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WFP AND THE WORLD FOOD SUMMIT: FIVE YEARS LATER

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INTRODUCTION

1. The World Food Summit: Five Years Later (WFS-fyl) will take place 10-13 June 2002. WFP attaches great importance to the goal of the summit—to improve implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action to reduce by half the number of undernourished persons by 2015. WFP hopes that the outcome of the WFS-fyl will reinforce three themes the Programme believes are central to reducing hunger:
 - Focus on the needs of hungry people, not just on food production.
 - Put women and children at the centre of efforts to end hunger.
 - Enable people to preserve their livelihoods in times of food crisis through direct assistance to the hungry poor.

WFP'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD FOOD SUMMIT FOLLOW-UP

2. WFP has informed the Executive Board on a regular basis of its follow-up actions in support of the World Food Summit Plan of Action. In 1997, the year following the WFS, two information papers on this issue were presented to the Executive Board: Follow-up to the World Food Summit Plan of Action (WFP/EB.3/97/3-C) and Implications of the World Food Summit Plan of Action for WFP (WFP/EB.1/97/3). In 1998, WFP presented a Progress Report on WFP's Implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action (WFP/EB.1/98/3), and another follow-up report was provided in 2000 (WFP/EB.1/2000/4-B). In October 2001, WFP informed the Board about its involvement in preparatory events for the WFS-fyl (WFP/EB.3/2001/4-B).
3. There have been no formal preparatory events for the WFS-fyl since the October 2001 Executive Board session. However, WFP has worked closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in developing a common approach to combating rural poverty and hunger. That approach, presented at the March 2001 Financing for Development Conference in Monterrey, contributes directly to the goals of the WFS-fyl. It advocates both immediate action to broaden access to adequate food, and sustainable improvements in agricultural productivity. It is hoped that this approach—which recognizes the importance of direct action against hunger and the role of food aid in creating lasting assets for the hungry poor and meeting their immediate food needs—will be reconfirmed at the WFS-fyl.
4. WFP's Executive Director will attend and speak at the WFS-fyl, and the Programme will ensure a public affairs presence at the event. WFP has contributed to the "Anti-Hunger" paper being prepared by FAO. WFP welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with FAO and IFAD at the WFS-fyl in any activities that would reinforce the joint approach of the three Rome-based agencies to reduce hunger and rural poverty.



WFP APPROACH TO MEETING THE WFS GOALS

5. To tackle hunger, a clear strategy for addressing food security is required. In formulating such a strategy, WFP keeps three important principles at the centre of its thinking and programming. These principles are already included in several of the commitments of the World Food Summit Plan of Action.

Principle 1: Food Security Should Be about People, As Well As Production

6. Most people are hungry because of lack of access to food, not lack of production. Effective strategies for addressing hunger must begin with the use of assessment and mapping tools that examine how the hungry poor cope with this lack of access at the household level. What must be determined is:
- Who is hungry?
 - Why are they hungry?
 - Where are they located?
 - How do they try to meet their immediate food needs?
7. WFP's vulnerability and analysis mapping (VAM) system is a people-focused contribution to the global food insecurity and vulnerability information and mapping systems (FIVIMS). The results of VAM assessments must then be translated into programmes that not only meet the immediate food needs of the hungry poor but also leave them better able to meet their future needs. WFP's investment in human capacity through school feeding, nutrition interventions for mothers and young children, and training is a good example of a targeted, people-focused approach to ending hunger.

Principle 2: Women and Children Should Be at the Centre of Efforts to End Hunger

8. No single activity has more significant effects on food security than investing in women. Putting food in the hands of women is much more likely to result in that food's reaching those in the family who need it most. Empowerment of women also has a lasting effect in a number of other areas that contribute to hunger reduction, including nutrition, education, public health and the reduction in income inequality. That is why the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) concluded in February 2000 that "women's education and relative status have contributed to more than half of the 1970-95 reduction in the prevalence of malnutrition in developing countries". WFP has been a leader in putting women and girls at the centre of its programmes, through implementation of its Commitments to Women, of food aid programmes for women and girls at critical times of their lives, and of school feeding and take-home-ration programmes that increase girls' school attendance. However, much remains to be done in order to maximize the contribution that improved status for women can make to reducing hunger.



9. Reaching children is equally vital to making a lasting difference in the fight against hunger. Undernourishment and malnutrition in young children impede their physical and mental development, not just for the present but also throughout their lives. This in turn leads to an intergenerational cycle of hunger and poverty that is difficult to break. WFP feeding programmes for children are part of what needs to be a multi-sectorial approach to ending hunger and accelerating progress towards the World Food Summit goals.

Principle 3: Direct Food Assistance Should Be Targeted to the Hungry Poor in Times of Food Crisis to Enable Them to Preserve Their Livelihoods

10. Commitment Five of the World Food Summit Plan of Action stresses the importance of addressing emergency food requirements for reducing global hunger. WFP is the largest global provider of emergency food aid to the millions of victims of natural disasters and to millions of refugees and displaced persons. When immediate survival is threatened, food aid often becomes a matter of life and death.
11. However, transitory hunger is not found only in large-scale emergencies. The poor often move in and out of hunger as a result of localized household shocks caused by: economic crises; smaller or recurrent droughts or other natural disasters; crop failure and livestock loss at the community and household level; and the sudden loss of a family member's income-generating capacity through disability or illness, such as HIV/AIDS. Without prompt assistance at these times, families often sell off the assets necessary for them to maintain their livelihoods—thus turning short-term hunger into long-term deprivation.
12. Food-based safety nets help create, maintain and rehabilitate assets. In cases of short-term food scarcity or market breakdown, food aid offers effective protection for needy households. WFP activities—in food for work, food for training, and targeted free food distribution—in all programme categories (development, emergency operations, and protracted relief and recovery operations) help fulfil this vital social-safety-net function.

CONCLUSION

13. All WFP activities are consistent with the World Food Summit Plan of Action and contribute to the achievement of its seven commitments. WFP strongly believes that food aid benefits will be maximized through complementary and parallel interventions by other partners. To meet the Plan's seven commitments, WFP works in partnership with United Nations agencies and more than 1,000 international and local non-governmental organizations. Properly targeted food aid interventions combined with long-term interventions are key elements of a comprehensive approach to the fight against hunger and poverty. Through this approach, endorsed at the WFS-fyl, the goal of reducing the number of undernourished by half by 2015 should remain within our reach.

