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INFORMATION NOTES

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS' VISIT TO ETHIOPIA

20–25 September 1998



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INTRODUCTION

1. Members of the Executive Board from Angola, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, China, Finland, India, Morocco and Paraguay participated in the first visit by Executive Board Members to WFP operations, starting with Ethiopia. Members were accompanied by the Regional Director, Africa Bureau, Mr. Mohamed Zejjari. The list of participants is attached in Annex I.
2. The visit fulfilled its primary objective, to inform Executive Board Members of the significant challenges to food security in Ethiopia and the ways in which WFP is using food aid to contribute towards cooperative efforts to meet these challenges. Overall, Members were impressed with the quality of projects visited and the scope for food aid to make a valuable contribution towards meeting emergency, protracted relief and recovery, and development needs. It is clear that food aid will be required to help address Ethiopia's structural food deficit for some years to come. While a range of factors contribute to food insecurity, the rehabilitation of rural lands, including soil and water conservation, is a fundamental priority and the appropriate focus of WFP's major development projects. These interventions should be complemented by other efforts, such as increasing agricultural productivity and pursuing an active population policy. Members concluded that food aid, in cooperation with national efforts and actions, and coordinated with bilateral and multilateral activities, has a vital role to play in overcoming long-term chronic food insecurity.

PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT

3. Members visited the following projects: Urban food assistance facility (Ethiopia 5403.00), Food assistance for Somali, Sudanese, Djiboutian and Kenyan refugees in Ethiopia (5241.03), Relief food assistance to victims of the Meher crop failure (5979.00), Rehabilitation and development of rural lands and infrastructure (2488.03) and Improving education through school feeding (4929.00). Members also visited the Emergency Food Security Reserve (EFSR) store in Kombolcha.
4. Members met with the Prime Minister and with the Heads of United Nations agencies based in Addis Ababa. The mission received extensive briefing from WFP's implementing partners—Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC), Ministry of Planning and Economic Cooperation (MEDAC) and Project Implementing Ministries, Administration for Refugees and Returnees (ARRA) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The programme for the visit is provided in Annex II.

KEY POINTS FROM MEETINGS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

5. The Prime Minister emphasized the importance of:
 - the Government's National Food Security Programme and WFP's role within its framework, especially efforts to address the critical problem of land degradation;



- the Government’s policy to improve community assets and minimize food aid dependency through food-for-work programmes;
 - education as one of the priority sectors for development, especially the need to increase enrolment and attendance; and
 - local purchase of commodities to support agricultural production in surplus areas.
6. Representatives of DPPC, MEDAC and line Ministries stressed:
- the importance of the EFSR as an efficient and effective response mechanism in addressing food shortages, and WFP’s important role as a key partner;
 - the need for additional resources to improve the impact of food-for-work activities, including technical assistance and equipment;
 - the importance of food aid in improving the nutritional status of vulnerable groups in urban areas and community infrastructure;
 - the benefits of the pilot school feeding programme (while raising concerns about sustainability); and
 - the need to harmonize methodologies for assessing food aid needs.

OBSERVATIONS FROM VISITS TO PROJECT AREAS

7. Local-level participatory planning is embedded in project design and is delivering benefits to women and men. However, the participation of women in planning, decision-making and implementation of activities remains problematic. Women’s participation needs to be encouraged.
8. Food aid is well targeted to the poorest beneficiaries. Continuous improvement of targeting, underpinned by Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) activities, is essential to ensure that food aid remains focused on the most food-insecure.
9. Extensive areas of productive agricultural land have been rehabilitated through food-for-work activities. A range of non-food inputs, including technical assistance, could contribute in a large measure to improving the impact and sustainability of interventions.
10. The commitment and professionalism of Government authorities—at all levels—to successful project implementation, including accountability, was evident. WFP appears to be stretched to undertake adequate monitoring in some districts, especially those receiving relief food aid.
11. The school feeding programme is achieving significant results in reducing malnutrition and improving enrolment and retention rates, especially of girls, in chronic food-deficit areas. The programme has a high level of community support and involvement. However, coverage is limited to less than one third of the beneficiaries originally identified.
12. The extended presence of the refugee population is a burden on national resources, and support from the donor community is likely to be difficult to maintain. Repatriation efforts and revalidation exercises should be strongly supported. Environmental degradation is exacerbated by the presence of large numbers of people. Opportunities for refugees to engage in meaningful activities are extremely limited.
13. Strong and successful partnerships have been formed with NGOs in urban food assistance activities. Food aid is well targeted to especially vulnerable groups and



integrated with a range of interventions aimed at improving the health, education and employment status of beneficiaries through skills training for income-generating activities as well as community assets. NGOs regard food aid as a reliable and useful form of support to their activities. Matching funding by partners is a major constraint to the expansion of much-needed activities.

14. Emergency food aid needs in chronic food-deficit areas, which are often cyclical in nature, require longer-term responses. WFP is giving appropriate emphasis to strengthening the design of Employment-Generation Schemes for relief food aid to improve effectiveness, sustainability and links with development food-for-work activities.
15. The EFSR is an extremely important mechanism which enables an efficient and effective response to food shortages. Despite poor infrastructure, exacerbated by the recent outbreak of hostilities, WFP's Food Aid Transport System (FATS) to support operations, including the emphasis on contingency planning, is impressive. WFP is currently using only one port—Djibouti—and the limited facilities may cause a slow-down in the transportation of food.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

16. Given the right conditions, food aid can make a valuable contribution to development.
17. The constraints imposed by the lack of non-food items in projects were evident. In some cases, relatively minor cash resources would add significant value to the impact of WFP activities. WFP is encouraged to pursue an active programme to attract complementary inputs from other agencies, including FAO and IFAD, as well as from donors.
18. The size and scope of food-for-work activities underline the need for WFP to develop better performance indicators to measure impact on a systematic basis.
19. Every encouragement is given to WFP to pursue, with government authorities and local communities, improvements in the participation of women in decision-making which affects projects. The recruitment of a gender adviser to help country office staff to mainstream gender issues is very welcome.
20. Continuing emphasis should be placed on increasing girls' enrolment and attendance at school. In view of its impact on enrolment and retention, there seems to be a case for extending the school feeding programme in chronic food-deficit areas. Stronger support for the programme from the central administrative authorities would be helpful.
21. The United Nations family is well represented in Ethiopia. WFP is encouraged to continue its efforts to coordinate interventions with other agencies and NGOs. In particular, WFP could assume a major role in coordinating food aid activities, and should attempt to harmonize among various agencies the differing methodologies on needs assessment.
22. WFP's role in advocacy, both at the country office and headquarters level, is extremely important in view of the substantial resource needs to maintain current programme activity.
23. The Country Programme should be systematically reviewed, and the Board should be informed about progress towards adoption of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in Ethiopia.
24. The visit was extremely useful and mission participants would encourage other Executive Board Members to take part in future visits. The support, including briefing



material and presentations provided by the WFP country office and headquarters, was excellent. The mission has some suggestions to pass on to the Bureau for enhancing the contribution of Members to visits.

25. Members appreciated the dedication and enthusiasm of the WFP country office team regarding the very real challenges faced in the practical implementation of WFP's policies and programmes. The mission thanks them, and their colleagues in Rome, for their hard work and professionalism, and for the tremendous support they gave to the visit. Members also thank the Government of Ethiopia and the many officials who gave freely of their time and experience to help inform Members' understanding on the opportunities of contributing towards national efforts to achieve food security.



ANNEX I**MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MISSION TO ETHIOPIA**

Angola	Mr Kiala Kia Mateva
Australia	Ms Catherine Walker
Belgium	Mr Kris Panneels
Brazil	Ms Mitzi Gurgel Valente da Costa
China	Mr Zhang Zhongun
Finland	Ms Anne Huhtamaki
India	Ms Neela Gangadharan
Morocco	H E Ahmed Afailal
Paraguay	H E Oscar Cabello Sarubbi
WFP	Mr Mohamed Zejjari



ANNEX II**Programme for the Executive Board Members' visit to Ethiopia
20–25 September 1998****Sunday 20 September**

Arrive Addis Ababa

Monday 21 September

Meeting with the Commissioner, Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC)

Meeting with WFP staff and presentation

Lunch with Heads of UN agencies

Group Meeting with Ministry of Planning and Economic Cooperation, and Project Implementing Ministries

Meeting with Director, Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA)

Reception at UN-EC Centre

Tuesday 22 September

Visit Daughters of Charity - nutritional rehabilitation programme, day-care facilities, stone paved roads, drainage system, water points

Visit Gemini Trust - clinic, nutritional rehabilitation unit, income-generating activities, food distribution, infant feeding, skills training

Meeting with H E the Prime Minister Ato Meles Zenawi

Wednesday 23 SeptemberGroup A

Fly to Dire Dawa/drive to Deder town visiting old project Ethiopia 2488.00 sites en route

Briefing in Deder by Zonal and Woreda authorities

Visit Ministry of Agriculture warehouse

Visit soil conservation and afforestation sites and spring developments around Deder

Visit integrated soil and water conservation, pond and road construction activities around Chelenko, Meta Woreda

Group B

Fly to Jijiga - Meeting with ARRA and UNHCR

Visit Hartishek and Kebribeya Refugee Camps



Thursday 24 September

Fly from Dire Dawa to Kombolcha

Visit EFSR store in Kombolcha

Meeting with Zonal Authorities at Dessie

Meeting with members of the Werebabu Woreda Council, Bistima town

Visit Bistima Primary School - school feeding programme

Visit Emergency food distribution site in Bistima town

Friday 25 September

Fly to Addis Ababa

Meeting with NGO representatives

Debriefing meeting with Project Implementing Ministries

Debriefing meeting with the Commissioner, DPPC

Press Conference

