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COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINES

Agenda item 4

For consideration



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COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINE— SRI LANKA

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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.

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Executive Summary

Sri Lanka is a low-income, food-deficit country (LIFDC) of 19 million people. It has made considerable progress in terms of human and economic development. Strong investments in human resources, the promotion of gender equality and the early liberalization of the economy have positioned the country in the medium human development category. It has a Human Development Index (HDI) rank of 84, a Gender Development Index (GDI) rank of 68 and a per capita gross national product (GNP) of US\$820. Despite this impressive achievement, at least one quarter of the population continues to suffer from food insecurity and malnourishment. Two factors are among the prime causes of this adverse development. First, and most obvious, 17 years of armed conflict have taken a heavy toll on the country's social and economic performance. Second, relative to their successes in earlier decades, public institutions and their strategies for tackling poverty and food insecurity have become less effective.

Without resources and catalytic and innovative approaches from the donor community, further improvements for the most vulnerable groups are not likely to occur. The poorest rural districts lack economic infrastructure and quality social services. Entire communities there are trapped in a vicious circle of malnourishment and poverty. Families are restricted to an average daily food intake that is 25 percent below the WHO/FAO standard recommended level of 2,100 kcal per person, and malnutrition (underweight) rates among young children reach 50 percent. Reducing poverty through the promotion of improved accessibility to basic services and the creation of economic opportunities for the poor is one of the priority areas of the Government's Framework for Poverty Reduction in Sri Lanka, and of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

WFP's vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) of food insecurity—outside the conflict area—identifies small and marginal farmer-cum-worker households in eight districts as those most in need of development food assistance. Food insecurity for this group has two dimensions: insufficient access to an adequate diet and poor food utilization resulting from inadequate nutrition education, care and health practices. The equally poor or worse situation of many families from the conflict area is being addressed by WFP through a protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO).

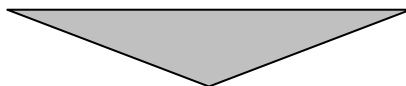
The goal of the WFP Country Programme 2002–2006 will be to improve the food security of vulnerable households, particularly of mothers and children, in the most food insecure areas in Sri Lanka and to apply innovative approaches that may later be adopted and expanded in other food assistance interventions by the Government and its development partners. In accordance with decision 1999/EB.A/2 of the Executive Board, WFP focuses its development activities on five objectives. The Sri Lanka Country Programme will address objectives 1 and 5: enable young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related health needs, and enable households that depend on degraded natural resources for their food security to make a shift to more sustainable livelihoods. The Country Programme under the strategy outlined in this CSO is estimated to benefit about 170,000 persons per year. Cross-cutting concerns will be gender equality and environmental protection. In line with WFP's Commitments to Women, and in light of



the specific situation in Sri Lanka, special attention will be given to women's involvement in decision-making and their equal access to and control over resources.

Underlying principles of the Country Programme will be: (i) the achievement of more synergy between food assistance interventions; (ii) the building of partnerships to ensure complementarity of efforts (especially with United Nations partners such as UNICEF and the International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], bilateral and multilateral donors and competent non-governmental organizations [NGOs]; and (iii) the strengthening of community participation in programme implementation and monitoring. Monitoring of programme outcome and food security issues will not only assist in programme management and advocacy, but will also indicate when WFP assistance is no longer required.

Draft Decision



The Board endorses the Country Strategy Outline for Sri Lanka (WFP/EB.2/2001/4/3) and authorizes the Secretariat to proceed with the formulation of a Country Programme, which should take into account the comments of the Board.



FOOD SECURITY AND THE HUNGRY POOR

Food Insecurity at the National Level

1. Sri Lanka, a low-income, food-deficit country with a population of 19 million, has achieved considerable progress in terms of human and economic development. Social development policies, such as universal primary education, basic health services and social-safety-net programmes, have resulted in Sri Lanka's ranking 84th out of the 174 countries analysed in UNDP's Human Development Report (UNDP 2000). Its infant mortality rate of 17 per 1,000 live births is even close to the figure of 12 per 1,000 for the Organization for Economic Development (OECD) countries. Also, its Gender Development Index value of 0.727 is well above the average (0.630) for developing countries. This is a reflection of the higher life expectancy of women (76 years) compared with that of men (71 years) and the higher enrolment rate (grades 1–12) of 67 percent for girls compared with 65 percent for boys. With a per capita GNP of US\$820, Sri Lanka also compares well with other low-income, food-deficit countries.
2. Despite this legacy of impressive achievements, Sri Lanka has not been able to alleviate the food insecurity and malnutrition faced by a considerable portion of its population. Between one fifth and one third of the total population (excluding the conflict-affected northeast) can be considered “poor” using a consumption poverty yardstick.¹ Worse, in the 1990s, progress in poverty reduction slowed and regional disparities widened. Two main factors have contributed negatively to this present-day condition: the armed conflict and the increasing ineffectiveness of public institutions and their strategies for tackling poverty and food insecurity.
3. Since 1983, the armed conflict in the north and east of the country has led to the damage and destruction of rural and urban infrastructure and, more important, to the loss of livelihoods. Major offensives caused large displacements in 1990, 1995, 1997 and more recently in 2000. To date, the conflict has claimed more than 62,000 lives, and has had a devastating impact on the economy at large, currently costing about 7 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) (US\$1 billion per year). Approximately 2 million people are affected directly by the conflict through displacements and massive destruction of infrastructure and property. Government statistics reveal that more than 700,000 persons are displaced, with more than 170,000 of them living in more than 350 welfare centres. The majority reside with friends and relatives in the border districts.
4. The Government is the main party providing relief assistance, including food, although its resources for assisting conflict-affected persons in attaining more sustainable livelihoods are limited. Also, its food package falls short nutritionally, as it provides only 1,044 kcal per person per day. Upon the request of the Government, WFP is implementing a two-year PRRO to provide food assistance to up to 100,000 of the most food insecure conflict-affected people. Currently, the Government, with the assistance of the UNDP and the World Bank, is preparing a broad-based Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation Framework to coordinate related efforts in conflict-affected areas.
5. Public institutions and their strategies for tackling poverty and food insecurity have become increasingly ineffective. The Government recognizes the urgent need to redefine

¹ A Framework for Poverty Reduction in Sri Lanka, Government of Sri Lanka, 2000.



strategies for reducing poverty in all its dimensions.² In this context, it recently completed, with the assistance of the UNDP and the World Bank, a Framework for Poverty Reduction in Sri Lanka. Consistent with this framework, UNDAF recognizes that the restoration of peace, poverty reduction and improved governance involve closely linked challenges and opportunities.

6. In 1996/1997 food availability at the national level was at an average daily per capita supply of 2,337 kcal. However, the average food intake of households below the “food poverty line” was only 1,700 kcal per person, i.e. 25 percent below the WHO/FAO-recommended daily standard of 2,100 kcal per person per day.³
7. Past policies have helped Sri Lanka become almost self-sufficient in rice, but the country still imports a significant portion of its cereal requirements. In 1999 (during one of the best recent harvest seasons), Sri Lanka covered one third of its cereal requirements through imports, mainly of wheat. While the contribution of agriculture to the GDP fell from 47 percent in 1988 to 21 percent in 1999, it was still the largest employment sector, engaging 38 percent of the labour force.⁴
8. Sri Lanka stands out in South Asia as having no significant gender inequality in access either to health or to education services. This does not preclude the adverse effects of other socio-economic forces on women from poor households. For example, women in casual agricultural work earn some 25 percent lower daily wages than their male counterparts. Moreover, women continue to encounter barriers to achieving leadership roles and acquiring decision-making prerogatives in community organizations. There is also increasing evidence that women face physical insecurity arising from domestic violence.
9. Food insecurity in Sri Lanka has two critical dimensions:
 - insufficient access to food as a result of poverty; and
 - poor food utilization resulting from inadequate nutrition, care and health practices.
10. The Government’s Framework for Poverty Reduction distinguishes between two measures of poverty: (i) a lower food poverty line below which basic food consumption needs cannot be met (3.3 million people outside the conflict area fall into this category); and (ii) a higher consumption poverty line that includes 1.2 million people who are highly vulnerable to seasonal and cyclical changes in incomes and employment. Households below the lower food poverty line can be considered chronically food insecure, i.e. their *access* to food is permanently insufficient. The second group of poor households can be characterized as transitory food insecure. They need assistance and social protection to be better able to cope with agricultural seasonality and shocks such as economic downturns and natural disasters.

² A Framework for Poverty Reduction in Sri Lanka, Government of Sri Lanka, 2000.

³ Report on Consumer Finances and Socio-economic Survey, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 1996/97.

⁴ Annual Report, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 1999.



11. Sri Lankan poverty has a distinctly rural bias. Ninety percent of the poor live in rural areas. Poverty is largely related to small landholdings, insecure tenancy arrangements and underemployment. Small and marginal farmer-cum-worker households are the predominant group among the poor. Poverty levels in Sri Lanka fell sharply during the 1970s and 1980s, but in the 1990s little progress was made in reducing poverty except in urban areas.⁵ Even more worrisome during that decade was the persistence and exacerbation of regional disparities.⁶ The district-wise variation in poverty prevalence has been enormous, ranging from 10 percent of the population in the Colombo district to 49 percent in the Moneragala district.
12. The second and more complex dimension of food insecurity in Sri Lanka is poor *nutrient utilization*, which manifests itself in high malnutrition rates among children under 5 (about one third are underweight, nearly one fifth are stunted and 14 percent are wasted), with negative and generally irreversible effects on their intellectual and physical capacities. The nutritional profile is characterized by the early onset of chronic malnutrition, with stunting starting at 6–18 months as a result of early weaning and poor complementary feeding practices. Studies indicate that complementary foods are given with insufficient frequency and in too small amounts, and are of poor quality.⁷
13. For a country that has received substantial human capital investments in the health and education sectors since the 1950s, the low birth weight rate of 18 percent is a cause for concern. Low birth weight is also an indicator of maternal malnutrition. In Sri Lanka, weight gain during pregnancy is low, at an average of 7.5 kg, compared with an average of 10–12 kg in developed countries. In addition, one in three Sri Lankan women have short stature, with a height of less than 148 cm.⁸
14. Despite ongoing national supplementation programmes, micronutrient deficiencies remain a serious problem. Iron-deficiency anaemia affects about 65 percent of expectant mothers and 45 percent of children under 5.⁹ Instances of goitre are reported to exceed 5 percent in almost all districts (in some they rise to 30 percent), and 36 percent of young children suffer from vitamin-A deficiency.¹⁰

Target Population

15. In Sri Lanka, small and marginal farmers-cum-workers are the most food insecure population group. Their livelihood is characterized by:
 - fragmented small landholdings (i.e. less than 0.81 ha) and rain-dependent land-use systems;
 - environmentally harmful practices such as *chena* (slash-and-burn) cultivation;
 - inefficient food production methods;
 - rapidly rising input costs and diminishing output prices;

⁵ A Framework for Poverty Reduction in Sri Lanka, Government of Sri Lanka, 2000.

⁶ Missed Opportunities, the World Bank, 2000.

⁷ The Health and Nutritional Status of the Girl Child in Sri Lanka, Medical Research Institute, New York: UNICEF, 1993.

⁸ Report of Consultative Workshop Regarding Weight Gain during Pregnancy, Government of Sri Lanka/UNICEF, 1999.

⁹ National Nutrition Plan of Action, Government of Sri Lanka, 1997.

¹⁰ A Framework for Poverty Reduction in Sri Lanka, Government of Sri Lanka, 2000.



- climatic vagaries that stretch the households' coping mechanisms; and
 - limited alternative sources of income, especially off-farm wage employment.
16. Typically, these households are able to meet only 75 percent of their minimum calorie requirements;¹¹ their low resource base does not provide them with sufficient means of meeting subsistence requirements. For most of them, paddy cultivation is limited to the *maha* season (October to February), the main rainy season. Even so, crops may not grow well unless water is stored during this season for their irrigation during the dry season. Almost 40 percent of farming households depend on tank irrigation schemes. Failure to maintain irrigation infrastructure has been causing gradual dilapidation and reduction in productivity. When this occurs, these households must depend on other sources of income such as land encroachment and employment as agricultural labourers, activities that are equally affected by adverse weather and economic conditions.
17. Reduced water availability resulting from dilapidated irrigation tanks has adverse effects also on the household chores of women. Moreover, while women account for more than one third of agricultural workers in rural areas, they are usually employed in the more mundane and lower-paying activities. Even when women do perform the same jobs as men, they are usually paid less than men. This in turn adversely affects the economic position of the households that depend on these women's income.
18. The prevalence of malnutrition is very high among small and marginal farmer-cum-worker households. Underweight rates in the poorest rural districts reach as high as 50 percent.¹² Moreover, infant and child weaning and feeding practices are heavily influenced by inappropriate traditional beliefs. As there is a close correlation between lower levels of educational attainment and food poverty, there is serious concern about a future drop in intellectual development caused by inadequate feeding during pregnancy and the early years of life. The poor are usually educated to only a primary or junior secondary level.¹³ This holds true for men and women alike, since the gender gap is not significant either in enrolment rates or adult literacy rates (the female literacy rate is 94 percent of the male literacy rate).
19. WFP's VAM Unit utilized secondary sources of data in its analysis of food insecurity in Sri Lanka. Analysing the relative food insecurity of districts outside the conflict area, it took into account four indicators: poverty, food consumption, maternal malnutrition and child malnutrition. Both the poverty and food consumption indicators (percentage of population below the food poverty line and per capita calorie consumption of the poorest fifth) have been used to measure access to food.¹⁴ The malnutrition indicators shed light on food utilization: low birth weight has been used as a proxy indicator for the malnourishment of mothers, and weight-for-age has been employed to measure the extent of malnutrition among children under 5.¹⁵ The results of this analysis are reflected in the food insecurity map attached in Annex I.

¹¹ Sri Lanka United Nations Development Assistance Framework, United Nations System, Sri Lanka, 2000.

¹² National Nutrition Plan of Action, Government of Sri Lanka, 1997.

¹³ A Framework for Poverty Reduction in Sri Lanka, Government of Sri Lanka, 2000.

¹⁴ Data from Department of Census: Household Income & Expenditure Survey 1995/1996 (representing most recent data, since results of the 2000/2001 survey have not been made public).

¹⁵ Low birth weight data from Demographic and Health Survey 1997, and weight-for-age data from Thriposhha Programme, 1999.



GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND POLICIES ADDRESSING POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY

Overall Policies

20. The Government's development strategy has two pillars: (i) a set of fiscal, monetary, trade and structural policies that support sustained private-sector-led economic growth and employment creation; and (ii) a social welfare system that assists the poor.
21. To date, the effect of the public-sector programmes on the welfare of the poor and the food insecure has been mixed. As pointed out in the UNDAF document, “60 to 70 percent of them were not sustained and had limited impact upon the poor. There are a variety of reasons cited for this failure—principal among them, the lack of people’s participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of these programmes”.¹⁶
22. In November 2000, the Government completed its Framework for Poverty Reduction in Sri Lanka, designed to combat the persistent high levels of poverty in the country. It was based on a broad consultative process involving civil society, the private sector, the donor community and government organizations. The strategy comprises three core elements: (i) the creation of opportunities for the poor to participate in economic growth; (ii) strengthening of the social protection system; and (iii) empowerment of the poor and the strengthening of governance. All poverty-reduction efforts will be based on well-elaborated designs, participatory approaches, sustainable institution-building and assistance that is targeted and managed by poor community groups. Stable macroeconomic policies (including sound fiscal management, a foreign trade and tax regime that is non-discriminatory across sectors and activities, promotion of private-sector development and labour market reforms) are to underpin the poverty-reduction strategy.¹⁷
23. As follow-up to the Beijing International Women’s Conference, a Country Plan of Action was formulated that identifies women’s empowerment as a crucial area for intervention. The institutional framework to promote the advancement of women has been improved significantly over the past decade. In 1993 the Government adopted a women’s charter, and one year later the National Committee on Women (NCW) was formed with the mandate to implement the charter. In 1997 a separate Cabinet Ministry of Women’s Affairs was established, and as a recent development, gender focal points have been identified in all line ministries to activate the Country Plan of Action. However, implementation has been hampered by a lack of technical and financial capacities in the relevant Government institutions. The Country Plan of Action covers the same elements as WFP’s Commitments to Women.

Food Security and Nutrition Policies and Strategies

24. Sri Lanka’s approach to food and nutrition security is best discussed in the context of the sector policies that have a bearing on food availability, access and utilization.
25. Past investments in irrigation and rice technology, together with open-economy policies, have been the pillars of national *food availability*. However, physical limits on the expansion of land and water resources are rapidly being reached. Therefore, the Government’s strategy is to revitalize agricultural development by raising the productivity

¹⁶ Sri Lanka United Nations Development Assistance Framework, United Nations System, Sri Lanka, 2000.

¹⁷ A Framework for Poverty Reduction in Sri Lanka, Government of Sri Lanka, 2000.



of labour and land and by promoting commercialization. Specific measures include: expanding and improving private property rights with the aim of improving land markets and strengthening land tenure arrangements; making improved technology available for small farmers; and combining and rationalizing government extension services at the local level. The government strategy will also seek to forge an agricultural trade regime, built on predictable levels of tariffs, to support efficient agricultural commercialization. Finally, a new water management policy will involve small-scale farmers directly in developing and managing water resources.¹⁸

26. Adequate *access to food* is a function of people's income and purchasing power in relation to the price of food on the market. The Government aims to ensure food access for all in three major ways. First, the Framework for Poverty Reduction will focus on sustainable solutions to poor people's income problems. Second, the Government will support multi-purpose cooperative society stores that will provide consumers in all parts of the country with basic food items at affordable prices. Third, social-safety-net schemes, in particular the *Samurdhi* programme, will provide cash grants to households below the poverty line. With a cost of more than US\$125 million (0.8 percent of the central budget) and a total of 2.1 million beneficiary households, *Samurdhi* is the single largest welfare programme in the country. In addition to giving cash grants, *Samurdhi* also operates a range of compulsory savings programmes, has founded a *Samurdhi* bank society and has spearheaded national youth job creation and village development efforts. The Government's future plans for the *Samurdhi* programme are tighter targeting, the concentration of income-transfer assistance to the poorest groups and greater emphasis on the provision of social insurance and other financial market services.¹⁹
27. Micronutrient deficiencies, inadequate mother and child nutrition and health care practices, insufficient health services and an unhealthy environment—compounded by inadequate dietary intake—have been identified as major *food utilization* problems in Sri Lanka. These problems are underlying causes of mother and child malnutrition and food insecurity in general. Having recognized these causes, the Government's National Nutrition Plan of Action aims at combating malnutrition through a series of activities such as supplementary feeding, improvement of health services, nutrition education, monitoring and the training of the various stakeholders.
28. The Government of Sri Lanka, through the Ministry of Health, implements a Mother and Child Feeding Programme. It provides a blended food supplement (*Thripasha*) of maize, soy, dried skim milk and a vitamin and mineral premix to infants, pre-school children and expectant and nursing mothers at the primary health care centres. All expectant and nursing mothers throughout the country are eligible to receive the supplementary feeding for up to six months. Children up to 5 years are selected on the basis of their weight-for-age status. Approximately 1.1 million people qualify for this assistance. Costs are estimated to be US\$8 million per year. Although the programme has been beset with supply and distribution problems, over the past two years deliveries have increased significantly. Still, owing to production limitations, only some 50 percent of the eligible beneficiaries are actually served, and there are concerns about the selection criteria used and the effectiveness of the feeding programme. In particular, its insufficient integration with community-based nutrition promotion programmes has been criticized.
29. Nutrition monitoring and education is being addressed by two major programmes. The nutrition component of a World Bank-supported health-services project aims at reorienting

¹⁸ A Framework for Poverty Reduction in Sri Lanka, Government of Sri Lanka, 2000.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*



the existing health centre-based growth promotion programme to a community-based growth promotion programme. Community mobilizers are trained to provide nutrition education and community-based growth monitoring and surveillance. The programme is implemented by the Ministry of Health through more than 50 NGOs in selected communities in 19 of the 25 districts in Sri Lanka.

30. Likewise, the Government seeks improved delivery of nutrition and health education in nine districts with the UNICEF-supported Participatory Nutrition Improvement Programme (PNIP). In this project, UNICEF forms a cadre of trainers, who act as resource persons; these include government officials from the Medical Service and the Education Department and planning officers. These resource persons train volunteers in each community, each of whom is responsible for the nutrition and health status of approximately 20 families. Volunteers may also recommend the inclusion of those families in the Government's Mother and Child Feeding Programme.

Food Aid Flows

31. In the past, Sri Lanka received significant amounts of programme food aid, especially to meet its wheat requirements. At the beginning of the 1990s, food aid contributed close to 40 percent of total cereal imports. By the end of the decade, this share had declined to less than 10 percent. The average yearly food aid flow during 1997–1999 was around 80,000 tons, of which WFP donated about 16 percent. In 1999, WFP assistance amounted to 1 percent of the total Official Development Assistance (grants and loans to Sri Lanka totalled US\$415 million), but 6 percent of the total grant aid.

ASSESSMENT OF WFP'S PERFORMANCE TO DATE

32. Cooperation between Sri Lanka and WFP began in November 1968. Since then, WFP has provided food assistance through 32 development projects and 21 emergency and protracted relief operations, with a total value of over US\$180 million (see Annex II). Projects have supported agriculture, land development, housing, forestry, nutrition and the conservation of historical monuments. More recently, WFP has channelled its development assistance to the agricultural sector, namely by improving access to irrigation water and land settlement. A separate PRRO provides relief and recovery assistance to about 100,000 internally displaced persons.

Relief and Recovery Assistance

33. While the Government remains the main provider of humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected people, since 1992, WFP has provided relief assistance to internally displaced persons residing in government-run welfare centres. The current phase of the PRRO includes recovery activities designed to create more sustainable livelihoods for internally displaced people. The activities focus on assistance to resettlement and relocation and complement the government programme. The current phase also provides for supplementary feeding for the most vulnerable groups, who are in a precarious nutritional status: children under 5 and expectant and nursing mothers. Recently this feeding activity was linked to the UNICEF-supported Participatory Nutrition Improvement Programme.

Major Irrigation and Land Settlement Schemes

34. Historically, the Government placed considerable emphasis on bringing land under major irrigation projects in order to promote agriculture and settlement schemes. The



largest scheme, Mahaweli, which now contributes almost one quarter of national rice production, received the greatest proportion of WFP development assistance, approximately US\$30 million between 1979 and 1997. Over the years, WFP food aid assisted about 100,000 families during their “non-income-earning” period, while they invested their labour in preparing their new lands.

35. One of the main characteristics of these larger-scale irrigation schemes was the reliance on the Government’s top-down management decision-making process. The Government selected settlers island-wide and settled them on “virgin lands”, but without facilitating social coherence. As a result, there was little sense of ownership and little community involvement in water management and scheme maintenance. Inefficient provision of funds for maintenance by Government agencies and a lack of community commitment caused many schemes gradually to become less efficient.
36. Such lessons from previous experiences were taken into consideration in the design of the WFP-assisted Uda Walawe Settlement Project, approved in May 2000. In this project, settlers are familiar with the project area; some of them encroached on the land two decades ago. During the initial stage of land development and the construction of temporary shelters, they receive food-for-work family rations. The project pays special attention to female settlers’ needs regarding training and participation. Women’s participation in farmer organization committees and WFP’s advocacy efforts for the introduction of joint landownership titles are expected to strengthen women’s decision-making role in the communities and their access to and control over resources.

Minor Irrigation Schemes

37. Since the early 1990s, WFP’s focus has shifted towards the rehabilitation of minor tank irrigation schemes. More than 1,000 schemes have been rehabilitated under WFP-assisted projects. The ongoing project is implemented in 17 of the country’s 25 districts. In the project, farmer organizations put forward proposals for schemes with the Department of Agrarian Services (DAS), which then selects schemes on the basis of their feasibility for the realization of their agricultural potential.
38. A WFP/FAO appraisal mission conducted in May 1999 concluded that the technical quality of rehabilitation work in Sri Lanka was generally good, and that the immediate effects on the agricultural production of the communities were significant. With water availability assured, cropping intensities and paddy yields have increased, and many farmers are now able to harvest a second crop during the *Yala* season (March to August). Household food availability has improved, and income has increased, which benefits both men and women.
39. However, community participation in the maintenance of irrigation schemes and women’s involvement in decision-making leave room for further improvement. Farmer organizations concerned with the rehabilitation and management of minor irrigation schemes have not functioned very effectively as a result of insufficient involvement in planning and implementation. Community development, institution-building and farmer training fall into the purview of DAS, whose capacity to cover all the training requirements of farmers is limited.

Cross-cutting Issues

40. The cost-efficiency of food aid interventions in Sri Lanka has been found to be good as a result of two factors: (i) international food prices tend to be lower than domestic food prices; and (ii) logistics costs are relatively low owing to the short distances required to



move resources and a good existing transport infrastructure. Therefore, the local value of the food-for-work rations exceeds their procurement and delivery costs.

41. Women constitute 55 percent of the workforce involved in the tank rehabilitation works. The proportion of women participants is higher, as the food-for-work schemes provide attractive opportunities for women in areas close to home. Yet, only 30 percent of the members of farmer organizations are women. Although women usually attend the meetings, many of them do not actively participate, partly because traditionally women do not speak in public. WFP has mandated that at least two of the eight members on the executive committees of the farmer organizations be women in order to increase women's involvement in decision-making. In addition, leadership and management training provided by WFP is conducted with a special focus on women's participation. Furthermore, project monitoring provides gender-disaggregated data to allow project management to monitor the implementation of WFP's Commitments to Women.
42. WFP's monitoring and greater understanding of the needs of the assisted communities, coupled with a systematic VAM effort, have shown that, even with improved household incomes, in many areas problems of mother and child malnutrition persist. Over the past two years, the country office has explored viable strategies for complementing the current projects with activities that improve the nutritional status of the target population, especially of young children and expectant and nursing mothers.

FUTURE ORIENTATION OF WFP ASSISTANCE

43. The recently completed UNDAF acknowledges that progress in Sri Lanka is constrained by the nexus of an ongoing internal conflict, poverty and weak governance. Within the overarching goal of promoting sustainable human development, UNDAF signals the United Nations commitment to assisting Sri Lanka by:
 - providing emergency and humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected areas and people, assisting in restoring the economic livelihood of adversely affected persons and providing support for efforts that contribute to the establishment of peace and social harmony;
 - reducing poverty through the promotion of improved accessibility to basic services and the creation of economic opportunities for the poor; and
 - supporting governance reform aimed at promoting people-centred development.
44. Improvement of household food security is at the core of the Government's Poverty Reduction Framework and is one of the UNDAF priority areas. The United Nations system's assistance to Sri Lanka is expected to assume a catalytic and advocacy role in this process.²⁰
45. WFP's current PRRO complements the Government's efforts to ameliorate the conditions of the conflict-affected persons through relief assistance in welfare centres and limited recovery activities. Within the next phase of the PRRO, WFP intends to expand the recovery component and, where security conditions permit, assist displaced persons in their efforts to settle and to lead normal lives. Current resettlement initiatives indicate that there are sufficient opportunities for establishing more durable solutions, e.g. skills training for income-generating activities, provision of community infrastructure and support of

²⁰ Sri Lanka United Nations Development Assistance Framework, United Nations System of Sri Lanka, 2000.



community integration efforts. Provision of supplementary feeding and nutrition education awareness will cater to the nutrition- and health-related needs of vulnerable persons long deprived of normal services. Given the scale of the destruction that has occurred, the need for this assistance will continue for some time, even after a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

46. Complementary to the proposed activities in conflict-affected areas, the proposed WFP Country Programme for 2002–2006 will focus its development assistance on vulnerable people in the most food insecure districts outside the conflict area. It will have a two-fold goal:
 - to improve the food security of vulnerable people, particularly of mothers and children, in the most food insecure areas in Sri Lanka; and
 - to apply new approaches that may later be adopted and expanded in other food assistance interventions of the Government and its development partners.
47. In accordance with decision 1999/EB.A/2 of the Executive Board, WFP focuses its development activities on five objectives. The Country Programme will address objectives 1 and 5:
 - enable young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related health needs; and
 - enable households that depend on degraded natural resources for their food security to make a shift to more sustainable livelihoods.

Targeting the Malnourished Poor

48. WFP's vulnerability analysis and mapping identifies small and marginal farmer-cum-worker households and, within them, expectant and nursing mothers and their young children as those most in need of developmental food assistance. A composite food insecurity index (see Annex I) identifies eight districts outside the conflict area with the highest concentration of such households. WFP will focus its development assistance on these eight districts, which means a tighter geographical targeting compared with that of the current coverage of 17 districts.
49. Since socio-economic and environmental conditions vary among districts, WFP, together with its government counterparts, is currently examining food insecurity at the divisional level for programming purposes. This divisional analysis will provide the basis for intra-district programme targeting.
50. The Country Programme for 2002–2006 will for the first time address poor food utilization. Under a new activity in support of mother and child nutrition, the provision of a food supplement will ensure that children and expectant and nursing mothers get the macro- and micronutrients they need at critical stages of their lives.
51. Gender issues and environmental protection will be cross-cutting concerns in WFP's strategy. In line with WFP's Commitments to Women, and in light of the specific gender concerns in Sri Lanka, enhancement of women's involvement in decision-making and equal access to and control over resources will receive special attention. Food-for-work interventions will involve activities that both create sustainable livelihoods and protect the environment, such as the rehabilitation of minor irrigation schemes and water catchment area development.
52. The underlying principles of the country strategy will be:
 - to promote synergy between food assistance interventions;



- to build partnerships to ensure complementarity of efforts (especially with other United Nations agencies, e.g. UNICEF and IFAD, bilateral donors and competent NGOs); and
 - to strengthen community participation in programme implementation and monitoring.
53. Monitoring of programme outcome and food security issues will not only assist WFP in programme management and advocacy but will also indicate when WFP assistance is no longer required.

Identification of Key Areas of Assistance

54. WFP's development assistance strategy for Sri Lanka will be based on two mutually reinforcing programme activities complemented by advocacy for improved food assistance programmes in the country.

📌 **Support to Mother and Child Nutrition**

55. Low birth weight, stunting and underweight in children signal the lack of adequate food at critical stages in the life of those children and their mothers. Supplementary feeding will address the immediate nutritional needs of children under 3 and expectant and nursing mothers.
56. A fortified blended food will be provided to expectant and nursing mothers and to children 6–36 months. Special attention will be given to the local production of this food. Supplementary feeding is expected to prevent or reduce the prevalence of underweight among young children (6–36 months) and reduce the prevalence of low birth weight.
57. Building on ongoing community-based initiatives, such as the UNICEF-supported PNIP, communities will monitor child growth under the overall supervision of health staff, primarily the public health midwife, in the nearest mother and child health clinic. Community facilitators will convey nutrition messages to the community and will mobilize and involve them in nutrition improvement activities, in particular improved nutrition during pregnancy and breast-feeding and complementary feeding practices.
58. WFP's assistance to the ongoing national supplementary feeding programme will be implemented in the districts that have been identified as most food insecure and, within those districts, in divisions with high levels of poverty and where PNIP or other similar interventions such as those supported by the World Bank will be functioning (see map in Annex D). Emphasis will be placed on strengthening the Government's capacity to target and implement better the supplementary feeding programme, which includes the development and establishment of a functioning community-based and participatory monitoring system in collaboration with other implementing partners.
59. Another area of special attention will be the nutritive value and cost-effectiveness of the supplementary feeding ration. *Thripasha* is relatively costly and, as currently distributed, well below the minimum recommended levels in terms of micronutrients, energy and protein content. While providing additional blended food, WFP will advocate for cost-effectiveness and an increase in the ration size.
60. WFP's food resources will complement government resources and assist vulnerable mothers and children in areas that did not receive adequate support in the past. At the same time, the jointly designed intervention will provide a model for future supplementary feeding interventions in the country. While initially this component should account for about 20 percent of total WFP programme resources, that figure is expected to double by 2006. WFP estimates that an average of 50,000 children and 20,000 expectant and nursing



mothers per year will benefit from this assistance. Thus, WFP will draw the public's attention to these marginalized groups and will mobilize resources that these groups otherwise would not get.

✦ **Support to Households to Make a Shift to More Sustainable Livelihoods**

61. Increasing the agricultural productivity of land and labour is the key to income and food security for small and marginal farmer-cum-worker households. Their livelihood depends on village tank irrigation schemes. Where these have fallen into disrepair, people revert to highly seasonal rainfed farming and environmentally harmful slash-and burn-cultivation. WFP's strategy will be to help the households of small and marginal farmer-cum-workers, through their farmer organizations, restore dilapidated village tank irrigation schemes. Food-for-work support—mainly during the lean labour period from April to July—will cover income foregone when farmers-cum-workers invest time and resources in tank rehabilitation and other community-based activities, including watershed management and afforestation. In a few locations within the target districts, smaller amounts of food assistance may also be used to support the settlement of marginal farmer and encroacher families in a major irrigation scheme, as is currently the case in the Uda Walawe area. There will be about 100,000 food aid beneficiaries per year under this activity (20,000 households).
62. The tank rehabilitation and watershed management works will contribute to the protection of the environment. The more secure harvests from the irrigated plots and the higher labour requirements of irrigation agriculture will reduce slash-and-burn cultivation activities and encroachment on virgin lands. Discussions with the Global Environment Facility/Small Grants Programme (GEF/SGP), administered by UNDP, are being held to introduce reforestation and other pro-environmental activities in the activity portfolio chosen by a community.
63. Recently, a needs assessment conducted in selected villages in four districts revealed that a majority of potential beneficiaries, both men and women, considered the improved supply of irrigation water to be among their most urgent development needs. Other community works, such as the construction of access roads and agricultural improvements, were major concerns among men, while women gave higher priority to the availability of potable water. Direct food distribution is preferred to cash payment because the distribution of food is more likely to lead to an increase in food consumption, even more so when the food is distributed directly to women.
64. The final composition of the activity portfolio will depend on the communities' priorities and the capacities of the implementing partners. Nevertheless, it is expected that the rehabilitation of minor irrigation schemes will remain the activity absorbing a major portion of the food-for-work resources. DAS will assume overall responsibility for the technical implementation of that activity. Partnerships with other donors such as IFAD will strengthen funding of non-food inputs and community mobilization.
65. Increased emphasis will be placed on strengthening community capacity by involving beneficiaries during the whole cycle, from identification to implementation and monitoring of activities. Farmer organizations will be responsible for food distribution, monitoring and the management of the assets created. Training in operation and maintenance issues will be provided to group leaders. The process of strengthening self-help capacities will be facilitated by institutional organizers, hired by DAS on a contractual basis. These individuals will act as catalysts of change and as conduits between the farmers and authorities.



66. Special attention will be paid to the enhancement of women's active participation in all aspects of the programme activity. Women are expected to represent around 60 percent of participants, as they are attracted to food-for-work activities, which enable them to stay near their homes and fulfil their additional household responsibilities. The challenge will be to strengthen women's role in decision-making, commensurate with their high level of work participation. WFP will advocate for a higher proportion of women among government field staff. The Ministry of Women Affairs has indicated its interest in organizing gender training for all trainers (divisional secretariat level) and institutional organizers. Moreover, efforts will be directed towards increasing the number of women in farmer organizations and executive positions.
67. Hard manual labour in the last trimester of a pregnancy can adversely affect the health both of the mother and of the unborn child. Hence, WFP will seek to support expectant mothers by enrolling them in the supplementary feeding activity and, wherever possible, substituting them in the food-for-work activity with another member of their household. Enrolment of such women in the feeding programme will play an important role in raising their awareness about mother and child health care and nutrition and in providing them with the nutrients they and their unborn children require.
68. WFP's food-for-work activity will complement government resources and assist small and marginal farmer-cum-worker households and communities in improving their resource base and attaining better livelihoods. Simultaneously, the jointly developed intervention will provide a model for future food aid interventions in the country.

Advocacy Efforts

69. WFP's advocacy role will have three dimensions. First, the two programme activities supported with WFP's limited food resources will act as innovative and catalytic models for wider national and donor-funded programmes. Second, there will be scope for policy dialogue and advice on other types of food assistance and food security-related programmes. WFP's experience with VAM could possibly contribute to improving the targeting of food security-related transfers, such as the ongoing *Samurdhi* programme. Third, WFP will advocate for more gender-sensitive food assistance programming in general and an increase in women's participation in decision-making in particular. In conjunction with the ongoing Uda Walawe Settlement Project, WFP advocates an amendment to the Land Settlement Ordinance that will ensure that both husband and wife are jointly given the title to land. Moreover, paying attention to the training of women and making their involvement in programme management bodies mandatory is in line with both WFP's Commitments to Women and UNDAF.

Principles and Modalities of WFP Assistance

70. Promoting synergy among food assistance interventions is one of the underlying principles of WFP's country strategy for Sri Lanka. Such an approach is supported by past experience that has shown that food-for-work activities alone are insufficient for addressing the various dimensions of household food insecurity. The synergy concept will therefore be applied to the two Country Programme activities in all districts targeted by WFP. In addition, efforts will be made to ensure that complementary programmes funded by partners, such as the UNICEF-supported PNIP, reach the districts identified as most food insecure.
71. WFP will negotiate with the Government an exchange of wheat for rice, especially in years with domestic surplus production of rice. During the last few years, rice imports have been minimal and the Government has subsidized farm gate prices to protect rice



producers. Wheat requirements, however, are exclusively covered through imports and usually amount to well above 500,000 tons per year.

72. The proposed design of future WFP assistance includes closer working relationships with local governments. WFP will open two sub-offices in the southern and north-central provinces, in order to be able to interact directly and efficiently with counterparts at the local level. The office in the north-central province will establish a nexus between development and recovery activities, as suggested in the UNDAF.
73. Special attention will be paid to the monitoring and evaluation of programme activities. The comparatively good data availability, disaggregated by gender, will facilitate the monitoring of the benefits of these food assistance interventions. Monitoring and evaluation will be closely linked with the periodic up-date of VAM information for the country.

Partnerships and Joint Programming

74. This strategy is the result of a consultative process with the Government and other stakeholders. A series of workshops has been held with line ministries and main stakeholders. The guiding principle has been to streamline WFP-assisted interventions towards the most food insecure people and areas. Consultations with potential beneficiaries underline the need for the suggested activities. The country strategy is also consistent with the UNDAF document that was completed with the active participation of WFP in December 2000. WFP's programming cycle is fully harmonized with that of the Government and the plans of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF to begin their programmes in January 2002.
75. The Department of Agrarian Services will continue to be the key implementing counterpart for the food-for-work component at the central level. Provincial councils and district secretariats are expected to play a greater role in programme management at the sub-national level. Government implementation partners for the new nutrition component will be the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Plan Implementation. The latter is the lead ministry for community-based nutrition promotion initiatives, while the former is responsible for the provision of supplementary food rations and the management of mother and child health centres.
76. WFP has actively pursued a policy of fostering partnerships with bilateral and multilateral donors and national and international NGOs. Collaboration with IFAD started in 1996, under which IFAD provides funding to strengthen district-level implementation capacity for the rehabilitation of the village tank irrigation schemes. An agreement has been signed with German AgroAction and the SewaLanka Foundation regarding the rehabilitation of irrigation tanks and resettlement in the northwest. Collaboration with the UNDP-administered Global Environment Facility/Small Grants Programme will be undertaken to strengthen environmental protection in the activity portfolio. WFP is discussing with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) about a possible collaboration in the rehabilitation of irrigation tanks under GTZ's Integrated Food Security Project.
77. The programme component in support of mother and child nutrition will involve close collaboration with UNICEF and a consortium of NGOs funded by the World Bank. WFP's provision of supplementary feeding rations will be contingent on the local presence of a community nutrition promotion programme sponsored by either UNICEF or the World Bank-funded NGOs.

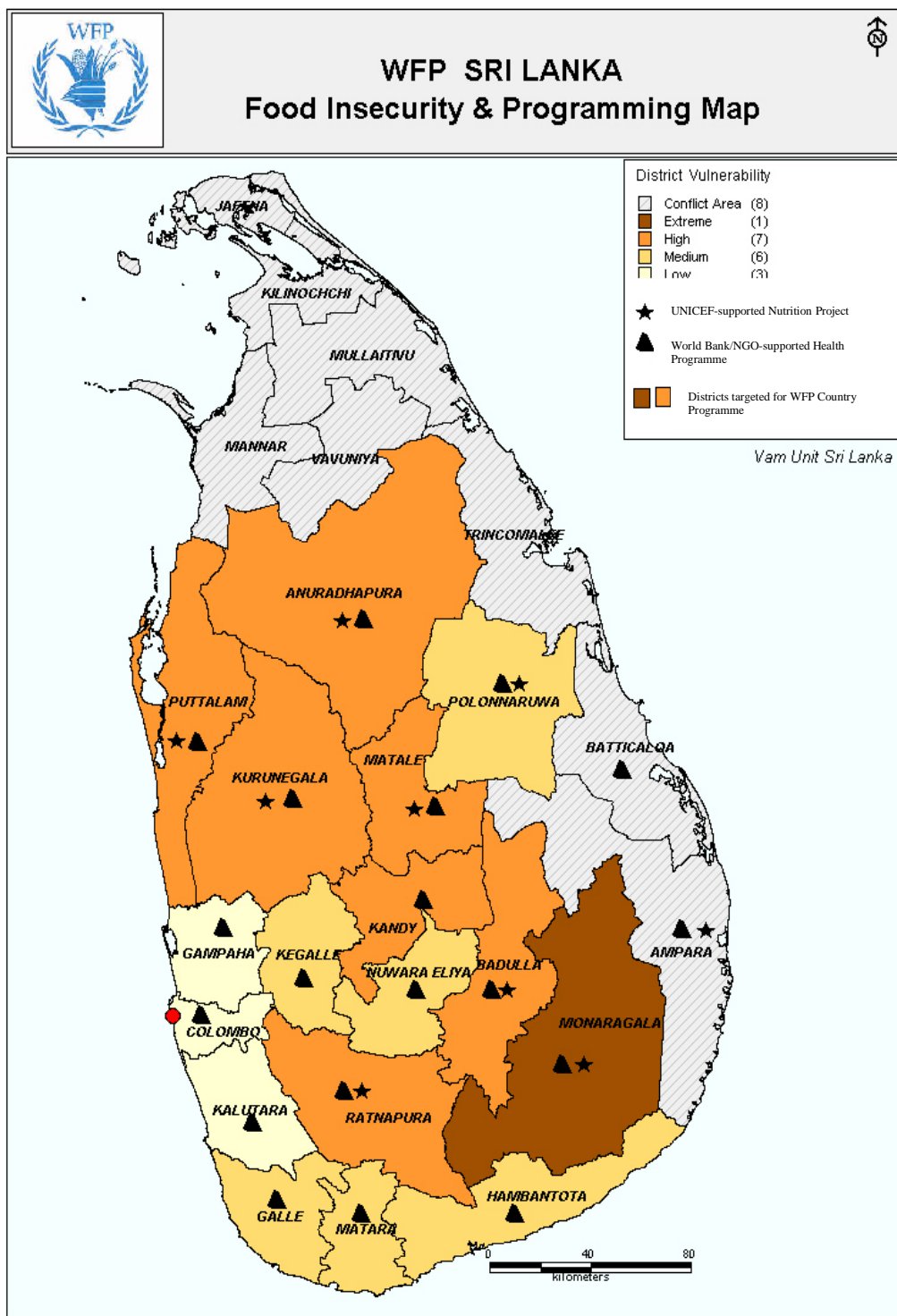


KEY ISSUES AND RISKS

78. The current conflict in Sri Lanka pervades all facets of society. Therefore, in any strategic planning process, the conflict is a key issue and a real risk to be considered. A major change in the conflict will affect the implementation of WFP-assisted activities: Any increase in conflict could divert government efforts and investment resources away from the implementation of development programmes. Any reduction in the intensity of the conflict and a movement towards peace could necessitate a temporary adjustment in programme priorities.
79. The specific changes proposed in this CSO that need to be closely monitored are:
- the concentration on the most food insecure areas with thorough VAM support;
 - the more participatory approach; and
 - the development of new partnerships and the advocacy objective.
80. A concentration on the most food insecure districts and divisions is likely initially to reduce the implementation and absorption capacity for effective food assistance activities. This situation could be eased through new partnerships with other aid agencies and NGOs and a greater emphasis on community participation. However, establishing effective partnerships is a time-consuming process, and community-oriented programming will imply more complex programme design and management requirements. The costs of fully implementing the participatory approach and the establishment of a results-oriented monitoring and evaluation system are likely to require higher expenditures. Finally, the attainment of the advocacy goal will depend on the Government's acceptance of the WFP-supported initiatives as pilots for other food assistance interventions, and on the identification of appropriate performance indicators that demonstrate the model interventions' success.
81. If economic growth in Sri Lanka continues at the same level as experienced over the past ten years, and if the Government is successful in realizing its policy of restructuring the rural economy by providing new employment opportunities in non-agricultural sectors and improving its strategies for the delivery of social welfare systems as laid out in its Framework for Poverty Reduction in Sri Lanka, then continued WFP development assistance may not be required beyond 2006.



ANNEX I



The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Food Programme (WFP) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its frontiers or boundaries.



ANNEX II

WFP ASSISTANCE TO SRI LANKA 1968–2000
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Type of assistance	Value* (in million US\$)	%
Development Projects		
Agriculture development	35.0	
Rural community infrastructure	15.1	
Land settlement	47.6	
Forestry	0.2	
Housing	0.9	
Cultural development	6.2	
Nutrition education	0.6	
Poultry industry	1.6	
Subtotal	107.2	60
Emergency Operations		
Food assistance for drought and flood victims	23.1	
Food assistance to victims of the Kantale Dam disaster	2.5	
Food assistance for families displaced by civil strife	3.6	
Resettlement of families displaced by ethnic disturbance	2.7	
Assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs)	31.9	
Subtotal	63.8	35
Quick-action Projects		
Rural works programme in drought-stricken areas	8.1	
Subtotal	8.1	5
Total Assistance	179.1	

*Value refers to WFP projects approved until 31 December 1999.

ONGOING PROJECTS

Project SRI 4521.01—"Community-managed Rehabilitation of Minor Irrigation Schemes in Sri Lanka" (1 January 2000–31 December 2002)	6.7
Project SRI 6107.00—"Assistance to Settlers in the Uda Walawe Project" (1 June 2000–31 December 2002)	1.0
PRRO 6152.00—"Relief and Recovery Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons in Sri Lanka" (1 January 2000–31 December 2001)	13.0
Total	20.7



LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CSO	Country Strategy Outline
DAS	Department of Agrarian Services
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF/SGP	Global Environment Facility/Small Grants Programme
GNP	Gross national product
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LIFDC	Low-income, food-deficit country
NCW	National Committee on Women
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Development
PNIP	Participatory Nutrition Improvement Project
PRRO	Protracted relief and recovery operation
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAM	Vulnerability analysis and mapping
WHO	World Health Organization

