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Programme
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World
Food
Programme

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Agenda item 7

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INFORMATION NOTE ON THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS PROGRAMME CATEGORY

* In accordance with the Executive Board's decisions on governance, approved at the Annual and Third Regular Sessions, 2000, items for information should not be discussed unless a Board member specifically requests it, well in advance of the meeting, and the Chair accepts the request on the grounds that it is a proper use of the Board's time.

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for information to the Executive Board.

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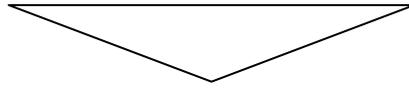
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DRAFT DECISION*



The Board takes note of the information contained in the document “Information Note on the Special Operations Programme Category” (WFP/EB.1/2004/7).

* 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. Recommendations regarding the definition, scope, funding modalities and procedures for Special Operations (SOs) were provided by a thematic evaluation of the SO programme category carried out by the Office of Evaluation (OEDE) in 2001 and an internal review conducted by the Dutch company Royal Haskoning in mid-2002.
2. At the October 2002 session of the Executive Board, members took note of the recommendations in the "Summary Report of the Thematic Evaluation of Special Operations" (WFP/EB.3/2002/6/2) and of the management response in the associated information note (WFP/EB.3/2002/INF/12). The director of the Transport, Preparedness and Response Division (OTP) informed the Executive Board at that time that a paper on the SO programme category was to be presented to it. The Board encouraged further action on the recommendations, with considerations raised during the discussions taken into account.
3. There was consensus that SOs had value if linked with a WFP emergency operation (EMOP) or a protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO), and that the programme category should be maintained. It was noted, however, that clarification with respect to SOs and WFP's provision of inter-agency services should be forthcoming, and that weaknesses in SO document preparation and funding should be addressed.
4. The purpose of this information note is (i) to inform Board members of progress made to date in addressing SO issues, (ii) to propose a new working definition for the SO programme category and (iii) to outline the steps needed to align the SO programme category more closely with WFP's other programme categories.

BACKGROUND

5. SOs are intervention measures targeted to overcome bottlenecks, primarily logistic, that hinder efficient, secure delivery of food aid and other humanitarian assistance.
6. The definition of SOs in WFP's *General Regulations, Rules and Financial Regulations, 1 January 2000*, Rule II.2.d, is:

Special Operations Programme Category, for activities to rehabilitate and enhance transport infrastructure, if necessary and in extraordinary circumstances, to permit speedy and efficient delivery of food assistance to meet emergency and protracted relief needs.
7. The role of SOs has become increasingly important as they have tended to be synonymous with flexibility and speed. This has meant, however, that the current definition no longer covers current practice or the inter-agency services that WFP is increasingly called upon to provide.
8. SOs can be classed in two major categories:
 - (i) those serving EMOPs or PRROs, known as WFP-specific SOs, including:
 - ◇ rehabilitation of infrastructure, such as emergency repairs to roads, bridges, railways, airports and ports;
 - ◇ exceptional provision of trucking support fleets;
 - ◇ operational support equipment and service packages such as base camp or mine action modules; and



(ii) those serving the humanitarian community, referred to as common-services SOs, including:

- ◇ United Nations Joint Logistics Centres (UNJLCs); and
- ◇ WFP aviation projects.

TRENDS 2000–2003

9. Figure 1 shows that there was a significant requirement for SOs during 2000–2003, on average 20 per year. It is worth noting that although common-services SOs were outnumbered by WFP-specific SOs in 2001, the number levelled off in the following years.

Figure 1

Year	Number of active SOs	SOs	
		WFP	Common
2000	31 ¹	25	6
2001	27 ²	16	11
2002	14 ³	7	7
2003	18 ⁴	8	10

¹ 10 SOs carried over from previous year.

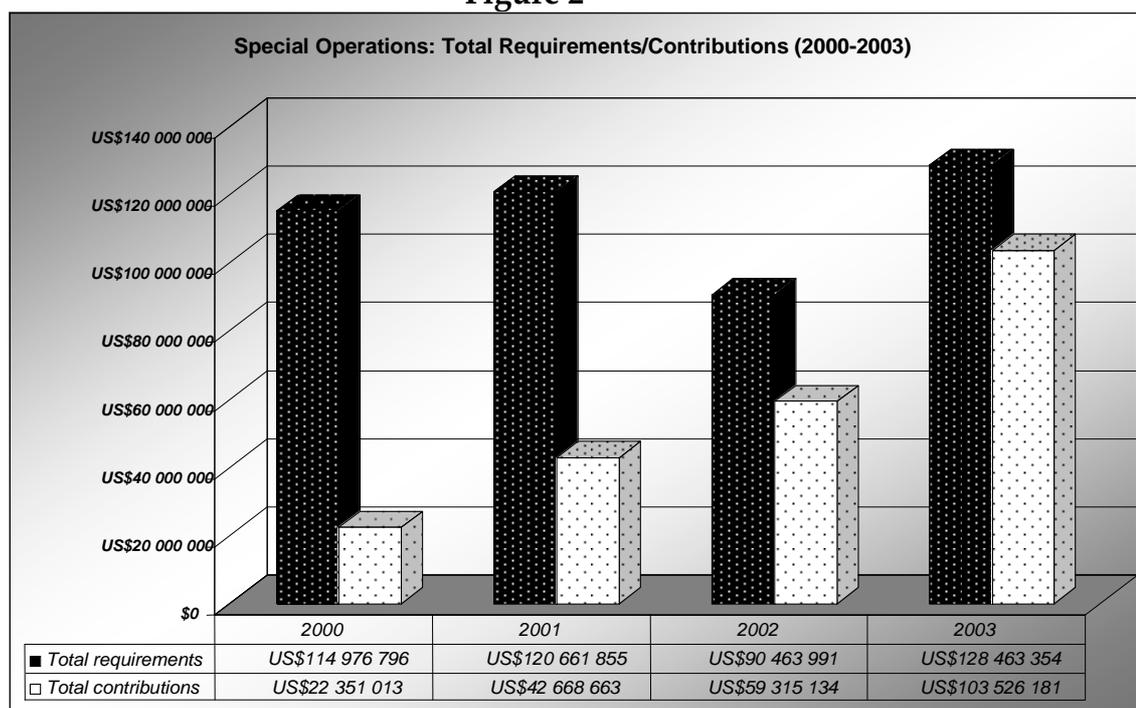
² 12 SOs carried over from previous year.

³ 4 SOs carried over from previous year.

⁴ 5 SOs carried over from previous year.

10. Figure 2 shows that annual requirements for SOs grew from US\$114 million to US\$128 million; contributions from donors dramatically increased from US\$22 million in 2000 to US\$103 million in 2003.

Figure 2



Note: The amounts in Figure 2 were extracted from the October 2000–October 2003 issues of the Yellow Pages.



PROGRESS MADE TO DATE

11. Since the October 2002 Executive Board meeting and the management response to the evaluation, progress has been made in formalizing WFP's mandate in relation to the common services it provides.
12. At the High Level Committee for Management (HLCM) meeting in New York on 15 June 2003, WFP was given and accepted the mandate to administer non-peacekeeping air transport services for United Nations bodies and their NGO partners for humanitarian and other activities. WFP continues to provide aviation services for the humanitarian community through SOs when there is a significant WFP operational component: if WFP is to be a major user of such services, then an SO project document will be launched; if WFP is not to be a major user of the services or where such services are provided at the request of another agency, a third-party agreement or its equivalent will be entered into.
13. As mandated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group (IASC-WG) in March 2002, WFP is the custodian of UNJLC, the inter-agency logistics coordination facility for emergency response. SOs are launched for UNJLC field operations such as those in Afghanistan, Iraq and Liberia.
14. WFP uses SOs for inter-agency telecommunications and information technology projects when requested to undertake them on behalf of the United Nations and for large-scale start-ups for projects serving WFP programme categories only.
15. The focus for OTP in 2002–2003 was to improve the normative guidance material in line with other programme categories and to expand operational guidance on the SO workflow cycle with a view to improving the quality, cost-effectiveness and implementation of SOs in accordance with the recommendations in the evaluation and as encouraged by the Board.
16. The revised guidance material on SOs, which is in the Programme Design Manual (PDM), seeks to address gaps in previous guidance material. It is based on analysis of lessons from recent experience, following consultation with country offices and regional bureaux. It clarifies:
 - the working definition of an SO pending an Executive Board policy decision;
 - the workflow for submitting, clearing and approving SO projects and project revisions;
 - budgets under other direct operational costs (ODOC) and direct support costs (DSC) for SOs;
 - types of emergency infrastructure works and the circumstances in which WFP should carry them out;
 - management roles, responsibilities and reporting lines; and
 - obligations and procedures relating to situation reports, progress reports and the annual standard project reports (SPRs), in line with *Operations Department (OD) Guidelines, 2003* and WFP's other programme categories.
17. An inter-divisional workshop was held on 14 November 2002, with the participation of relevant Headquarters units and representatives from the Afghanistan, Angola and Kenya country offices. The workshop established consensus on recently developed SO guidance material for the PDM and examined the workflow in detail.
18. In preparing the updated guidance material, the OTP Logistics Service (OTL) has (i) removed obsolete sections from the PDM, (ii) created new material on analysis, design and planning, document preparation, budget, clearance and approval, budget revision and



extension procedures, financial management and phase-out procedures, (iii) prepared a workflow chart for SOs and identified where further work is needed in 2004, particularly in assessment, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, and (iv) ensured complementarity and links with guidance material and directives relating to EMOPS and PRROs.

19. Some lessons that WFP has learned in examining its SO programme category are as follows:
- WFP staff have little knowledge about the SO process in terms of justification, management implications, resource requirements and allocation of tasks;
 - county offices and regional bureaux could involve donor authorities to a greater extent in the planning stages of an SO to gauge funding possibilities; improved coordination is required between country offices, regional bureaux and Headquarters in following up donor leads;
 - there is a need for a dedicated project manager in the country office staff structure for large scale and multi-faceted SOs, to be deployed from the outset; such a project manager was deployed to manage WFP's Iraq SO;
 - implementation plans need to be drawn up as soon as possible after approval of project documents to set targets and focus on activities, timing and budget implications; and
 - clear performance indicators are required at the outset as a base for monitoring, budget adjustments or revisions.
20. WFP has learned from experience of SOs and providing common services that:
- budgeting of common services should normally be separated from logistics augmentation projects that serve WFP projects only; and
 - each common service managed by WFP should have its own SO, rather than having different common services combined in one SO.
21. The advantages of this include (i) clearer delineation of roles and responsibilities for clients and donors, (ii) clearer and more transparent fund management for clients and donors, (iii) allowance for different reporting lines and different operational user groups, (iv) respect for inter-agency oversight mechanisms and (v) acknowledgement of different project timeframes.

OUTSTANDING POLICY ISSUES

22. Redefinition of the SO is the most significant outstanding policy issue to be resolved for continued improvement of the SO programme category.
23. Following the recommendations of the evaluation, the working definition in the PDM has been revised to address both traditional WFP logistics projects related to enhancing food delivery, as outlined in the *General Regulations* definition, and the common services increasingly carried out by WFP on behalf of the humanitarian community; it also aims to clarify the circumstances in which SOs should be used.



24. The working definition in the *Programme Design Manual, 2003* is as follows:
- Primarily, interventions undertaken to rehabilitate and enhance transport and logistics infrastructure (in extraordinary circumstances) so as to permit the timely and efficient delivery of food assistance to meet emergency and protracted relief needs. Such extraordinary interventions are for activities that are not budgeted through LTSH, ODOC or DSC of the associated EMOP or PRRO.
 - SOs may be used, when WFP is requested by the humanitarian community, to enhance coordination through the provision of common services, including joint logistics centres, humanitarian air services (passenger and humanitarian cargo air operations) and communications initiatives.
25. Another policy issue cited by the evaluation is the need for a stronger link between emergency infrastructure work and the objectives of the related EMOPs or PRROs. It was recommended that minor road repairs should be incorporated into the LTSH or ODOC of EMOPs or PRROs, and that larger-scale emergency infrastructure projects should be budgeted in SOs according to stricter criteria. This calls for greater emphasis on project management and the relationship of the SO to food delivery. For this reason, SO titles now normally include the name of a related EMOP or PRRO.
26. Improved guidance is required on distinguishing between minor and major emergency infrastructure repairs, and on deciding whether it is appropriate for WFP to go ahead with an SO. This need is highlighted by discussions with donors and consideration of the problems encountered with donor funding for emergency road repairs in the Southern Sudan EMOP 10048.2 and railway rehabilitation in the Sudan SO 10278.0 and Democratic Republic of the Congo SO 10195.0, both of which had a 100 percent shortfall.
27. The guidance material will be updated once policy has been agreed on (i) making this distinction and (ii) whether there is a threshold for infrastructure projects. It is difficult to determine the extent to which WFP should be undertaking infrastructure repairs, given that it depends on donor preferences yet requires a flexible approach.

NEXT STEPS

28. Inter-divisional work to finalize updates of SO guidance material was postponed in 2003. Since January 2004, OTL has re-established and chaired the SO working group (SOWG) to follow up outstanding recommendations with a view to resolving the policy issues outlined above and to improving the quality and funding levels of SOs.
29. The purpose of SOWG is to ensure that all relevant units are involved, to agree on major outstanding work relating to SO workflow for the PDM and to consider issues relating to common services as well as traditional SOs. SOWG will propose recommendations for policy or procedural changes to the Executive Staff. SOWG is convened every two weeks for an initial three-month period.
30. In view of the large amount of work still required on the SO programme category in terms of guidance, information and training to ensure integration into corporate approaches, a fixed-term SO officer post in OTP has been approved for two years, funded by the Programme Support and Administrative (PSA) budget.
31. OTP recommends amendment of the definition of SOs in General Rule II.2.d: Programme Categories in WFP's *General Regulations, Rules and Financial Regulations, 1 January 2000*. OTP will prepare a paper seeking Executive Board approval for the rule change in 2004.



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ALITE	Augmented Logistics and Intervention Team for Emergencies
DSC	direct support costs
EMOP	emergency operation
HLCM	High Level Committee for Management
IASC-WG	Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group
LTSH	landside transport, storage and handling
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODOC	other direct operational costs
OTL	OTP Logistics Service
OTP	Transport, Preparedness and Response Division
PDM	Programme Design Manual
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
PSA	Programme Support and Administrative
SO	Special Operation
SOWG	Special Operations Working Group
SPR	standard project reports
UNJLC	United Nations Joint Logistics Centre

