme. Despite overall figures showing an increase in enrolment following the introduction of school feeding, some initial evidence suggests that food aid is not always effective in the short term as a means to promote enrolment, attendance and retention, particularly for girls. All stakeholders in schools reported, however, that wet feeding relieved short-term hunger, with consequent enhanced learning and participation. In this respect, wet feeding had clear advantages over dry feeding in the form of take-home rations, but it was not without some costs. Feeding at schools increased the workload of teachers and school directors, and took time from the school programme for teachers and pupils.
53. A standard nationwide take-home ration has been provided as an incentive to parents to send girls to school despite varying degrees of resistance among the regions to girls' education. In the Southern Red Sea *zoba*, with strong cultural and social restrictions and few accommodation facilities, such a ration has had much less effect on increasing girls' enrolment. It is important that non-food support should also be available in the form of accommodation, washing facilities, beds, blankets and mosquito nets to enable children to attend school. There is a particular duty of care associated with attracting girls and boys to boarding and para-boarding schools, not only in relation to their nutrition, which must be regular, sufficient and balanced, but also to their general health and well-being. It appears that this has been overlooked by WFP in many such schools.
54. In the Southern Red Sea *zoba*, school feeding was already taking place prior to WFP assistance, supported by local government and parents. This raises issues of the rationale for WFP selection of those schools, and the country office strategy for sustainability and phasing out.¹¹

Food for Training and Adult Literacy

55. In 2003, 41,426 trainees, of whom 86 percent were women and girls, at 665 sites in all six *zobas* received food for training. Reports indicate an average 55 percent increase in enrolment in Anseba for 2003, compared with 2002. There were high completion rates in Anseba and other *zobas*. It is difficult, however, to determine a correlation between food assistance and increased enrolment and attendance, because food was delivered at the end of the programme instead of twice a month as originally agreed. It is assumed that the promise of food assistance motivated attendance and a decrease in dropout rates.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

56. Please see the attached management response matrix in the Annex to this document.

¹¹ The country office notes in this context that decreasing government resources forced the Government of Eritrea to withdraw its school feeding programme support in this region.



ANNEX: EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE SUMMARY — ERITREA RELIEF PORTFOLIO

Recommendation to WFP (Date)	Action by	Management response and action taken (Date)
Strategy and Design		
<p>1. In order to manage relief to recovery transitions and outcomes for key beneficiary groups more effectively, the country office needs to develop a strategy for managing the current protracted situation. This includes clarifications regarding (i) how greater synergies among relief and recovery activities and outcomes could be achieved through clearer definition of the relationships among activities, (ii) the value-added of continued use of the responsive EMOP instrument in combination with a PRRO, (iii) a clear rationale for guiding the geographic targeting strategy, (iv) how to strengthen the capacity of implementing partners, (v) the interplay between relief and recovery interventions and (vi) an exit strategy for all portfolio-related activities. A PRRO with a larger relief component without an EMOP within the portfolio might be more appropriate for longer-term planning and resourcing, and might offer the potential to improve coordination among portfolio activities.</p>	Country office	<p>The country office has noted the recommendations and will work towards formulation of a PRRO focusing on managing the current protracted situation. The country office will ensure that relief needs of the vulnerable population are articulated in the PRRO and identify recovery activities for targeted populations where appropriate. The country office will also ensure that the exit strategy is well defined.</p>
Design assumptions, risks and contingencies		
<p>2. It is recommended that some further contingency planning be undertaken to cover, among other things, the following risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attacks on trucks transporting food, implementing partners or WFP vehicles or offices; • critical fuel shortages or other circumstances that prevent commercial trucking companies from delivering food aid; and • government policies requiring all food aid for recovery activities to be monetized. 	Country office	<p>The country office has already initiated discussions with government counterparts on the possibility of protecting the trucks carrying WFP commodities in high risk areas. One proposal is to put clearly visible WFP flags and logos on the trucks during delivery.</p> <p>All WFP vehicles in the country are MOSS-compliant and are fitted with ballistic blankets. Shatter-resistant films have been put on all vehicles and offices, including sub-offices in the field.</p> <p>The country office has put in place provisions of fuel stocks in drums in sub-offices and in Asmara.</p> <p>WFP's current policy (1997) on monetization clearly states that "WFP will not undertake projects involving full open-market monetization to fund activities that are not related to direct food assistance....." The country office will strengthen its dialogue with the Government to advocate more for direct distribution of food, in line with the WFP policy on monetization.</p>
Management and implementation processes		
Planning and programming		
<p>3. Responsive programming is required to meet the changing needs of different geographical areas, but rapid shifts in the areas and populations to be supported under general feeding is inimical to household food security. Improved procedures for food-security and vulnerability monitoring and mapping should principally be used to identify new areas and populations to support and/or weaknesses in programmes being implemented. There should be closely monitored phased transitions, not rapid changes in the levels of support to any one geographic area.</p>	Recommendation to WFP	<p>The country office is working on refining its targeting strategy. In agreement with its partners, general feeding activities will be limited to well-defined geographical areas. The tools to be employed are the QSI, the Coping Strategy Index (CSI) and the National Nutrition Surveillance System (NNSS).</p>



ANNEX: EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE SUMMARY — ERITREA RELIEF PORTFOLIO

Recommendation to WFP (Date)	Action by	Management response and action taken (Date)
Targeting		
<p>4. WFP and ERREC should make greater efforts to influence targeting in the community. This may require more active promotion and sensitization of communities and relief committees by local government and other community-based organizations. WFP could then support local government and other implementing partners to develop strategies for promoting targeting whereby constraints, assumptions and risks are identified for each strategy. Strategies could then be piloted, monitored and assessed before wider replication.</p>	Country office	<p>The country office has already started to discuss with the Government at the central and regional levels a targeting strategy and methodology to involve communities. Gash-Barka has been the pilot region: a first workshop was held in June 2004. After evaluation, the exercise will be extended to the rest of the country.</p>
Partnerships and coordination		
<p>5. The function of the Food Sectoral Working Group should extend beyond discussion of logistics and pipelines. This group is an ideal forum for discussing thematic, policy and programming issues related to food aid to ensure a coordinated approach to the relief package – where relief food will be targeted, appropriate and standardized means of targeting and minimum food requirements for areas in need. Ideally, all of the major players in the relief food system would be present in order to discuss problems, limitations or successes. Broader government representation is required for productive discussions on food aid strategies as well as developing joint strategies. WFP in partnership with the Government should be more active in promoting the working group to ensure maximum impact and detailed follow-up on issues raised.</p>	Country office	<p>It should be aimed at having high-level representation at decision-maker level. The deputy ERREC Commissioner is the chairperson.</p> <p>UNICEF was recently included in this working group and topics related to supplementary feeding are now part of regular discussions.</p> <p>The country office will advocate with the Government for inclusion of other players in the humanitarian sector.</p> <p>It should be noted that there is another food and nutrition forum where policies are discussed. The current Food Sectoral Working Group, targeting and geographical areas of coverage are also discussed.</p> <p>In Eritrea, WFP is not chairing the Food Sectoral Working Group: the Government has stated that it is its responsibility. But WFP facilitates the process and is the secretary to this working group.</p> <p>WFP will use its current role in the working group to leverage more support from the Government on strategic and policy discussions and decisions.</p>
<p>6. Sub-offices should do more to promote coordination among implementing partners and government agencies at the <i>zoba</i> level to enhance field-based effectiveness of programmes.</p>	Country office	<p>In areas with no OCHA presence at the sub-office level, the country team could ask OCHA Asmara to organize coordination meetings.</p> <p>At the <i>zoba</i> level WFP works and coordinates with implementing partners and government counterparts, and will continue to improve on the coordination process.</p> <p>WFP sub-offices can organize partners meetings if requested to do so in addition to what is already being done.</p> <p>NB: Areas like Massawa do not have local-level representation of NGOs, so it is important that the Asmara-level NGO personnel are involved in the <i>zoba</i>-level coordination process.</p>



ANNEX: EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE SUMMARY — ERITREA RELIEF PORTFOLIO

Recommendation to WFP (Date)	Action by	Management response and action taken (Date)
M&E		
<p>7. Programme quality is an important area of M&E and management, of which there is little mention in project and country office documentation. Standards of performance and quality of outputs and outcomes need to be given increasing prominence, especially as the country office expands and diversifies into a complex range of recovery activities.</p>	Country office	<p>The country office is currently piloting revised monitoring formats and adjusting its monitoring database. This is expected to improve the effectiveness of the monitoring system.</p> <p>Relief feeding monitoring will include distribution monitoring and post-distribution monitoring to track output-level information and to inform the country office about issues related to redistribution/sharing as well as food use at the household level.</p> <p>Further training of staff and counterparts will take place to enhance skills related to data collection, data analysis and report writing.</p> <p>A first draft of a monitoring guide has been prepared by the country office for use by field staff, providing instructions on monitoring and a framework for sub-offices to carry out systematic monitoring. Feedback on the guide has been gathered from the sub-offices and integrated into a revised version.</p> <p>Communities will be sensitized to raise awareness about ration size and food entitlements. WFP will work with ERREC and the Ministry of Local Government to disseminate information on targeting criteria and ration entitlements through relief committees in line with the Enhanced Commitments to Women.</p> <p>Quarterly reviews of consolidated monitoring information related to each thematic area will take place between management, thematic focal points, heads of sub-offices and implementing partners to ensure that information gathered through monitoring is used to inform decision-making and enhance the effectiveness of programme activities.</p> <p>It is neither feasible nor advisable, however, for the country office to attempt to collect nutrition related data on its own. Such information should be gathered through the WFP-supported Ministry of Health National Nutritional Surveillance System, launched in December 2003.</p>
Enhanced beneficiary participation and commitments to women		
<p>8. Beneficiary participation in all areas of the portfolio require further strengthening and consolidation as a starting point for enhancing effectiveness and impact and meeting the enhanced commitments to women. Greater emphasis should be placed on encouraging women's participation at all stages in programme design and programme planning. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> relief committees, which operate at the community level, need to be better sensitized to the objectives of WFP assistance, to the importance of effective targeting and to the role and benefits of enhanced women's participation; and 	Country office	<p>WFP is organizing the ECW baseline in Eritrea (August 2004).</p> <p>WFP works with the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) in FFT projects under the Adult Literacy Programme.</p> <p>WFP will liaise with NUEW, ERREC and the Ministry of Local Government on strategy for improving women's participation in relief committees on completion of the ECW baseline and action plan.</p> <p>ECW will be part of the proposed training of Ministry of Local Government officials at the different levels so that they can focus on the role of women in food management.</p>



ANNEX: EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE SUMMARY — ERITREA RELIEF PORTFOLIO

Recommendation to WFP (Date)	Action by	Management response and action taken (Date)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strategies are required to further enhance women's capacities in management of food aid distributions and the selection of beneficiaries. 		PTAs and ALP Committees are required to have at least 50 percent women members; this will be monitored and recorded, taking into account cultural and religious constraints.
Effectiveness and results		
Nutritional outcomes		
9. Special attention should be paid to the increasing levels of urban hunger and malnutrition. Baseline data should be gathered, strategies developed and agencies identified who are prepared to support this group.	Country office	In the data for development UNDAF theme groups, the work plan mentions an urban survey in which WFP might be a partner. Under the NNSS, the expert committee is currently looking at the technical aspects of a nutrition survey. The WFP country office will seek additional support from Headquarters and ODK on nutritional issues.
10. Blanket feeding should be considered as an option for targeting the most vulnerable groups if overall relief food cannot be increased to cover the population in need. Special focus should be given to children under 5, pregnant and lactating women, and adolescent and adult women who have a critically low body mass index. WFP, the Ministry of Health and UNICEF should jointly assess the feasibility of beginning a blanket feeding programme, with special consideration of community support and involvement, staffing capabilities and screening/registration procedures.	Country office	It should be noted that blanket feeding is an "alternative" rather than an "option" for targeting the most vulnerable groups. UNICEF and World Bank experience in this area indicates that various questions must be settled before WFP commits itself. WFP might explore on a pilot basis blanket feeding for targeted communities, which will be sensitized prior to implementation; the villages will be selected taking into account the impact of drought and war as well as nutritional status.
11. Coverage of SFPs and TFPs should be increased to enhance impact on nutritionally vulnerable groups. WFP should serve as a lead agency in increasing the coverage of selective feeding programmes across the country.	Country office	WFP will carry this out wherever feasible, taking into account the serious lack of capacity in the Ministry of Health, the lead institution, and among other implementing partners



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ALP	adult literacy programme
BMI	body mass index
COMPAS	Commodity Movement Processing and Analysis System
CSI	Coping Strategy Index
EMOP	emergency operation
ERREC	Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
FDP	final distribution point
FFW	food for work
IDP	internally displaced person
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MOSS	minimum operating security standards
NFA	national field assistant
NGO	non-governmental organization
NNSS	National Nutrition Surveillance System
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OEDE	Office of Evaluation
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
PTA	parent-teacher association
QSI	quality of season index
VAM	vulnerability analysis and mapping

