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Contribution by the World Food Programme */

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The Food Aid Organization of the United Nation System

REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR
LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR THE 1990s

Contribution of the
World Food Programme
to the High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting
on the Mid-term Global Review

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World Food Programme

Introduction

1. As the food aid arm of the United Nations system, the World Food Programme (WFP) stands on the front line of the United Nations' battle against hunger and poverty. WFP concentrates its efforts on the neediest people in the neediest countries of the world. In so doing, this agency addresses the UN's commitment to one of the most basic human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration--that of ensuring the right to food.

2. In 1994, 53 percent of WFP's resource commitments were allocated to Least Developed Countries. These resources were used in support of interventions aimed at both relief and development. On the relief side, WFP has been responding rapidly to food shortages by relying on its network of country offices and on its expertise in transport, logistics and procurement. It is an unfortunate reality that the challenge of emergency relief in LDCs has in recent years subordinated the main challenge of the 1980s which was focused on long-term development. During 1994, WFP provided relief assistance valued at more than US\$ 1 billion to over 32 million people affected by disasters, some 75 percent of whom were made vulnerable by armed conflicts. More than 21 million of these people were in Africa.

3. On the development side, WFP food aid is used as an effective means of transferring income to the poor and encouraging collective action in poor communities. WFP recognizes that in the long run it will be development activities (as opposed to relief activities, however well-designed and implemented) that will lead to an end to famines and other humanitarian crises. The only sure way to beat hunger is to alleviate its symptoms while simultaneously rooting out its causes. Currently some 225 development projects with an aggregate commitment of US\$ 2.6 billion are being supported by WFP in 83 developing countries, of which 41 are LDCs. In regional terms, Africa (40 percent) and Asia (39 percent) continue to receive the largest share of WFP development resources.

4. The largest share of development projects ongoing in LDCs in 1995 was focused on agricultural and rural development activities, representing 41 percent of the total portfolio in value terms. Other major categories included support of the education sector (37 percent) through school-feeding and training activities, and support of nutrition through Maternal and Child Health interventions and nutrition rehabilitation in hospitals (17 percent).

5. WFP also pays great attention to the importance of linking relief activities and those of a longer-term developmental nature. The chronically food insecure of today can easily become the famine victims of tomorrow. This argues for a well-coordinated attack on the root causes of emergencies, while at the same time building up national capacities both for

crisis identification and for more timely and effective emergency response. Importantly, WFP, with its dual mandate (combating hunger through relief food distribution while promoting development through human resource enhancement and infrastructure creation) is uniquely placed to assist in both areas.

6. Food-assisted projects help lay the foundation for sustainable development by fostering conditions for human and capital asset enhancement during and after major emergencies. WFP is therefore making a deliberate effort to identify ways that increase the linkages between its relief and development assistance in three ways: integrating disaster mitigation elements into development projects; developing capacity-building elements into relief operations; and, strengthening disaster preparedness by vulnerability mapping, better early warning and institutional development.

7. In many countries, the return and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced people is dependent on WFP assistance. Labour-intensive works programmes support the reconstruction of infrastructure, the restoration of basic services and training activities that promote greater food security and self-reliance. WFP is also increasingly involved in the demobilization of ex-combatants and de-mining operations, crucial to the rehabilitation of countries such as Angola, Afghanistan and Cambodia.

WFP's Resource Base

8. WFP food assistance is used exclusively for targeted interventions through development projects or during humanitarian interventions. Such assistance is specifically destined for poorest and most hungry people in any given country. Thus, the food aid is largely additional to existing consumption and conventional market supplies.

9. The value of WFP resources has increased sharply in recent years from less than US\$ 1 billion in 1990 to around US\$ 1.5 billion during each of the years from 1992 through 1994. Approximately US\$ 105 million of the 1994 resources were in the form of cash contributions in support of major relief operations in 1994 in 33 countries (Special Emergency Operations). These cash resources are used for an increasing range of logistics support and other services, such as improving port and inland transport infrastructure aimed at facilitating food movements (such as in Sudan and Rwanda).

10. The food aid delivered by WFP is a valuable grant resource used to support projects or humanitarian interventions generally implemented by government departments, or by other donor and NGOs agencies in the developing countries. The grant nature of WFP assistance is particularly valuable to regions such as sub-Saharan Africa which not only account for two-thirds of the world's LDCs, but continue to experience negative capital flows. The volume

of WFP food resources to Africa (and the activities that they support), make WFP the largest source of grant assistance in the entire UN system to that continent.

WFP's Mandated Focus on LDCs

11. Although WFP was one of the main suppliers of food aid during the 1980s to the two-thirds of LDCs that receive such assistance, WFP's focus on LDCs has sharpened during the first half of the period of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s (PALDC). During the decade of the 1980s, WFP allocated an average of 39 percent of its total food resources to LDCs. This represented a total of 6.8 million tons valued at roughly US\$ 2.6 billion for the decade. Since 1990, WFP's food commitments for development and relief assistance to LDCs have almost doubled to an annual average of 1.3 million tons, reaching a total of 6.9 million tons for the first half of the 1990s alone.

12. Beyond WFP's recognition of the growing need for food assistance in many LDCs, this renewed attention to some of the world's most vulnerable countries can be traced to a set of policies and guidelines adopted by WFP's Governing Body during 1992 and 1994; namely, adoption of country allocation criteria and a new Mission Statement, both of which state that: "Highest priority should be given to the least developed countries, with a target of providing at least 50 percent of development assistance to these countries by 1997".

13. These resources are to be used in a very specific manner to address hunger and poverty in LDCs. WFP assistance will support disaster prevention initiatives, preparedness systems, mitigation, and rehabilitation measures, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The main thrusts of this approach are: i) to regularly examine how WFP-assisted projects can be better used to improve disaster mitigation and rehabilitation (making the concept of a relief-to-development continuum an operational reality); ii) to collaborate more closely with other funding agencies that work in LDCs such that nonfood resources can be allied with WFP food aid to maximize the impact of both. Such collaboration through joint projects is already underway with the World Bank and IFAD in countries such as Mozambique, Niger and Madagascar.

14. What is more, WFP has begun to purchase a majority share of its food commodities from within developing countries for disbursement in third-country locations. In 1994, WFP purchased almost 1 million tons of food in developing countries (valued at around US\$ 190 million), of which 304,000 tons (worth US\$ 72 million dollars), were obtained from LDCs themselves. For the period 1990 through 1994, WFP food purchases from LDCs alone totalled 1.3 million tons, valued at US\$ 306 million.

Emergency Relief in LDCs

15. Unfortunately, the need for assistance in LDCs continues to outweigh the supply of assistance from all sources. Despite some development successes in agricultural productivity growth, for example in Ghana and Bangladesh, and nutritional improvements recorded in Tanzania, most macroeconomic and social development indicators in LDCs still give cause for grave concern. Particularly worrisome from WFP's perspective is the growing frequency and complexity of humanitarian emergencies.

16. In 1994, two out of three tons of WFP-provided food aid were distributed as relief assistance and only one ton was used in support of development projects. Five years ago it was the reverse. Fewer resources used for development implies that "silent" emergencies, in which people live in abject poverty and chronic food insecurity for many years, can evolve into crises in the near future. Relief assistance alone cannot change the vulnerability of poor people to the next emergency.

17. WFP has proven itself effective at delivering essential food to the hungry during disasters. Indeed, the share of WFP assistance going to emergency and refugee needs has risen from 25 percent in 1986 to 71 percent in 1994, the bulk of these resources addressing crises in Africa. But, WFP also recognizes that a better delineation of responsibilities and tasks leads to more efficient and cost-effective operations. For example, the sharing of tasks, resources and ideas among agencies was crucial to the success of operations during recent crises in southern Africa and Rwanda. Thus, during 1994 WFP formalized areas of collaboration in emergencies with UNHCR, and pursued the development of similar agreements with a number of NGOs.

18. Some 64 percent of WFP relief operations during 1994 were in support of needy people in Africa. The single biggest operation was the Rwanda/Burundi activity, costing an estimated US\$ 242 million--22 percent of total relief expenditures. This operation, associated with tragic loss of life on a massive scale, continues to be an urgent focus of attention for the WFP today, not only in Rwanda/Burundi but also in Zaire, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya. The Liberia programme (costing US\$ 96 million in 1994) is another ongoing regional crisis affecting multiple LDCs. WFP is providing assistance to refugees and displaced persons not only in Liberia itself but also in four neighbouring countries involved in the crisis.

19. Major emergencies faced by WFP in LDCs outside of Africa included Afghanistan, another country that is still in a state of chronic food insecurity in the absence of peace. The WFP regional operation in support of Afghan refugees and IDPs cost US\$ 95 million in 1994.