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## Report on the field visit of the WFP Executive Board

### Acknowledgements

The Executive Board Member States whose representatives participated in the field visit to Guatemala and Honduras would like to express their appreciation and gratitude to the WFP Secretariat and the WFP teams at the regional and country levels for their efficient planning and coordination of the visit, which provided an opportunity to gain a firsthand overview of the situation in each country.

Members would also like to thank the governments of Guatemala and Honduras for hosting the visit as well as the local partners and institutions working with WFP in each country and the WFP staff in the two countries for their hard work and dedication.

### Introduction

1. Representatives of Member States of the Executive Board of WFP took part in a field visit to Guatemala and Honduras from 26 November to 2 December 2023. The participants were the Permanent Representatives of India, Ireland, Panama, Poland and Senegal.
2. The visit allowed the Board member representatives to obtain direct insights into WFP activities in both countries and to review WFP's work in supporting communities in poverty faced by extreme food insecurity.
3. The visit provided a unique opportunity to learn about and assess WFP's activities at the country office level and in the field. The Board member representatives were provided with a range of opportunities to examine and witness results at the regional and country levels. The thematic focus of the visit was resilience building, emergency response and support for communities.

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#### Focal point:

Mr P. Ward  
Secretary to the Executive Board  
Executive Board Secretariat Division  
email: [philip.ward@wfp.org](mailto:philip.ward@wfp.org)

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4. The Board member representatives observed the policies, procedures and structures in place to support operations and learned about the implementation of WFP policies, strategies and programmes in the field as well as the methods and modalities of programme delivery. This included a review in each country of the following elements: support for national social protection programming; all aspects of programming and programme delivery; the steps taken in anticipation of crises, in particular in preparing for severe climate-related effects; and the challenges faced by the beneficiaries of operations, communities and the individuals and organizations engaged in the delivery of services. The Board member representatives also observed innovative cash-based transfer activities and livelihood projects in action as well as school meals programmes. It should be noted that most of the programmes observed by the Board member representatives had a women's empowerment component.
5. The Board member representatives reviewed and discussed the impacts and results of WFP programmes with government and non-government counterparts at the national, local and community levels and had the opportunity to be briefed on the political environment in which WFP is operating in both countries. Throughout the week, in both Guatemala and Honduras and in addition to all the field-based work, the Board member representatives were introduced to a wide range of government officials, donors, non-governmental organizations, academics, diplomats and officials from the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes present in country.
6. Overall, it was clear to the Board member representatives that the work of WFP in Guatemala and Honduras is vital and highly valued. Both countries clearly recognize the positive benefits of the support given by WFP.
7. Migration as an effect of food insecurity was also discussed with emphasis and agreement by all that more investment is needed in long-term food security to address the most fundamental root causes of migration. Long-term investment and increased resilience are inextricably linked to reduced migration.

## **Guatemala**

### **Background**

8. The visit began in Guatemala City, where the Board member representatives were provided with a comprehensive preparatory briefing on the visit in the context of the continuing severe food insecurity prevailing in the country. Guatemala has the highest rate of chronic malnutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean (and the sixth highest in the world), with 46.7 percent of children under 5 affected. It is also the tenth most vulnerable country to climate crisis globally. In both Guatemala and Honduras, the effects of El Niño, flooding, conflict (particularly in Ukraine), the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic and other extreme geopolitical stresses have contributed to severely depleted harvests of coffee, cocoa, sugar, corn, beans and other staples in recent years. Poverty and hunger are endemic in both countries. Indigenous Peoples account for 44 percent of the population of Guatemala and live in remote environments exposed to the impacts of climate change. WFP, with a staff of 130 in Guatemala in all offices, is striving to include more Indigenous staff in the workforce and progress is being made in that regard.

### **Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs**

9. A very positive meeting was held between the Board member representatives and His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mario Bucaro, and his team. He shared with the Board member representatives that the inauguration of the President-Elect was scheduled for 14 January 2024.

10. Food security concerns are headline issues for the Government and, it is hoped and expected, for the President-Elect as well. Minister Bucaro is confident that much has been achieved over the past four years and the emphasis after the transition should be on maintaining and increasing the support with WFP and others for those in need. The continuation and intensification of cooperation with WFP is critical.
11. The current government has made significant investments in food security, resilience and social protection. The group expressed its appreciation for the investments of the Government and noted that WFP is committed to continuing to work with the President-Elect and the future government to improve the food security and nutrition of the Guatemalan population.

### **Meeting with the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Guatemala**

12. Following a preparatory briefing with WFP, the Board member representatives met with the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Miguel Barreto. He outlined the work of his office in coordinating the actions of the United Nations system in the country. He provided a comprehensive briefing of the work of his office with the wide range of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes based in Guatemala. There are 27 entities in total: 23 are present in the country – 20 with resident representatives and three with heads of programme – and four have no in-country presence.
13. The Resident Coordinator engages very directly and actively with the current government and is preparing for continuing positive work with the President-Elect after 14 January 2024. Guatemala has a number of joint United Nations programmes with good collaboration, and there are always opportunities to expand.
14. All agreed on the need to increase cooperation in the field and noted that more funding was needed. WFP is a lead agency in Guatemala and its role in tackling food insecurity through resilience building, social protection, country capacity strengthening, service provision and emergency response is vital. WFP is considered a strong ally by the Government in all these areas, and participants discussed current challenges with significant impact on the country, such as El Niño and irregular migration.

### **Guatemala field visits**

15. The Board member representatives spent considerable time with Indigenous people in Zacapa and Chiquimula, in the Dry Corridor, which has experienced critical climate-related stresses and challenges. They were constantly reminded in their various engagements of the fact that Guatemala is one of the countries most vulnerable to and affected by natural disasters – particularly prolonged droughts and torrential rains.
16. It was very evident to the Board member representatives that stunting (low height for age) and wasting (low weight for height) are two of the most significant effects of hunger and malnutrition for Indigenous people in Guatemala.
17. Guatemala has the highest rate of stunting in the Latin America and the Caribbean region and the impact of stunting is endemic and devastating. The window for the normal development of organs such as the brain is 1,000 days from conception. In many rural communities, this period of life is significantly affected by acute food insecurity and additional factors such as limited access to health services, lack of water and sanitation and low levels of education.

**Visits to the communities of San Miguel (in Huite, department of Zacapa) and Plan del Jocote (in Chiquimula, department of Chiquimula)**

18. In both communities, the Board member representatives reviewed the "PRO-Resilience" project funded by the European Union and saw firsthand the wide range of activities that WFP supports using its resilient food systems approach. European Union funding will come to an end this year and no renewal of resources is foreseen for the time being.
19. The Board member representatives saw firsthand evidence of the resilience activities supported and promoted by WFP in both communities in the areas of nutrition and sustainable agricultural development.
20. In San Miguel and Plan del Jocote, particular emphasis was placed on the resilience and nutrition activities. There was a component of financial management training and savings and credit groups (mostly led by women) have been created in the communities to foster their economic sustainability.
21. In San Miguel the programme benefits 150 families, 140 of whom are headed by women. In Plan del Jocote, 191 families take part, including 175 families headed by women.

**Visit to the community of Minas Arriba (in San Juanita Ermita, department of Chiquimula)**

22. The Board member representatives visited the community of Minas Arriba in the municipality of San Juan Ermita, department of Chiquimula. The municipality has a population of 17,000 and covers an area of 80.5 km<sup>2</sup>. The aim of the visit was to see the disaster risk finance activities developed with the support of WFP.
23. The newly elected mayor of the municipality, who will take office in January 2024, welcomed the delegation and expressed his support for the programme. He underlined the importance of resilience in the area, which was very vulnerable to natural disasters. Emigration and the difficulty of keeping young people in school during the coffee harvests were also big challenges.
24. The three presentations made by the community highlighted how they are using new technologies to measure the humidity of the soil in order to cultivate the right produce at the right time. They also described how they are saving water to be able to maintain their crops, how their harvests have increased and been diversified and how, through their participation in the micro-insurance programme, they receive financial payments when their harvests or economic activities are affected by drought or floods.
25. The delegation showed a lot of interest in the maintenance of the equipment, the duration of the training sessions and the possibility of continuing the project without the support of WFP. They received guarantees that everything was being done to ensure good monitoring and maximum sustainability.
26. The most important lessons learned during the visit were the pride of the population, who had discovered that they can always do better, their commitment to sharing experience and knowledge to support each other, their confidence in their resilience and their gratitude to WFP and other partners. It was amazing to see that most of them had no intention of leaving their locality. They are determined to change their lives and they are sure that they are on the right path. It was also satisfying to note that many young people, especially girls, are involved in the project.
27. The delegation recommends the continuation of WFP activities and enhanced cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and other partners for more integrated projects. Minas Arriba needs more time and resources to achieve full resilience.

## **Honduras**

### **Background**

28. In Honduras, the Board member representatives visited the remote communities of Genjibral, in Santa Rita, Santa Bárbara; Apacilagua, in Choluteca; and Texiguat, in El Paraíso where they continued to review WFP resilience building programmes including the support – technical and material – provided for smallholder farmers so that they can adapt to and mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events and anticipate the impacts of inevitable climate shocks, particularly those related to El Niño and extreme flooding.

### **Meeting with officials of the Government of Honduras**

29. The Board member representatives had a meeting with His Excellency Minister Rodolfo Pastor, Secretary of State for the Presidency; Mr Rider Calix, Director of External Cooperation and Resource Mobilization in the Ministry of Social Protection; and Mr Dixon Morales, Director of Multilateral Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The President of the Executive Board briefed the Minister and officials on the purpose of the field visit. The Board member representatives shared their reflections on the field visit and commended the work done by the Government towards the objectives of saving lives and changing lives in close collaboration with WFP, especially the efforts being made to build resilience through initiatives aimed at ensuring food security and nutrition in the Dry Corridor and the school meals programme. The Minister and officials appreciated the efforts of WFP in Honduras, resolved to further strengthen and deepen collaboration with WFP, and expressed optimism that their country would be able to take advantage of the technical assistance of WFP to achieve autonomy of the programmes in the long run, including financing from national budgets.

### **Honduras field visits**

30. The school meals programme, which is managed by the Government in cooperation with WFP, is invaluable for the communities, not only for the purposes of feeding children and attracting them to education but also in establishing sustainable links (created and managed by WFP) between local farmers and schools. Illiteracy is very high (30 percent) and education is a real challenge (with a starkly low percentage of educated Indigenous women). It was clear that Indigenous women's economic empowerment is a top priority for WFP and attracting girls to education is critical. Board member representatives were struck by the fact that when asked what they wanted to do when they grew up, the boys in the school meals programme replied individually and collectively "go to the United States of America". The girls, on the other hand, expressed the desire to stay at home even though many girls simultaneously said that mathematics was their favourite subject (thanks to a good teacher, probably).
31. The emergency cash-based transfer intervention with "over the counter" cash distributions targets 6,773 vulnerable households (33,865 beneficiaries) covering a total of 23 municipalities in nine departments. Each household receives USD 150 for a period of 90 days through three 30-day instalments.
32. Attention is directed mainly to women, who represent 70 percent of the population served. The assistance is complemented by training sessions on the use of cash and household financial management. The beneficiary families are extremely poor, with no fixed income, and affected by the climate crisis of drought in the Dry Corridor.

### **Visit to Humberto Barahona educational centre in Santa Bárbara**

33. On 1 December 2023, the Board member representatives visited Humberto Barahona educational centre in Santa Bárbara, Honduras to review the school meals programme (home-grown school feeding initiative) being implemented by the Government of Honduras with the support of WFP.
34. Cooked meals are provided to children in the school. Although the school has a kitchen, pending its full operationalization the responsibility for preparing food is being shared by mothers of the schoolchildren on a rotational basis, and the food is cooked at their homes and delivered to the school. Logistics support for this activity is provided by WFP. One of the key requirements for a successful school meals programme is to serve high-quality and hygienic meals that are consistent with local cultural norms and existing consumption practices and tastes, and the school scores well in this regard. During interaction with the Board member representatives, the school management said that the introduction of the school meals programme had led to a marked improvement in the school attendance of the children, especially of girls, and in their nutrition status. While cooking of hot meals *in situ* is still in its inception phase, it enjoys strong community support. Acceptance among the children and the commitment and zeal of the wider community, especially parents and schoolteachers, who are part of the School Meals Committees, is visible and could be a key driver for its sustenance and eventual institutionalization by the Government of Honduras.
35. The continuity and institutionalization of the school meals programme is there and benefits from strong commitment. The inclusion of fresh foods requires additional resources and investments in functional architecture especially institutions. The success of the programme also depends on empowerment at the grassroots level through capacity strengthening and the eventual decentralization of resources.

### **Visit to the community of Genjibral in Santa Rita**

36. Resilience is the ability to anticipate risk, absorb impacts, acquire coping skills, evolve and grow in the face of turbulent change, and build better systems that can adapt to future shocks. The shift from “saving lives” to “changing lives” is gradual and at times non-linear, requiring diverse developmental strategies and interventions. Resilience, be it at the individual or community level, helps in smoothing out this process and accelerating it. Participation in resilience projects empowers farmers, enhancing their skills and boosting production. By promoting livelihood resilience, WFP ensures a coordinated approach to save lives, change lives and progressively reduce humanitarian needs, in line with the triple nexus.
37. Honduras faces recurring climate hazards that limit food availability, especially for those who rely on agriculture as their primary source of livelihood, which increases their vulnerability. WFP is implementing a livelihood resilience project that aims to strengthen egg and fish value chains, boost sustainable development and promote food and nutrition security for vulnerable communities. Through collaboration with partners, technical support is provided to 160 smallholder farmers from 12 organizations, enabling them to improve poultry and aquaculture production efficiently and sustainably. WFP seeks to connect these smallholder farmers with stable markets, fostering their ability to withstand challenges.
38. WFP has played a critical role in motivating and mobilizing young smallholder farmers to take up aquaculture activities, implementing capacity strengthening activities and connecting them to markets. Under one such resilience building initiative, beneficiary farmers from the community of Genjibral in Santa Rita supply fish to the Humberto Barahona educational centre in Santa Bárbara with the assistance of WFP. It is encouraging to note that the smallholders supported under this project have been able to connect with 93 schools to sell their produce.

39. The Board member representatives visited Genjibral to review this integrated resilience activity. Ten young farmers have formed a collective and taken up tilapia fish farming on a piece of community land adjacent to a perennial freshwater source. Tilapia is one of the most important fish species produced through aquaculture, with global production of 6 million mt in 2020. The fish has certain advantages in being climate resilient (able to adapt to wide range of conditions), an affordable source of animal protein, nutrient-rich, inexpensive to cultivate due to low feed costs, fast growing and easy to fillet and it enjoys huge market potential. The tilapia facility in Genjibral has the requisite infrastructure for all stages of production. Through a private company, WFP has supported the farmers with a high-quality shoal of an improved breed of tilapia, which in turn is being maintained and further propagated, reared and cultivated. Formulated pellet feed for the fish is sourced from a private partner. Table-size fish (250–300 grams) are supplied to schools under the school meals programme. At present, the farm has the capacity to produce 14,000 fish (5–6 mt). The group has been trained on various stages of tilapia production, especially farm management practices and processing techniques concerning fish filleting and packaging.
40. Of late, there is growing recognition that for higher incomes it is essential for smallholder farmers to move from “crop alone” to “crop plus strategy”, an approach that integrates horticulture, aquaculture, poultry, dairy farming and other livestock into core agriculture. It is also an important tool for building resilience by promoting sustainable livelihoods. In this context, this project is a welcome initiative.
41. A further scale-up of such activities by farmers requires affordable and collateral-free finance and risk mitigation instruments such as crop insurance, with government backing during the initial years.

***Centro de Aprendizaje para la Resiliencia al Cambio Climático in the Dry Corridor (Texiguat, El Paraíso, Honduras)***

42. The *Centro de Aprendizaje para la Resiliencia al Cambio Climático* (centre for learning on resilience to climate change) was established in the first phase of a project funded by the European Union in 2020–2022. WFP continues to monitor the activities of the centre and seek opportunities to enhance it. The centre provides services to the communities of Mayaran, Potrerillos, Apalu, Hato San Antonio and San Sebastián.
43. The centre has an important component of activities for single mothers, who are given access to training programmes and income-generating opportunities. A total of 40 single mothers participate in the various initiatives run by the centre.
44. The centre strengthens the local capacities of small-scale producers by implementing modules on sustainable agricultural and forestry production and facilitating the adoption of production technologies and value-added processes in the context of resilient production in the Dry Corridor.

## **Conclusions**

45. It is clear in both countries that participation in resilience projects has empowered farmers, with an emphasis on women’s empowerment, enhancing their skills and boosting production. The school meals programmes provided by governments in both countries and supported by WFP are also very impressive. The delegation reviewed the WFP emergency financing for people severely affected by climate-related disasters and at highest risk of food insecurity and spent some time speaking with the Apacilagua community. The Board member representatives reviewed the operation of the cash transfer system provided and managed by WFP and many of the individuals that they spoke with were genuinely appreciative of and hugely reliant on this support.

46. The greatest need of all the communities visited is and will continue to be access to the water resources needed for the sustainability of agriculture crops, which are the basis of the economy in the region.
47. Much appreciation was expressed by all communities for the work and support of WFP.