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SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT SUDAN EMERGENCY OPERATION 107600

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration

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 point indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes an evaluation of WFP's general food distribution in Darfur in 2009. A team of three international evaluators carried out the fieldwork in March 2010, using methods that included key informant interviews, document research, meetings with beneficiaries, direct observations and online surveys.

The outbreak of conflict in Darfur in 2003 led to deaths, the destruction of productive assets, and large-scale displacement. This displacement led to the loss of livelihoods, not only for the displaced, but also – to a lesser extent – for the nomadic and settled communities that were economically linked with the displaced agricultural communities. WFP has been aiding the conflict-affected population in Darfur since 2003, and its programme is now mature. However, seven years after the conflict started, there has been little return in Darfur, as the causes of the displacement remain unresolved.

The evaluation found that the emergency operation was relevant to the people affected, and largely appropriate to their needs. The modality of general food distribution was appropriate to the circumstances in 2009, although this approach is **becoming less appropriate as needs evolve**. It was also efficient, incurring a lower cost per metric ton compared with other **modalities** that would also have required more skills from cooperating partners.

The emergency operation reached almost 100 percent of its beneficiaries, which was a major achievement given the difficult operating context, the expulsion of cooperating partners – for which WFP had to **compensate by engaging in direct distribution** – and a funding shortfall of 22 percent. The operation's attainment of stated objectives was difficult to identify because corporate indicators had already been met by the time it was approved. Regarding impact, the operation is the largest in Darfur, giving WFP a central role among its partners. WFP assistance enabled the affected population, particularly internally displaced persons, to engage in livelihood options that are less risky than those they would otherwise have had.

DRAFT DECISION*

The Board takes note of “Summary Evaluation Report Sudan Emergency Operation 107600” (WFP/EB.2/2010/6-D) and the management response in WFP/EB.2/2010/6-D/Add.1 and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* 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. This report summarizes an evaluation of WFP's general food distribution (GFD) in Darfur in 2009 as part of emergency operation (EMOP) 107600. A team of three international evaluators carried out the field work in March 2009 using methods that included key informant interviews, document research, meetings with beneficiaries, direct observation and online surveys.
2. The outbreak of conflict in Darfur in 2003 led to deaths, the destruction of productive assets, and large-scale displacement. This displacement led to the loss of livelihoods not only for the displaced, but also – to a lesser extent – for the nomadic and settled communities that were economically linked with the displaced agricultural communities.
3. WFP has been aiding the overall conflict-affected population in Darfur since 2003, and the programme is now mature. However, seven years after the conflict started, there has been little return in Darfur, as the causes of the displacement remain unresolved.
4. Darfur is a difficult context in which to work. Even at the best of times it is food-insecure, with a history of famines and chronic malnutrition in some areas. Security for international staff has steadily worsened since 2004. In addition, logistics circumstances are challenging, leading to high operating costs.

OVERVIEW AND STRATEGY OF THE OPERATION

5. The EMOP was the largest of six WFP operations in the Sudan in 2009. The other five operations were the country programme and four special operations, three of which were relevant to Darfur, with one fully concentrated on Darfur.
6. The overarching goals of the EMOP were to save lives, reduce food insecurity and restore livelihoods of conflict-affected and vulnerable populations in the Sudan. This fits into WFP's Strategic Objective 1, "Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies". The operation also aimed to protect livelihoods. The objectives stated in the project document were fully coherent with WFP's policies and goals. The use of an indicator compendium and the project review process both helped to ensure that project documents complied with policies.
7. The EMOP had a total budget of US\$868.7 million for the year; US\$675 million had been raised by the end of 2009.¹ The programme aimed to reach 6.2 million beneficiaries, including 3.8 million GFD recipients in Darfur. It included several food distribution methods, the most important of which was GFD. WFP planned to distribute 443,800 mt through GFD in Darfur, accounting for 84 percent of the EMOP's total GFD. The EMOP was complemented by a special operation, to cover the extra costs arising from the expulsions of cooperating partners and to increase the number of locations where WFP staff could work in compliance with United Nations security rules.
8. When the Darfur operation began in 2003, the entire affected population was in need of food aid. The original targeting strategy based the provision of assistance on status as an internally displaced person (IDP) rather than on level of food security. Over time, the affected population has developed alternative livelihoods. Many of these are inadequate to

¹ WFP revised the EMOP three times during 2009: the first revision reduced the budget in response to lower food and transport prices; the second was a minor administrative revision; and the third revision increased the caseload in the south.

support families on their own, and poorly adapted in that they damage other livelihoods or are unsustainable. All of them are contingent on local security. The pattern of alternative livelihoods, among other factors,² results in big variations in need across the IDP population. The targeting strategy should therefore be shifting to a needs-based approach, with targeting at the household level rather than for groups, such as IDP versus host communities. However, adjusting the targeting strategy and making the associated programme changes would face resistance for these reasons:

- The leadership of the affected communities is strongly opposed to any rationalization of the distribution lists.
 - The affected communities are similarly opposed to any targeting that differentiates among community members; they recognize the fragility of many of their livelihoods and are concerned that targeting aid to fewer households would threaten social cohesion. In addition, some communities confuse entitlement to food with conflict-affected status.
 - Cooperating partners have capacity constraints that affect the extent to which they can carry out alternative programmes that require more expertise than GFD.
9. The strategy of the operation is still relevant, but there is also need to consider and address questions about the future of IDPs and their potential return to old livelihoods. Although many alternative livelihoods are of low quality, they are still better than those that some of the poorest people previously had in rural areas. Together with the increasing years spent in an urban environment, this means that even with peace, a significant proportion of the affected population – interviewees estimated from 15 to 50 percent – would not return. Permanent returns to villages have been minimal, but there is a growing pattern of temporary returns for the agricultural season. This issue is critical for the EMOP's design, if the affected populations settle in urban areas.
10. WFP has reacted to the difficulties of targeting different levels of need within the population by reducing the overall ration size. The Darfur Food Security Monitoring System (DFSMS), a major achievement for WFP in 2009, has provided excellent data on food security, which shows that this reduction of the ration had no major negative impact on food security in the monitored sites.

RESULTS

Beneficiaries and Assistance Provided

11. At peak times, WFP reached 3.7 million beneficiaries in Darfur, or 96 percent of the number specified in the original EMOP design, and 99.5 percent of that in the operational plans. This was a significant achievement given the difficulties of operating in Darfur. Another remarkable achievement was that the loss of cooperating partners in March 2009 had very little impact on the numbers of beneficiaries reached or the tonnages distributed. WFP launched its direct distribution very effectively. It varied the numbers of beneficiaries and the ration composition throughout the year, based on vulnerability assessments, responding to the seasonal pattern of need with rations for resident populations during the hunger gap.

² Other factors with an important role in differentiating the level of need for assistance include gender, financial and other resources, family network, skills, and camp location and size.

12. WFP distributed 83 percent of the planned GFD tonnage, which was a considerable achievement for an EMOP that was only 78 percent funded (see paragraph 30). From 1 January 2009, WFP reduced IDP ration size to 70 percent, as food security data showed a relatively positive picture following the “good” 2008 harvest. In November 2009, resource constraints made it necessary to reduce rations further, bringing the IDP ration to roughly 60 percent of the original planned. These rations were notional, however, and pipeline breaks in the supply of certain commodities sometimes reduced them more, as did factors such as milling losses, milling costs, transport costs, and taxes paid to sheiks, at some locations. The notional 70 percent ration therefore provided less than half of food needs, while the need for recipients to sell some food to pay for soap, education and other goods and services reduced the notional value even further. The ration for non-displaced recipients was 50 percent of that for IDPs.
13. WFP’s planned changes to the programme for 2009, including greater use of non-GFD mechanisms to improve the targeting of assistance, were derailed by the need to respond to the expulsion of cooperating partners in March 2009. However, WFP maintained – and in some cases increased – important non-GFD mechanisms, including food for education, supplementary feeding programmes and a blanket supplementary feeding programme (BSFP).

Attaining Objectives

14. The indicators used in the EMOP for saving lives were crude mortality rate (CMR) and level of global acute malnutrition (GAM) among under-5s, in line with WFP’s corporate indicator compendium. However, the evaluation found these indicators problematic because: i) the targets have been largely met since late 2005 – although some areas continue to have persistent problems with acute malnutrition – so progress or achievements since then cannot be determined; ii) acute malnutrition can be caused by other factors, including poor hygiene in the home, so changes in the indicators may be difficult to attribute to food assistance; iii) and the indicators are designed for the onset of an emergency situation, such as to measure eligibility for supplementary feeding, rather than for long-term crises such as in Darfur. WFP’s assistance has not reduced the CMR or GAM, but has helped prevent them from rising in the face of suboptimal alternative livelihoods.
15. The evaluation considers that the coping strategies indicator and the household food consumption scores, both of which are used in the DFSMS, are better indicators of the overall outcome of WFP’s intervention in Darfur. Introduction of the DFSMS dramatically improved food security monitoring in 2009, effectively replacing an annual survey with a series of four surveys. The DFSMS showed that livelihoods generally provided adequate food security at most of the monitored sites in 2009. It also showed that WFP food was a large part of the livelihoods of assisted populations.
16. One of the unintended positive outcomes was the effect of food assistance on local markets. Research on the impact of conflict on trade, carried out by Tufts University in 2008,³ found that WFP food had a greater than previously estimated effect on urban cereal markets, virtually keeping these markets alive. Beneficiaries trade some WFP assistance to fund school fees and other costs, or because they prefer local varieties. Beneficiaries with multiple ration cards also sell their surplus. The impact of these sales has been to stabilize

³ Buchanan-Smith, M. and Fadul, A.A. 2008. *Adaptation and Devastation: The Impact of the Conflict on Trade and Markets in Darfur. Findings of a Scoping Study*. Medford, Massachusetts, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University.

food prices in Darfur. The EMOP thus indirectly supports the access to food of non-targeted groups, such as the urban poor.

The Operation's Contribution to the Larger Humanitarian Situation and Response

17. Without peace there can be no development. This is certainly the case in Darfur, where the lack of an effective political settlement means that IDPs do not consider it safe to return. WFP assistance has allowed the affected population, particularly IDPs, to avoid engaging in livelihood strategies that pose greater risks than those they currently use.
18. The EMOP is the largest humanitarian intervention in Darfur, giving WFP a central role in providing a framework within which other humanitarian partners can implement complementary initiatives. However, only a few programmes have been implemented by other actors, especially since the March 2009 expulsions of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Factors Explaining Results

19. **Security.** The failure of the Darfur Peace Agreement is another factor driving the continued need for assistance. Security for the aid community has worsened every year since 2004, and almost the whole of Darfur is subject to United Nations travel restrictions. In addition to constraints imposed by the security situation itself, United Nations security rules impose further restrictions on national and international staff. The kidnapping threat applies to international staff, while security threats for national staff depend on their own origins and the part of Darfur they are working in. This situation affects the way in which WFP staff can operate, the availability and quality of cooperating partners, and the cost of the operation.
20. **Inclusion and exclusion errors.** There are two types of inclusion errors in the distribution lists in Darfur: the inclusion of people who are not members of the affected population; and the inclusion of those with strong alternative livelihoods, who do not need WFP assistance.⁴ The lists are thought to contain a good number of people who are either registered twice, or are not entitled to food assistance. Current lists have remained largely unchanged since late 2005;⁵ with a few exceptions, they do not include new arrivals or children born since late 2005. However, sheiks are strongly opposed to re-registration, and communities are opposed to household targeting, as explained in paragraph 4. WFP has conducted one re-registration exercise at a small camp in West Darfur, but only after leaving the camp without food for three months. This was wholly appropriate as the current ration registers are an obstacle to proper targeting.
21. **Partnerships.** WFP is constrained by the limited number and capacity of cooperating partners. The relatively small number of NGOs working in Darfur compared with the overall humanitarian needs leaves WFP with little choice in selecting partners. The challenges of working in Darfur make it difficult for cooperating partners to attract appropriately qualified staff.
22. In March 2009, the Government expelled several cooperating partners, accounting for nearly half of WFP's total capacity from cooperating partners. The WFP operation in Darfur was only able to cope with the expulsion of such a large part of its distribution

⁴ WFP's planned research in 2010 will investigate the links between livelihoods and household food security.

⁵ Distribution lists and their updates are the responsibility of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) rather than WFP.



capacity because it is a mature programme that has learned and incorporated lessons over the years. The non-WFP key informants interviewed generally had a very high opinion of WFP, and were full of praise for how well it had dealt with the expulsions.

23. Before the expulsions, WFP had begun work on an improved management information system – the Sudan Operating System – to make better use of monitoring data and to address, among other issues, problems with partner performance. Engaging in direct distribution made WFP even more aware of partners' capacity problems, and it has instituted a special project to support the development of these capacities.
24. Cooperating partners generally praised WFP as a good partner, but also said that it negotiated field-level agreements aggressively, and that they felt these agreements represented an unfair sharing of financial risks between WFP and its cooperating partners.
25. **Beyond general food distribution.** WFP's piloting of milling vouchers in north Darfur was an excellent initiative; the vouchers are far more cost-effective than having beneficiaries sell or barter part of their food to meet milling costs.
26. WFP had planned to expand non-GFD modalities significantly in 2009, but was prevented by the expulsions. It engaged in direct distribution in areas where it could not find a partner to manage the distribution at reasonable cost. Direct distribution had a high opportunity cost for WFP, as the staff it required did not have time to follow up on new projects using other modalities.
27. The security situation was very tense prior to the expulsions, so there was no space for other modalities. Special assistance for the most vulnerable was expanded through BSFP, but this was constrained by capacity limitations. Non-GFD modalities generally need more management capacity and serve far fewer beneficiaries than GFD.
28. **Learning from experience.** The WFP programme in Darfur has learned lessons from its investment in research. A small example of this was an expert consultation in February 2009, when WFP staff held a three-day meeting with four of the most knowledgeable academic experts on Darfur, and exchanged views on what achievements could reasonably be expected.
29. Direct distribution highlighted problems that should have been picked up by routine monitoring but were not. This has led WFP to invest more resources in monitoring, including by introducing the Sudan Operating System software to integrate all information and make monitoring easier and more effective.
30. **Level and timeliness of funding.** WFP attracted 78 percent of the funds needed for the EMOP. The United States of America was the biggest donor, and also provided funds early. Given the time required to mobilize resources and transport food into Darfur, WFP needs to have funds well in advance of the start of the year. The United States of America provided more than two thirds of its funding in the third quarter of 2008, and WFP had received 63 percent of the eventual funding for the EMOP by 1 January 2009 – a considerable achievement given that only 78 percent of funding was obtained by the end of the year (see paragraph 12).
31. **Cost.** The Sudan is an expensive operating environment, especially Darfur. Local transport, storage and handling costs are high, as are direct support costs, which are largely the costs of maintaining a WFP presence and complying with United Nations security rules. Despite the cost, however, there is good evidence from the DFSMS that without WFP assistance there would have been a food crisis in Darfur, which implies that the operation is cost-effective.



OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

32. **Relevance and appropriateness.** WFP's programme in Darfur was relevant to the affected population and largely appropriate for its needs; GFD continued to be appropriate for the circumstances prevailing in 2009. However, the programme is facing a growing disconnect between needs and assistance owing to the need to update distribution lists and consider the alternative livelihoods that have developed among affected communities. Ideally, the programme should evolve towards self-targeting modalities, such as food for work, and targeted food appropriate to the communities' contexts, to ensure high levels of relevance and appropriateness, but such a shift is not realistic. Instead, WFP addressed these problems for the short term by adjusting rations to reflect overall needs, without incurring major negative consequences on nutrition or food security in 2009.
33. **Efficiency.** Reliance on GFD is historical as there was no other option at the start of the operation in 2003/04. GFD offers lower overall implementing costs per metric ton and requires fewer skills from cooperating partners than other modalities do. The disadvantage of GFD is that it is untargeted, but the scope for alternative programme activities is limited.⁶
34. WFP's operation in Darfur is one of the most expensive in the world, owing to logistics challenges and the high costs of applying United Nations security standards. In 2009, WFP introduced cost-saving measures to reduce the overall cost per metric ton, and milling vouchers as a more efficient way for families to meet their milling costs than by selling part of their ration.
35. WFP has also negotiated hard and succeeded in reducing the cost of contractors and cooperating partners. Partners are not always transparent about their true costs, but WFP's direct implementation has given it a very accurate picture of such costs. For cooperating partners, however, tough negotiations for efficiency gains have raised questions about the meaning of partnership.
36. **Effectiveness.** When measured by the conventional indicators of large-scale excess mortality or malnutrition, the humanitarian crisis in Darfur has been over since late 2005. However, without WFP assistance, the continuing large food deficit in Darfur would lead to a return of humanitarian crisis. This apparent discrepancy results more from the corporate indicators than from the effectiveness of the programme, which reached 95 percent of its intended beneficiaries and distributed more than 83 percent of its planned tonnage, in spite of achieving only 78 percent of budgeted funding.
37. **Sustainability and connectedness.** The continuing efforts of WFP and other humanitarian agencies are preventing the political crisis in Darfur from escalating into excess mortality and malnutrition rates. Agriculture, Darfur's economic powerhouse, is still operating at only a fraction of its pre-conflict level, and will continue to do so until the displaced people feel sufficiently safe to resume their former livelihoods. Until then, continuing assistance will be needed in Darfur.
38. **Overall assessment.** Darfur is a very complex environment. WFP has demonstrated a constant effort to deepen its understanding of the dynamics in Darfur and has benefited from the insights of academic experts to develop its programme. Overall, the evaluation

⁶ Even if cooperating partners had the capacity to implement alternative programmes on a large scale, such activities would be limited, because GFD is the only means of addressing the large food deficit.

team concluded that WFP has done a good job in Darfur in the face of very difficult circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

39. **Recommendation 1:** WFP Sudan should continue general food distribution in Darfur in 2010.
40. **Recommendation 2:** Given the inability to target GFD effectively within communities, WFP Sudan should continue to reduce the GFD ration so that all food modalities combined match each community's overall need for external food assistance.
41. **Recommendation 3:** WFP Sudan should extend the DFSM to provide managers with good information on the impact of ration changes in different locations.
42. **Recommendation 4:** WFP Sudan should move away from a single ration level for all the beneficiaries in a category to a range of rations to be allocated to that category at a single location, based on food security information.
43. **Recommendation 5:** WFP Sudan should consider introducing a targeted ration for vulnerable cases.
44. **Recommendation 6:** WFP Sudan should continue working with IOM to rationalize distribution lists, and should suspend distribution at sites where the community refuses to accept re-registration.
45. **Recommendation 7:** WFP should avoid direct distribution when possible. This may involve developing cooperating partners' capacities for sites where no acceptable distribution partners are available.
46. **Recommendation 8:** WFP needs to develop its mechanisms for negotiating costs with partners, to make them more appropriate to the concept of partnership.

MAP OF THE SUDAN



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.



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

BSFP	blanket supplementary feeding programme
CMR	crude mortality rate
DFSMS	Darfur Food Security Monitoring System
EMOP	emergency operation
GAM	global acute malnutrition
GFD	general food distribution
IDP	internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	non-governmental organization